In this paper, we take a journey to Chiangtung (Kengtung), a former vassal state of Lanna and close neighbour of Chiang Rai Thailand. This paper represents an effort to share some information about some of the mysteries of a city that has long been closed to the outside world. Now that the Thachilek/Mae Sai border has finally opened up, a greater number of tourists are being attracted to this place which once formed the mountainous area of northern Lanna and that is today the Shan State of northeastern Burma. It looks like Chiangtung will become a major tourist destination in the upcoming years. International tourists are likely to find a city which has not fully opened up to the world more interesting and Thais will be attracted to its charm, and cultural similarities, and will be reminded of Chiang Mai sixty years ago. The fact is, Chiangtung is located in the area called the Golden Growth Quadrangle in which the first stage will focus on the development of a transport network to provide ease of access among the four participating nations, Thailand, China, Myanmar and Laos. In two years time, maybe more, Chiangtung will be a greatly changed place if far-sighted members of the regional communities do not make the right decisions.

The Route to Chiangtung

The trip from Thachilek to Chiangtung took us about 12 hours to cover a total distance of approximately 160 kilometers. This was interrupted with many stops along the way for taking photos, shooting a video and conducting interviews. It is interesting to observe the roadway which quickly changes from a paved surface at Thachilek to dirt and dust the rest of the way. Houses and trees along both sides get a good covering of red dust. The road becomes narrow and dangerous at times. In places the road has boulders and many potholes which makes the journey extremely bumpy and causes wear and tear on the van. There are also delays caused by bulldozers busy widening the road. At these detours, ladies from the nearby village spread food along the roadside for sale. Noodles and a variety of snacks, smokes, and
drinks can be purchased to help pass the time spent waiting. We were stranded outside of Hpayak for about two hours. It appears that the current effort to improve the roadway from Thachilek to Chiangtung is moving at a snail's pace and a good transport network throughout Burma may still be a long way from reality.

Along the way, most houses are wooden structures elevated on stilts much like those in northern Thai villages and there are many villages similar to the hilltribe one found in Thailand. Outside of Thachilek several of the hilltops have reliquary chedis on their summits.

Hpayak is a fine place to stop and observe the local architecture. The town spreads out along the road and cuts through the center of town. About a hundred paces from the road in the middle of town there is the city spirit shrine situated under a tall tree. It is referred to as hor thewada and one is present in all villages and towns we visited. There are two monasteries that are worth visiting. The ordination hall at Wat Chettan is constructed in a pond of water and reflects a style of architecture which was common throughout Lanna. In former times, as was the practice in Chiang Mai, the ordination ceremony was conducted on a raft on the river. This type of boundary is called the Uthok Sima or water boundary. The water boundary was first mentioned during the reign of Phaya Kuna, the 6th ruler of Chiang Mai. According to the Chiang Mai Mulasasana chronicle Phra Sumana Thera performed the Uthok Sima ordination ceremony on the Ping river in front of Wat Phra Yuen in Lamphun in 1369 AD. The Jinakalamti chronicle tells about 25 Lanna monks being ordained on a raft on the Galayani River in Sri Lanka. When they came back seven years later, this tradition was introduced in Lanna. To the best of my knowledge there are still ordination halls built ever ponds in existence at Wat Phuta En in Mae Jaem district of Chiang Mai province and at Wat Tha Kham, Mae Taeng district Chiang Mai province.

Inside the assembly hall (vihara) at Wat Chettan there are many tung banners and pennants of different styles hanging from the beams. The numerous banners were given as offerings in honor of the Lord Buddha and his teachings. It is a form of the highest respect offered to the Buddha images on the altar in the hall. Another feature of local architecture that is typical of Tai Kern is the phaythart roof. All of the temples in Phya and Chiangtung had similar pulpits.

Wat Wiang Kao is located near the market across the street from the thewada shrine. The principal Buddha image has similar features to many found in Sipsongpanna. It is seated at the west end of the hall with a flaming halo that represents the moment the Buddha reached enlightenment. The ears are very large with long lobes hanging down to the shoulders, which symbolises wisdom. Many banners are hanging from the ceiling beams as offerings to the Buddha.

