Jackie Yang Rettie, a native of Kokang – a state popularly known as a Chinese state within the Shan state, writes that Yang Shien Tsai, the first ruler of the house of Yang ruled Kokang for nine generations, lasting for 300 years until 1959. In 1840, Yang Guo Hwa, a direct descendant of Yang ruling house, received the copper seal from the Governor of Yunnan giving his family and heirs the hereditary rights to rule Kokang. The author says this statement was extracted from the documented history of Kokang in Chinese and Burmese records. (No. 12 March 1991, Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter: 10-12)

Briefly given the termination of the thirty-year conflict between the Slorc government (Myanmar) and Kokang on the 22nd of November 1990, it continues:

As a role of Kokang in the kaleidoscope of Burmese politics has become of increased interest to both domestic and international observers, it may be time to take a closer look at the land and its people.

Delving into its history, the author contends that Kokang was first settled by the Han migrants in the 16th century.

Absolutely not, the British record in 1892 illustrated that a few Shan villages in the neighborhood of Taw Nio and the Miaotzus that remained in the Clonomilin village are the original inhabitants of Kokang. Many of them had been ousted by the Chinese. The Li Sus in Hpin Hor village are the genre of Chinese army that was sent against the Burmese army. (Rigby, Lt. Gerard Christopher. “Notes on Kokang. Report on a Tour through the Northern Shan states. Military Dept. Library. Burma, Southeast Asia, 1895. India Office Records, L/Mil/17/19/34. )
Hpin Hor, a Chinese word for friendship, is a village lying between Kokang and Cheng Kang (Yunnan). The people there said that many years ago, the Burma – China war was stopped by a truce made at that place. The Burmese history mentions such truce between the Burmese and the Chinese army was during the time of King Hsinbushin (1763-78). The Burmese General Maha Thiha Thura signed a peace treaty with the invading Chinese army in 1769. The General was punished for making truce without the consent of the Burmese king. It is thus assumed that the establishment of settlements in Kokang could not be earlier than the 18th century.

It is true that Kokang has become an interest to the international observers as it is also crucial for Burma’s politics. Looking into its location and past history, the British record states that Kokang lays wholly east of the River Salween was formerly one of the 49 mongs (city states) of Hsenwi state. Kokang touches on the east the three Shan-Chinese states of Mong Hkeng (Cheng Kang), Kung Ma (Keng Ma) and Mong Ting; on the south it is bounded by Somu – the La state, and on the north, the River Salween divides it from Mong Hkwan ( Mang Shih). (Memorandum on Kokang, BHC, No. 561). The Shan records also ascertain that Kokang was a state-let of Hsenwi. While under the Burmese Kings, Hsenwi was divided into five parts; the part in which Kokang was called Theinni Ashe-let lit. Eastern part of Hsenwi state. (Confld. Dept. No. 1963/ka-14 (54). Off. Of the Spl. Comm. Lashio. F.N. 16 Yapa (Ka) 55). (See map in Appendix I).

Kokang itself was divided into nine kangs, or districts. Hence it name Kau Kang meaning nine districts or guards in Shan. Kokang was a corrupt Burmese word for the Shan Kau Kang. The nine districts from which Kokang derived its name are;

1. Tau Nio
2. Yang Tang (it is a circle in which Satihsu, the chief town of Kokang is situated)
3. Pang Sung
4. Pang Yang
5. Ken Nge (Ken is a “La” word for township and it is mainly inhabited by the “La”)
6. Ken Fang (Ken Fan is also inhabited mostly by “La”)
7. Ken Pwi (Ken Pwi is also inhabited by “La”)
8. Maw Htai
9. Mong Hawm (Maw Htai and Mong Hwam are on the west of the River Salween)

(Burma-China Frontier: Conference at the Foreign Office of 17 February 1893. (Memorandum on Kokang. BHC No. 561)

