

ALOHA from Burma (Myanmar)

April 28, 2004

It was cloudy outside. We were all sitting inside the Nam San Yang church. The speaker was preaching in a language that I didn't understand. The advantage of being in a worship service where you didn't understand the language was that you can let your mind wander. My mind was wandering, my eyes gazing at the clouds through the window behind the speaker, the mountains murmuring in a language that I could almost understand.



Fig. *The view from Nam San Yang Church*

My mind wandered back to the beginning. I didn't want to live in Yangon during summer. I traveled all over Burma during the last two months. Among many trips I took, Nam San Yang trip was very exciting. Here is how it all began. It was back in Rangoon.

People were sleepy in front of the gate of Myanmar Railways. All of them were there to get in line for buying train tickets. It was about 9:00 PM and the night was still young. The ticket wouldn't go on sale until 6:00 AM. Yet people were overzealous. Brang Mai, a student of mine, and I went to a friend's house near the train station. We came back

at about 11:00 PM to the station. We sat there in front of the gate, feeling sleepy.

They opened the gate at 1:00 AM. People rushed in, pushing each other, some even ignoring their sandals. It was a complete chaos. Almost nobody gave priority to women and children. It was 2:00 AM when we were settled, getting our place in line. We were pretty far back. Being sleepy, I wished traveling in Burma would be a bit more comfortable. A young woman was sitting not very far from us. Her baby was sleeping in her lap. Her eyes were closed, being tired. Her face looked weary. Yet she was there in line to get the tickets she wanted. Finally, we got our tickets at 6:15 AM.

We left Rangoon the following evening. It was a 15-hour train ride to Mandalay. Arriving in Mandalay, we had breakfast. Satisfied because we no longer felt hungry, we had to start working on getting train tickets to Myitkyina. We were able to get 2 tickets from the black market paying 3 times the cost. Still being short of one more ticket, we stood in line to buy the without-seat ticket (ticket you can ride the train, but you are not assigned any seats, so you might have to sit on the floor). It was sold out before our turn. Since we already had gotten two tickets, we decided that our friend would ride the train without any ticket. We took the Myitkyina train for 30 hours. It was about 700 miles from Mandalay to Myitkyina.

We spent two nights in Myitkyina to visit some interesting places there. Going to the Mayka-Maylika confluence which became the Irrawaddy (Aye Yar Waddy.) The confluence was a beautiful place with beautiful mountains around and rocks on the bed of the river. Believer it or not. Brang Mai and I peed behind big rocks to pollute the Irrawaddy, which shows the lack of nice public restrooms. Mind you if you are using the Irrawaddy water downstream. ☺

The following morning, we left for Nam San Yang, a village 40 miles southeast of Myitkyina. We spent about 10 days in Nan Sam Yang. We taught English to the kids from the village. One truth I have found is that there are kids who want education, but are not fortunate enough to go to

cities where good schools are. The kids showed enthusiasm to learn, but didn't have experts to guide them. Many kids were still confused about the uses of "I, me, my and mine." It would be challenging for an educated person to go live in those places to teach them. I hope there will be more educated people from the region to train them effectively.

Inside the church, the kids were singing "Yehowa hpe kabu gara ai myit hte dawjau nga mu." They were singing in Kachin that they will serve the Lord. I prayed that one day they will be educated and help develop the area.



Fig. Brang Mai, a student of mine, and a local kid, Shai Awng Ja. The house in the background is the pastor's.

Please keep in your prayers those kids from the area and those who are serving there for the development of the area.

Education shall make them free.

May God bless you!

Love in Christ,

Lwin Moe

<http://dmw.mine.nu/~lwinmoe/lwinmoe>



Fig. A local kid helping his parents, on the way back home from their farm



Fig. Sunrise in Mandalay