The monastery on the hill on the northern outskirts of Hpayak can be reached by foot from the main road. The climb up takes you to a single chedi on one of the two hills overlooking a panoramic view of the river valley below. In the distance you can see Hpayak and another village on the other side of the river among lofty trees. They appear to be multi-eaved roofs similar to those found in Sipsongpanna. The chedi has a superstructure mounted on a runathart body with four small niches housing Buddha images with inscriptions on their bases. On the neighboring hill is the Buddha image hall and another chedi. A small path down the hill crosses the creek and runs up the next hill to this temple. On the altar are seven Buddha images covered with tvones. The chedi base.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Myanmar**

This is a variant spelling of Myanmar. Myan means ancient.

**Chiangtung, Phwa, Phya**

Thais frequently use the term Phaya Kuna, Phaya Kuna, and it is used by Hermit Tin Norngtung.

**Chom**

Chom means circular or rounded. Chom Mom means circular walls. Chom Mom is a hermit who came from the southern walls of the city. Wat Phak is on a hill south of the city.

**Hor Thewada**

In village, town, the city's spirit shrine, where the city's spirit lives. Temple wall shelf for offerings.

**Kad**

Kad means centrally located. Kad mea is a permanent shelter with parasols surrounding them. Temple wall shelf for offerings.
were stranded in an effort to improve their pace and a good reality. On stilts much like a hilltribe, one of reliquary chedis in nature. The town of about a hundred shrine situated under the ordination hall of architecture and the practice in Chiang Mai. This type of boundary was formed by the Uhrak in Lamphun in being ordained on a rup three years later, there are still many banners found. It is a form of the hall. Another feature which has a multi-named stomach is which has a multiurban. Apus found in the thewada is an important monastery located on the hill in the north. Portions of the southern walls, moat and entrance can be seen here. Chom means low hill and Mom means circular. The names refer to the circular shape of the original city as designed by Hermit Thongka. Wat Phrathart Chom Kham is located on a low hill in the north of the city. Wat Phrathart Chom Sri is located outside the city. Wat Chom Mai is situated near the city. Wat Chom Mai is situated near pratu Padaeng in the west of the city. Chom Sak is the location of a Christian church school in the east of the city.

Hor Thewada

In villages, towns, temples and inside homes there is a special place for the village, town, temple and house spirits. Villages and towns construct a shrine under a tree, where they pay respect and homage to the spirit that protects and takes care of them. Temples build the hor thewada in the corner of the monastery compound and a wall shelf for flowers is attached inside the living room of the house.

Kad

Kad means market and Kadung is Chiangting’s main market. It is fairly centrally located but lie slightly to the south. The market is a large area enclosed with permanent shops and six entrances. Goods are displayed on mats and plastic sheets with parasols shading them from the sun. Other goods are placed in permanent stalls which are built in rows. There are many bicycles parked at the entrances and there is a bike parking lot with a guard on duty near by. There are two kinds of market days.

**IMPORTANT PLACE NAMES AND TERMS**

**Myanmar**

This is a word which was found in Pagan and recently used instead of Burma. *Myan* means active and *mau* means strong.

**Chiangtung, Kengtung, Tungkhaburi**

Thais frequently use the name Chiangtung. Chiang refers to city and it is commonly used in northern Thailand. Cities using *chiang* in their names are Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chiangsaen, and Chiangkhong. The Shan State has many cities using the term *muang* which is more commonly used instead of *chiang*. (Muang Ping, Muang Ma, Muang Yong, Muang Hpayak, Muang Ton, Muang Kung and Muang Len) The word Kengtung is mentioned on an ancient seal of the rulers of Kengtung, and it is used by most geographers. It has also been called Tungkhaburi after the hermit who came from Yunnan and founded the city after draining the lake called Nornung.

**Chom**

Chom means a low hill and there are five places that use this name. *Wat Thay* *Chom Mom* is an important monastery located on the hill in the north. Portions of the southern walls, moat and entrance can be seen here. *Chom* means low hill and *Mom* means circular. The names refer to the circular shape of the original city as designed by Hermit Thongka. Wat Phrathart Chom Kham is located on a low hill in the north of the city. Wat Phrathart Chom Sri is located outside the city. Wat Chom Mai is situated near the city. Wat Chom Mai is situated near pratu Padaeng in the west of the city. Chom Sak is the location of a Christian church school in the east of the city.

