

Interview with Sara Yaw Shu (Joshua) Chin¹

96 years old, co-inventor of the Wa alphabet and long-time Wa Baptist Church leader

27 February 2006, by Martin

At his house, 24 Byuha Road, Ward 1 Lashio, Northern Shan State

Born on 17 October 1910 in Yang Na Hat Village, Lancang, Yunnan.

Christened by William Marcus Young

1920 Started attending school in Banna Village, Yunnan,

1920-1928 Studied seven years of primary education

1929 Began Bible study

1930 Went to teach in Ang Grag Village, Lancang; began to work with Vincent Young, son of William Marcus Young, working to devise a Wa alphabet

1931 Completed work on the alphabet and started on a hymn book

1932 Completed hymnal (Western songs translated into Wa), took the book to Rangoon.

1934-1950, After William Marcus Young had returned to the United States in 1933, Sara Yaw Shu went to work in Banna 16 years. Began work on the Wa New Testament in that year (from the King Jame's Version of the Bible).

1938 Completed New Testament

1953-1971 Starting on 20 May 1953, when he, Vincent Young and others left Kengtung for Mong Mau, traveling for 16 days on horseback.

1971 When the Communist Party of Burma entered Mong Mao, they left on foot, arriving in Hopong after 6 days

1972 (approximately) Moved to Lashio where he continues to live.

1990s: Active in Lashio Wa Baptist Church, but also has visited Wa Region, including twice to Pang Kham, where he met Chairman Bao twice, going to his house and that of one of Bao's daughters who is a Christian. He prayed for them both on each occasion. In one area in Pang Kham there is a Wa village of about 60 households, on the road to the border bridge.

Attended a training course by the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Chiang Mai from 1994-1996. Achan Moses was one of the instructors.

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: These events occurred long, long ago at the time of a Chinese chief named Khung Ming Sang. When the Wa people were preparing to plant their crops, they went looking for paddy seeds to cultivate among the Chinese villages. When they looked for this, Wa were given seeds that had been cooked for rice wine and sun dried. When the time came for sowing and the Wa sowed the seeds they had got from the Chinese, none sprouted. Then, they went for the second time to the Chinese Chief to ask for good seeds. They said, "Chief, the seeds you gave us did not sprout when we put them in the ground." The Chinese leader at that time wanted to limit the power of the Wa who then were very powerful and numerous with their own Chief and Leaders. The Chinese Leader said, "Ah, this time, you should cut somebody's head off and offer it to the Spirit. Sow the seeds again." But that time they gave good (uncooked) seeds to the Wa and told them, "every time before you sow paddy seeds you must cut some people's heads off and offer them to the Spirits. The Wa did not know anything after that. They thought that they could not live without eating. So the Wa would then cut somebody's head off and offer it to the Spirit. When they planted the seeds, they found that the seed sprouted.

Martin: Because at that time they were given good seeds. Right?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Seeds will sprout not whether someone's head is cut off or not but whether they are good seeds. Henceforth, the Wa cut somebody's head off to offer to the Spirit before they sowed paddy seeds and always found that the seeds sprouted. They decided that they had to do this ever since. So they continued to cut off someone's head to offer to the Spirit whenever they sowed paddy seeds. When the sowing season came, the

¹ The interview was conducted in Wa and Lahu by Martin Samtan, of Lashio, who translated it into English. This was edited by Joe Rickson and Ronald D. Renard, Khun Lu, of Hopong, checked the Wa spellings and place names.

Wa went out to look for heads to cut and offer to the Spirit. The Wa, in Ngim Tau and Ngim Neu villages, where your uncle lives, was not so long ago a thick forest where they cut off people's heads for Spirit offering. The headhunters stayed in that forest looking for heads to hunt. That place is called Can Kap and it is where your uncle is living.

Martin: When was it?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Oh, it was long, long ago already.

Martin: Did you exactly know when it started? How long ago did Khung Ming Sang live?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: It was before the time of the Chinese Chief. When you asked about the Chinese, you will know the time of Khung Ming Sang, it was before the founding of the United States of America. Even young Chinese will not know; only old Chinese people will. We also know only the name and but do not know the time exactly. So henceforth, the Wa people cut or hunted for heads until the BCP (Burma Communist Party) entered the Wa State only about 20 years ago.

Martin: Yes, it was not so long.

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes, after the Kuomintang and then the BCP came into the Wa State, headhunting disappeared. Before that, like in 1953, when we lived in Mong Mau, there was still headhunting. Headhunting was completely stopped only after the peace-making between the Wa Authority and the Burmese Government.

Martin: Was there headhunting everywhere in Wa State? Was there any place where there was no headhunting?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin No, not everywhere was there headhunting. There was no headhunting close to China. However, the people living in the heart of the Wa Region practiced headhunting. The Wa living near to China were unable to practice this because people who hunted heads were killed by the Chinese government. There was no headhunting in Man Ton or Man Toe (presently inside Chinese), in the south part of Wa Region close to Burmese and Shan territory, like Man Ton, Kang Seu² and on the way to Man Leen, there was no headhunting either. But it was practiced in the northern part of Loi Leen (Naw Kham Oo³). They practiced headhunting because they did not know the real meaning and nature of agriculture and because of their ignorance. They were mistaken because they were victims of others' deceit and cheating. This decreased our (Wa) power. At that time the Wa were so powerful that even big cities were ruled by the Wa. The Chinese refer to Mandalay as Wa Cheeng. Nearby is Inwa (Ava) and that name shows that the Wa were there.

The Wa also lived here in Lax Shio which is now called Lashio. People say that a long time ago, there were four sons of a Wa Chief. These were Ai Man Seeng, Nyi Mang Van, Sam Yawt Tax, and Sai Man Khri. Ai Man Seeng lived in the heart of the Wa Region and he ruled it all. Nyi Mang Van lived in Pang Long, which was in Pang Khawng (called at

² Kang Seu is the name of the area governed by the Man Ton Chieftain one of the most prominent Wa leaders in the past.

³ Naw Kham Oo was a Wa chieftain in the late-nineteenth century known to the early British officials, such as James George Scott, who came to the Wa Region. Perhaps through Chinese influence, the term is mispronounced now as Nam Kham Wu, and is a township in Wein Kao District, north of Pang Kham and on the China border.

that time Meung Pang Khawn). The later Pang Long Chiefs were his descendants. Sam Yawt Tax was in the place where you are living (around Mang Leun). Sai Man Khri lived in Sien Vi (Theinni, Hsenwi). The fourth one, Sai Man Khri, received offerings of a bunch of bananas because there was nothing else, such as bread, to offer. Each family came to offer him one bunch until they had given a total of 100,000 bunches. These were only from within in his region. What now we are calling (Sien Vi, i.e. Theinni or Hsenwi) is a Shan term 100,000 bunches. In Shan, *vi* means a bunch of banana [and *hsen* means 100,000).

Martin: Were those people who came to offer these bananas Lahu or were there also Wa?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin Those were all mixed, Wa, Lahu and Shan. He ruled them all at that time.

Martin: Do you know what time this was?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin No, I do not know the exact time, but it was long ago. But after that time, because there were many Shan living in the area, these sons and daughters of the Wa chiefs married Shan people. They started speaking mostly Shan until, after three to four generations, these Wa began to assimilate completely into Shan culture. That Chief of Pang Long (Mong Pang Khawn) was the second one.

Sara Yaw Shu Chin The actual tradition of the Wa is like this: when Wa get sick, since they do not have doctors, they call for a *Tax Cao Jhai* (spirit healer) and kill a chicken to see the situation of those patient by performing a ritual called *seet si ang ia* in Wa. If the *Tax Cao Jhai*, says to kill a chicken, they will do so or if he says to kill an animal with four legs, they have to do so, they will do as instructed. The killing of these animals depends on the situation as explained by the *Tax Cao Jhai*. He might call for killing a chicken or a buffalo, depending on the situation. If the condition of the patient is not serious, they might sacrifice a chicken but if is worse, they will have to kill a pig a cow, or even a buffalo. If they do not own any of these animals, they will have to borrow one from a relative and follow the instructions of the *Tax Cao Jhai*. This is because they want to be cured from their suffering according to their beliefs. Sometimes they were cured, but sometimes not. There was no guarantee.

