

## **Historic Sites and Cultural Heritage of the Shan in Kyaing Tong, Eastern Shan State**

**Maw Maw Aye**

Department of History, University of Yangon, Myanmar

### **Abstract**

Kyaing Tong is the principal city and the largest area of Eastern Shan State. Kyaing Tong is an ancient historic city and the eastern gateway to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, bordering with the People's Republic of China to the north, the People's Democratic Republic of Laos to the east, and Thailand to the south. Because of the distinct geographical setting and strategic position, Kyaing Tong was a political center during the Myanmar monarchical times. As Kyaing Tong lies near the Golden Triangle, people could easily communicate with the neighboring countries in terms of political, economic, and cultural relations through the eras. The aim of this paper is to show that Kyaing Tong has long traditions of history and its own rich cultural heritage. The study emphasizes the historical significant sites and historic buildings of Kyaing Tong based on what they are and how to preserve them. It is shown that Kyaing Tong is an interesting place for its historic sites and remaining historic heritage which can still be seen today. Moreover, Kyaing Tong is renowned as the home of a variety of Shan ethnic groups, and it has the most scenic views.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Eastern Shan State, Ethnic Groups, Historic Sites, Kyaing Tong

## Introduction

According to the Kyaing Tong Chronicle, ancient Kyaing Tong was established by a Chinese hermit, and then Wa or Lawa influenced it from A.D 1134 to A.D 1229. Gon Shan ruled it in A.D 1243. A succession of Swabwars started to rule Kyaing Tong in A.D 1253. During the reign of Myanmar kings, it was called “Alan Oo King Hpya” or “King Oo Lhan Hpya” (meaning that Kyaing Tong is situated at easternmost Myanmar and served as a garrison town with the Myanmar flag was hoisted due to its strategic position (Than Tun, 2004).

In the long course of Myanmar history, Myanmar intermittently was at war with its neighbors, China, Thailand, Assam, and Manipur, and also with Great Britain. There were glorious periods in its history when Myanmar fought foreign invaders during the reigns of Kings Anawrahta, Bayinnaung, and Alaung Paya. The Shan contingents gallantly fought together with Myanmar to win against the foreign foes. Relations between the Myanmar kings and the Shan chiefs before the British occupation were based on the policy laid down by the central court of Inwa (Ava) and implemented by the ministers. Other components of the central policy consisted of loyalty, allegiance, voluntary services, regular tributes, and taxes needed by the central government headed by the king. In the three wars with the British, the Shan sacrificed thousands of lives in guarding Myanmar sovereignty. The Shan forces had fought against the British during the First Anglo-Myanmar War of 1824 and the Second Anglo-Myanmar War of 1852. (Sai Aung Tun, 2009). Unlike the rest of the Shan States, Kyaing Tong had been enjoying internal peace ever since the middle of the century when the three Siamese (Thailand) invasions had successfully been repulsed by Kyaing Tong forces, and except for attacks on Kyaing Tong and Monglem, in 1872 and again in 1881, external peace was also maintained. No notable event occurred until Sao Kawngtai became Sawbwar when he declared himself independent of allegiance to King Thibaw (Sao Saimong Mangrai, 1965). Kyaing Tong rebelled against the Myanmar king during the reign of King Thibaw so the relations of Kyaing Tong and the Myanmar king diminished. Sawbwars therefore ruled as a king in Kyaing Tong (Than Tun, 2004).

Myanmar fell into the hands of the British in 1885 after the third Anglo-Myanmar War, and both Shan and Myanmar became colonial subjects of the British for nearly a hundred years. During the British rule in Myanmar, the Shan states were separated from Myanmar proper in accordance with the British policy of “divide and rule.” At first, the British had no idea how the Shan states should be ruled. Finally, they readopted the method of the Myanmar kings to rule the Shan state through their own chief. They held out the olive branch to all Shan chiefs, persuading them to submit and vow allegiance to British power. By those terms, many traditional and hereditary privileges and rights were curbed and the

positions of the Shan chiefs were no better off than in the time of the Myanmar kings. This created dissatisfaction among the Shan chiefs. They were under the tight control of the British commissioner and governor. In 1922 the British introduced reform, and all the Shan States were placed under the institution of the Federated Shan States. A council was created, having the British commissioner as its chairman and the British resident as its secretary. The Shan chiefs were members of the Federal Council but their roles were merely advisory. They had no legislative and executive powers at all. The Shan chiefs presented memorandum after memorandum stating their grievances and dissatisfactions and appealed for reform and an increase of most of their privileges and rights in administering their states. The British turned a deaf ear to their appeals and were slow to introduce reasonable reforms. Political agitation took place in 1930 when the roundtable conference was held in London to discuss the question of the separation of Myanmar from India. The Shan chiefs sent another memorandum and requested permission to participate in the roundtable conference and ascertain the position of the Shan States after the separation of Myanmar from India. But they received no favorable response from the British government. The Shan States were not only separated from Myanmar proper but placed under the Frontier Area Administration created by the British authority (Sai Aung Tun, 2009).

