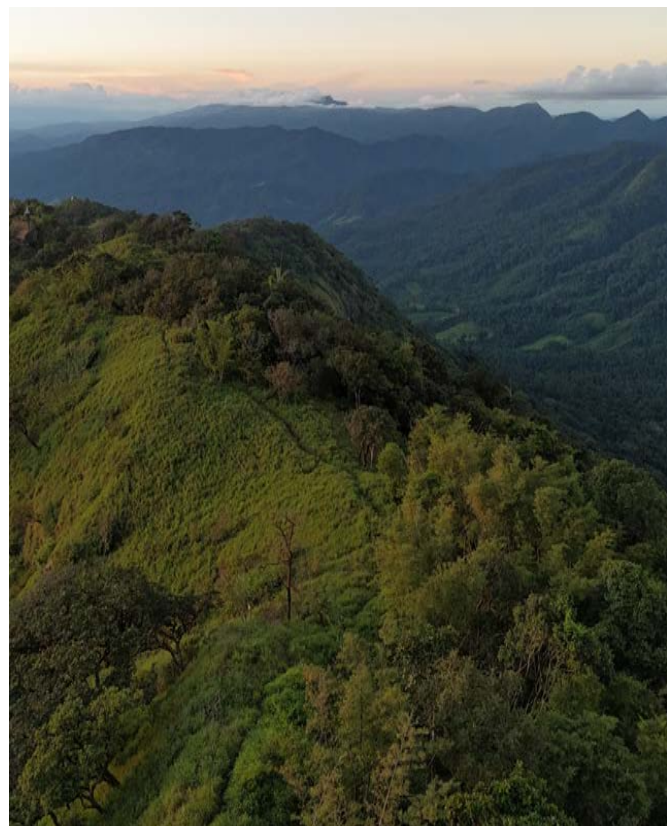




The Living Cultural Territory

Sacred and Historical Sites in the Salween Peace Park

July 2026



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Sacred and Historical Sites in the Salween Peace Park

Published by



Salween Peace Park & Karen Environmental and Social Action Network

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Acknowledgements

The implementation of this sacred and historical sites research in the Salween Peace Park, Mutraw District was initially conceived in 2016 during the first public forum for the establishment of the Salween Peace Park. Eight years later in 2024, we are happy to say that we have finally been able to realize this goal. This has been a collaborative initiative for us to defend and reclaim our territorial rights, strengthen our autonomous governance systems, preserve our cultural heritage, and actualize our collective right to self-determination. For the successful completion of this research titled, “The Living Cultural Territory: Sacred and Historical Sites in the Salween Peace Park”, a number of individuals and organizations provided their support in different ways and by different means, including ideas, concepts, advice, analysis, guidance, leadership, times, wealth of knowledge and financial resources.

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Additionally, our heartfelt thanks go to local Indigenous communities, elders, and wisdom keepers for their precious time and willingness to participate, cooperate, and share profound memories, experiences, wisdom, and knowledge in relation to the fourteen sacred and historical sites in Butho, Luthaw, and Dwelo Townships. Special thanks also go to our friend Jack Jenkins Hill for his support and guidance in research methodologies and processes, literature, technical advice, analysis, proofreading and editing of the English version of this report. Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to The Border Consortium for funding the field research carried out for this report and to the Tenure Facility for supporting the printing costs of this report.

Researchers



Saw Eh Liberate



Naw Htoo Tha Blay



Naw Mu Si Yo



Saw He Say



Saw Htee Lay Mo



Saw Lay Thaw



Naw Chit Moo Tha



Saw Nay Blut



Naw Paw Dah



Saw Ler Htoo



Saw Ta Tu



Naw Hai Say Htoo



Saw Eh Mwe

Research Objectives and Methodology

Research is a vital component to strengthening Indigenous territorial governance systems of the Salween Peace Park, asserting for our rights to self-determination, defending territorial integrity, preserving our unique cultural heritage, and protecting the health of our ecosystems. Furthermore, it is a strategic tool to empower Indigenous communities to be able to advocate for their socio-political needs and aspirations effectively at local, national, regional, and international levels. The primary objective of this research is for Indigenous communities in the Salween Peace Park to mutually recognize and reclaim ownership over their biocultural knowledge systems and practices.

Traditionally archeological research on artifacts, cultural materials, and historical sites has been based on the mindset, practices, and influence of colonialism and imperialism through western scientific methods that have historically led to the extraction and dispossession of local and indigenous peoples' histories, artifacts and cultural sovereignties.

Promoting and strengthening Indigenous research on cultural materials, artifacts, histories, and sacred sites is part of the process of decolonization. Reversing colonial ideologies, influence and interventions, while practicing our own right to self-determination is foundational to this research.

Indigenous archeology has most commonly been practiced in America, Canada, Australia and Oceania, and is a collaborative form of research that blends archeological and anthropological methods with the knowledge and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples.¹ In doing this it sets about to create decolonial practices and theories around past, history and heritage that challenge dominant imperialist voices. In this Indigenous-led research, our goal is not only to research and document cultural materials and artifacts, but also to also incorporate oral histories, traditional folklores, *Hta* traditional poems, spiritual relationships with our ancestral lands and environment, sacred sites, cultural ceremonies and rituals, traditional handicrafts, folktales, and ancient myths.