It is also important for them to kill a buffalo once a year to offer to their Spirit in their shrine (*Nyiex Moeg*). In making this offering to the Spirit, they do not simply choose any buffalo. They select the best of the best buffalos based on a combination of preferred characteristics including a fair complexion, good skin horns, and hair. They refer to this kind of animal as *mhawm khuan*, *mhawm hauk mai*; *pa loig* in Wa, meaning the purest with no flaws. When the correct time comes, they sacrifice the buffalo at a post they call *khaox si gang* in Wa. Then they make an offering of the buffalo's blood and offer a piece of buffalo meat and skin at the *khaox si gang*⁴.

In my preaching, there is no purest, or the best of the best (*pa mhawm*, *pa loig*) on earth; there is only Jesus Christ. Before you Wa used this *khaox si gang* but now we use the Cross on which Jesus died. Moreover the thing that these Wa are doing is a sign of this Cross. I preach this to the leaders of the Wa and mentioned also that the purest (*pa loik*) is Jesus alone. He has no sins, and he died on the Cross for us to be free form our own sins

⁴ A post in the shape of a "Y" planted in the ground and held sacred by the Wa.

and sufferings. He washed away our sins with his blood. The things that you do--killing chickens and looking at the bones of that chicken is the same as injecting medicine with a small syringe I always bring one with me. I tell them that the things that they do with chickens has the same effect of injecting medicine with a small syringe. Killing buffalos and cattle is the same as injecting medicine with bigger syringe. I explained to them, now, this time, you do not need to do this because if you get sick you should get a real injection. In this way I show them these two syringes I take with me. If I insert medicine and inject, you will be cured. In the past they did not have any chemical medicine. But they did know how to use herbal medicine from the forest when they get sick. They know how to use these herbal medicines properly for headache and even when they suffered from malaria. They knew about three kinds of bark and herbs for malaria. We cannot find these kinds of medicine in the town; they can only be found in the forest. Whenever the Wa get sick, they use only these kinds of herbal medicine.

Martin: Where did you go to preach?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I went to preach in Meung Tong, Mong Sak from Kengtung district, Chiang Lap, Par Liao near the Mekong River and in the Mong Yawng area.

Martin: Were you preaching only to Wa people or to other ethnic groups?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I also preached to other ethnic groups such as Lahu, Akha and Shan. To the Wa I preached in the heart of the Wa Region which is now in China. In Khar Pheux, north of Kengtung, I preached in Sam Tao where Bulang (called Palang in Wa), a kind of Wa live and also in places where the Ehn [En] people lived. These are the people we call Wa Keut, which means those left behind (*cub pa plok tix ih: tam*). I also preached to the Wa and Lahu people from Banna and Mong Liam (Kaung Liam in Wa) where they majority is Wa. I preached in areas where many Wa people live in Man Tong, Man Toe, Phin Kyan, Man Nawng, Khe Khu, Man Lhim, Man Ton Yaong Kwax, Mon Ton Yaong Rung, Ang Khang, and Nawng Plawx under the governance of Yaong Soi.⁵ From south of Kokang down to Mong Mau and over to the Salween River, I preached to many people.

This place was also inhabited by the Wa from the beginning. The first people to live in Burma were also Wa. The origin of the Wa is the same as those from Mongolia and Tibet. The Wa and Lahu also come from the same place of origin. There were two groups of Wa who left this place of origin. One group went along the Irrawaddy to the south and arrived in Wa Cheeng (now called Mandalay). If you know Chinese, you will know that Wa Cheeng means the city of the Wa. In the past, Shan also referred to a place there as Veing Ava. The Burmese called it Innwa. When the British came to rule Burma, there was also written evidence clearly referring to the city of the Wa (Veing Ava). I also saw in writing, references to this City of the Wa (Veing Ava). Later, it was removed.

Martin: When did you see this?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I saw it 1941-1942 when the English were driven out by the Japanese when they entered Burma. All American missionaries went back to their country at that time also.

Martin: What are the most remarkable Wa traditions?

⁵ A tribe of the Wa known as the Ai Soi live in this area.

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: When an adult boy wants to get married to an adult girl, (*tax cao car, aix kar phie ve*) the parents and friends from that adult boy's side go to the girl's home to arrange the engagement and then decide the appropriate day for the ceremony. When the time comes, they kill pigs and chicken and celebrate. Usually they celebrate the wedding for two days, one day for man's side and one day for woman's side. They might celebrate for more than two days if they are sufficiently wealthy.

Martin: When you were younger, how did Wa people became rich? What are the reasons or business that made them rich? And what did they cultivate to make a living?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Most of Wa lived by shifting cultivating and growing various kinds of paddy rice in the lowlands. They also cultivate *sawng* (corn), *abie, koi* (millet), *siphiex* (corn), and *khawx* (finger millet)⁶, throughout the Wa Region. They ate fruit and other things from their crops.

Martin: In which part of Wa region do they cultivate lowland wet-rice the most?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: They developed the lowlands for paddy cultivation wherever there are available water sources; mostly this was in the plains.

Martin: Where do they have most?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: We can see the most paddy land in Man Ton and Man Toe within the Wa Region, which is now in China. But if we come to this side, because there are so many mountains we cannot see much paddy. But almost everywhere we can find small paddy fields. In making their livelihood, since Wa people were cultivating opium long ago, some Wa made money by opium trading. Others did well buying and selling buffaloes and cattle.

Martin: Was there any other business like mining and trading jewelry?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There was no mining directly done by Wa, but they let Chinese people perform mining activities. Chinese had done mining in Cin Chan from Pang Long and in Pang Khawn and at the gold mine in Pan Kawx. They also did some mining in Mong Mau where some traces can be still seen.

Martin: Did they get permission from Wa leaders at that time?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No, some did not get permission from the Wa leaders but others did. At that time the Wa leaders had many weapons, but some Chinese were not afraid and came to mine without paying attention to the leaders. Wa leaders had at that time only flintlocks, spades and other hand tools. They did not have any machine guns. They come to possess them only after the BCP came into the Wa Region. This business was done by some rich Wa people. For the poor people, they engaged in small trading, such as selling and buying pigs, chicken, vegetables and some herbal medicines in the market on market day. Rich people, as I said, traded in opium, buffalos, and cattle. But the price of opium was not as high as at present. The price of a viss (1.6 kilograms) of opium was 300-400 kyat. But now it is 300,000-400,000 kyat per viss (US\$250-335).

⁶ The Wa brew a popular kind of beer from finger millet.

Martin: Concerning religion, how did the Wa people convert from their traditional spirit worship to Christianity or Buddhism or other religions? What changes, improvements, or developments occurred in their lives?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I will tell you about my experiences after I became a missionary for the Wa. It was about then that the Wa started becoming Christian which followed upon William Marcus Young's move to Banna and Kengtung. In 1909, some Lahu and Wa started a mission center with a celebration in Nawng Phar in Kengtung. William Marcus Young lived in Kengtung for 15 years when a new missionary, Mr. Telford, arrived there. Then he returned to America and lived there for three years. After that he came back to the Wa Region but did not go to Kengtung. He returned to Wa State through Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Yunnan. After arriving in Kunming, he proceeded to Simao, Pu-er and then to Sipsong Panna from where he went to Mong Liam. He tried to start a mission there for the second one, but was not given permission to do so by the local leader called Khun Haw Kham.

Then he went to Banna, which is about five hours walks from the Chinese border, where he had visited while he was in Kengtung as missionary. He called for some Christians from Mong Liam to join him. They celebrated and started the second mission in that place. Later, he did a third Christian fellowship celebration in Swan Kyan Shin in Shan Kai Shin Township. He called again for some Chinese and Lahu to come from Mi Chax and he tried to get his son Vincent Young to work at that place. In 1935, he built a Church in Pang Yang but that was all destroyed in the war with Japanese and very few Lahu live there. But the Church in Shan Kai Shin is still standing and some Lahu stay and worship there.