The Second World War broke out and the Japanese invaded Myanmar. The Shan States came under the Japanese military administration and were also separated from Myanmar proper. Moreover, two prominent Shan states, Kyaing Tong and Mong Pan were given to the Thai government by the Japanese military authority as royal gifts without the knowledge or agreement of the Shan people. The 1945 the world war came to an end. The Japanese withdrew from Myanmar and the British reoccupied it. The Shan States were again placed under British rule. Kyaing Tong returned under the British rule in 1946 (Sai Aung Tun, 2009).

After independence, tranquility prevailed in the Shan States, but only for a short time. Suddenly, to the great surprise and shock of the Shan, Kuomintang soldiers armed with modern war equipment appeared on their doorstep with the grand plan to make Shan land a springboard to reinvade and recapture China from the Red Army. These Kuomintang remnants were led by General Li Mi of the Eighth Army. The number of Kuomintang soldiers at the beginning of 1950 was about seventeen hundred and they occupied the northeastern Shan States around Mong Yang in Kaing Tong State (Sai Aung Tun, 2009). After gaining Myanmar independence, the Eastern Shan State was formed and Khon Shi Li, the first Secretary of Frontier Area was appointed at Kyaing Tong on 1 October 1950 by the U Nu Government. The succession Secretary of Frontier Area became U Nyo and U Tun Lu (Than Tun, 2004).

By May 1951 the Kuomintang force had increased to two thousand and established bases along the Myanmar-China border in the Ko Kang and Mong Lun states. Many new recruits further enlarged the Kuomintang army. The Myanmar government asked the Kuomintang either to leave the Union territory or to surrender. But the Kuomintang was determined to remain in Myanmar and to make its territory a military base to invade mainland China. The Myanmar government did not expect resistance from the Kuomintang to its legal demand for evacuation or surrender. But when the commander of the Union forces in Kyaing Tong sent an ultimatum to the chief of the Kuomintang force, General Li flatly refused to surrender and warned that he would retaliate with full force if attack by the Union forces. A few Kuomintang suspects were arrested by the Myanmar intelligence officers in Kyaing Tong. The Kuomintang went so far as to reconstruct the Kyaing Tong-Tachilek road that led to the Myanmar-Tai border, through which they hoped to get quick military supplies from Thailand. The Myanmar government had no choice but to launch an attack against the Kuomintang. From June 1950 to December 1951, five operations were launched against the Kuomintang. Finally, the problem was brought under control with the help of the United Nations, but it had heavily taxed the resources of the newly born independent nation of Myanmar. The Kuomintang incursion into northeastern Myanmar from 1950 to 1953 was a short period, but it created a series of bad consequences (Sai Aung Tun, 2009).

Only in 1959, over ten years after joining Myanmar to gain independence from the British, did the 34 Shan princes, or chiefs, officially relinquish their hereditary powers to the elected Shan State Government. However, some of them remained in government positions and were instrumental in pushing for constitutional reform towards a federal system of government that would put the ethnic states on a more equal footing with Burma Proper. They were not demanding secession, even though this provision had been written into the 1947 Constitution. Yet their push for constitutional reform was given as a main pretext for the military coup by General Ne Win in March 1962, who claimed that it was necessary to prevent the disintegration of the Union of Myanmar (Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), 2009).

Shan State is one of the largest areas among Regions and States of Myanmar which was for centuries comprised of numerous Shan principalities, each with their own hereditary ruling prince of Sawbwars, meaning "Lord of the Sky" (SWAN, 2009). During the administration of Sawbwars in Kyaing Tong, they built and repaired the city walls, moats, and city gates to protect the city and the people. They also constructed their residential houses called in *Haws*, at first in vernacular style, and later in western style. During the colonial period, Kyaing Tong became the center of the British administration.

Therefore, the British built residential houses, churches, post offices, and roads to improve their administration in Kyaing Tong.

According to the historical setting of Kyaing Tong, there are many ancient pagodas, ancient historical sites, and historic buildings in it. The arguments for this paper are that ancient buildings, valuable evidences of Kyaing Tong are becoming ethnic heritage. Although the Archaeology Department and National Museum and local administration departments have tried to start preservation of some places and buildings, systematic historic preservation is necessary for them. Moreover, local ethnic especially new generations need to be aware and participate in heritage conservation.

### **Literature Review**

Relations between Myanmar and Kyaing Tong included in the Chronicle of turning around within the Country is written by Dr. Than Tun with the relevant classical literature of Myanmar and Gon Shan. Therefore it can be used in my paper in terms of historical background and political situations about Kyaing Tong. History of the Shan State from its Origins to 1962 written by Sai Aung Tun is complete for the Shan States in terms of political, socio-economic, and cultural conditions. So it is useful for political situations of the Shan State. The Shan States and the British Annexation written by Sao Saimong Mangrai is useful for studying the city walls, moats and gates of Kyaing Tong.

There are Magazine articles concerning Kyaing Tong which are written in Gon Shan, Myanmar and English. Among them, "Today scene of ancient heritage Khemarahta's city wall and city gates" written by Khon Sa Wun in the 25th Anniversary Silver Jubilee Magazine of Khemarahta Kyaing Tong Monastery is reliable for studying the city walls, moats and city gates of Kyaing Tong at the present day. "Chronicle of Kentung Town" which is compiled with Gon Shan in Shan Parabike (Parabike, long scrolls of paper folded fanwise in book albums is usually of paper) translated by the Chief Minister of Hsenwi State. It is translated into English by Shan Swe in Guardian Burma's National Magazine which can be used for some historical sites of Kyaing Tong. Some facts included in The Misty Hill Station Town that is the Record of Loi Mwe Pagoda Trustee can be used for studying the buildings of Loi Mwe.