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Besides the regular day there is a special day called kad luang which occurs every third or fourth day. *Kad lunag* market days are bigger and goods are brought in from far away.

The ancient Kadtung market was located in the area in front of the hotel and next to the municipal sports stadium. The folks can still remember another market ground located across from the Ku Jao Fa Tombs and next to Wat Chiangjan. It is still called Kadtung Kao and every year it is the site of a special fair. There is also a shrine which was built for the spirit of Chaofa Jetphandu, who ruled over Kengtung. In 1339 Phaya Pa Yu, the fifth ruler of Chiang Mai, sent his son, Chetpandu to rule Kengtung. When Phaya Pa Yu died in 1355, Chaofa Chetphandu was called to take the throne, but was killed on his way to his coronation. The murderer fled to Ban Hua Kad. The local folks believe that the angry spirit of Chaofa Chetphandu also went to Ban Hua Kad looking for the man who killed him. So as not to anger the spirit and to protect the folks residing in this area they constructed a shrine for his wondering spirit at Kadtung Kao. During Songkran they *liang pee* (present offerings and pay respect to the spirit) at this shrine.

Khern

*Khern* is a term that refers to a branch of the Tai whose language is similar to that of Chiang Mai. The majority of the population of Chiangtung is Tai Khern. The word may have originated from the legend concerning the founding of the city. After the hermit tried unsuccessfully to drain the lake in the south, he marked a channel with his cane in the north and the water drained away through it. The river in the north is called Khern river and the early people who occupied this area were called Khern.

Ku Chaofa Tombs

These royal tombs contain the relics of rulers of Chiangtung. The largest tomb houses the ashes of Chaofa Ratana Kornkeow Intalaeng who died during the reign of Rama VII.

Ku Nangfa Tombs

These royal tombs contain the relics of Jaonang Daeng and Jaonang Buasawan. Ku Jaonang Daeng's is the large tomb and Ku Buasawan's the smaller one. They are located at Wat Khemin in the rear of the temple compound.

Norng

Norng means pond or lake and four importance ones are mentioned in the chronicles. Norngtung is the lake inside the city. It is believed to have occupied the area where the city was later established by a hermit who drained it resulting in its present size and shape. Norng Ngern is located outside *pratu Norng Lek* in the northwest. Today there is a village called Ban Norng Ngern. Norng Kham is located outside of pratu Maan in the northeast just before reaching Wiang Mai, the site for a new city. Norng Keow is located near *pratu Ngam Fa* and has greatly decreased in size.

Sipsongpanna

Sipsongpanna is a branch of the Tai.

*Talaeo (Chalae)*

This is found today in the north.

Layout of Chiangtung

The earliest Buddha who visited Kengtung was called the first Buddha to visit the city by digging a well in the lake at Norng Norng. This created a triangle which formed a circle around the ancient city where Chiangtung City is today.

The Norng Nangfa Tombs

Ku Chaofa Tombs

Sipsongpanna

The walled settlement of Wiang Mai which were built with the cardinal lines were scratched filled up with water to the size of today called Nam Fa Lake. In 2357 B.C. they further modified it and finally fortified the city which still exists today.
Sipsongpanna is an area of southern Yunnan, China which is occupied by a branch of the Tai. In Thai it literally means twelve thousand rice paddies.

**Talaeo (Chalaeo)**
This is found above the doorway of a house or in the four corners of a rice field.

**Layout of Chiangtung**
The earliest city came into being in fulfillment of a prediction made by the Lord Buddha who visited the area and announced the arrival of a hermit who would build the first Buddhist city in this area. The hermit who was called Tungkha fortified the city by digging a deep moat in the northern and southern hilly sections of the town. This created a triple barrier that consisted of a moat, inner, and outer walls. The walls formed a circle around the city with eight passages through them. The gates of the ancient city were first established in alignment the eight points on the compass. The Chiangtung Chronicles mention the following:

- North: Norng Pha Entrance
- Northeast: Yang Ping Entrance
- East: Pa Daeng Entrance
- Southeast: Chiang Lan Entrance
- Southwest: Jen Muang (Saeng Muang) Entrance
- West: Yang Kham Entrance
- Northwest: Norng Lek Entrance

Sometime later four additional gates were added by either the rulers of Chiangtung or the local residents. There were two entrances created in the lower northeast called Pratu Nam Bor Oi and Pratu Man (Mangkhla). The other three entrances were Pratu Ngam Fa in the southeast, Pratu Phayang in the lower southwest (on the route to the crematorium) and another one in the northwest called Pratu Kai Hai.

