

HISTORY
OF
SHAN CHURCHES
IN
BURMA (MYANMAR)
(1861 – 2001)
By
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**This book is dedicated to my beloved parents
Saya Hsaw and Daw Nyunt.**

Preface

Praise be to God our Heavenly Father!

In the year 2000, at Great Commission Institute Training in TaungGyi, a young lady wept when she heard that we had tried to unite Shan Churches all over Shan States to form Shan Baptist Convention but failed. She said that no one had told her, including many young people, about our effort and work among Shan Churches, needless to say about the work of missionaries one hundred years ago. She thought that no one had tried to do anything for the betterment of Shan Churches except their pastors in their own Churches for their own congregations. It prompted me to write this book to let all the Shan Churches and Christian workers who are involved with missions among the Shan to know the history of Shan Churches since the beginning in 1861.

History is a record description of the past events. The historians write the events without bias so that the readers get the truth of the past. The Bible tells us the truth. The writers of the books in the Bible have written the true story about Adam, Abraham, Jacob, David, Peter and Paul etc. both sides of their life without prejudice. However not every one wants the truth to be told. Pharisees hated Jesus because He spoke and taught the truth. In writing history of Shan Churches in Burma the real story and the truth must be told otherwise it will not be a history.

My purpose of writing this book is to let the people see the works done by missionaries, evangelists, pastors and Christian workers among the Shan in 140 years, to appreciate their dedications and sacrifices, to follow their footsteps in good direction, to learn the lessons and strive forward for perfection in the future Shan missions. Nothing in the book is personal. I have no intention of hurting or discrediting any one, any Church, any association, any convention or any denomination who have been serving God faithfully and honestly.

Undoubtedly there will be two kinds of reactions to this book. One will appreciate for writing and telling the truth and revealing success and accomplishment, the weaknesses and failure in our missions, in our leaders and our Churches so that the future Shan leaders and workers who work in Shan missions and Churches will be able to improve and achieve successful ministries. Another reaction will be disappointment and anger for telling the truth and revealing the weakness and failure in our missions, our leaders and our Churches. I wish the readers would read this book with open mind and sincere heart so that we can learn the lessons and strive forward for the betterment of our Shan Churches and missions in the future.

Sai Htwe Maung
April 2007
United States of America

Introduction

The Baptist mission has started among the Shan in Burma (Myanmar) in 1861 by missionaries from Baptist Missionary Union of United States. They continued their missions in the Shan States until 1966 when Burmese military government asked all foreigners to leave the country after military coup.

There are many difficulties in evangelizing the Shan because of their long and old traditional cultural background and belief. Knowing the past missionary endeavor among the Shan is very important to make changes if necessary, to improve and strive forward for the successful missions in the future. The main source of information and references to this writing are the letters of missionaries, reports from Baptist Missionary Union, Baptist Missionary Magazine, Burma Baptist Convention Annual Meeting Records, Minutes of the meetings from Shan Churches and associations, corresponding letters, field research and personal experience.

Chapter one of the book is about the Shan people, their ancient kingdoms, their states, their culture and their religion. Chapter two is about the beginning of Baptist mission in Burma, in Shan people, the most famous missionary Rev. Josiah Nelson Cushing who translated Bible to Shan language, the establishment of first mission field in HsiPaw, second mission field in MunogNai, the third mission field in NamKham and the fourth mission field in KengTung and subsequent development. Chapter three is about the challenges in twenty-first century and the chapter four is about how we develop a project to meet the challenges. Chapter five is about the effort in ministry development in translating Shan Bible into new Shan writing system, publishing new Shan Hymnbook and broadcasting gospel in radio to the Shan. Chapter six is the analysis make on the past and present situation in Shan Churches and missions. The biography, corresponding letters and reports from Shan Churches, leaders and associations are included in appendix. Because of inadequate resources and references, I admit that this writing is not a comprehensive history about the Shan Churches but this is the true facts and writing.