Moreover, some scholars do research for their Master Degree and Doctor of Philosophy Degree about the City Walls, Heritage in the Myanmar Frontier: Shan State, Haws, and Conditions for Public Participation and Cultural landscape and Vernacular Architecture in Historic Town of Keng Tung, Shan State, Myanmar respectively. I can compare and put in the required documents based on this researches and the data collected in my field studies.

### **Rationale and Research Questions**

The research hopes to discover places and ancient buildings that are matters of pride for Shan ethnic and cultural heritages of Kyaing Tong. This informs the present conservation situation of these sites according to the responsible persons. Moreover, this is particularly important because the research explores significant ancient buildings, valuable remaining evidences and the public need to participate on the preservation systematically.

The research studies are based on the research question such as why can we regard these sites as historic sites? And how can people preserve these materials as cultural heritages? This especially focused on the ancient building and places that are valuable for local people.

### **Methodology**

Historical background for the study area is vital regarding historic sites in Kyaing Tong. So, study on relevant literature concerning with the subject are firstly approached. Field studies which involved interviewing some local people focus on current conservation of these significant places and buildings.

### **Findings**

Studying with relevant historical documents and remaining historical evidence such as Haws, fragments of city walls and moats, preserved city gates, and *Dipderocarpasalatu* plant that firmly establish Kyaing Tong as an ancient historic town in Trans-Than Lwin Region. Moreover, it can be noted that these evidences are historical heritages and cultural heritages for the people of Kyaing Tong.

By studying field studies and from personal interviews, it can be seen that the 12 city gates are preserved by the Archaeological Department and National Museum. At present, the responsible persons and the elders of the Shan ethnic have protected as the legacy of Shan Sawbwars under the guidance of the State. But city walls and moats need to be conserved against extending residential houses, creating planted area and poor public participation in the conservation process. Hundred Year Aged-old Building and Lone Tree can be preserved by the local military regime. *Haws* have been by the relatives of Sawbwars. Today is the globalization era, so the conservation of cultural heritage is vital for all ethnic groups. It tells us that public participation and awareness are vividly needed in the preservation of the historic sites and cultural heritage in Kyaing Tong.

Furthermore, Kyaing Tong is the home of the Shan ethnic groups especially Gon Shan ethnic group. Every ethnic group possesses the colorful traditional dress, own literature and traditional customs.

Nowadays, all the ethnic groups who live in Kyaing Tong have good relations and have similar cultural relations with all the neighboring countries and Myanmar.

## Discussion

### 1.1 Geographical Setting of Kyaing Tong



Figure 1: Map of Kyaing Tong and bordering Countries

According to the topography of Myanmar, Shan State is situated in the Eastern Hill Region and is the largest state of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Shan State can be divided into three parts; Northern Shan State, Southern Shan State and Eastern Shan State. Kyaing Tong is the largest town in Eastern Shan State bordering with People Republic of China to the north, People Democratic Republic of Laos to the east and Thailand to the south. It is also located close to The Golden Triangle.

The border towns of Kyaing Tong are the Mong La Township to the east, the Mong Pyain Township to the west, the Mong Khet Township to the north and the Mong Hsat Township and the Mong Hpayak Township to the south. It is located between East Longitude 99° 16' and 101° 15', between North latitude 21° 05' and 21° 35' (The Department of Settlement and Land Records, 2012). Total area of Kyaing Tong is about 12400 square miles and it also located between Mekong River and Thanlwin River. Kyaing Tong is the most mountainous region and some are 5000 feet or 7000 feet height (Myanmar Encyclopedia, 1955).

Kyaing Tong is situated over 2700 feet above sea level. It was circled by three mountains; Lone Tree Hill called Suam Mong Kon, Song Taung or Song Hkam pagoda called Song Taung Kon and Suam Sup Kon where Khe Mar Ra Hta Buddha Image or Standing Buddha is located (Ma Thida, 2014). Kyaing Tong is composed of Kyaing Tong Township, Mong Khet Township, Mong Yang Township, Mong La Township and Mong Pauk sub-Township. Kyaing Tong Township is the biggest area as well as the most populated in Eastern Shan State. There are 5 quarters and 36 village tracts in Kyaing Tong Township (The Department of Settlement and Land Records, 2012). Variety of Ethnic groups totally 31 live in Kyaing Tong Township (Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population, Kyaing Tong, 2014). Among them Gon Shan and Shan live in the plain and Lahu, Akha, Lwa, Wa, Ann and Palaung and other hill tribes live in the upland area (Khon Sa Wun, 2014).