Martin: Can you tell me about yourself and some of your experiences in Wa State?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes, I will tell you about myself and some of my experience in Wa State. I was born in the Nawng Phar mission in Kengtung. My mother was Lahu named Nar Ngiex and my father was Sara Nyi Rong and he was Wa. They studied together under Reverend William Marcus Young and got married. He was born in Kengtung Township. I had two elder brothers but they passed away at a young age. One month after I was born, my mother, Sarama Nar Ngiex, took a chicken and went to Reverend William Marcus Young to explain that she had two sons but both of them had passed away. This time she said that she had come to ask him to pray for her third born son and bless him so that he might have a long life and be able to do mission work. He read from the Old Testament and replied to my mother that her son's name must be Joshua who was a second Moses and a leader of Israel. Reverend William Marcus Young also prayed over me that I might be a leader one day and name me Joshua.

I lived in Nawng Pha in Kengtung Township with my parents until they were called by Reverend William Marcus Young to be pastors in Shan Kyan village in China. He lived in that village until I was ten years old age helping his parents to do domestic work. When I was eleven years old, an American Baptist Mission began work in Banna and in Kengtung. I studied in the mission school up to grade seven in eight years. At that time I was already 19 years old, Reverend William Marcus Young had me study the Bible for one year in 1929. In the year 1930 he sent me to be a teacher in one of the Wa village in Ang Khrag. I taught 80 students, both boys and girls, in the village. I stayed there as a teacher for three years until mid-1933. After that I went back to the Banna mission

compound and got married to Sarama Nar Khar Bo. I went back Banna again until the end of that year. At the end of that year, Reverend William Marcus Young and his wife called us back to stay in the mission compound at Shan Kai Shin, Meeng Meeng (Si blaung) (known as Swan Kyan Shin, in Chinese). I stayed there with Saya Lao Ta and Saya Lao Lo. The Reverend William Marcus Young came to stay with us there too. We built four houses and lived there until 1934. At that time Reverend William Marcus Young went back to America. Since nobody was there to look after this mission compound, Saya Lao Ta, Saya Lao Lo, Mr. Vincent Young and I went back to Banna in 1934 and started doing working on a Wa alphabet. At that time there was no Wa alphabet; instead they used Lahu and Shan scripts. Since they knew Shan, Wa, Lahu and Chinese, Vincent Young called them and led them in translating the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, John, Luke and the Acts of the Apostle into Wa since 1930.

Each of these five books was translated by one person. In the winter and dry season, they preached the Gospel to the villagers and in the rainy season they taught Wa reading and writing as well as Lahu. I took responsibility for education and Reverend Vincent Young handled missionary activities. I had the responsibility to revise and teach to the students from 6-8 in the morning and again at 4-6 in evening. I used most of my time in teaching and revising the Wa Bible and other writings. We drafted and then edited 27 books of the Wa New Testament from the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans to the book of Revelations in 1934. From 1930 to 1938 we devised a complete script and translated the entire New Testament into Wa. This is still being used now.

In 1950, after members of the Kuomintang Party, came to the Banna mission compound, the Reverend Vincent Young and all the local leaders went back to Nawng Phar in Kengtung. They had to celebrate Christmas on the way back and they arrived at Kengtung only at the end of the year. I stayed in Kengtung up to the year 1952. In 1953, with Saya Aik Sang, Saya Ah Wu, Saya Ciet Rong, and Saya Bodder (a Karen) we went to Mong Mau and started a mission with five existing Christian households. Since they did not have a school compound yet, these five Christian households came and killed a pig and joyfully celebrated. Then they helped build a mission compound. All the villagers happily celebrated the opening of the mission compound but the school for the boarding children was not built yet. After a discussion with some leaders from Mong Mau, and with their permission and encouragement, they built a school within a week in May of that year. I could open the school with 60 students on 1 June of that year. Burmese was taught by Saya Bodder, Wa literature was taught by Saya Aik Sang and Saya Ciet Rong and I taught Bible. Saya Ah Wu was in charge of medicine and looked after the patients. We started working there from 20 May 1953 and continued until 1971 when Mong Mau was attacked by the Burma Communist Party. In 1971 we went to Lashio where we have been working up to now. As the result of that stay in Mong Mau, 30 headhunting villages converted to Christianity. Most of the villages were from Pang Vai, (Sao Pha). All the people from Ta Kang Neu (Tan Bar) and Yaong Ting village also became Christian. There were another 45-50 households of traditional worshippers who became Christian. When the BCP came into this place, some Wa fled to Lashio. Some of these Wa went to stay in Namt Ma, Man Pen, Ho Peek and Loi Tawx villages. I stayed and worked as a leader of the Wa Baptist Church in Lashio. I have now been working as Wa Baptist Pastor since 1930, 76 years of service. This is my life--working with Baptist Christian as a pastor.

Martin: Where did the Wa headhunting people live and where did the others live?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Most Wa did headhunting in the past and they lived in the place where they ruled.

Martin: Where did they live the most?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were mostly in the hills of Sha Kang Neu and up to the Chinese border at Lar Bar and Ban Veng. Another region where they lived was around Yaong Leen, Yaong Maw, Kawn Prawx, Kawn Cawx and Kawn Rao, which is now called Ai Cheung. Also there was Kawn Mau⁷, and the northwest of Loi Leen (Naw Kham Oo) in Long Larp Seing⁸.

Martin: Were there Wa headhunters in China?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No, Wa people living in China did not do hunting.

Martin: Did they do headhunting before?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No, moreover, the Wa who had immigrated to China did not practice it any more. This was because some Wa from this Wa area went to China where they stopped headhunting. People from Tar Ban Hai, (known in Tar Kang Neu in Chinese), were the most terrible. But some of them did not hunt heads when they went to live with the non-headhunting Wa.

Martin: Where did these Wa who did not practice headhunting live?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were many Wa who were not headhunters. Some were from people from Man Ton and Man Toe. But some from Yaong Soi did headhunting. These were the people in Nar Mart and Yaong Shaw in the Yaong Soi Region. These are Ai Soi people.

Martin: How did the non-headhunters make a living?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The same as all the other people do. They lived by cultivating wet rice, terraced rice while some people did shifting cultivation. The livelihood activities were the same for the headhunters and the non-headhunters.

Martin: What traditions did the non-headhunters practice?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: It was the same as now. They just worshipped the spirits.

Martin: Did missionaries go work with them and where did they go for education?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were no Wa headhunters living in the northeast, which is now in China and where my father was born. They did not have the Christian Cross at that time. Some headhunting Wa moved to Lahu places and Wa areas where there was no headhunting.

⁷ Known today as Ying Phan, a Chinese term meaning "silver."

⁸ Long Larp Seing is in Naung Khit Township, on the way from Naung Khit to Ling Haw Township.

Martin: Who were more numerous, those who practiced headhunting or those who did not?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were more headhunters. Since they were densely settled, nobody dared go to their place. No Chinese or Burmese went to their region. Although they were in control of their own region, there was no one overall leader. They had their own separate group leaders.

Martin: Did these two groups live together and did they visit each other?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No, they dared not visit each other. But some Wa headhunters visited non-headhunters but not the reverse because they were afraid of them. There were particular groups who did the headhunting. For example, the Wa Leen did not hunt people in their own group. The Wa Leen only hunted other types of Wa, such as the Wa Maw. Similarly, people from Kawn Prawx only hunted other people's heads, not those of their own group.

Martin: Did Japanese come to the Wa Region during the Second World War?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The Japanese only went to Mong Mau, in the north. They did not go to other parts of the Wa Region. They did not get to Loi Leen (Naw Kham Oo. Nor did they go to Pang Yang in the south. The reason why they went to Mong Mau was because there were Chinese Kuomintang soldiers there at the time. They did not go elsewhere. They did not even reach Kawn Mau (Ying Phan, as it is known in Chinese). They also went to Pang Long. In Mong Mau, there were not there very long and retreated after a few days.