Kokang under Hsenwi was under the charge of a Heng (a Shan title for circle headmen). The neighboring Chinese called him “Lu Kwan” and Kokang “Lu Hu”. The Heng belongs to a Yong Chang family. The majority of the population was Chinese, many of whom were settlers from Yunnan and Sz-chwan. (See Appendix II) (Scott and Hardiman 1901a: 465). Out of the revenue of Kokang, 10% was paid to the Sawbwa of Hsenwi as annual tribute. (Rigby, Lt. Gerard Christopher. “Notes on Kokang. Report on a Tour Through the Northern Shan states. Military Dept. Library. Burma, Southeast Asia, 1895. India Office Records, L/Mil/17/19/34.) The Shan State Customary
Law was extended to Kokang up to the outbreak of the Second World War. (Confidential Dept. 20-10-54. Off. of the Spl. Comm, Lashio. F.N. No. 1963/ka – 14 (54)

The author nevertheless insists that Kokang was put into British Burma under the Peking Convention of 1897. The British record, however, says that following the annexation of Upper Burma and Shan States; Kokang became a subject to be discussed with the Chinese Government on the issue of the territorial concession to China. Rejecting the Chinese claims for a port on Irrawaddy, the Chief Commissioner of Burma stated that it was made with political aims and not in the interest of trade. He therefore suggested to waive the British claims in Kianghung and Meunglem (formerly under the Burmese kings), and to secure satisfactory settlement, Kokang, a circle of Hsenwi should be ceded to China. (Burma-China Frontier: Cession of Kokang to China Proposed. Political and Secret Home Correspondence, 1892, Vol. 127 – 134. BHC, No. 560). The British Government agreeing to cede Kokang to China reserved and maintained the rights over Kianghung and Muenglem and the cession of these rights formed part of the compensation offered by the British Government. (Burma-China Frontier: Conference at the Foreign Office of 17 February 1893. (Memorandum on Kokang. BHC No. 561)

By the Convention of March 1, 1894 between Great Britain and China, Kokang was ceded to China. Article III of the Convention envisaged:

From latitude 23 degrees 41 minutes the frontier will follow the Salween until it reaches the northern boundary of the circle of Kunlong. It will follow the boundary in and easterly direction, leaving the whole circle of Kunlong, and the ferry of that name, to Great Britain, and leaving to China the state of Kokang.

The Chinese Government, in derogation of the March 1, 1894 agreement ceded Kianghung to France by the Convention of 20th June, 1895, between China and France. The British Government therefore made the following additions and alternations in 1897 Convention with the Chinese Government.

The line shall then ascend the Salween till it meets the north-west boundary of Kokang, and shall continue along the eastern frontier of Kokang till it meets the Kunlong circle, leaving the whole of Kunlong circle to Great Britain. (Confidential; Report of the British Commissioners on the work of the Sino-British Boundary Commission, 1935-36. Off. of the Supdt., Govt. Printing and Staty., Reprint 1957, Rangoon).

Kokang thus become a part of China only for a period, from March 1st, 1894 to 1897.

**Kokang in Kunlong Circle**

Citing both the articles by Jackie Yang Yetti and Bertil Lintner, Professor Allen Wittenborn made a query on the total area of Kokang. The former in Thai-Yunnan Newsletter Number 12 (March 1991): 10 said it is about 2,000 square miles, while the latter in “The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma, CBP, Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Series No. 6, 1990: 83”, notes it is 2,000 square kilometers. In response to the query, the
author Jackie Yang Yettie, giving reference to the Chinese and Burmese sources, corrected her first statement saying:

… the linear measurement “li” was translated into the pre-metric mile. A close study of an enlarged ordnance survey map authorized for navigational purpose indicates that the approximate area may be nearer to 2,000 square kilometers than 2,000 square miles. (Thai-Yunnan Newsletter Number 14, September 1991: 25).


Another statement in the official report of the Shan State government in 1958 states that the area of Kokang from east to west is 16 miles and from north to south is 50 miles making the total area of 800 miles. (Secret No. 3/Lawa (58), Zau Seng, J.N., Resident, S. S. Northeast Special District. F.N. G.A. 99 Yapa (Ka) 58). Giving the distances between the villages of Kokang, the Resident of Eastern Shan state district reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Distance - miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kunlong to Long Htang</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Htang to Shan Hto Chen</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan Hto Chen to Kho Htang</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kho Htang to Se Aw</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se Aw to Sin Chen</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin Chen to Sucha Chen</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucha Chen to Hin Htang</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hin Htang to Long Htang</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Htang to Maw Htai</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maw Htai to Sitong Ywe</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maw Htai to Song Kan</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song Kan to Pan Ku Shan</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pang Ku Shan to Kyin Phan</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyin Phan to Sin Cheng</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to the population count of Kokang, the author, without giving the date says that out of the total population of approximately 120,000, 90% are Han Chinese speaking a Yunnan dialect quite similar to the dialect spoken in Fengyi (Shunling), South China. There are other minorities such as Shan, Palaungs, Hmong, Kachin, Wa and Lisu.