The names of Kyaing Tong have been called since the foundation date of Kyaing Tong. The name of a region which is used by people is very important historical background for this region. According to the Kyaing Tong Chronicle, the city of Kyaing Tong was formerly known by the three names of Dammelar, Mong Aung Pu and Sanda Wazi. It was also called Tongkapuri because it was established under the guidance of a Chinese hermit named Tongarathi (Shan Swe, 1969). And then it was named as Keng Tung (Kyaing Tong) (Shan Swe, 1970). In the Hman Nan Maha Yazawindawgyi (The Glass Palace Chronicle, 2008), it was recorded as Khema Vara, Khema Rahta and Kyaing Tong. Regarding a brief history of Keng Tung written by U Sai Long Seng Lung, it was called Mong Zantara Kwarm and Khemarahta Zayasohti Tunggapuri. Nowadays, it is renowned as Kyaing Tong or Khemarahta.

Because Kyaing Tong is an ancient city, it has significant historical sites. Among them Loi Mwe, Nong Tong Lake, the City Gates, ancient city Walls and Moats, Haws and Lone Tree are the most distinguished historical sites of Kyaing Tong

## 1.2 The Misty Hill Station Town (or) Loi Mwe



Figure 2: Loi Mwe Township



Figure 3: Loi Mwe Lake

Loi Mwe is one of the historical sites of Kyaing Tong, it is located over 20 miles from the southeast of Kyaing Tong and is situated 5542 feet above sea level (Field studies, 8. 3. 2016). Loi Mwe is Shan dialect. Loi means mountain and

Mwe means snow. So, Loi Mwe means the Misty Hill Station Town. The ethnic groups such as Akha, Lahu, Shan, Lishaw, Lwa, Wa, Bamar, Chinese and Indian live in Loi Mwe. Therefore, many dialects and several cultural traditions can be seen there. The majority of residents in Loi Mwe are Christians; others are Buddhists, animists, Moslems and Hindus (Pagoda Trustee Committee, n.d.).

During the 18th century, Circle Headman ruled Loi Mwe under the administration of Kyaing Tong Sawbwar. After the British annexation of 1886, Loi Mwe was still ruled by Circle Headman. The British interfered in the administration of Loi Mwe after Shan State was regarded as a state of the British-Indian in May, 1886. The British settled at Loi Mwe with a temporary office in 1900. A Hindu temple and a shrine for a nat were established under Sir J. George Scott in 1903. The Catholic monk,

Longbardini, reached Loi Mwe in 1912 to propagate Christianity. The Colonial Government started to construct over 100 brick and stone buildings in European style in 1913. The buildings for their servants were the hospital, residential buildings, Roman Catholic Churches, Panwaing Baptist Church and District Officer's house. At that time, Loi Mwe was at the level of village tract and the British Government regarded Loi Mwe village as a District (Administrative Center) of the Eastern Shan States. The first District officer of Loi Mwe was Colonel. V.G Robert. Nine Townships had been considered under the administration of Loi Mwe District since 1918 (Pagoda Trustee Committee, n.d.).

The British Government ruled these nine townships strictly with military, law and order, communication and revenue administration from Loi Mwe so the power of Sawbwars gradually declined. Although the Governor General of India proclaimed Shan State as the Feudatory Princely States, Sawbwars were subordinate to the power of the District officer. After renaming as Loi Mwe District, in 1927 the British started to construct motor roads; from Loi Mwe via Panwine to Kyaing Tong, from Loi Mwe via Holatt to Kyaing Tong and from Loi Mwe via Hparthe to Tachileik, to be convenient for administration and communication. After constructing the Loi Mwe-Kyaing Tong motor road, Loi Mwe became a prosperous city engaging in trade or commerce. From 1930 to 1940, Loi Mwe was a most prosperous town. Under the administration of the British, damson, avocado pear, kind of creeper bearing edible fruit (or) chayote, pear, one kind of local fruit called in *pinsein* fruit and green tea as well as opium and hashish were sold as Loi Mwe's products to other towns. At that time, Loi Mwe used British money and rupees, and local weights (Pagoda Trustee Committee, n.d.).

During the Second World War, the British troops at Loi Mwe retreated to Central Myanmar when the Japanese troops were marching to Mae Sai via Tachileik at the end of 1941. The Chinese troops entered Loi Mwe because of lack of administration. When the Japanese entered, the Chinese retreated to Kyaing Tong and burnt and destroyed the whole of Kyaing Tong. Japanese troops established headquarters at Loi Mwe with the existing office buildings. The Japanese transferred Loi Mwe district to the Thai Government as the Thai Government supported the Japanese in WWII. According to the agreement, Japanese Prime Minister Togyo himself signed and transferred Loi Mwe district to the Thai Government in Bangkok on 4 July 1943. When the British returned to Myanmar, Loi Mwe District was again ruled by the former District officer Colonel Robert at the end of WWII. The last Frontier officer at Loi Mwe was Governor Capt. V.G Robert. After gaining independence in 1948, the Myanmar Government allowed Kyaing Tong Sawbwars to rule instead of the District officer. The District office situated in Loi Mwe was moved to Kyaing Tong from 1957 to 1958. The Revolutionary Council regarded Loi Mwe as District village in 1963 (Pagoda Trustee Committee, n.d.).



Figure 4: Hundred Years Aged-old Building

An ancient historical building of Loi Mwe is the house built for the first District officer, V.G Robert. In order to calculate about the age of this house from 1918 to 2020, it has lasted for 102 years. So, the inhabitants of Loi Mwe and Kyaing Tong called this house the Hundred Years Aged-old Building (Hundred Years House). The building style of this house was as a model of a

European house. Because of snow over Loi Mwe for 9 months every year, the British regarded it as a miniature England (Field studies, 8. 3. 2016).