Contents

	Page
Preface	III
Introduction	IV
 CHAPTER ONE	 1
SHAN PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURE	
 The Origin of Shan	 1
The Ancient Kingdoms	2
Their Migration	3
Their Present Settlement	3
Shan States in Burma	4
Climate and Natural Resources	4
Political History	5
The Shan States Under British (1887-1948)	5
PangLong Agreement	6
Agreement	6
Signatories of PangLong agreement	7
Independence of Burma and Shan SaoPha	7
Culture and custom	8
Language	8
Literature	10
Shan Calendar & New Year	12
Festivals	12
Hospitality	14
Tattooing	14
Sickness and Medicine	15
Making Covenant	16
Cultivation and Farming	16
Method of Farming	16
Handicrafts	17
Food	17
Cooking	18
Dress and Costume	18
Martial Art	19
Use of Bamboo	19
Shan House	19
Newborn and Naming a Child	20
Maternity Period	21
Shan Name	22
Education	23
Family	24
Courting	24
Marriage and Divorce	25
Class of People	26
Music and Dancing	26

Market-day	27
Funeral	27
Behavior	29
Religion	29
The Belief in Creation	30
Spirit Worship	30
Superstition	31
Monk-hood	31
CHAPTER TWO	32
BAPTIST MISSION AMONG THE SHAN	
Baptist Mission To The Shan People Of Burma	32
Pioneer Baptist Missionaries to Burma	32
Shan Are Overlooked	33
Baptist Mission to The Shan	33
Shan Mission in Toungoo	33
The Beginning	34
Deep inquirers and new Believer	34
Survey of the Year	35
The First Chapel	35
Opposition	36
School	36
The First Shan Convert	36
Shan Buddhist Teacher	36
First Theological Training	37
Preparation for travel to Shan Country	37
Manuscript in Shan	38
Choosing Language	38
Source of Teacher	38
The Last report from Bixby	38
Rev. Josiah Nelson Cushing	39
Arrival Of Cushing	39
Shan Teacher refused to Teach	40
First Visit to Shan Country	40
Shan works continued in Rangoon	41
Bhamo Mission Station	41
Printing Shan Bible and other Literature	42
The First Shan Hymnbook	43
The Four Gospel	43
Shan Literature	43
The First Shan Church in Toungoo	43
Teaching at Rangoon Baptist College	44
Shan Believers in Mobyai and Genuine New Life	44
Cushing's Future Plan for Shan Mission	44

Mission Fields In Shan States	44
The First Mission Field, HsiPaw (1889)	45
Medical Work	45
School	45
Evangelistic Work	46
Bazaar Meeting	46
Jail Meeting	46
Bible Class	46
Church	47
Getting SaoPha's Support	47
The Second Mission Field, MuongNai (1892)	48
Cushing's visit to MuongNai	48
Mission Field Established	48
MuognNai Church	49
Evangelistic Work	51
Conversation between Missionary and Buddhist Monk	52
Medical Work	53
School	54
Letter of Dr. Henderson regarding Shan Work	54
The Third Mission Field, NamKham (1893)	55
First Shan Convert	60
ShweLi Vellay Baptist High School	60
Evangelistic Bazaar Meeting	61
NamKham Hospital	61
Prayer Services and Bible Study	63
Evangelism	63
The Fourth Mission Field, KengTung (1901)	63
Early Mission Work	66
Evangelistic Work	67
First Shan Convert	69
Mission Compound	70
The First Shan Church	70
KengTung Hospital	71
Statistic 1963	72
Mission School	73
Mass Baptism	73
Evangelist Training	74
Bible School Graduates	74
ShweLi Valley Shan Baptist Mission	76
Churches and their Pastors	76
Member Churches in 1945	76
Member Churches in 1992	76
Statistic in 1958	77
Membership in 1992	77
The First Executive Board Members in 1945	78
Executive Board Members in 1961	78
Report in 1962	79
Local People helping Foreign Missionaries in the Past	80
Those who served in ShweLi Valley Shan Baptist Mission	80