We, however, find that the original settlers of Kokang were reduced to become minorities but a large number of them still remained in 1893. The Burma Gazette in 1893 maintains the following ethnic groups and the population count of Kokang.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thans-Salween Kokang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanchar Chinese</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisu</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palaung</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Shan and Palaung</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Chinese and Palaung</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Chinese and La</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Chinese and Kachin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miaotzu</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Villages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mong Hwam Circle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palaung</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kachin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total population in trans-Salween Kokang 15,700
Total population in Mong Hawm Circle 1,780
Total 17,480

The population of Kokang rose to 48,599 and the number of villages also grew to 408 in 1958. (Secret No. 3/ Lawa (58). Zau Seng, J.N. Resident Northeast Special District. 99 Yapa (ka) 58)

**Administration of Kokang**

Asserting Kokang being a part of China, the author claims that located in the far remote south, the Chinese government had left Kokang for self rule. This practice being nurtured through the centuries it led the people of Kokang a strong sense of independence.

Even though located in the remote area on Burma-China frontier, the Shan State government had in its early years of independence managed under difficulties to effectively control the administration of Kokang merging it with Northern Wa, Southern Wa, and Manglun states together with Kengtung in the eastern Shan State district. The intrusion of the Kuomintang Chinese troops and the rise of insurgencies in the Shan state had altogether left the administration of Kokang and Wa states into the hands of the local administrators and the outlaws. In 1954 when the Kuomintang troops withdrew from the area, the government put the Northern Wa, Southern Wa, Manglun and Kokang states into the newly formed Northeast Special District. (No. 1270 Ka. S. S. Govt. F.N. G.A. Dept. 14 Yapa (Ka) 55). This area on the Burma-China frontier, inhabited by various ethnic groups on both sides of the border, is crucial for the national security of Shan State as well as for Burma. In order to effectively administer and control this Northeast Special District, the Shan State government in 1959 handed it over to the administration of the Central government for 10 years. During the period this area was renamed Frontier Areas Administration.

Justifying that Kokang was a part of China; the author claims that, the conferring of the title of Myosa to Yang Wen Ping by the British Government in 1929, made Kokang veering closer to Burma. This statement is to be completely rejected. We find that Kokang had only for a short period of 3 years been ceded to China from 1894 – 97. Since then Kokang has been a part and is still being a part of Shan State. We cannot yet find the exact date and consequences of conferring the status of Myosaship to Yang Wen Ping, but it is certain that by 1944 he was a Myosa. (See Appendix III and IV).

During the Second World War, the Myosa of Kokang formed the Levy force (home guard) with a strength of 1,500 men. Battalion strength of Chinese regulars was also stationed in Kokang to resist the invading Japanese army against China. (21-1-52, No. 8/L. Office of the Sawbwa of Kokang. G.A. 269 SG (A) 51). This situation has changed the status of Kokang with a result that it was separated from Hsenwi state. (FACE Part I Report 1947: 186). At the same time the Chinese population of Kokang in 1947 also grew to 33,475 out of the total population of 40,804. (FACE Part II Report II: 31) This levy force was retained after the war.
Kokang, a Sawbwaship State

The majority of the population being Chinese with well-trained Chinese speaking force of levy about 900 men, alarmed the North Hsenwi state when in the early 1951, the Kuomingtang Chinese troops from Yunnan crossed the border into Kokang. To contain them and to prevent Kokang becoming the strongholds of the Kuomintang troops, the Sawbwa of North Hsenwi in whose state Kokang was a part, decided to raise the status of the administrator of Kokang state. An agreement was made on 15 July 1951 between the administrator of Kokang and the Sawbwa of North Hsenwi state whereby Kokang was given an independent charge within a fixed territory. (See Appendix V)

The status of the ruler of Kokang was also raised to Sawbwaship making Yang Kyein Sai, to become the first Sawbwa of Kokang. (Confdl. Dept. 20-10-54. Off. Of the Spl.Comm. Lashio. F.N. No. 1963/ka – 14 (54) (Sawbwa is a corrupt Burmese word for Shan Saopha - the hereditary ruler of a State). These were the causes that create Kokang as a separate state with its own Sawbwa.