In this house every living room has a fireplace and master bedroom. There are eight rooms, four master bedrooms, two living rooms, and two small rooms. The building style and interior decorations were of high standard in those days. All the walls of the living room and a master bedroom situated at the right-hand side and the wall of the main entrance of the building include peacock designs, but the rest of the rooms on the left-hand side do not. The house was renovated on 14 March 2006 to preserve the ancient colonial buildings. Now, it is preserved by Loi Mwe's military regime (Field studies, 8. 3. 2016).

Loi Mwe lies 5542 feet above sea level and its weather is cool and pleasant. It has the distinguished traditional customs of the inhabitants' ethnic groups, fantastic scenic views and beautiful cherry flowers; the Satu Rahta Thu Mingala Pagoda and Loi Mwe Lake are supplements for Loi Mwe as a most interesting place. Furthermore, Loi Mwe is famous for its many kinds of wine, green tea, and strawberries which are attractive to visitors. It can be proved that Loi Mwew was important for the administration of the Colonial Government (1918-1945) in the Eastern Shan State, and because of the colonial buildings it became the most interesting historical site for Kyaing Tong.

### 1.3 The Historic Nong Tong Lake



Nong Tong Lake is located in the center of Kyaing Tong and it is also one of the historical sites and the pride of Kyaing Tong. It is a kind of natural lake and is 6250 feet wide (Field studies, 1.6.2016).

According to the Chronicle of Kyaing Tong, during the life time of Godama Buddha, Buddha predicted that the four hermits from the north headed by Sunda Theikkha Tong (or) Tongarathi would arrive to the Dammelp or Kyaing Tong which was the flooded area and they dried up this basin with their power. And then, they would build a great city on the dried up basin of the lake. Owing to this chronicle, local people believed that the brother hermits built a city under the guidance of Tongarathi. They built a city in a part of the dried up basin called Nawng Le (Shan Swe, 1969).

After the long time of the Prinibbanna of Lord Buddha, heavy rain fell in Dammelp or Kyaing Tong for seven days and seven nights continuously. Thus, Dammelp or Kyaing Tong basin became flooded. After meditation for three years later, the four hermits gained the secular world super natural power. When they arrived Dammelp or Kyaing Tong, they temporarily stayed at the un-flooded area named Twan Phu Lon or Lwe Lon. And then they went to Suan Suck hill. The four hermits came to know about the prediction of the Lord Buddha. So, they vowed themselves and tried to dry out Dammelp Lake to be flowed to the southern part of the lake with their super natural power stick. But they found that the water seeped down along the southern part of the lake. Therefore, they vowed again and tried to dry it out to flow to the northern side as usual. In this case, the water did miraculously flow to this side. After seven years and seven months later, Dammelp or Kyaing Tong Lake changed into a small lake. At present, it can be seen as Nong Tong Lake (Record of Gon Shan, n.d.).

At present, Nong Tong Lake noted in the Kyaing Tong Chronicle is regarded as an ancient historical site as well as a recreation place for health and mental fitness by local people. Moreover, the traditional local foods in Nong Tong Lake are very attractive to the local people as well as visitors.

#### **1.4 The City Gates, Walls and Moats of Kyaing Tong**

According to the Kyaing Tong Chronicle, Wa (or) Lwa influenced in Kyaing Tong from A.D 1134 to 1229. Gon Shan reached Kyaing Tong in A.D 1243. The Sawbwars of Kyaing Tong started to rule Kyaing Tong in A.D 1253 (Than Tun, 2004). Sao Narn Toom (A.D 1253-64) was the first Sawbwa of Kyaing Tong and Sao Sai Long was the last Sawbwa (Khon Sa Wun, 2014). Sao Sai Long was installed as the forty-third ruler of Kyaing Tong (Sao Sanda Simms, 2017). In the Chronicle of Kyaing Tong, Sawbwa Sao Pha Long moved to Kyaing Tong in A.D 1817. He had repaired and extended the walls, moats and city gates of Kyaing Tong for three years since A.D 1819 and again repaired them. The Chronicle recorded that these walls and moats 4 miles 1 furlong long were completed in A.D 1833 (Than Tun, 2004).

Captain W.C. Mcleod and Dr. D. Richardson were sent in December 1836 by Mr. E.A. Blundell, the Commissioner of the British Tannintharyi, to open “the gold and silver road of trade” between Mawlamyine and the Shan States through Chiang Mai. They recorded the walls, moats and gates of Kyaing Tong as follows;

The fort stands on high ground at the foot of the range of hills passed by us on the march, and which run to the north and northeast. The wall on the southern face has been lately extended, in consequence of an order from Inwa (Ava), directing that all Tsobuas shall surround their capital with walls 6,000 cubits in circumference. The wall, which is about fifteen feet high including the parapet, consists of a double wall of brick and mud of about two feet thick, with the space between them filled up with earth. In many places the weight of the earth during the rains has brought down portions of the wall, and parties of Chinamen are at work repairing these breached, the inhabitants paying them for their labor. This industrious race furnishes the only artisans in the place. Many of them come in search of work, be it what it may, during the dry season, and after collecting a little money together they return to their homes. But to return to the fort; it has twelve gates, four or five of which are on the eastern face, but it has no bastions or embrasures for canon. The wall, following the conformation of the ground presents a most irregular fortification. Swamps supply the place of a ditch, and where these do not exist, a cutting has been made in some places to the depth of 30 feet from the foot of the wall through the hilly ground to a level with the swamps, but no water enters it (Sao Saimong Mangrai, 1965).