Martin: When the Japanese went to the Wa Region, was there fighting between the Wa and the Japanese? If not, was there peace between them?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There was a bit of fighting in the beginning. But they did not go to the villages because of the thick forest and steep topography. Moreover, the Japanese did not burn villages or destroy things. They only went to some places in the Region, not everywhere. They did not get to areas like Sha Kang Neu, Man Ton, Man Toe or Yunan Seung to fight with Chinese.

Martin: Can you talk about the Wa missionary work?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I spent two years in Yang Gong [Rangoon]. The first missionary was Dr. U Ba Min and the second was me. At that time I did not know Burmese very well. But he said, since you are working with various groups and there are Lahu, Kachin and Shan Christian groups, there was no Wa group. So it was suggested that there should be a Wa group and that Saya Joshua should be the leader to take care of those Wa Christians. They also said, since Saya Joshua was one of the group who had invented the Wa alphabet, he should be responsible for the Wa mission and they handed me some programs. There were annual meetings. I went back to my native place once a year to see my mother. Throughout this time I stayed in Banna, Mong Mong and Kengtung. I stayed for three years in Kengtung from 1950-1952, and then in the Banna mission compound for 15 years as Pastor. In the beginning of my pastorate my first station was in Ang Khat for three years. Then I transferred to Mong Mongo, where I stayed for one year. After that I was transferred to Banna for 15 years and then went to Kengtung for three years.

Then in 1971 I went to Lashio where I have stayed until now. Altogether I have spent 76 years in mission activities. Since 1930 in my missionary work, I have published some hymn books in Wa and some magazines in Wa but some are already lost. At present we have only the book of Psalms, the New Testament and a hymn book. We are using them still.

Martin: How many types of Wa do we have in the whole Wa region?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There are two main types of Wa, Wa Leen and Wa Maw. There are also many small groups, maybe 20-30 within the Wa Leen. There are also many types of Wa Maw. The Tax Cao Tie and the Pang Long Sawbwaw are a group of Wa Maw called Kawn Prawx. People from Yaong Raok and Nar Tant Loi Ngeen are Wa Leen. I am also Wa Leen. In all, there are about 50 types of Wa. They all are called Wa.

Under the Wa, there are particular traditions in each area. They vary from one place to another and also within the group itself. For example, in Yaong Reek (Shin Kai Neung) there are four types of tradition. The Yaong Reek where Khun Nyi lives has one kind. The Yaong Noon, where a person called Sam Khun from Pang Long lives, has another. Law Ta is Tawie Long and Si Gang Riex is Namt Liex. For example, how they perform healing rituals, funerals, marriages and engagements differs. The Paox Miex (known in Wa as Sum Ka Paox) have different cultures and traditions. If someone goes to become engaged with a lady, the gifts he gives the lady's family (such as his future brothers-in-law and parents-in-law) differ from one group to another. For marriage, how meat, especially pork, is given to the woman's family varies. Some have to give 20 viss, some 30 viss, and some a pig. The traditions of the Wa Buddhists differs from Wa spirit worshippers. In Man Toe, there are four villages, which have different traditions and cultures; these vary from Tong Vah and Phin Cang. Man Tong, Yaong Rung, Yaong Kwah and Yaong Rang all have variant cultures and traditions from other villagers.

Martin: How did the Wa make a living? What crops did they cultivate?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: When I was young, I saw most Wa people cultivate various kinds of vegetables such as pumpkins, cucumber, chili, onion, and ginger throughout the Wa Region. There are also many paddy fields in Man Ton and Man Toe. Some also did some mining. Since the Wa Region is mountainous, most Wa make a living by shifting cultivation. Livestock raising is the same as now; they raised cattle, buffalo, pig, fish, chicken, duck and turkeys, just as we do now. They also have fruit trees orchards, vegetable gardens, and herbal medicine gardens. Since there are many people in the Wa mountains, sometimes they fought over land to cultivate and water to irrigate their paddy fields.

Martin: Did they fight just for headhunting?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: When the Wa Leen went to hunt the heads of the Wa Maw and the Wa Maw hunted the Wa Leen, there were some small fights.

Martin: What handicrafts did they produce, and what of these traditional handicrafts are still practiced?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Since the beginning, Wa weaved cloth for trousers and blouses to wear themselves.

Martin: What did they use for weaving?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: They made cloth out of cotton. Some of them were able to cultivate cotton plants to weave. They tried to remove the cotton bolls and made the thread for weaving. Their clothes were short--they did not wear long clothes. Women wore knee-length skirts. They covered their shins with a cloth called *si gum* in Wa. They knew how to make cloth for men and also for women. They also made hats for men and women. They had different hat styles for man and woman. They passed on these skills from generation to generation.

Parents also transferred their livelihood skills to their children, such as how to do business, conduct trade, grow crops, and practice shifting cultivation. Since these people had never been to other countries, they just knew their simple livelihood which they handed over to their children. They knew and taught their children about social life but could not provide any formal education because they were illiterate.

Martin: Did the Wa people who did not wear clothes know how to make clothes?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I do not think they knew how because they did not wear clothes and I never saw them weaving. They just went around naked. Later they bought clothes from the people who knew how and wore them.

Martin: Do Wa still practice weaving clothes?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Nowadays, we seldom find Wa weaving their own clothes; mostly they just buy clothes ready made and wear them. Some women know how to weave bags and are still doing so. Some even produce these goods commercially. They also knew blacksmithing, silversmithing and other handicrafts, such as making rings, earrings, and necklaces. These are the things that Wa People know how to do by themselves. I am not sure that they have learned this from other people but I saw some old Wa doing this. They used to make iron knives, hoes, and shovels and other farming tools such as plows. Sometimes they produced flat and round rings out of a single piece or the metal point of a dibble stick. Sometimes they even sealed their name on the tools they made.

Martin: What popular stories about the Wa did you hear when you were young?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The grandfathers of U Khun Nyi know Wa stories well because they were advisors to Wa leaders in the past. Wa leaders used to say: "*ciet seung piet mong, kao hoe sip loi*" means, 7 countries, 8 cities, 9 canyons and 10 mountains which was the way to describe the entire Wa Region. This is something like describing the many states and cities of the United States. But we really do not know how many mountain ranges there are in the Wa Region.

There was also another famous person named Cao Prawng Meung. He was a great advisor in his day.

Martin: Was he Shan or Wa?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: He was a Wa. His full name was Cao Prawng Meung Nyi Nap.⁹ Nyi Nup was his Wa name. Prawng Meung refers to his position. The phrase, Phax Vaix Long, Khun Paux Mong, refers to the guard (*paux*) of the gate who is like a knife. Nyi Nap was the gatekeeper of the Wa Region. One outstanding characteristic of the Wa is that they are tough fighters. They win almost every time they fight. There was a famous chief in the Sha Kang Neu Region who was the first ruler of that city. His son was Cao Man Maw, and Cao Mang Maw's son is Cao Khun Nyi Ai Nap who is still alive. The real famous one was he alone at that time. This is all about U Khun Nyi's father Cao Mang Maw and his grand father was Nyi Nap, Phax Vaix Long, Khun Prawng Meung, Cao Pawk Mong. That Khun Nyi's full name in Wa is Nyi Kap. His brother Ai Nap is not a Wa leader, he is working as teacher.

Martin: Where did these Wa headhunters live?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were no headhunters in Burmese, Shan or Chinese territory, because most Wa from those areas were either Buddhist or Christian. But we found a little headhunting in Yuanna Seung (Khui Ming), known as Mong Shien Long in Shan. In the Wa Region, headhunting was carried out from the present Burmese-Chinese border westwards, to where the Shan lived. When the Japanese arrived in Lashio and Mong Yaw, a Wa elders named Cao Kham Lian was in the Loi Maw Army. His group is called Loi La (Ava Loi La). Originally they were Wa, but since they were staying in a Shan area, they called themselves Loi La. The Japanese trained and led them to fight against the Wa inside the Wa Region. The Wa from the present Wa State never attacked the Wa area in China. But some Loi La Wa leaders and also some people from Shan and Burmese areas settled around the Loi and Loi Sang Ngang, they fought the Wa around Mong Mau. They went up as far as Man Ton, Kang Seu and Mong Mau with the Japanese soldiers. These group leaders were Wa in nationality but had taken Shan names and began to practice Shan customs. One of their leaders took the Shan name, Cao Kham Lian Mong Yaw. He raised a Wa force and went to Mong Mau to fight the Wa there. They did not reach Sha Kang Neu, Man Tong or Man Toe. Yes, that was the reality. Although these Wa people didn't want to go to fight with Wa people from there, they were ordered by their leaders to do so and they obeyed.

