

AGAIN: THE FORTIFICATIONS OF CHIANG SĀN

by

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Discussing the ancient fortifications of Chiang Sān in a previous paper, I came to the conclusion that, whatever the present situation of the rampart, in the 19th century Chiang Sān had a double wall on its north, west and south sides, with a moat in between, the higher wall facing the town, the lower wall the outside¹. This was based on personal observations made in 1969, and above all on a description by Hallett² which dates back to 1884 or 1885.

In the meantime, I have come across a passage in Hosséus' book on his travels in (then) Siam which generally agrees with what Hallett had observed but differs in a few details.³ Hosséus, a German botanist who visited Chiang Sān in May 1904, twenty years after Hallett, described part of the fortifications (my translation): "... northern rampart ... Here, at its inner side, the rampart consists of bricks, while its outer side is surrounded by a palisade made of wood which mostly has been burned. The entrance is made exactly according to the pattern of the one on the south side. Around the first rampart, a moat has been dug which is bordered by a second, lower rampart".⁴

Thus, while Hosséus also noted a double wall, he disagreed with Hallett on the position of the palisade. Hallett had written: "The crenelated top of the wall (i.e. the inner wall; H.P.) having been destroyed,

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- 1) Hans Penth, "The Fortifications of Chieng Sēn", in: In Memoriam Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Bangkok (Siam Society) 1970 p. 349-351.
 - 2) Holt S. Hallett, "A Thousand Miles on an Elephant in the Shan States", Edinburgh/London 1890 p. 194 f.
 - 3) Carl Curt Hosséus, "Durch König Tschulalongkorns Reich", Stuttgart 1912.
 - 4) This passage is on p. 178 and reads in the original German: "... Nordwall ... Der Wall besteht hier innaen aus Ziegelsteinen, während die Außenseite ein Palisadenzaun mit größtenteils verbranntem Holz umgibt. Der Eingang ist genau nach dem Muster desjenigen der Südseite errichtet. Um den ersten Wall ist ein Wassergraben gezogen, den ein zweiter niederer Wall einfaßt".

a strong teak palisade 6 feet high has been erected against its inner side as a protection". The problem is whether both authors meant the same palisade. As for the gates, Hallett had thought that they were all alike. On this, Hosséus was more cautious; he only compared the northern to the southern gate. As I had already occasion to point out in the previous paper, the present shape of the gates does not suggest that they had a completely identical lay-out.

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Concerning the fortifications on the east side, it is now generally believed that they were destroyed by the river. Hallett had noted: "The eastern side (of the town; H.P.) is unprotected; the fortifications, together with about a quarter of a mile in width of the city, having been swept away by the encroachment of the river". Also, I have heard authorities of the Fine Arts Department express the opinion that the two sand banks or islands in front of Chiang Sän, each carrying the ruins of a monastery, may be remains of the former eastern part of the city.

Hallett did not give his reason for writing that there had been fortifications, i.e. a wall, on the east side. Possibly he just assumed that if there were three walls, a fourth one must have existed as well. However, there is reason to doubt that Chiang Sän indeed had an eastern wall. As far as I know, no remains of a wall nor of any kind of fortification have been found on the two islands in the Mä Khong, although the ruins of the monasteries still exist. Of course, one may argue that the rampart could have been made of earth and therefore easily been swept away, or that it could have been still farther to the east, in what is now the middle of the river.

However this may be, it seems that, when the town was founded in 1327 or 1328 close to or on the site of an older town, no east wall was erected. My copy of the Chiang Mai Chronicle⁵ relates the founding of

5) An undated palm leaf manuscript. See also: Camille Notton, "Annales du Siam III: Chronique de Xieng Mai", Paris 1932 p. 78; คณะกรรมการจัดพิมพ์เอกสารทางประวัติศาสตร์ สำนักนายกรัฐมนตรี "ตำนานพื้นเมืองเชียงใหม่ จากต้นฉบับโบราณอักษรไทยยวน", กรุงเทพฯ พ.ศ. 2514 หน้า 37

Chiang Sān by King Sān Pu as follows (my translation): "...Jao Phanya Sān Pu went to (re) build Müong Lòi. He ordered that the moats of the wiang⁶ be dug on three sides; on the east side, the Mā Xòng⁷ was taken as the moat. Then he ordered that the walls of the wiang be erected on three sides. When all was finished, Jao Sān Pu lived and enjoyed the royal properties in that country, which then received the name Müong Ciang Sān⁸. One chronicle says that Ciang Sān was built in the year Mông Mao, 689 of the era. Another chronicle says (it was) in the year Pök Si, 690 of the era, 7th month⁹, 2nd of the waxing moon, Friday, the Tai call the day Pök Si... they made Ciang Sān 1500 wa long and 700 wa wide".

One has therefore to assume that Old Chiang Sān was situated directly on the west bank of the river, that it had walls and moats on the north, west and south sides, and that the east side had no wall. The text does not mention details, i.e. if the walls were double or single, or if they were made of brick or of mud.

It is true that the Chronicle then continues to say that there were five city gates, one of which by name of Patu Tha Man¹⁰, which could be understood to mean "Gate of the Burmese harbour", and thus possibly might refer to a gate in the wall along the river. But I am inclined to think that this item alone is rather dubious evidence for the existence of a wall on the east side. First, it is not clear what "tha", a word with many possible meanings in old texts, here stands for. Then, there might have been a gate even without a wall; also, we do not know what a "gate" looked like in those times. Finally, the name Pratu Tha Man, or Pratu Tha Ma or even Pratu Thap Man¹¹, is nowadays applied to the

6) The fortified part of a settlement.

7) Mā Khong river.

8) Müang Chiang Sān.

9) March-April 1328.

10) ประตูท่ามาน

11) ประตูท่ามาน ประตูท่าม้า ประตูทัพมาน

gate on the south side of Chiang Sän¹². Therefore, until more and better evidence is found that shows something different, one can assume that Old Chiang Sän had just three walls.

This does not exclude the possibility that at a later time, a fourth wall was added which subsequently fell victim to the river. But this also remains to be shown.

12) The chronicle *Tamnan Singhanawati Kuman* (Prachum Phongsawadan vol. 61, 1936, p. 149 and 167), which dates the founding of Chiang Sän by King Sän Pu in 1287, mentions 11 gates, six or seven of which contain the word *tha* (the two accounts in the chronicle are not exactly identical). The chronicle gives the names of six gates along the river, all of which (or all but one) include the word *tha*, but seems to place *Pratu Tha Ma* on the south side of the city. No particular mention of a wall by the *vmdei. serair*