In the Shan Hill written by Scott, he recorded that Kyaing Tong was established with secret city gates and walls about 4 miles 4 furlongs long. There were about one thousand houses. The majority of Shan living in Kyaing Tong were Gon Shan. The size of Kyaing Tong is double that of Wales. According to the

record of Scott, Kyaing Tong is about 12400 square miles wide and is situated on a plain which is 20 miles long and 15 miles wide. The wall was 15 feet in height but the bricks have decayed and some parts of the wall were falling down. Walls looked good but not strong (Scott, 2017).

There are 12 city gates in Kaing Tong. These city gates can be seen today in Kyaing Tong and they are as follows; (Field studies, 17.6.2016)

1. *Mangala Gate* (Now, Airport Road )
2. *Padaeng Gate* (Now, near the Old Hospital)
3. *Zeing Lann Gate* (Now, near No.4 B.E.H.S)
4. *Ngum Fah Gate* (Now, near wall of Lone Tree Hill)
5. *Pha Yang Gate* (Now, beside the Tharthapala Monastery)
6. *Jen Mong Gate* (Now, near Paw neint village)
7. *Yang Kharn Gate* (Now, near Yang Kharn Market)
8. *Naung Laik Gate* (Now, near Police Station)
9. *Naung Pha Gate* (Now, Mong Yang Road)
10. *Kai Hai Gate* (Now, near Naung Pha Shin Phyu Monastery)
11. *Yang Poug Gate* (Now, No. 8 Military Police)
12. *Yang Gong Gate* (Now, Namp Paw Awe and Yang Kon Road).

Padaeng Gate is the only one left standing and the best remaining preserved gate. It lies at Loi Mwe road in the No. 3 Quarter. It was built of Sand-Stone and the preserved gate is the original one. It was protected by the Department of Archaeology and the National Museum.

Figure 6: City Gates of Kyaing Tong



At present, the group headed by the representative of parliament from Kyaing Tong, the elders of Shan ethnic and the responsible persons have planned and protected the Padaeng Gate under the guidance of the State (Maung Maung Naing, 2020). Pha Yang Gate, Naung Pha Gate, Kai Hai Gate, and Jen Mong Gate remain as fragments. But these gates could be used as the gates for the local people. The rest of the city gates are preserved with the little stone pillars with the names of the gate in 2017 by the Department of Archaeology and the National Museum. Nowadays, all gates can be regarded as cultural heritages of Kyaing Tong.



Figure 7: Present Preserved Padaeng Gate View (Maung Maung Naing, 2020)

To study the walls and moats inside the quarters, one walks along the Song Sat Kon, Taunggyi Road and Yan Kham Gate to the outer part of the south of Quarter No. 1. It ends near the Tachileik Road and No. 4 Basic Education Middle School and it is about two miles long. Although some parts are ruined, the part that from the Hpan Yan Gate to Ngan Hpa Gate still exists. No wall and moat were found at Quarter No. 2 and Quarter No. 3. One wall lies beside the Airport Road; Magalar Gate to the Mong Yan Road, Naung Hpa and Kai Heik and it is about 2 miles long. Then, next lies from the Mong Yan Road and Kai Heik Gate to the Taunggyi Road and Yang Khan Gate about 2 miles long ( Khon Sa Wun, 2014).



Figure 8: Map of Wall and Moat of Kyaing Tong (Khon Sa Wun, 2014)



Figure 9: Wall, Moat and bricks can be seen today

The walls, moats, and city gates of ancient Kyaing Tong can be found till today. But the walls and moats far from houses still exist originally with bushes, while some walls disappeared with the extension of houses and digging the ground for building residential houses. Nowadays, the rest of the city walls, moats, and gates are preserved as ancient historical sites and cultural heritages of Kyaing Tong by the Department of Archaeology and the National Museum of Kyaing Tong. Nowadays, it can be proved

that Kyaing Tong flourished in glorious power in the past. Moreover, local people take pride in the valuable ancient cultural heritages and very interesting historical sites.

Sawbwars (Saohpa) was head of the Shan state. *Sao* is the Shan word for ruler, lord, king, master, of prince and *pha* means sky. Thus Sawbwar means Lord of the Sky. By virtue of this concept, the Sawbwars became the ruling class of Shan society with their special God-given right to rule their subjects (Sai Aung Tun, 2009). During their rule, many of the princes lived in grand, elaborately designed palaces, (called “haw” in Shan) with unique architectural features. The succession of Sawbwars ruled in Kyaing Tong built city gates, walls and moats for the security of the city as well as constructing Haws, their residential houses.