The status of Sawbwaship for Kokang, however, lasted only for a few years because in 1959, all the Shan Sawbwas had relinquished their hereditary rights after receiving commuted pension from the government. Where as for Kokang, the author says:

…Yang Kyein Sai, the Kokang Chaofa (Sawbwa), however, refused compensation, reasoning that power cannot be exchanged with monetary compensation but should be returned to the people and not to the central government.

With regard to the above statement I would most humbly like to suggest the author to review the political situation of Shan state during the said period - the relationship between the Shan Sawbwas and the Central Government in reproving the Shan Sawbwas of relinquishing their hereditary rights in exchange for monetary compensation.

A question remained with regard to the status of Kokang Sawbwa. Yang Kyeing Sai having been approved as the Sawbwa of Kokang in 1951 by the Sawbwa of North Hsenwi, the Head of the State of Shan State on 13 June 1953, recognized him as the Sawbwa of Kokang. After two years of probation, the President of the Union Government of Burma also agreed to recognize the Sawbwa of Kokang. But the recognition order was to be followed by the grant of the Sanad of his father Yang Wen Ping, the former Myosa of Kokang. (5-11-57, No. 171-Ya Aa (57). Office of the Resident, N. E. Special District, F.N. G.A. 311 Yapa (Ka) 57). The Sanad of the former Myosa, however, could not be forwarded to the Government until 1957, when all Shan Sawbwas had decided to relinquish their hereditary rights; their resignation was done in April 1959. The creation of Kokang Sawbwaship therefore became unnecessary. (See Appendix VI)

Yang Kyein Sai, the Sawbwa of Kokang, in the presence of the Burmese army commanders, tendered his resignation and surrendered all his powers and hereditary rights to the Head of the State of Shan State in Maymyo on 17th May 1959. (W/T Message No. 3/9, 19-5-59, from the Resident Lashio to Shan Government, Taunggyi. F.N. G.A. 50 Yapa (ka) 59). (See Appendix VII). The resignation of Kokang Sawbwa was accepted by the President of the Union Government of Burma on 30 June 1959. (No. 26, Ya (La) 58 Pt. II. F.N. G.A. 50 SG (A) 59).
Regarding the commuted pension for the Sawbwa of Kokang, the Head of Shan State says that the Sawbwa of Kokang being appointed by the administrator of North Hsenwi State, and unlike other Shan hereditary rulers, he did not deserve the commuted pension amounted to K. 332,524. (Secret/Immediate. No. 26 Ra (la) 58, 19-5-59. Head of State to Shan Ministry, Rangoon. F.N. G.A. 50 (Yapa) Ka 59).

**Citizenship for Kokang Chinese**

As a consequence of given an independent charge, citizenship for Kokang Chinese became an issue. The author says despite the fact that the Kokang Chinese was classified as an indigenous race of Burma in 1948 the Sawbwa of Kokang had difficult times persuading the Burmese Government to grant citizenship to Kokang Chinese.

The official report of the Shan state government in 1958 stated that a meeting attended by all the Chinese elders of the district held at Lashio decided to defend the rights and privileges of the Chinese in the Shan state and to be recognized as citizen of Burma (Top Secret, M. Saola, Minister for F&R Department to Head of State, Shan State Government. G.A. Dept. 185 Yapa (ka) 58).

As a matter of fact, the Chinese inhabitants of Kokang were issued a certificate by the Kokang Sawbwa’s office, acknowledging them as natives of Kokang. This certificate for Kokang inhabitants is valid to travel only up to Lashio, the administrative headquarters of Northern Shan state. To proceed from Lashio to other parts of the country, permission from the Special Commissioner of Shan State is required. Therefore up to 1961, the Kokang Chinese were not recognized as an ethnic group of Burma. This was because they are not only Chinese but many Chinese new settlers from the other side of the frontier had over the time been migrating to this side to settle in Kokang. The Chinese from China having been overflowing into this side of Kokang, the officials responsible stated:

*Every Kokangese is a Chinese but every Chinese is not Kokangese*

The following saying is also spread in Northern Shan State.