Martin: When did that happen?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: It was the time when Japanese were fighting in Burma in 1943-1944. I think that it was around that time because these Japanese came into Burma in 1942-1943 and they left in 1945. They left after the atomic bomb exploded in Japan. These Japanese intruded into the Wa Region in 1942-1943. I think the retreat of Japanese began in 1944. They did stay for long. They retreated after the Americans dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

On 20 May 1953, Reverend Vincent Young and his wife went back to America. They could not go to Lancang District or Banna in China because Communists were in these areas. Since there were already Christians in Mong Mau and Sha Kang Neu, Reverend Vincent Young had me lead these people and do missionary work there.

At that time there were Saya Ah Wu, Saya Ciet Rong (U Sawlu's father), Saya Ah Sang, Saya Boader (Karen) and me. We five built a Church in Mong Mau with the help of the

⁹ *Cao Prawng Meung* is derived from a Shan/Tai term meaning Lord Governor [of a] Meung [land].

Christians there. I was made leader and tried to reach all of the Christian in the Wa Region and also those in China. To do this, we started the journey from Kengtung on 5 May 1953. On the way, we passed Ho Pon, Mock Ngoax, Pang Yang and Man Leen, where they built a church compound, and then proceeded to Mat Man Sieng, Man Khar, Man Ton, Kang Seu, Yaong Rang, Man Kwe and Mock Lhaong before reaching Mong Mau. Before reaching Mong Mau, we sent a letter ahead telling the date we would arrive in Mong Mau. Some of the Mong Mau Christians then prepared five houses, one for each one of us and welcomed us warmly with food. Some Wa leaders, including Tax Ong, Tax Lao Meung, Tax Ong Meung, Tax Yawt Mong, Po Lai Haw Sha, Cao Yawt Shan Meung, Tax Mawk Kham, Tax Pann, and Tax Kie Nap as well as church leaders, namely Saya Rong Pleeg, Saya Ai Mong, Saya Ai Khwet, Saya Kat and Saya Nyi Tao, from Mong Mau welcomed us too. We thanked them for their contribution and support. At that time I requested these Wa leaders that it was time to open a school for the children. I also noticed there was no school so I also requested them that this building be built to serve as a chapel and also a schoolhouse. The Christians from there and from Kawn Caong constructed a building within one week to serve as a school on weekdays and as a chapel on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Saya Boarder, the Karen, taught the Burmese curriculum, Saya Ah Sang and Saya Ciet Rong taught them Wa and Shan and I taught Bible. Health care was provided by Saya Ah Wu. We stayed for 18 years in Mong Mau and converted more Wa to Christianity during that time.

Martin: How many people converted to Christianity?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: When we went to Mong Mau, there were already some Christians on the way to Mong Mau. There were some in Pang Yang, Man Leen and Nar Ang village (where my mother and grand parents lived). Saya Cakheu and Saya Cafa were already in Nar Ang village. At that time there were two Lahu Christian villages and two Wa Christian villages. There was Pang Ho Kweu where Saya Rong Kat (Saya Denny's father) lived and Man Khar where Saya Ai Rong lived. I stayed for ten days in Pang Yang, and then went to the Man Leen church compound from where we proceeded to Mat Man Sieng. After that we to Yaong Plong (Man Khar in Shan) then to Kiex Village, Yiex Sung Village, and Gawng Pa Village. Next we went to Man Ton, Kai Seu, Mock Lhaong, Man Koe, Mut Lung Yaong Vah and Yaong Rax. I stayed in Yaong Rax for one night and the departed early the next morning for Mong Mau. We reached the church compound that day at noon.

Martin: How many Christians were in Mong Mau before your missionary group went there?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were already Christians in five villages: Yaong Prong, Kax Kat, Yaong Shiam, Phar Peung and Piet Song in Mong Mau. There was a leader in each village. Saya Ai Khwat was in Yaong Prong, Saya Sai Rai in Kax Kat, Saya Nyi Pao in Phar Kaw, Saya Nyi Kat in Phar Peung and Saya Ai Mong in Piet Song. There were two villages Gawng Leen and Yaong Lax in Kawn Song area with some Christians. Totally there were seven villages with Christians at that time.

Martin: How many Christian households are there in Mong Mau?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There are three big villages where we have many Christian households: Mong Mau, Yaong Shiem, Phar Peung and Piet Song. The total is about 400 baptized members from the seven villages at that time with one pastor to look after them.

Martin: How many Christian do you think there are now?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: From my last visit to Mong Mau, there are about 60-70 Christian villages from all the townships, including Mong Mau, Pang Wai (Sao Phar), and Kaun Chong. About 30 small Wa headhunting villages and about 100 households had converted to Christianity. After we left Mong Mau after 18 years of service, villages such as Yaong Ngaik, Yaong Lhax, Yaong Laik, Yaong Tong, Yaong Prao, Yaong Krung (where my father lived) Man Hoe, Long Ting, Yaong Ting, Yaong Maw, Man Meue, Dung Krak, Cung Paux, Pu Riep, converted to Christianity. These were all traditional spirit worship villages before. Prior to our arrival in Mong Mau, there were already Christians in Sha Kang Neu. Before I was pastor, Sha Kang Neu had some Christians already since I had stayed there with William Marcus Young. These people from Sha Kang Neu converted to Christianity after 1923. This was in China not in the south of Shin Kang Neu. Many more people converted to Christianity in that area after we arrived.

Martin: What ethnic groups lived in Mong Mau when your first arrived?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were mostly Wa with only three Shan villages. About seven Wa villages were located where the town is now. There were many Wa villages surrounding that area. There were only a few Chinese--about five households in the marketplace. No Lahu lived there. Some time later, after the Kuomintang arrived in Mong Mau, two or three Lahu moved there.

Martin: What did they sell on the market day?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Some Wa people sold rice, pork, pigs, chickens and vegetables. They also sold clothes made by Wa people themselves. Some Shan clothes and Chinese clothes were also for sale at that time.

Martin: What special stories or tradition can you relate?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The Wa customarily kill a buffalo once a year at the traditional "Y Post" (*khaox si gang*) and offer blood and a piece of meat to the spirit in which they believe. This was led by a leader called *Tax Cao Chai*. This was practiced since long long ago, maybe over a thousand years in the past. I saw them doing from as long ago as I can remember. The Wa who performed this were not headhunters.

Groups following the teaching of Tax Cao Tie have another practice. They take a *lhax ka* in their bag wherever they go. Tax Cao Tie is also the one who tried to eliminate the practice of headhunting. He taught them his own ideology not like me who taught about Our Lord Jesus Christ (*Aux mawh Cao Max, Maix Mawh Cao sawx* in Wa). Tax Cao Tie once told me that he was the one who showed the way while I was the one who walked the way. This tradition originated by this individual who did not learn it from someone else.

Martin: What about the translating the Bible into Wa? Can you give specific examples of what was the most difficult?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I cannot say what was so difficult to translate at that time because it was a long time ago and I cannot remember it clearly. In the beginning we just translated one book each (Mark, Luke, John, Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles). But we could not put them together into a single volume. Later on we translated the rest of the New Testament, from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans until the end of Revelations. Only then could we put it together as the full New Testament. We did this from 1934 until we finished on 15 July 1938. This translated New Testament is still in use now. I forgot the specific words in English that were the most difficult parts to translate. Only Reverend Young could remember that well. We just translated in a simple straightforward way and I have forgotten some details now.