Figure 10: Kyaing Tong palace (Forbidden Glimpses of Shan State, 2009)

Sawbwar Sao Kawn Kiao Intaleng attended three durbars, including the first one in Delhi in 1903 for which Sir George Scott was responsible. Another, in 1906, was in Yangon when their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales, visited that city (Sao Sanda Simms, 2017). After attending the Delhi Durbar in 1903, Sao Kawn Kiao Intaleng returned to Kyaing Tong and he built his new palace in Indian style in 1906. It was the grandest of the Shan palaces. It was demolished on 9 November 1991. In 1994, the Myanmar Ministry of Hotels and Tourism constructed the Kyaing Tong Hotel, on the site of the old palace (Shan Women’s Action Network, 2009).

Nowadays, five Haws still exist in Kyaing Tong. Among them, Zeing San Haw, Naung Wun Young Haw and Sao Sai Long Haw have been preserved by the relatives of the sawbwars who lived in these Haws. Sao Saing Meng Haw is changed its name into Nwe Ye Gust House. Zeing Kaung Haw was named as the Shan Cherry Educational Welfare of Others and changed as the children’s foster and educational center (Field studies, 19.6.2016).



Figure 11: Houses of Kyaing Tongs Sawbwas (Haw)

### 1.5 Lone Tree Hill (or) Suam Mong Hill



Figure 12: Kanyin Phyu (Diptero Carpus Alatus) tree

The hill in which the tree, Meik Mat Yang in Gon Shan dialect, Botanical name Diptero Carpas Alatu located is called Lone Tree Hill or Suam Mong Hill. The Lone Tree Hill called in Myanmar Thit Tabin Taung lies at the No.1 Quarter in the Suam Mong Hill. Suam Mong means the third prince (Field studies, 26.6 2016).

According to the local legend of Gon Shan people, the chief warrior, Sao Sai Taw fought against the sons of Wan Ti Phan, the king of Sipsong Panna, and won the battle. He therefore married the daughter of Wan Ti Phan and had three sons. Sao Sai Taw prepared another war to Min Tar Taw Pyay. In case he was defeated in this battle, he arranged for his sons to rule their territories respectively.

So, he ordered that the three regions - Kyaing Hung, Mong Lin and Kyaing Tong had to be ruled by his three sons viz the eldest son (Sao Eike), the second son (Sao Yee) , the youngest son (Sao Sam or Sao Seik Pann Tu) respectively. As Sao Sai Taw was defeated in this battle, the queen and his ministers continuously maintained the kingdom. When the three sons came of age, the queen and ministers conferred to rule three territories to princes according to their father's order. In A.D. 1360, when Sao Sam reached at the age of 32, the three brothers met and discussed to conclude peace and tranquility for their regions and friendship relations among them. They named Kyaing Tong as the central region. They planted three Kanyin Phyu (Diptero Carpus Alatus) trees as the token of their friendship. The eldest son planted it in Wun Pan; the second son in Pin Meik Sayee Tar and the last son in Suam Moon Hill (Records of Gon Shan ethnic, n.d.).

Among these trees, the Kanyin Phyu tree planted by the last son is still alive at the Suam Mong Hill. Therefore, this hill became well-known as the Lone Tree Hill (Thit Tabin Taung) at present. There are a few differences to calculate the age of this tree. According to the legend of local people and records of Gon Shan ethnic, they stated that this tree was planted around 1426 A.D. In this situation, the life of this tree may be over 500 years.

Forbidden Glimpses of Shan State describes that Locals were bewildered by this signboard which declared that this tree was planted in 1744 by King Alaung Min Taya. In fact, King Alaungpaya had never visited Kaing Tong (SWAN, 2009). At present, the height of this tree is 218 feet, the breast girth is 38 feet and 8 inches and the basal girth is 39 feet and 10 inches (Field studies, 26.6.2016).

### **Conclusion**

Historic remains can prove the glorious past of a region and cultural standard of its nationalities. Heritage conservation is therefore necessary and needs to protect their original style systematically. Even though the historic cities of Myanmar like Yangon, Bagan, and Mandalay gain momentum for heritage conservation under the guidance of the State, a conservation strategy for Kyaing Tong is required. Kyaing Tong is a remote state on the borderland and is isolated from central Myanmar. Kyaing Tong can be designated as an eco-tourism city because of its favorable conditions such as the original lifestyle of hill tribes, the scenic beauty, trekking, mountain biking. The development of eco-tourism could promote socio-economic development, ethnic identity, and pride for future generations. Although the heritage conservation effort in Kyaing Tong is faced with many requirements, it needs to be promoted.

Interesting places and historic evidences are rich in Kaing Tong. These are connected with the historical background. According to the geographical setting, Kyaing Tong is far from the Central Myanmar, so it stands separately and owns divers cultural traditions. Myanmar kings generally gave full authority to the Shan Sawbwars to rule on his behalf. During that times, Kaing Tong had often faced annexations by neighboring countries throughout the era. Because of these situations, succession of Kaing Tong's Sawbwars created fortified walls, moats and city gates. In their lifestyle, their residential houses, Haws are built with vernacular style in the early days and European style during the colonial period. In fact, City gates, moats, walls and Haws became the historic relics and cultural heritage of Shan ethnic group in Kyaing Tong.