This research utilized community-led participatory methods based on the principles of community empowerment, enabling local research participants to identify, analyze, and discuss issues within their communities, develop local solutions to problems that they are facing, and collectively reach wise and well-informed decisions for the long-term vision of community development². The successful implementation and completion of this research was thanks to the collaborative and concerted efforts of officials and staff members of the Mutraw District/Townships, Salween Peace Park Research Team, and Karen Environmental

¹ 2006 *Indigenous Archaeology as Decolonizing Practice*. *The American Indian Quarterly* 30:280-310.

² KESAN/ (2024). *Research in the KESAN way: a guide for community researchers*. Wanida Press, Chiang Mai, Thailand

and Social Action Network (KESAN). While the preliminary baseline data on the sacred and historical sites in SPP/Mutraw District identified over 70 sites, after having a thorough discussion and analysis of each name list, plus reflecting upon the agreed upon criteria, a collective decision was reached to prioritize 14 sacred and historical sites for this research.

Given the challenges that we encountered while undertaking this research, including the many decades of state violence and political repression by the military dictatorship, war, religious colonialism, prolonged displacement and the passing of the Indigenous elders/knowledge keepers, research data in the forms of oral tradition, intergenerational memories and bonds, local histories, biocultural knowledge, poems, folklore, taboos, ancient myths, spiritual relations, and cultural materials was successfully collected from thirteen out of fourteen selected areas. The sacred and historical sites included Thawthi Kho (Mount Thawhti), Paw Law Pu, Ler Mu Kho Ser (Stony Cliff), Htee Nu Pu (Cave), Hlo Pwor Bi (Ancestors' Spiritual Gravesite), Pwo Pwor Lay, Hkeh Pa Lay in Luthaw Township; Ker Kaw Lay, Hkoe Ler Phar, Thu Mu Lay, and Htee Theh Lay in Dwelo Township; and Par Baw Lay, Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe, and T' Ri Kyoe (only the photos and video were obtained) in Butho Township of Mutraw District in the Indigenous-conserved territory of the Salween Peace Park.

The criteria for the implementation of the research are detailed below:

- (1) Safety and security concerns for local researchers and communities are our top priority throughout the implementation of the research,
- (2) Sites that continue to hold cultural, ecological, spiritual, and historical significance and value through meaningful relationships with Indigenous ways of life, traditional livelihoods, and customary governance systems and practices, and
- (3) Communities continue to preserve traditional knowledge, folklores, legends and myths, cultural and spiritual ceremonies, poems, and cultural materials and artifacts.

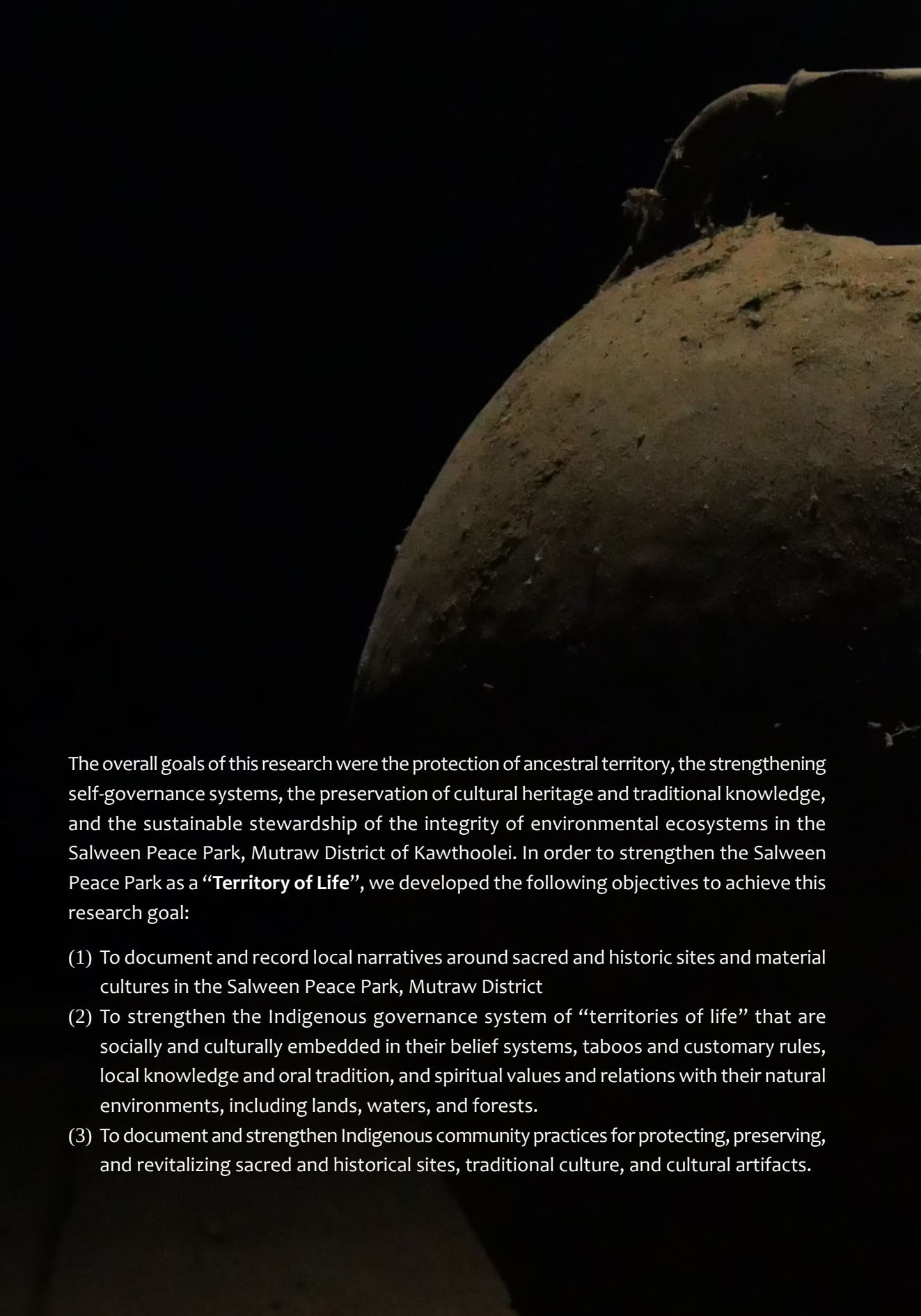
Prior to the field research, a community-led participatory research training to equip local researchers with essential research concepts, principles, and skills and identify methods and tools that were locally relevant and culturally appropriate was conducted. We also spent a considerable amount of time in brainstorming, developing, and analyzing research guiding questions for the field research. Methods of this qualitative research were composed of personal interviews, focus group discussions, participatory tools and processes such as the drawing of community historical timelines, territorial and resource mapping, spirit mapping, transect walks, recording sacred sites with GPS, direct observation of local communities' way of life and livelihoods practices, testimonials, community meetings,