The walled city was circular in design and very similar to the pre-Chiang Mai Lua settlement of Wiang Chet which was situated at the foot of Doi Suthep. Ancient cities which were built by hermits usually had a circular shape with eight entrances aligned with the cardinal and ordinal points of the compass.

According to legend, Lord Buddha visited the Shan State and rested at a large lake. He predicted that the lake would be drained and that later a Buddhist city state would be established in the valley. The hermit Tungkha came down from Sipsongpana and used his staff to drain the lake. He first drew a line with his cane in the south which turn into a channel, but did not drain the lake. Two additional lines were scratched on the ground in the north where they turned into channels, filled up with water and after seven years and seven months successfully drained the lake to the size of the current existing pond called Norng Tung. The two streams are today called Nam Larp and Nam Khun.

In 2357 BE a new wall was built by Chaofa Maha Kanan who used bricks. It was further modified during World War II. During the Japanese occupancy of Chiangtung they fortified the southern earthen barriers on One Tree Hill and built a pill-box which still exists today.
IMPORTANT MONASTERIES ESTABLISHED IN ANCIENT TIMES

Wat Phrathart Chom Kham

This ancient temple is located on the northern hill close to Pratu Yang Ping. According to legend the Lord Buddha left six strands of hair in the locality which were later enshrined in a chedi by Hermit Tungkha. Based on this legend, the local folks believe it is one of the oldest temples in Chiangtung.

The present assembly hall (Buddha image hall) has been renovated. The wall murals are all rubbed on with lacquer and gold leaf. The ceiling and wall decorations are very beautiful. There are a variety of regalia around the altar which have been left in honor of the Buddha image by the local temple supporters. Equally interesting and beautiful are the pair of incense and flower offering trays done in wickerwork and laid out on tables in the hall. As is common in all the temples, there are a large number of tung banners hanging down from the ceiling.

Most of the earthenware objects decorating the exterior, especially on the roof, come from Ban Yang Khuang, a Tai Khern pottery village located just outside Pratu Nam Bor Oi on the road to Muang La. The nuk hatsudding (mythical elephant bird creature) is found on the apex of the ordination hall located next to the Buddha image hall.

Wat Phra Keow and Wat Hua Khuang

These two monasteries are located at the head of the former palace grounds. They are situated side by side and today are separated at the junction of two roads. They were constructed by Chaofa Chet Phan Du in 1350 A.D. Chaofa Chet Phan Du was one of the earliest rulers recorded. The name “Chet Phan Du” refers to the seven thousand entrances to a beehive. Phaya Pa Yu, the 5th ruler of Chiang Mai, sent his son to rule Chiangtung. He brought four high-ranking monks who established a branch of Buddhism stemming from the late Hariphunchai period. There were three Buddha images enshrined at these temples, one made of crystal (Phra Keow), the other made of stone (Phra Hin) and the third one called Phra Nga (nga meaning sesame). The monks residing at these temples received support from the royal household of Chiangtung and formed the order which became known as the Yang Khuang Sect.

Temple Built by Chaofa Ai On and his son Chaofa Ken Lek

They built a large monastery for some monks who belonged to the Sujato order, which was a Sinhalese Theravadin Order that was supposed to be of the purest form.

Wat Pa Daeng (Red Forest Monastery)

Wat Pa Daeng is located just outside of Pratu Pa Daeng in the east. This temple was established by a monk named Khemanangala in around 1440 A.D. At this time the ruler of Chiang Mai was Phaya Tilokaraj and it was a glorious period in Lanna history. This monastery was first called Jayamantarama but later adopted the name Red Forest Monastery after the one established in Chiang Mai by a group of monks who went and studied in Sri Lanka. Another Red Forest Monastery was established in Phayao as well. The interior of the wiharn is very lovely and the scripture repository is twelve sided.
Pratu Yang Ping, the locality which were end, the local folks innovated. The wall and wall decorations which have been left equally interesting and in wickerwork and laid are a large number of specially on the roof outside Pratu Nam jhant bird creature) is idha image hall.