Martin: Can you tell me about the places where you went to preach and about any remarkable incidents in your life?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: From the beginning of my mission activities, I went to 20 Lahu Nyi and Lahu Nax villages in Mong Sak and Mong Tung. Most people there talked to me in Shan which was popularly spoken there at the time. Thus I had to preach in Shan. Again in Kengtung, there were only a few Wa Christian villages: Ping Saing, Jo Phyu, Kawng Tax, Quang Ca and Ka Thai villages. In Mong Yawng, I preached only in the town center, not in the villages. There were not many Wa Christians yet. Since most people were Shan, Saya Ai Mong preached and wrote in Shan as well as using the Shan Bible. I also preached in several villages in Banna: Naung Heh, Mie Cawx, Ah Lieh, Man Lee, Nar Long, Par Phaw, To Kar, Pan Lee, Peu Peux, Nar Baw Kwi, Khar Lar and Ho Yaong. Since these are close to the China and influenced by Chinese tradition and culture, most of the women wore trousers and ate with chopsticks instead of spoons or their hands.

Martin: Were they Christian before you were in their villages?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No, they converted to Christianity only after our missionary group had visited their villages.

Martin: What did they worship before then?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: They were originally traditional spirit worshippers. They converted only after we arrived in their villages. I saw both Lahu men and women from Pan Lee, Peu Peux, Khar Lar and Ho Yaong villages wearing shirts and trousers instead of wearing Lahu dress like other Lahu. And again in Man Ton and Man Toe villages, although these villages were close to the China (and are now in China), the women wore mostly Wa dress but the men dressed in the Chinese way. Like the Chinese, they prepared dried meat (*nex kroh*) which they keep for years.

Regarding education, all the Wa Christians use the Bible Wa script. Some non-Christian Wa write in Chinese. Most can speak Chinese. Prior to that, if they were literate, they only used Chinese characters because there was not yet any Wa alphabet. After 1930 when there was a Wa alphabet, then most Wa started using Wa writing although some used both Wa and Chinese because there is also a Chinese Bible and there were Chinese Churches everywhere. These were built since the time of Reverend William Marcus Young and some earlier Wa Pastors, such as Saya Sam Lao and Saya Sam Lee. They went with the Reverend William Marcus Young.

Martin: Was there any Catholic Mission there before?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes, there was but only in one village, Phin Cang in Man Tau. There was also a place in Nhim Neu area. In all there were two such villages in the Wa region (of China) at that time.

Martin: Were there also Catholic Mission and villages in Pang Yang area?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes, there were but I do not know how many. There were also five Christian villages in Naung Pawx area. In those areas also, they only used Wa language and alphabet. There was a large population in Ai Soi and they all converted to Christianity during my mission work there. Only Yaong Ping, Yaong Shiao and Namt Ma villages and two to three villages from Ai Soi City did not convert at that time. Those that converted included Har Gie, Khar Vo, Pannai Sex, Pannai Lhaong, Ohm Khrawm, Pan Tok, Yaong Rang, Ohm Khrawm, Ton Mu, Man Tat, Ho Nar, Rong Maw and Pet Cawng. All the Wa from here became Christian and used only the Wa language and alphabet. But now in Ai Soi, some use Chinese also. In the villages where Tax Tao and Tax Sang lived, there are still no Christians.

Now in those areas, there is a mixed population, such as Chinese and Wa and no Christians. Mostly, they use Chinese language and very few Wa people know Wa writing. In Shin Kai Tan, since they are close to Mong Tung and Mong Kaw, some use a mixture of Shan and Wa. Phar Phuex, Pang Ngox, Gawng Peux, and Gawng Toi villages are in the area of Sha Kang Neu. Now most are Christian and use Wa language and writing but also know how to read in other languages. There are more than 20 Christian villages in Kai Tan. Many Wa converted to Christianity in Sha Kang Neu where Cao Prawng Meung, Khun Prawng Meung, and Tax Khun Nyi lived; they are using the Wa Bible and writing now. Before they used Shan, even for their village name because they are close to Shan settlements. Some old Wa still speak, read and write Shan language.

Lahu from Keung Ma and Keung Tum also use Shan and Chinese, because they are close to the Chinese. Their dress is also a mixture of Shan and Chinese styles. But in religion, they know and use Lahu writing and the Lahu Bible. In Lahu areas like Shan Kai Shin, Meeng Meeng, and Shan Kai Shin Mi Chax, they act like Chinese. Their dress is also like Chinese with both men and women wearing trousers. There are only two Wa villages in Shan Kai Shin—almost all the people are Lahu.

Martin: Have you been there on missionary activity?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Sure, I went everywhere around that place. I have been in almost every village in Kengtung, Lan Chang, Swang Cang, and Chang Yuan. Most older people there know me well. Only people born after the Kuomintang entered the region do not. There are also many Wa not converted to Christianity yet. Sometimes we had to be very careful in travelling from one place to another. There were rebels waiting on the way who sometimes tried to attack us. There was also an accident when they tried to shoot us but the gun did not fire.

Martin: Can you tell us about that?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: When we reached the Ai Soi area, we slept overnight in a Christian Ho Maw village. We left Sha Kai Tan City for Sha Kang Neu to participate in a religious

celebration. About 30 of including 10 pastors were in our group. About 100 Ai Soi people were waiting for us in the valley. Both sides were covered with huge rocks and thick forest. When we got to within ten miles of the valley, over a day walking time, we saw some people preparing to ambush us. One person hurt his leg while they were preparing. They were all fully armed. Before we reached the ambush site, we came to Yaong Rang Village where Saya Ai Seu and Sayama Ok Soi lived. We slept one night there. At that time Reverend William Marcus Young and his son Vincent Young came along to go with us. There were also pastors, including Saya Law Ta, Saya Law Eu, Saya Nyi Seu, and Saya Ai Rong. I was there too with some other Wa pastors. They got the news about the possible ambush from Saya Ai Seu in Yaong Rang village and informed Reverend William Marcus Young but he said, "we will go, whatever the situation may be, we will go. Don't be afraid." Then in Shan he said: *phrah pin cao yuh phai hao, hao ma ko lah lah* ("God is with us and we fear nothing" Rom 8:31). Although Reverend William Marcus Young had said so, his son Vincent Young asked him not to proceed. At that time Reverend W. M. Young intended to assign his son Harold Young to work in Meeng Meeng. But he was not transferred there yet.

His son told his father that he was already old enough, but we your sons are just becoming adults. And although two of your sons have found a place to live, he had not yet done so. The son added that most of the pastors had families and their groups totaled only 30 so that they would not be able to fight their way out of the ambush. The son told his father that they surely would become victims since there were about 100 people waiting in the bush to shoot them. He said that although his father might be old enough, he should think of his sons and all the pastors. But the Reverend W. M. Young persisted on going ahead. His son tried to persuade him again saying, "if we go and die on the way, who will take care of the family?" He added, "even if we have to go way, we should proceed only after those people leave". They could had been killed if they went ahead that night. But his father still persisted on going ahead no matter what. But after a long discussion that day, they retreated back to Ho Maw and slept there.

In Ho Maw, there were Lahu and Shan but most were Wa. They told the Reverend W.M. Young, "Tax Phrawng Kat, Saya Kyaw Naing Win's grandfather, don't be afraid, we don't fear the Ai Soi people." Tax Phrawng Kat said he wanted to fire the Reverend W. M. Young's gun, which was made in Germany if only once. He asked permission from him and found out that gun could hit a target five kilometers away. He said he got it from W. M. Young and fired at a *Khaox Kraox* tree that was around one foot in diameter and found out that bullet went through that tree. After that he said that he was not afraid of anyone from Ai Soi as long as he had that gun. Therefore, "don't be afraid" he said to them. He gathered about 100 Christians, one person from each family, to go with the Reverend W. M. Young and some catechist to get through that place and on to the festival site. They also brought some other weapons with them. Then they went to Yaong Khawng, (Thwar Ce Caing, in Chinese), by another way, instead of going where the Ai Soi people lived. They reached Swan Kyan Shin from Sha Kai Shin without passing Lang Chang. About 50 persons from each village from Shan Kai Shin followed them up to the end of the Shan Kai Shin region. After that they preached to the Wa, Lahu and Mi Char people from Shan Kai Shin, they went to Pang Wai, Pang Yok, Chieng Naw, in the Lang Chang region and then went back to Banna. It was the first time they went in that region and later no one was there to stage an ambush. Some of these people had been were driven away by the Chinese.

