

HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONORABLE SAO HKUN HKIO, THE SAWBWA (RULER) OF MONGMIT (27-30)

He was born on 19 August 1912 and after leaving the College he went to Cambridge University, where he got a BA in 1934 and married an Englishwoman.

They then returned to Mongmit, where in February 1937 he succeeded his father as hereditary ruler of Mongmit, which is now part of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). At the time it covered an area of 3,733 square miles with a population of 59,865. He reigned as ruler until 1952, when it ceased to be a separate province. He was the last of the Sawbwas, the hereditary rulers of Mongmit.

He became the parliamentary representative of all the Shan peoples after his brother-in-law, the Sawbwa of Mongpaw, was assassinated along with other leading politicians, on the eve of Burmese independence.

In 1947 he wrote a report on "The Secession of Kokang" for the Government of Burma. You can read his report at http://206.225.87.154:9080/live/shan/resources/history/secession_of_kokang.htm

Throughout the 50s and 60s he played major roles in the government, as Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Burmese delegation to the United Nations.

After the military coup led by General N Win in 1962 he was held in solitary confinement and his wife was eventually sent back to England. Released in 1968 and rearrested for a time 4 years later, Hkun Hkio lived quietly in Rangoon until 1997 when he was finally given back his passport which allowed him to return to England.

During the last years of his life he lived quietly and contently with his wife and children at his home outside Cambridge, where he died in October 1990 at the age of 78.

The following photo on the right appeared in Autumn 1991 edition of the OF Magazine and shows the young Sao with his father and the Rev Rupert Kneese. The picture was taken when the Scouts were holding a weekend camp on The Front. The picture on the right shows where the Mongmit district is located in Myanmar.



Alfred Molson (K38-43) has provided the following fascinating recollections of him :-

One cold and rainy September day in 1927 at Fram, two lonely boys found themselves in totally strange surroundings. Both had just arrived at Fram as new boys and away from home for the first time. One was Sao Chow (**Sao Hkun Hkio**) the eldest son to the Ruler of the Shan States in Burma and a long way from home. The other was **Victor Hammick (K27-30)** (my first cousin) from near by Leiston, Suffolk. Their loneliness in their new surroundings cemented a close friendship that lasted until Sao died in 1990.

Summer of 1936 we had a family gathering at my Uncle and Aunts home. My parents, sister and I were present, so was Victor Hammick and his sister Winnie. The only non-family present was Sao Chow (the name by which we knew him.) He had just arrived back in the UK from Burma, and wanted to see Victor. He was invited to join us and the next day he discovered that among other celebrations it was Winnie's 21st Birthday. He hired a car, drove off to Ipswich on some false pretence and returned with a birthday present for his old school mate's sister. It was a Diamond ring (cost some £850.0.0.!) - as much as a Doctor in family practice made in a whole year. (Fram. Fees were £85/90. p.a.) The next day, Vic. Sao, Winnie and my sister all drove off to Ipswich where a more appropriate present was found.

Sao was granted a "Kings Commission" in the British army, NOT a 'Viceroy's Commission" as was usual for 'Colonials' incl. Indians who served under the British Flag. While he drew a pension, when he died Westminster flatly refused to give his widow a pension. She was a Brit - his landlady's daughter who he married while at Cambridge. Victor enlisted several MPs and a QC, all to no avail. Another shameful act of Governments of all kinds.

Sao was the son of the Ruler of the Shan States in Burma (east of the Salween River on Thai boarder). While the very helpful British Raj ruled the country, they did supply a "British Official" as resident 'Advisor'. His father noticed that whenever the Brits introduced a new law, (usually to benefit the Brits.) the Advisor was usually sympathetic at the start, he always ended up insisting 'it would be better to acquiesce, and avoid troubled feelings on the part of the Brit. Raj. Sao came to the UK to offer Victor a lifetime job as his all around advisor, so as to have a second opinion on the subject. After Fram, 1930, jobs were very hard to get, and the best Victor got was as a clerk in the Leiston East Suffolk County Council. Pay was ten shillings a week. However my parents were able to get him a job with Prudential Insurance.

The 'U' after a Burmese name is like 'Esq.' (i.e. he has and wears a white shirt.)