and social gathering for storytelling and *Hta* traditional poems sharing and recitation. This participatory research was undertaken from September 2024 to March 2025.

To honor as well as uphold the best practices of the international principles of the Indigenous Peoples' decision-making process known as Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), a consultative meeting was held with the leadership of Mutraw District, SPP's Governing Committee, and local communities prior to the field research. During the meeting, we informed them about the historical background and rationale behind this research, its goal and objectives, research methods, and how the collected data would be used, and finally secured their consent for the implementation of this research.

Furthermore, to ensure that the research findings and knowledge generated throughout entire process of data collection are accurate, reliable, and trustworthy, we conducted a data validation workshop with local researchers, Mutraw District's leaders, and members of the Salween Peace Park's Governing Committee to proofread, clarify, review, and make necessary changes for the finalization of the report. The workshop was held from May 22 to 23, 2025 in Day Bu Noh Village, Salween Peace Park in Mutraw District.





The overall goals of this research were the protection of ancestral territory, the strengthening self-governance systems, the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, and the sustainable stewardship of the integrity of environmental ecosystems in the Salween Peace Park, Mutraw District of Kawthoolei. In order to strengthen the Salween Peace Park as a “**Territory of Life**”, we developed the following objectives to achieve this research goal:

- (1) To document and record local narratives around sacred and historic sites and material cultures in the Salween Peace Park, Mutraw District
- (2) To strengthen the Indigenous governance system of “territories of life” that are socially and culturally embedded in their belief systems, taboos and customary rules, local knowledge and oral tradition, and spiritual values and relations with their natural environments, including lands, waters, and forests.
- (3) To document and strengthen Indigenous community practices for protecting, preserving, and revitalizing sacred and historical sites, traditional culture, and cultural artifacts.

Sacred and Historical Sites Location



Salween Peace Park, Mutraw District Map

Why are we undertaking this research?

Globally, Indigenous Peoples are well-known for their effective stewardship of the environment and planetary ecosystems as the result of their reciprocal relationships, cultural values, spiritual connections, and unconditional expressions of gratitude and respect towards the natural world.³ Maintaining a harmonious and peaceful co-existence with nature through taking care of each other for collective wellbeing is the key principle of Indigenous environmental governance, the praxis that has evolved over thousands of years, long before colonization and the emergence of the contemporary political systems. Historically, Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples in Kawthoolei have experienced intergenerational oppression, discrimination, cultural assimilation, exploitation of their natural resources, and dispossession of their ancestral territories under the Burman empire, British colonialism, ethnic chauvinism, and military dictatorship.

Additionally, our inherent rights such as the rights to self-determination, territorial rights, and importantly our cultural rights have been violated on a regular basis. For example, during the British colonization in Burma, Christian missionaries were used to convert Karen (K'nyaw) peoples to Christianity, undermining their Indigenous belief systems, ways of life, and traditional cultural practices. Further, at the hands of the repressive military dictatorship of Burma, Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples in Kawthoolei (K'nyaw homeland) have experienced atrocities, indiscriminate killings, natural resources extraction and exploitation, militarization, and invasion of their ancestral territories “Kaw”. These are genocidal and ethnocidal crimes that the Burman military regime commits against Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples.