Another time, we were going to a spring between Honna and Lahu Ho Maw village to baptize some young and older Wa and Lahu faithful from places such as Ho Maw, Honna and Gawng An villages. That spring is not far from those villages. After we had finished the baptisms, we had to pass through a thick forest. Some people were waiting there to ambush them. On our return, while I was on horseback we heard gunfire. That group's leader had fired on those in the lead. That leader had ordered them to shoot them all but only after he could shoot W. M. Young first. If not, they were to keep silent. The leader aimed and pulled the trigger but the gun did not fire. Then he pointed the barrel upwards and the gun fired. After that not one of them dared shoot at us. Some of us thought that the gunfire was by hunters. We passed through that place without realizing what had happened. Later, some of those people came to Saya Nyi Sin and told him that, "they were waiting to shoot, but unfortunately the gun did not fire when it was aimed at the target. The gunshot you heard was when one of them pointed the gun in the air and pulled the trigger". Since the gun did not go off as planned, they gave up. They believed it was God's protection. Later on, Saya Nyi Sin came to all the faithful and reiterated this story.

Yet another time, while we were in Man Tung, in the Man Toe region, going back from preaching we were trying to reach Nhim Neu but only got close to the Shan village of Rawng where there was a canal. My group, including W. M. Young and his son Vincent Young, some catechists and my father-in-law, about 20 in all, slept near to that canal in the forest. There were big trees and a thick forest there. When night fell, we said prayers and went to sleep. There were about 30 Ai Soi people who came to attack us. As they sneaked up on us, they met what they thought were Guardian Angels, dressed in white close to where Saya Yaw Shu's group was sleeping. When they saw this they dared not proceed and left at once. Those of us sleeping did not know anything but later heard about it from some of that group of 30 who came to tell Saya Nyi Sin because he was from Ai Soi. The Reverend W. M. Young wrote these stories up and sent them to the Metta Taman magazine press. Later the Metta Taman Press published them as a cover story and also made it the subject of its calendar for that year. Whenever we see that picture we reread the story to remember how the Guardian Angels protected Saya Young's group when he preached the gospel there.

Martin: What exciting experiences did you have with Reverend Young's family?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Once there was an incident in an Ai Soi town. It was on a day when upper Pan Noi Neu villagers were going to be baptized after listening to the Reverend Young preach. He was there with his son. Saya Harold Young already knew Wa, but Vincent Young only learned it later. That village leader himself got baptized. On that day, an Ai Soi man came into the village and asked that leader, "Although the Ai Soi region has its own leaders, why did you listen to these *kala* (Caucasians) and get baptized without listening to the Ai Soi leaders?" Where did you get permission to do this? As he was scolding him, Mr. Harold Young woke up and showed up with the recommendation letter given him by the Chinese authority to go preach everywhere in Yunnan Seeng. He showed the Ai Soi man the letter and asked, "Why did you interrupt us in our mission activities and do you have any authorization letter to do so?" And then Harold Young tied up that person and sent him back to his place.

On the way we had to pass an Ai Soi village. When we reached that village, a man called for us to help his relatives in the village. When some of his relatives gathered around us, he said, these *kala* tried to kill me today. Some of his relatives picked up weapons, such

as guns, knives and iron rods. But at that time, they were in the middle of Ai Soi and some Chinese soldiers were there as well. Saya Cabo was holding a 12 gauge shotgun ready to protect Reverend Young and his family. He said that if anyone fired at them, he would return fire no matter whether he was killed or not. At once, the Chinese soldiers came up and told everyone to be quiet. They controlled the situation and asked the villagers if they knew what would have happened if they had killed any of the white people. For reimbursement, the soldiers told the Ai Soi people that they would not accept money—only by handing over the entire Ai Soi region would they be satisfied. Do you know they are allowed to preach anywhere they want? Not only in China but everywhere they want to and can go—they are American. The villagers were amazed and dared not do anything. All these things were recorded in MBC Rangoon at that time. The Reverend W. M. Young's family went everywhere in the Wa Region, even where the Wa could not go. Later, they came to know that his mission area reached from the Salween to the Mekong Rivers.

Martin: When did this happen?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The first incident was in about 1931-1932 and the second in 1936. I cannot remember the exact date. But these were all after I became a pastor. The last incident was in 1925 while I was still studying. I studied until 1928 and did not see the incident so I cannot remember the date exactly. But I was in the other two ambushes.

Martin: What was the cooperation between the missionaries like at that time? Did the different missionaries get along with each other?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were three occasions when the different missionaries met with each other. The first was Christmas Eve, just before Christmas Day, when all Christians gathered and prayed joyfully. The second was Easter Sunday, the Resurrection of Christ. The third was the Communion Feast Day, mostly on the first Sunday of October. They celebrate these rotationally from one Church to another, year by year.

When I was young, Catholic missionaries and the Baptist missionaries did not get together. There were only two Catholic mission villages in the whole Wa Region. These are Phin Can and Ngim Neeng. Most of the time they just stayed in their villages. If the different missionaries met on the way sometimes, they exchanged pleasantries. A Catholic missionary priest came to me once in a while I was in Mong Mau.

Martin: What was his name?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: I forgot his name. But he said he was a leader of the Catholic missionaries of that place and that he was Canadian. I did not ask his name. The Catholic priest came to me in Mong Mau. He had come from Man Phant near Tangyan. He stayed about three days in Mong Mau. He said that he wanted to build a compound in Mong Mau. I told him that most of the people in Mong Mau were already Baptists. I suggested he go to Man Tung in the Kang Seu where there were no Christian villages yet. In Kang Seu and Namt Nie, the land is flat and it would be easy to build a mission compound and start activities. He agreed. I added that there were also Baptists in the Shin Kai Neeng and the Kauon Cong regions. But there were also Buddhists in Man Koe, Mock Chaong and Laih Raix. I told him that there were many Wa in Kan Seeng so that it would be a good place for him to work. At that time, the priest told me about a young Wa man named Sam Kan who had been ordained as a Catholic priest in Tangyan. After that, no Catholic

came to Mong Mau. In 1954 when I went with a group to Kengtung, I stayed overnight with that priest in Man Phant. He welcomed us warmly and gave us a place to stay.

Martin: Did that priest meet Reverend Vincent Young?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No, they had never met face to face. Reverend Vincent Young met Catholic missionary priests from Cawm Sat, which is near Kengtung. They talked sometimes but they did not do a fellowship service with each other. Mr. Dickey, his brother Raymond, Richard and Reverend Vincent met many times and talked but we never saw them do fellowship services together. Every year, there were Wa who converted to being Baptists. About 1,500 people were baptized in Mong Mau by the hand of Saya Kat. These were people who gave up headhunting. At present, also, the ceasefire group enforced the ban on headhunting. Now there are also Christians in Ai Cheung and about 100 households in Yaong Leen. Saya Sam Nap stays there now. These were all headhunters in the past. The Christian population is increasing now a bit by a bit.

Martin: What kinds of religion are most common among the Wa?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Most are traditional spirit worshippers.

Martin: Where do the Wa Buddhists live mostly?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Most Wa Buddhists live in the region close to the Shan. There are no Buddhists near Yaong Ting, Man Rai and in the area which is now in China. Most Wa in China are Christians.

Martin: What are other remarkable things of the Wa people?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: As they live in the mountains, whenever or wherever they kill pigs in their family prayer meeting and family devotion service, they have to give one leg to their eldest brother in order to build unity within the and as a sign of respect to their elders. Making Plai Khawx to drink with neighbors to welcome guest or outsiders in order to have smooth discussion or conversation is also a remarkable characteristic for the Wa. The third is annually, showing care, love and respect to their parents by giving a cooked or uncooked chicken with a cup of cooked sticky rice to honor them and also to ask their blessing (*tawx bwant*).

