

## Shan New Year

“The New Year” means the time, that previous year had past and a new year has restarted. A year can be determined because there are calendars or calculation. The Shan has also a calendar since ancient days. It was called “Parg-yiem-wan”, meaning “a pattern to examine”.

Our people had known for a long time. That the New Year is after the water festival, that was in the fifth month of the Shan calendar. So, some were puzzled, why the new year would fall on the fifth month and why there are two new year in a single year. Actually “the new year” in the fifth month, after the water festival it the “Buddhist New Year” which the Shans accepted with their religion. The “Lern Seign” the first month, is the true Shan New Year according to the Shan Calendar.

According to the old writing, there are three reasons about this existence of the Shan year.

The Shan Kingdom of “Muang Mao or Murng-mao” was founded in 94 BC, which was the 450 Buddhist Era. The “Muang Mao” was also known as “Sueng Mong Keng Wi” or “Mong Long Poong Tai”. And the Shan year was reinstated since that time.

So, the Shan year (Pi Tai) was based on the 450 BE.

There for the year	BE – 450
e.g.	BE 2554 (in 2009) – 450 = Tai Era 2104 (in 2009-2010)

As Buddha's Era, and this “Pi Mong” was widely used in most Tai groups. It is also used in Burma, and was also known as Koja or Burmese Era. So, the Shans had two calendars, the Shan and the “Pi Mong or Koja” in which the latter was more commonly used.

The “Pi Mong” was the based on the old year in the Indian calendar, but due to the astrologer’s foretold the future of the state, the year was revised down or adjusted down and restarted.

(1) Before the Buddha’s Era, “King Anjana” the king of Devadaha in Sharkya clan, subtracted 6845 from the ancient year (Kaliyuga Era) 6847, leaving “2” which renew up to the year of 148, Tuesday, the sixth full moon day, the Lord expired and entered “Nirvana”. And was called the great year (Maha year).

(2) Three months after the Lord “Gautama” had entered “Nirvana”; King “Ajatasatthu” re-established the Calendar. The year was counted “1” which was the year of the Buddha’s Era. In the [Buddha] year “424” the King "Sriraja" of “Srikhettra” tried to re-establish, but failed without the participation of the people.

(3) In the year of “624” BE. King “Sumundri” of “Srikhettra” re-establish the calendar, leaving “2” to start. And also was called Kovinda year or the great koja year.

(4) Then after the year reached 562, King “Pupa Saw Rahan” of “Pagan or Pookam kingdom” subtracted 560 leaving “2”. It was from this 2<sup>nd</sup> year which is now reached 1370 [in 2008 CE.] and was also known as the Burmese Era. And some where was known as Koja year or some as cula year.

This abstraction and re-instituting of the calendar had occurred, due to one of these facts.

- (1) According to the Prophecies.
- (2) When there were bad weathers, drought or flood, or destruction by pests, which resulted in famine.
- (3) The King simply wants to show his might and generosity to his subjects.

The king, who had abstracted and reinstutes the calendar, was usually expired within that year. They had to sacrifice their lives, for the goodness of their people.

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## **The New Year Festival**

According to the Shan Calendar the New Year is the first day of the “Lurn Seing – the first month”. To hold a ceremony or festival are base on their wealthiness. But however at least the traditional ways should be preserved.

### **The New Year Eve**

The New Year eve was the last day, the full waxing moon day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. It was called “Hup Seing” to welcome the 1<sup>st</sup> month “Lurn Seing”.

On the last day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month they get up early and make good deeds according to their religion. The Buddhist get up early, pay offering and homage, pray for good health and longevity. Share their merits for all living beings.

When a festival was to be hold, all the people join in the paying homage and offering in the monastery or the fair ground.

In the afternoon, they prepare traditional foods for the night, which was donated by all the folks in the communities. The old folks had to teach and lead the young generation not to forget the traditional ways. Learn to love and help each others. There was old saying “When someone is building a house, at least you must help a thatch and when someone is cultivating at least you must help in planting seedlings” Taught the Shan to have a team spirit.

In this night the old folks tell stories for the young about the past by reading in the old scripts, to love their nation, own culture, own literature and taught to be brave and useful to his own kins. The traditional ways about the new year, about the calendar, the tattooing and the traditional way of the Shans.

As it was the time of cold season, they build fire, to keep them warm until midnight, keep singing and dancing in welcoming the New Year.

### **The New Year Day**

In the New Year morning, people made good deeds due to their Religion and for the Buddhist, they offered foods from the new harvest,

to the lord Buddha and monks in the monastery. The monks must teach their disciple to preserve the old traditional ways.

A feast was serving for all the people. The traditional competition to preserve the old ways was held.

1. In literature – written poem, songs, etc.
2. Culture – the traditional handicraft, weaving, clay ware, paper etc.
3. Foods – cooking traditional foods.
4. Music and dances – martial arts, and other dances like Tow and Kinari.
5. Competition in traditional dresses and
6. Traditional sport.

The traditional ways, sports and games will be preserve and known to the younger generation. Competition in this New Year day was called “Lurn Seing” or “Lurn Ai”.

If the festival was held for three days, the final day will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the New Year. The final day was called “Som Sur Pi Mai” or joyful New Year, in which a feast was also given to everybody. Prayed to have peace and prosperity in the following New Year.