*Earth could not swallow a nation to extinction but a race would*

The undocumented article titled *Kokang* was published in the widely read No. 12 March 1991, of Thai-Yunnan Project Newsletter. Amazing!
Appendices

Appendix I

[Map of the area]
Appendix II

NORTH HSENWI.

Yang Kwe Cheing.

Chinese. Hêng or local official, of Kokang, an important district of the State of North Hsenwi. Yang Kwe Cheing was born in 1843, and succeeded his father in the Hêngship, which has been hereditary in his family for many years. He married a woman of the Li family, by whom he has five sons. One of these and a nephew assist in the administration of the district. In 1874 Yang Kwe Cheing practically lost his eyesight by the explosion of his powder flask during a fight with the Chinese-Shan States of Kêng Ma and Mêng Keng. Though rather a feudal than an official of North Hsenwi State, he has always been a faithful subordinate to the Chief. His loyalty to the British Government is undoubted, and he is much respected in Kokang. The title of Ahmudan gaung Tazeik ya Min was conferred upon him in June 1897.

Subjects: List of leading officials, Nobles and Personages in the Principal States under the Govt. of Burma
No.45-27 Pt: (1909)
Appendix III

BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

YANG WEN PING'S NOTICE TO THE PEOPLE OF KO KANG AND HEADMEN OF ALL VILLAGES UNDER HIS JURISDICTION.

1. YANG WEN PING, am the hereditary myosa of Ko Kang Sub State in British Burma. Owing to illness, I have come to India for treatment and recuperation. I therefore hereby notify that pending my return to Ko Kang I have entrusted my brother Yang Wen Tean with the task of the administration of the Sub State.

(Signed) YANG WEN PING
Hereditary Myosa of Ko Kang,
British Burma.

Notice issued by the Office in India of Ko Kang.

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command, I, the Chief Civil Affairs Officer, Burma, hereby confirm the above order of the Myosa of Kokang Sub-State delegating the powers of administration of the Sub-State to his brother Yang Wen Tean, provided that in exercising powers of civil administration the acting Myosa will be subject to the supervision of the Civil Affairs Officer appointed by me for the Kokang Sub-State.

C. F. B. PEARCE.
Major-General.
Chief Civil Affairs Officer (Burma).

The 16th June 1944.

[The text contains additional documents and notices, but they are not legible or translatable in this format.]
Appendix V

Agreement between the Administrator of North-Heenwi State and the Sashpalong of Kokang State.

1. There will be a permanent boundary for the North-Heenwi and Kokang States. The Salween river will be the boundary of the two States. A very small piece of land lying west of the Salween river will be amalgamated to the North-Heenwi State. The piece of land will be Monghawng, Lei Ping Ye and West Kunlong.

2. Yang Kyin Sai, Head of the Kokang State will make known to the people lying in Monghawng, Lei Ping Ye and the West Kunlong of the fact that the land lying west of the Salween will henceforth come under the administration of North-Heenwi State.

3. People living in the above mentioned areas will for administrative purpose, come under the administration of North-Heenwi State; and those who wish to earn their living by growing Opium can move into the Kokang State, i.e. the areas lying east of the Salween river. And those who wish to stay on the west side of the Salween can do so, the choice of which shall be left to the residents concerned.

The entire area lying east of the Salween will henceforth be known as the Kokang State; and its administration will be run by Yang Kyin Sai. The Salween river is the permanent boundary of the North-Heenwi and Kokang States.

This agreement comes into effect from today the 16th May 1951.

S/ (Soe Hma Hpa.)
Administrator of North-Heenwi State, Heenwi.

S/ (Yang Kyin Sai.)
Sashpalong of Kokang State, Kokang.

Signed in my presence.

S/ (Soe Hma Hpa.)
Special Commissioner.
Appendix VII

[Handwritten text in Burmese]

[Image of handwritten text]