For Karen (K'nyaw) peoples, “Kaw” refers to our ancestral territories. It refers not to land alone, but to the forests, rivers, spirits, plants, animals and humans that occupy it. For us, “Kaw” also includes the integrated territorial and environmental governance system, a system that is vital for the safeguarding and sustaining Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples' traditional knowledge system and practices, customary rules, taboos, and protocols in spiritual territories/sacred areas, natural resource management, conservation of biodiversity, and traditional sustainable livelihoods. Crucially, it is the heart of biocultural knowledge repository and transmission. As long as the military regime of Burma continues to hold the ideological doctrine of Burman supremacy “we are the master mindset”, there is no doubt that our territorial and cultural rights will continue to face grave threats.

³ Fa, J.E., Watson, J.E., Leiper, I., Potapov, P., Evans, T.D., Burgess, N.D., Molnár, Z., Fernández Llamazares, Á., Duncan, T., Wang, S. and Austin, B.J., 2020. Importance of Indigenous Peoples' lands for the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 18 (3), pp.135-140.

In responding to these existential threats and asserting for our political aspiration for self-determination, freedom, and equality, and liberating ourselves from the authoritarian regime of Burma, Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples in Mutraw District of Kawthoolei took a bold initiative to establish and declare the Salween Peace Park as Indigenous-conserved territory on December 18, 2018. The Salween Peace Park is an example of a "Territory of Life", rich in abundant natural resources, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. The sustainability of territories of life is comprised of three key characteristics, and they hold close and deep connections between a territory and Indigenous peoples/local community as its custodians, the continued functionality of indigenous governance institution, and effective enforcement and implantation of the governance decisions and rules that positively contribute to conservation of nature⁴. Equally imperative to territorial governance and integrity is embedded in the wisdom, guidance, and instructions that our ancestors give to us, "to care for the land and preserve living terrestrial and aquatic beings with whom we share the plant in an intrinsic and intimate web of life. We recognize that we are able to survive due to the well-being of the living things that comprise the biodiversity of these complex ecosystems. If we deplete these resources rapidly through over-extraction, over consumption, and overexploitation, the biodiversity that enriches our lives will go extinct and we will have undermined our own survival"⁵.

In defending our ancestral territories and their integrity, mutual recognition of our Indigenous leadership, wisdom, practices, and traditional knowledge systems based on collective decision-making through grounded democracy present a clear alternative to the repressive and dominant governance system of the authoritarian government and imperialist powers that continue to exacerbate interconnected global crises, including environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, climate change, armed conflict, war, and mass displacement. Therefore, the goal of implementing this sacred and historical sites research is to defend our ancestral territories, strengthen autonomous governance system, and move forward to achieve our collective rights to self-determination.

4 <https://www.iccaconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ICCA-Briefing-Note-7-Final-for-websites.pdf>

5 <https://kesan.asia/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sustainable-Forest-Management-English-Sept-20212.pdf>

Salween Peace Park as the Living Cultural Territory

The Salween Peace Park, the first Indigenous-conserved territory in Kawthoolei and in Burma/Myanmar has a total geographical coverage of 1,667,355 acres or 6,747.5 Square Kilometers (Km). Salween Peace Park is a **“Living Cultural Territory”** that connects intergenerational bonds and preserves the ancestral memories so that the young generation will continue to understand, appreciate, and carry on its cultural spirits into the future. The Salween Peace Park also embodies reciprocal relationships between humans and nature, safeguarding traditional and cultural heritage and identity, and sustaining local histories from across the generations. There are many sacred lands and historical sites in Salween Peace Park of Mutraw District, and they include rivers, mountains, valleys, stony cliffs, spiritual gravesites, caves, and more. This research is our collaborative initiative that will play a critical role in documenting the historic narrative of the Salween Peace Park and the spiritual relations that Indigenous Karen (K’nyaw) people hold over their land, forest, water and wildlife. Therefore, this research will be instrumental in moving toward achieving the Salween Peace Park’s goals of peace and self-determination, environmental integrity, and cultural survival.

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard”.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ Article 25





Key terminology

Indigenous Peoples

Even though the term “Indigenous Peoples” still hasn’t been formally standardized by international community, Karen (K’nyaw) peoples in the Salween Peace Park recognize and identify ourselves as “**Pwar Htoo Li Poe**”, the word for Indigenous people in Karen language. We identify as *Pwar Htoo Li Poe* because of the following characteristics.

Firstly, our ancestral lands known as “Kaw” are both our birthplace and the burial grounds of our ancestors, the foundation of our belief systems and institutions, and a sacred territory that spiritually, socially, and culturally connects our intergenerational bonds and histories between past, present and future generations. As self-identified Indigenous peoples, we have our own customary rules and taboos known as *Tadu Tatue*, *Talu Tathet* (spiritual offering ritual to the guardians of the water/rice spirits), *Taday Tahso* (spiritual offering ritual to the guardians of the land spirit), and other spiritual ceremonies that embody our spiritual relations, care, and mutual aid with our natural environment through reciprocity for collective wellbeing and survival. These customary rules and practices are critical to the effective and sustainable management and stewardship of our environment, lands, forests, rivers, and wildlife in line with our ancestors’ instructions and guidance.