Wat Yang Khuang
This Forest Monastery is located outside Pratu Nam Bor Oi. It is an important monastery which greatly appealed to the commoners. It is situated on a small hill. At the foot of the hill is the Hor Thewada shrine for Ban Yang Khuang. The temple compound has many trees.

Wat Thart Chom Mom
This monastery is located on One Tree Hill in the south of the city. The monastery is located on a hill overlooking the city and against the inside of the southern wall and moat. When the words are broken down they mean something like this. The word wat means temple, chom refers to small hill and mom means round in reference to the shape of the city. On the way up there are some soldier barricks, guard posts, and a large brick embankment bound together with cement. The road takes you all the way to the summit. There is also a staircase which leads up to the wiharn.

OTHER TEMPLES IN AND AROUND THE CITY

Wat Chiangjan
This temple is located at Ban Hua Kad and is across the street from Ku Chaofa (Chaofa Tombs). The interior of the wiharn is very ornate with many banners, an interesting busabok, and old thamart pulpit. There is a stone inscription on the wall.

Wat Chiang Ing
This temple is located on the west side of Norng Tung and has a casino operating in the evening. Several games using dice and cards are played in the monastery compound.

Wat Phrathart Saeng Muang
This monastery is located on the hill to the southwest outside of Pratu Jen Muang (Pratu Saeng Muang).

Wat Thart Chom Sri
This monastery is located outside the city to the northwest.

Wat Nam Daek
This monastery is situated in the south just outside Pratu Chiang Lan.

Wat Thart Doi Luang
This monastery is located on a high hill several kilometers outside the city. From here you get a panoramic view of the whole valley. The best time to come is in the morning when the view is clearest. There is a cave which was used for hiding weapons during the war. On the way, you get a good feel for the lifestyle of the local folks. There are many rice paddies and most of them are marked with the chalaeo bamboo markers.
Wat Ban Fui Rung
This monastery is located seven kilometers outside Pratu Norng Lek at Ban Fui Rung village. The village is populated by the Tai Nua ethnic group. They originally dispersed from southern Yunnan in the area bordering Myanmar and China. Many of the houses in this village are made of wood and bricks. The bricks are made of clay which is mixed and moulded at the building site. The village well has an interesting structure covering it with wall paintings of Mae Tharanee (Earth Goddess) and thewada (village guardian spirit). The monastery is typical of those found in Sipsongpana. One can notice that the walls are thick and the windows are small and there are only a few present.

Ban Yang Khuang (Village)
Yang Khuang village is a small Tai Khern village located about two kilometers from Pratu Nam Bor Oi in the north. The villagers are farmers and they also specialize in making earthenware. The products include clay pots, portable clay stoves, and temple decorations (garuda, singha, and nok hatsadiling figures). The earthenware is shaped and molded on crude potter's wheels operated manually. The designs are fixed on the surface with wooden sticks that forming horizontal, diagonal, vertical and zig-zag lines. The women, both young and old, seem to do most of the pottery work. After the clay objects have been shaped they are left out to dry in the sun. In the early evening a bed of straw is prepared and then covered with a generous layer of sawdust. The clay pots, portable stoves, and temple figures are carefully placed on top of the bed and stacked up several levels high. Everything is covered and buried deep with some more straw. After doing this, a layer of sawdust is placed over the mound and then some ash (keetcto) is sprinkled over it. The mound is set light to this simple kiln is left heated throughout the night. In the morning the earthenware goods are retrieved and then taken to Kad Tung (market).

OTHER THINGS OF INTEREST

One Tree Hill
Nowadays the symbol of the city is One Tree Hill, the hill in the northern part of the city on the compound of Wat Thart Chom Mon.

Blacksmith (specializing in knives)
A skilled craftsman in the art of knife-making can be seen a few paces from Wat Thart Chom Kham and across from the village thewada shrine. This blacksmith does most of his work on the porch of his house. He does have a small factory in the rear yard through, with several workmen employed. The metal for the knives come from old discarded automobile bumpers. He makes a variety of knives and sells them at Kad Tung (market).