By studying the history of Kyaing Tong, this paper mainly focuses on the historical sites rather than the traditional way of life of the ethnic groups. So, it cannot be regarded as the complete paper for Kyaing Tong. Moreover, other historical buildings during the colonial period need to be studied in further research. Many things must be added to fill the historical gaps regarding the distinctive social life, traditional customs, and culture of Eastern Shan State's ethnic nationalities. According to the historical evidences of Kyaing Tong, it can be regarded as the ancient historical place in the Trans-Than Lwin area.

Nowadays, the Department of Archaeology and National Museum, local responsible persons and local elders with national spirit have protected the historic sites and cultural heritages of Kyaing Tong under the guidance of the State. Moreover, the city elders preserve with patriotism and pass on the national culture, religious beliefs and traditional customs to the next generations.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest thanks to the organizers of the 3rd International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies for giving a chance to participate as Pre-Conference Workshop Participants. I am deeply grateful to Professor Dr. Kevin McLeod who guided, read and edited this paper and his kindness and supports. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to everyone who gave my interviews and helped me with this research paper.

## References

- Department of Population (n.d.) *List of Population according to the ethnic groups and housing lived in Kyaing Tong Township*. Department of Population, Ministry of Immigration and Population, Kyaing Tong.
- Gon Shan. (n.d.) *Records of Gon Shan Ethnic*. Translated to Burmese.
- Hmannan Maha Yazawindawgyi (*The Glass Palace Chronicle*) (2008). 3 Volumes (First printed). Yangon: Monywa Press.
- Khon Sa Wun. (2014). Shae-how-a-mwe-a-hnit, Khemarahta Myo-yoehnitkyoen-myar-iYa-nae-myin-kwin (Today scene of ancient heritage Khemarahta's city wall and moats). *25th Anniversary Silver Jubilee Magazine of Khemarahta Kyaing Tong Monastery* (pp. 173-178). Yangon.
- Ma Thida. (2014). Kyaing Tong Yin-kyay-hmu Pya-taik (The Cultural Museum of Kyaing Tong), *Khemarahta Magazine*, 1 (1), 39.
- Mangrai, Sao Saimong. (1965). *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, No.57 Data Paper, Southeast Asia Program. Ithaca: Department of Asian Studies, New York Cornell University.
- Maung Maung Naing. (2020). The preservation on the Padaeng Gate for continuing to exist, *Myanmar Digital Newspaper*. <http://www.myanmardigitalnewspaper.com/my/desathngkr-plnttnkh-rernnytnnytnrelupngnmaa-cheaangrk>
- Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Department of Settlement and Land Records, Kyain Tong. (2012). *Paper on the Report of the implementations from the Department of Land Records in Kyaing Tong between 2011 and 2012*.
- Myanmar Encyclopedia Vol.2, (Kya- Khon) Part A.* (1955). Yangon. The Association of Myanmar literature Translation.
- Pagoda Trustee Committee. (n.d.). *The Misty Hill Station Town and The Record of the upgrading of Satu Rahta Thu Mingala Pagoda*.
- Sai Aung Tun. (2009). *History of the Shan State from its Origins to 1962*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Sai Long Seng Lung, U. (2011). *A brief history of Keng Tung*. Kyaing Tong.
- Scott, George. (2017). *The Shan Hill*. Yangon: The Couple.
- Shan Swe. (1969, December). Chronicle of Kengtung Town. A short translation from a Shan parabike by the Chief Minister of Hsenwi State in 1216 B.E. *Guardian Burma's National Magazine* XVI (12).
- Shan Swe. (1970, April). Chronicle of Kengtung Town, A short translation from Shan parabike by the Chief Minister of Hsenwi State in 1216 B.E. *Guardian Burma's National Magazine* XVII (4)..
- Shan Women's Action Network. (2009). *Forbidden Glimpses of Shan State*.
- Simms, Sao Sanda. (2017). *Great Lords of the Sky: Burma's Shan Aristocracy*. Asian Highland Perspectives.
- Than Tun. (2004). *Kyaing Tong Myanmar hse-hsan-yae. (Relations between Myanmar and Kyaing Tong), Nehle Raza win (Chronicle of turning around within the country)*. Yangon: Pyayson Press.

## Field Studies

- Field Studies at Hundred Year Aged-old. (8. 3. 2016),
- Field Studies at Nong Tong Lake. (1.6.2016)
- Field studies at the ancient Walls and moats. (17. 6 .2016)

3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BURMA/MYANMAR STUDIES:  
MYANMAR/BURMA IN THE CHANGING SOUTHEAST ASIAN CONTEXT  
5-7 MARCH 2021, CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY, THAILAND

Field studies at Haw. (19.6.2016)

Field studies at Lone Tree Hill. (26.6.2016)

**Personal Communication (Interviews)**

U Waipon La, Monk of Satu Rahta Thu Mingala Pagoda, Loi Mwe Hill Station, 8 March 2016.

Ko Kyaw Ye Myint Aung, Gon Shan national, Yebawhaung Ywa, No. (1) Quarter 6 July 2016

U Sai Hong Khum, Chairman of Maha Myatmuni Pagoda Trustee Committee, Age 85, 14. July 2017

Daw Thidar Aung, Assistant Director, Department of Archeology and National Museum, Age 50. 14.

July 2017