The primary livelihoods of Indigenous Karen (K’nyaw) people are land and resource-based, including Ku rotational farming, agroforestry, and livestock raising, all of which are culturally embedded in our traditional knowledge systems and reciprocal relations with our sacred lands, forests, and waters. We have our own traditional histories, poems, language and literature, and cultural materials such as clothes and costumes, musical instruments—drum, *Porku* bamboo xylophones, cymbals, *Tanar* harp, traditional blacksmiths, weaving and other traditional handicrafts. We also have our traditional leaders known as *Htee Poe Kaw K’sar* (masters of Kaw), who are responsible for the functionality of customary land governance and management systems through traditional and spiritual obligations. For example, they play important roles in customary judicial processes, transmitting traditional and biocultural knowledge to young generations, instructing and guiding the practices of traditional handicrafts, hosting visitors, leading social and cultural ceremonies such as traditional wedding and funeral services, and Kaw offering ceremonies.

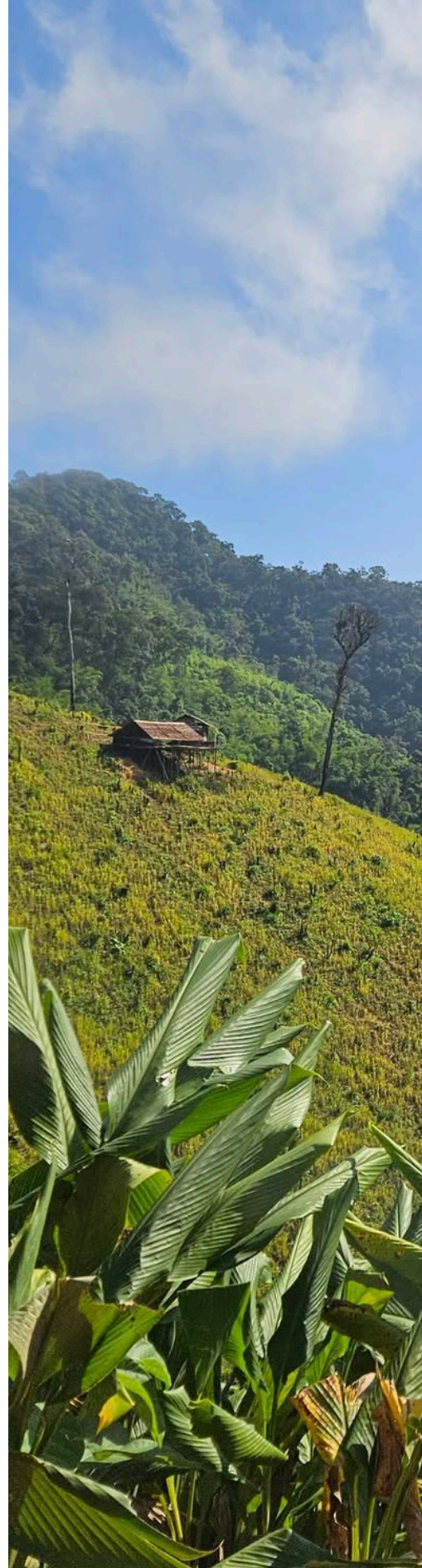
For our Karen (K’nyaw) people, the “Blaw” is foundational to the repository of traditional knowledge, material cultures and artifacts that have been preserved and sustained since our ancestral times. The “Blaw” is an important space for intergenerational learning and knowledge transmission for both present and future generations.

Finally, we recognize ourselves as Indigenous Peoples because of our ongoing struggle against historical injustices and oppression that we have experienced. These include the dispossession of our ancestral lands, the exploitation of our natural resources, and cultural assimilation. As Indigenous Peoples, it's critically important for us to reclaim justice and build a peaceful and sustainable future based on our Indigenous leadership and wisdom. In order to do this we must set about to self-strengthen our autonomous governance systems, revive our unique cultural identity, practices, and knowledge systems, and defend our ancestral territories, sacred lands, and biodiverse ecosystems against the exploitative systems of colonial and imperialist powers, capitalist systems, ethnic chauvinism, and authoritarian military dictatorship. These important characteristics demonstrate our unique identity as Indigenous Peoples that differ from others.

While there has not been an official or universally agreed upon definition of the term “Indigenous Peoples”, the United Nations has developed a common understanding of the term as below:

- (1) Self-identification as Indigenous Peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- (2) Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies.
- (3) Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
- (4) Distinct social, economic or political systems.
- (5) Distinct language, culture and beliefs.
- (6) Form non-dominant groups of society.
- (7) Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities⁶.