[Reference : Lung Khun Maha, Murg Yai: Khur Sen, Ton Ti (Taung-gyi) and Myanmar Soi Song Kyarn.]

## Sao Yawd Serk, Chairman of Restoration Council of Shan State Addresses a Speech on Shan New Year 2104

On this Shan New Year 2104, I would like to pray for all of our people who live both inside and outside of the Shan State for enjoying peace and progress.

The previous year has passed and the New Year has started. Last year, Our Shan state people have suffered from the Burmese inhuman actions such as losing properties and villages, which burned down by the Burmese Army. The Burmese Army and together with the traitors, have burned down villages. We are deeply felt sorry and touch by the people's plight. Because of the long decades of Burmese invasion and oppression, our people were not able to live peacefully, trade freely and do not have enough time to make a living. As consequence, thousands have fled to the neighboring country, Thailand for survivals and work as cheap laborers.

Many times and many of them were cheated and did not receive any payment from the employers. At the same time, Thai police arrested and deported them under the charge of illegal working. As long as, we cannot maintain peace and regain our country, our people would continue to suffer and live in the darkness. People eagerly want to know when we will gain independence.

Some turns to their relatives who have already settled in Thailand, with a hope of asking for assistance. Instead of helping each other, they were cheated, sold and exploited by their relatives. This should not happen and should refrain from doing so as it is worse than the ill-treatment that was



punished by the enemy. We must help each other when facing with difficulties. Since we do not have sovereignty power, we could not develop our country and ease the people hardship and it will continue.

It is not a surprise that the Burmese regime does not develop our country and improve the living condition for our people. It is because we are not the Burmese people. Currently, the Burmese troops are all over Shan State, how we will regain our country. It is true that the Burmese troops all over Shan State but there are ways to beat them. Therefore, for your consideration and analysis, I raised the following points:

1. To restore our Shan State is totally depends on the wills of its people. The Vietnamese people had defeated the powerful French and American armies. It is because they had strong wills and unity. The Shan State people are no different. If we are united and responsible to the assigned tasks, we will definitely defeat the Burmese Army. We should realize that it is the duty of the Burmese troops to oppress, kill and burn down our villages. This is because the Shan State people are their enemy. On the opposite, it is strange that the Shan State people are not united in the fights against the Burmese Army but make their own escapes. Making an own escape imply that the Shans do not love their nation and country. For instance, when the Burmese Army oppresses and launches attacks in some area, some Shan who live on the other parts of the area do not come to assist but prefer to wait and see. They forget that they will be the next target. Worse than that, some Shan State people embrace the Burmese Army as friends. This interprets the Shan State people do not know its national enemy. Therefore, knowing the enemy is the first important step and then builds a unity and map out the political strategies for protecting our country. After knowing our enemy, we must reorganize those who sided, married, made businesses with the Burmese Army. Addition to that, we must reorganize the splitting groups to be back into the fold. We must clean out the traitors, political opportunists and exploiters who have oppressed our people. They are one of the obstacles that have delayed the resistance movement.
2. Resisting against the Burmese Army has existed for decades and we have built several unities. Many times, our unities broke up. Moreover, we still do not have the strength to expel the Burmese troops from Shan State. People might want ask why. Of course, some people have already known the answer. The simple answer is due to the lack of unity, disagreements, disputes and self-interest. Due to

one of these points, some individual leaders broke up with the mother organization and surrendered to the Burmese Army. And they came back with the enemy to fight with the remaining ones. It is surprising, anytime the break-up happened; the splitting group was led by some individual students, educated persons and intellectuals. Besides, no one emerge with a stronger army after breaking up. Some even turned their guns to the once-supported people after they surrendered and some leaders even do not realize that they are sucking and exploiting on the people's sweat and blood. Yes, there are also some deserters who were from rural areas but very few of them. 2-3 rural fighters deserted to the enemy but they never come back to hurt the mother organization, it might be because of their education and knowledge. In this long resistance, whether it is the break-ups amongst the Shans or the fights against the Burmese Army, the most effective people are the people in rural areas. As I myself have brought up from a rural area, I fully understand the rural life and their feelings. At this point, I would like urge the educated people and the Sao Phas' (princes) kin that whether we lose or win in fights of political and restoring the state, both are your reputation and image. Therefore, the educated people should be united in the service of the national task. Daily, our people have shed its tear and cried like an infant who has lost its mother. There are many educated people but it is important to ask where they are and what they are doing. The young generation should study and analyze the wrongs and rights of the history and learn from the mistakes. Education without wisdom is meaningless. Without wisdom, we would not be able to fight our enemy in the future. Therefore, I would like to encourage the young generation to be a force for our nation and not to become a child who loses the opportunity.

3. The SPDC has planned to transform all cease-fire groups into Border Guard Forces (BGF) that comprise of 30 Burmese Army officers who will be in charge of commands. It is not good news for our nation. The ceasefire leaders used to claim that making ceasefire is an attempt to solve the political conflicts through the political means and they did not want to continue to fight in order avoid the unnecessary casualties to the people. However, the claims and expectation did not match and failed to materialize. It has been over 20 years for the ceasefire. They cannot discuss and solve the political conflicts as the Burmese regime plays with the time. Finally, the Burmese Army demands them to transform into Border Guard Force,