Women Association	80
NamKham Bible Training School	81
Bible School Graduates in One Century	81
The Unity of Churches	82
Pastoral Council	82
Report in the year 2000	82
Training	82
Evangelism	82
Development	82
Mission Fields	82
Future Planning	83
The First Shan Church in ShweLi	83
NongSanKone Shan Baptist Church	83
Fond Memory of Rev. Ai Pan	84
SeLan Shan Baptist Church	84
Those who served as Pastors	85
Those who served as Assistant Pastors	85
MuSe Shan Baptist Church	85
Fond Memory of Rev. Kham Maung	86
Those who served with Rev. Kham Maung 1915-1976	86
Those who served as Pastors	86
Baptized Members in year 2000	87
Historical photos	87
Eastern Shan State Baptist Association	91
The First Executive Board Members	91
Development	91
Eastern Shan State Shan Baptist Convention	91
Preparation for Formation of ESSSBC	92
Recognition of Convention	92
The First Executive Board Members	92
Shan Churches in Eastern Shan State in 1988 and their Pastors	93
Report in the year 2000	93
The Evangelists supported by Asian Outreach in 1999	93
Future Planning	94
KanNaLone Shan Baptist Church	94
Church Growth	94
Those who served as Pastors	95
Activities	95
One Sunday at KanNaLone	96
Statistic in 2001	96
Report from HIV/AIDS project	96
WanMon Shan Baptist Church MuongYawng	97
Church	97
The Resettlement Project	98
Middle School	98
Notable Achievement	98
Report from MuongYawng Shan Baptist Conference 2001	98
Member Churches	99
MuongYang Shan Baptist Church	99

School	99
Church	99
Seven Services on Sunday	100
Eastern Shan State Baptist Mission Centenary Celebration	100
Theme	100
Preparation and Celebration	100
Detailed Program	101
Testimony from Celebration	103
Historical Photos	104
CHAPTER THREE	108
CHALLENGES IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	
Burma Baptist Convention	109
Original Constitution	109
Cooperating Bodies	110
Burma Baptist Convention and Shan Churches	110
Shan Churches in Burma by E.E Sowards, 1954	111
Formation of Shan Baptist Convention	112
Initiation	112
Beginning	113
First Effort	113
Second Effort	114
New Direction or Diversion	116
Third Effort	117
CHAPTER FOUR	119
21st CENTURY SHAN MISSION PROJECT	119
The Vision	119
Vision in Action	119
Meeting Shan Churches' Leaders	120
Support from Burma Baptist Convention	120
Goal # 1 Training	121
Sending Students to Seminaries and Bible Schools	121
Training Leaders	123
Great Commission Institute (GCI)	124
Curriculum	124
Three-level Programs	124
The First Shan GCI, Maesai, Thailand	125
Preparation	125
Venue	125
Faculty	126
Subject	126
Report from Jean Harper	126
Testimonies from Trainees	128
Second Shan GCI, TaungGyi	129
Report from Jean Harper	129
Evaluation	132

Dedication	132
Speeches at Graduation Service	132
Lesson learned reported by Sai Htwe Maung	135
Third Shan GCI, KengTung	136
Trainers	137
Report from Takashi	137
Participants	137
Venue	138
Teaching	138
Visit to Tribal Village	139
New Footsoldiers of Christ	139
Budget	140
Testimonies	140
Fourth Shan GCI, MayMyo	143
Preparation	143
Report from Franklin	145
Participants	145
Curriculum	146
Faculty	146
Interpreters	146
Daily Schedule	147
Evening Ministry	147
Special Report from Sai Htwe Maung	147
Testimonies	148
Fifth Shan GCI, Yangon	149
Trainers and Subjects	149
Sixth Shan GCI, Yangon	150
Trainers	150
Trainees	150
Programs	150
Difficulty	152
Testimonies	152
Seventh Shan GCI, TaungGyi	152
Subjects taught	153
Eighth Shan GCI, KengTung	153
Report from Takashi	154
Total Shan Evangelists Trained	155
New Life and New Hope	155
Goal # 2 Evangelism	156
Goal # 3 Church Planting	157
Shan Village Setting	158
Spying (exploration)	158
Christian Village	159
Individual and Family Conversion	169
New Christian Challenge	169
Difficult Church Planting	160
Power of Holy Spirit	160
Dedication and Sacrifice	160
Holistic Approach	160