6 https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf

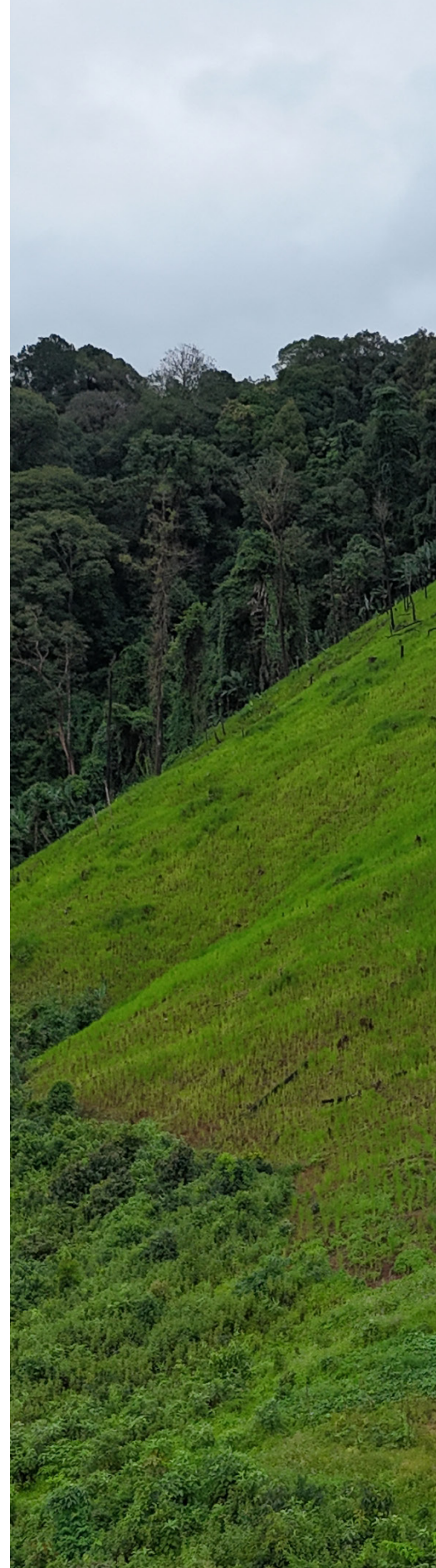


Tadu Tahtoo and Tadu (Traditional Taboos)

For Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities, *Tadu Tahtoo* (traditional taboo) are spiritual protocols and principles that are ingrained within our belief systems, practices, cultural values, social norms and worldviews that have been sustained and passed down through the generations. There are different kinds of *Tadu Tahtoo*, they include taboos that relate to traditional livelihoods, trades, travels, foods, wildlife hunting, land uses and housebuilding, and resource utilization. Simply put, *Tadue Tahtoo* are taboos that act to prohibit certain behaviors, determining what is or is not allowed to be performed and what should be avoided. For Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities, *Tadu Tahtoo* is understood as customary law, which has been practiced through the generations in the forms of *Hta* traditional poems, oral traditions, proverbs, folklores, elders' teaching, cultural and spiritual ceremonies, livelihood activities, land use and management practices, and environmental stewardship. *Tadu Tahtoo* is comprised of the following key aspects relating to Karen (K'nyaw) people's way of life:

- (1) *Tadu Tahtoo* in trades
- (2) *Tadu Tahtoo* in travels
- (3) *Tadu Tahtoo* in food consumption
- (4) *Tadu Tahtoo* in traditional livelihoods and farming practices
- (5) *Tadu Tahtoo* in household construction and village establishment
- (6) *Tadu Tahtoo* in inter/intra family marriage and relationships
- (7) *Tadu Tahtoo* in religious beliefs and practices
- (8) *Tadu Tahtoo* in traditional treatment and health
- (9) *Tadu Tahtoo* in the utilization of natural resources.

The Karen word *Tadu* indicates spiritual warning signs that have been observed and practiced by the elders through the generations. There are traditional proverbs that include





the following lessons; “*Tadu Oh Hpu Taseh Oh Taw* – Observe the complete the cycle of communal rest and take a brief pause after sneezing”; “*Per Du Tarnay Per Ha Tarhpu*-we will have a safe travel if we observe the complete cycle of communal rest”; *Per Ghay Tar Hpu Per Ha Tar Pleh*-assertiveness will make us feel safe”.

Our Hta teach us that where snakes and squirrels cross our path, where trees fall across our path, where deer bark or birds hang themselves while we designate lands to cultivate, that these are spiritual warning signs that indicate unforeseen troubles or obstacles during our work and travels therefore observing Tadu is required. There are certain Tadu/taboo that are observed at different times of year which take place within each Kaw customary boundary. Some of them include observing different phases of the moon (lunar cycle), observing Tar Ler Pler (folktale), Pwar Htaw Hlo (sending the deceased human remains to the spiritual gravesite), Bu Khaw Hti (rice roots), Tar Htaw Tar Law (guardian of water spirit traveling upstream), Day Kwor Tahoe (the traditional story of Smith’s litter frog and Muntjac deer), Bu Plo Hto Bu K’lar (rice spirit) and many others. “Tarmardu” means to the complete the observation of Tadu cycle. For example, to get rid of agricultural pests, a famer performs “Tarmardu Ku” ritual by scattering fermented bamboo shoot liquid around his farm and will wait until the following day. While observing “Tarmardu Ku” cycle, there is a restriction that no one is allowed to enter the farm unless the farmer has arrived at the farm first.