Long ago in the time of our elders, we killed chicken when we got sick and killed a pig if we were seriously ill. We called the Tax Cao Jai to ask for a prediction about the person's health by looking at the chicken bones. According to the instruction of the Tax Cao Chai, the Wa had to act accordingly. But after we converted to Christianity, we do not kill chickens or pigs when we get sick. Instead we pray to almighty God for the person to be cured and get medicines according to the will of God and do the things we need to do.

Martin: What do they believe about Si Yiex?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Wa always say the phrase, "Si Yiex Si Yawng", that they know how to call the name of God (Si Yiex) but they do not know how to listen the voice of God (Si Yiex). Whenever they feel sick or in great difficult, they always say "Si Yiex, Si Yawng Eue" or "Tax Yiex Miex Keeng Eue". They yearn with these words always whenever they are in great difficult situation from long, long ago. All Wa, including those

who are Christians and traditional Spirit Worshipers believe in the existence of God (Si Yiex), but do not know how to listen to the will of God (Si Yiex) and follow His will because they did not have anyone preach to them and guide them before. Some Wa people who get seriously ill yearn for the name of God (Si Yiex) but in their actual treatment they only listen to and follow the instruction of Tax Cao Jhai.

Martin: How easy or hard was it to work with Vincent Young? Was there any funny story you remember from your many years working with him?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There were no problems, disappointments or accidents when living with Vincent Young. We worked together with mutual help and understanding in preaching and teaching to the villagers. For example, sometimes we were not aware of obstacles or troubles we would encounter before setting off on a trip. But only on the way did we know something was risky and sometimes we only knew after we had already passed it by. I did not face anything to be worried about. Whenever we went to the villages, we were welcomed. If the village was small the villagers killed a pig to welcome us. If the village was big enough, the villagers killed a buffalo or a cow for us. Whenever we took a trip, we were accompanied by many villagers in good spirits.

Martin: Did you happen by chance, to do anything that did not coincide with what Vincent Young wanted?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Nothing like this ever happened.

Martin: Did he get angry when you were not able to do what he said to do?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: No. But there was such a person from the batch ahead of him who argued with Vincent Young's elder brother, Harold Young in Banna. His brother Harold Young lived in Pang Yang-Man Leen, at the Nan Phyawng mission compound. His sister was Mama Rutha. W. M. Young had two sons and one daughter. His daughter did not come to Burma, got married in America and lived there. In 1927, they opened two major mission compounds, one in Mong Mong and the other in Banna. His father assigned Vincent Young to work there. In 1935, they opened a mission compound in Pang Yang-Man Leen. That was to be the place for Harold Young. That case was because of Harold Young visited a lady in Banna many times. A catechist assigned to Banna warned him many time but was not successful. This led to a small argument between that catechist and Harold Young. But that case was solved by the help of other catechists.

Martin: What did Vincent Young do during that time?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Vincent Young used to call catechists for Bible teaching and training. But the teaching and training were not so long. Maybe this would be for a week or a maximum of ten days each time. He called mostly those who were staying with him. At least he gave training twice a year.

Martin: How did you use Wa literature?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: W. M. Young had already told Vincent Young to try to use Wa literature in Mong Mong because there were a lot of Wa there. With that idea, they tried to develop the Wa alphabet.

Martin: What did Harold Young do before he left the Wa State?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: From 1937, he moved to Mang Leen where he stayed until the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. He was friendly with the local British military officials. He knew the Wa, Lahu, and Shan languages very well and some Chinese. Since he knew many languages, the British asked him to serve as the governor of the whole the Wa State. He went to Mong Mau once while working with the British. His sister, Mama Rutha, was teaching literature in Man Leen and he himself lived in Mong Yawng. Sometimes he visited his wife and when he arrived to Pang Yang-Man Leen, he taught hymns and songs. He worked with the British for many years. Eventually he went to stay in Thailand where he died at an old age. Mama Rutha, went back to America after that war.

Martin: Was he involved in any fighting with the Japanese in the Wa Region while he was governor?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The one time he went to Mong Mau was only after Japanese retreated. He selected the site for the mission compound there. He told Saya Sam Pleek, that if it were the will of God, that place would be good for a mission compound on this hill. When I first arrived in Mong Mau, we went to the place where the District Hall is now but the drinking water supply was poor there. At last, we selected the place Harold Young had suggested to Saya Sam Pleek. The time they went to look for the compound, there was no Burmese military in Mong Mau. They built a chapel on one hill and other buildings on a hill nearby. They used the space in between as a playground. Now many houses have been built where the playground is. Although the foundation of his house still stands, a newer house has been built on it. This place is now used as the *Shien Cang Fu* (District Hall) for Mong Mau. There is a big rock still standing nearby. When you go to Mong Mau, you can go see the place he lived and my father lived because my father was also there for so many years.

Martin: What was the situation of Mong Mau like at that time?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: In 1953 when we arrived at Mong Mau, there were no Burmese military or government officials yet there. There were only Wa, a few Shan and Chinese.

Martin: Which ethnic group was in the majority at that time in Mong Mau?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Mostly the Wa ruled and governed by themselves in their villages and a few Shan people lived together with the Wa people. There were four to five Chinese households in the marketplace. The village where Wa and Shan live together is called Mong Mau or Yaong Shiam in Wa.

Martin: When did Wa start growing poppy?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: The poppy was growing before I was born. Some people from my village were already growing it and I remember this well.

Martin: Did the villagers from where you were born grow poppy?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes they also cultivated. Even some Wa people from the Man Ton-Man Tau grew it but not all. In the rest of the Wa Region, like in the Ai Soi Region and also around Mong Mau, the hills were covered with poppy at that time.

Martin: Were there poppy fields across the Salween River?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes, there were also poppy fields there. The poppy plants and pods were very good in the Kawn Rao and Mong Mau area. Therefore they planted mostly poppy. When I was in Mong Mau, I saw a lot of poppy fields.

Martin: Were there any famous story or person at those times in your young age? Can you tell what you remember?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: There was a famous person called Seen¹⁰ Khai Teung, in Man Ton-Man Tau at that time.

Martin: Was he Wa?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: Yes. There was also a person called Man Leen Cao Pha¹¹. I do not know his real name. But he was Wa. He was alive before the atomic bombs were dropped in Japan.

Martin: Where did he rule? Which areas were under his control?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: He ruled Nammu Se in Tangyan Township and up to Man Tun-Kang Seu area. In the north, Wein Kao, Loi Leen-Naw Kham Oo and Long Lap Sin were also under his control. Loi Leen-Naw Kham Oo is also connected to the Wa Leen and Wa Maw. In the south his area included Tangyan, Mong Kao (a bit of Shan), Mong Su, now called Mong Shu--actually it is not Mong Shu but Mong Su which means your country. He was from the Cao Maw group.

There were also some famous people in Ai Soi. There were Tax Tao Shieu Cang and Tax Sang (clerk of Shin Can Tax Tao) in Shin Kai Tang of Ai Soi. The situation there was very complicated before but later it grew peaceful. It was possible to travel for business and for mission activities easily because the people were at peace. There were no conflicts and worries for the people until the Kuomintang came in.

Martin: When was that?

Sara Yaw Shu Chin: That would be around 1935-1938. There were also two famous and rich men in Shin Kai Tang region. They were Tax Cao Khao and his son Tax Cao Peung from Phax Pheung village. They were among the first two persons to become Christian in the Wa Region. There was a person also from Shin Kai Neeng, who was a famous fighter named Cao Paw Meung¹² (Nyi Nap in Wa). He was famous because of his good leadership and better intelligence than other people were.

¹⁰ Seen is a Shan/Tai term, *saen*, meaning 100,000 which was used as a title for a local leader.

¹¹ From Shan *Saohpa* (in Burmese, *Sawbwa*), "Lord of the Sky", i.e. chief.

¹² From Shan/Tai, meaning Ruler Father of the Land.