Identification	161
Building Church Building	161
Problems	161
The Questions Remain	162
Conclusion on Twenty-first Century Shan Mission Project	162
CHAPTER FIVE	163
SHAN BIBLE, HYMNBOOK, RADIO, LITERATURE	
Shan Bible	
New Testament	163
Old Testament	163
Shan Bible Centenary Celebration	164
New Shan Bible Translation	166
Beginning of New Shan Bible Translation	166
Shan Bible Translation Workshop	166
Disagreement and Resignation	168
Comments on Genesis	168
New Translation Published in 1994	169
New Shan Bible Published in 2002	170
Concerns	170
Rewriting Cushing Shan Bible	176
Shan Hymnbook	176
Shan Gospel Radio Broadcast	177
15 minutes to 45 minutes daily	178
Programming	179
Chinese-Shan (DaiMao) Program	179
Khamti Shan Program	180
Effectiveness	180
Testimonies from Listeners	180
Audio Visual Production	182
Shan Christian Literature and Publication	182
Historical Photos	183
CHAPTER SIX	190
ANALYSIS	
Analysis On Shan Churches And Missions	190
1. Workers in the Harvest of Shanland	191
2. Response to Gospel	193
3. Commitment and Sacrifice	195
4. Opposition to Christianity	198
5. Religion, Tradition, Superstition	200
6. Shan National Culture and Christian Practices	202
7. Festivals	204
8. Academic Education of Leaders	206
9. Backslider and Exclusion	207
10. Water Baptism	208
11. Bazaar Preaching	211

12. Charity Work and Social Concern	212
13. Church Activity and Program	213
14. Church Growth	215
15. Church Building	216
16. Evangelism	218
17. Support	222
18. Friendship	224
19. School	226
20. Religion of Poor and Outcasts	227
21. Leadership Quality	228
22. Language and Literature	231
23. Poverty and Faithfulness	233
24. Denominationalism	235
25. Missions is Mandatory	237
26. Village Leader	238
27. Discipleship	239
28. Power of Holy Spirit	240
29. Unity	242
30. Association and Convention	243
31. Dignities, Credibility and Character of Leaders	245
32. Christian Suffering	246
33. Correspondence and Communication	248
34. Transportation and Traveling	249
35. Written Record	250
36. Understanding	251
37. Donation and Offering	252
38. Participation and Cooperation	253
49. Meeting and Fellowship	254
40. Jealousy and Selfishness	255
41. Dictatorial Control	256
42. Pride	257
43. Responsibility	258
44. Bible Reading and Bible Study	259
45. Prayer Life	260
46. Training	261
47. Praise and Worship	262
48. Christian Literature	263
49. Translation and Publication	264
50. Audio-visual Production	265
51. Spiritual Revival	266
52. Theological Seminary	267

CHAPTER SEVEN	270
CONCLUSION	
Eastern Shan State	270
Southern Shan State	270
Northern Shan State	270
Summary	271
Hope for the Future Shan Missions	271
Words of Thanks	274
APPENDIX	275
BIOGRAPHY	275
Moses Homan Bixby (1827-1901)	275
Josiah Nelson Cushing (1840-1905)	276
Ellen Winsor (Mrs. Cushing)	278
Kham Maung (1881-1976)	279
Ai Pan (1897-1980)	280
Sai Stephen (1953-2000)	281
Sai Htwe Maung	282
Corresponding Letters and Reports regarding Shan Mission Work (1978-2001)	283
1978-1980	283
1981-1983	290
1984-1986	295
1987-1989	302
1990-1992	303
1993-1995	309
1996-1998	319
1999-2001	351
Asian Reports	368
Asian Report 1987 Nov/Dec	369
Asian Report 1990 July	371
Asian Report 1993 Mar/Apr	372
Asian Report 1993 Nov/Dec	373
Asian Report 1994 Feb	375
Asian Report 1995 May/June	376
Asian Report 1996 Mar/Apr	378
Asian Report 1998 May/June	380
Asian Report 1998 Easter	380
Asian Report 1998 Nov/Dec	380
Asian Report 1999 Jan/Feb	381
Asian Report 1999 Mar/Apr	381
Asian Report 1999 May/June	383
Asian Report 1999 Sep/Oct	383
Asian Report 1999 Nov/Dec	383
Asian Report 2000 Jan/Feb	385
Asian Report 2000 May/June	386
Asian Report 2000 July/Aug	386
Asian Report 2000 Nov/Dec	387

Special Report 2001 Feb	387
Asian Report 2001 Mar/Apr	388
Special Report 2001 Apr/May	389
Special Report 2001 Apr	390
Special Report 2001 May	392
Special Report 2001 June	393
Asian Report 2001 Jul/Aug	394
Foreign and other Nationals who served as Missionaries to the Shan	395
Foreign and other Nationals who served as Medical Missionaries	396
Mission Stations for the Shan	396
R.I.P	397
REFERENCES AND SOURCES	399
INDEX	401