Thawthi Kho

Kay Pu Village-Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Mount Thawthi, locally known as Thawthi Kho is a renowned sacred mountain located in Lae Kee Kaw, Kay Pu Village Tract, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District of Kawthoolei. Thawthi Kho has an altitude of 7,592.52 feet (2,314.20 meters) above sea level and is recognized as one of the highest mountains in Kawthoolei. It is the origin for more than ten primary sources of waterhead for three major rivers such as Ler Hay Hlo Klo, Lae Hlo Klo⁷, and K'Bu Hlo Klo.

Lae Kee Kaw boundary has a total landscape coverage of over twenty thousand acres, all of which are under the collective governance and management of 37 indigenous households. The primary livelihood activities of this community include farming (lowland and Ku rotational farming) and livestock rearing. According to local indigenous elders, the original settlement of Lae Kee Kaw could be dated back more than ten generations. Geographically, Thawthi Kho is situated in the northeast of Luthaw Township and stretches into Taw Oo District and Baw Hu Der Townships of Karenni State. This sacred mountain has a treeless beautiful scenic view on its top and it's surrounded by other mountains at its base like chicks to their mother hen.

Thawthi Kho embodies deep cultural, social, spiritual, and historical values that are highly revered by Karen (K'nyaw) communities and other ethnic nationalities alike. Local indigenous elders explained that the face of Thawthi Kho overlooks Mutraw District of the Salween Peace Park while its ridge stretches into Karenni State. To the eastern side of Thawthi Kho is P' Hkoe Village in Karenni State, to the western side is Hsi Day Village in Salween Peace Park of Mutraw District, to the northern side is Klay Kee Village in Thawthi Taw-Oo Indigenous Park (TTIP) of Taw Oo District, and to the southern side of the mountain is an Indigenous village known as Lae Kee Village. Local elders in Lae Kee shared that Thawthi Kho is the sacred birthplace and home of many mythical beings and spirits. Over a century ago, as a significant spiritual sacred land, local travelers who arrived at the mountain ridge would witness the natural growth of

⁷ Klo is the Karen (K'nyaw) term for river

chili, eggplant, ginger, and spring onions; crops that grew naturally without being planted or maintained by humans. Local indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities in Lae Kee believe that they were planted by the guardian of the spirits known as “*Tarthue Tarpwo K'sar*” (divine entity). Further, a pile of firewood would always be prepared for travelers to cook and warm themselves. However, travelers who were dishonest, ungrateful, or abusive would not be able to see or use these resources.

It is also said that Thawthi Kho is the birthplace of our Karen (K'nyaw) legends, including Pu⁸ Maw Taw, Pu T' Keh who's also known as Pu Hto Meh Pah, Pu T'Nar Rah, and Pu K'Ter. As a spiritual and sacred mountain, local indigenous communities in Lae Kee believe that the deceased who had led a decent and honest life on earth, would return to Thawthi Kho to have a peaceful and happy afterlife. Conversely, those who led a dishonest and abusive life on earth would finally return to the adjacent mountain to Thawthi Kho, known as Pworghaw Kho in the afterlife. Because Pworghaw Kho is regarded as a place of death and evil; those who led a dishonest life during their time on earth would be consigned to this mountain for eternity. Indigenous elders explained that the reddish surface on the northern and southern sides of Thawthi Kho indicate that local communities will have fertile soils, and that they will enjoy plentiful crop yields. Indigenous *Tadu tahtoo* (taboos) around Thawthi Kho forbid the slaughtering of animals, the spilling of blood, and the drinking of alcohol. This also prevents the performance of ceremonial rituals that require the offering of local whiskey as the Thawthi Kho's K'Sar of the divine spirits does not like the smell of alcohol.

As a renowned spiritual and sacred mountain, indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) animist communities will always mention the name of Thawthi Kho when chanting prayers during the performance of ceremonial rituals. Because of their cultural, social, and spiritual values, reciprocal relations and respect for nature, descriptions about forests, mountains, hills, rivers, and wildlife are preserved through oral traditions, poems, proverbs, and folktales.

8 Pu in English means grandfather



As the birthplace of Karen (K'nyaw) legend, Pu K'Ter dug a hole with a T'lay Boe (Phyllostachys nigra) black bamboo spear, leaving a spear mark on the mountain. This spear mark resulted in the existence of T'lay Boe (Phyllostachys nigra) on Thawthi Kho until today. In the past, though travelers visiting the sacred Thawthi Kho could often hear the sounds of villagers pounding rice, roosters crowing, and children playing, even though there are no villages nearby. To this day, eggplants and onions naturally grow on the mountain. While the mountain surges to an altitude of 7,592.52 feet (2,314.20 meters) above sea level, there used to be a natural pool fountain on its peak. Moreover, sacred plants known as Sue Gaw Sue Baw (red and yellow Kaempferia herbal plants, a type of aromatic ginger) which are traditionally believed to possess supernatural power also used to grow on Thawthi Kho. Additionally, you are prohibited from taking orchids from Thawthi Kho. If one violates these traditional taboos, it is believed that one would get lost in the forest during their travels home.

Hta Poem About Thawthi Kho

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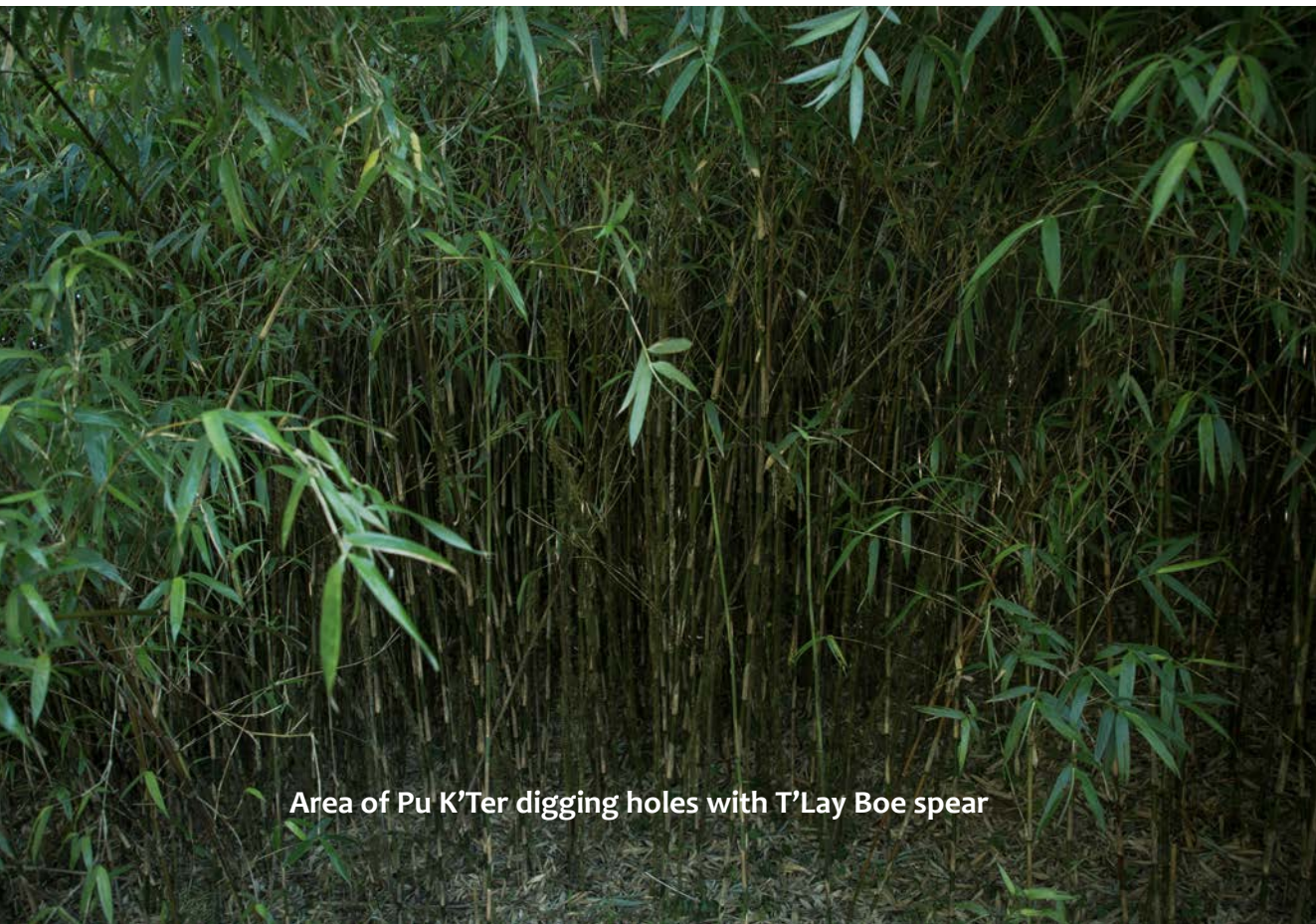
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သီသံခိုခိုစီးစီး၊ ပျိုဂီခိုခိုစီးစီး
မုတ်လှိုင်လှိုင်မုတ်လှိုင်၊ ပျိုဂီခိုလှိုင်မုတ်လှိုင်
တံတဟးစီးမုတ်လှိုင်၊ လဲစီးမုတ်လှိုင်သီးသီး

Do you know?

According to a myth shared by local indigenous elders, the three well-known rivers in the Salween Peace Park and Thawthi Taw-Oo Indigenous Park; Lae Hlo, Yaw Hlo, and Pweh Hlo Klo (Rivers) are created by wildlife. Lae Hlo Klo was created by a deer, Yaw Hlo by a cobra snake, and Pweh Hlo (which is also known as Pway Hlo and Pwo Hlo River) by (Slow Loris) Asia Slow Loris. These three animals were friends, once living in Thawthi Kho together. One day they had a discussion about the creation of the rivers. Lae Hlo Klo was created by the joyful deer jumping along the way, dragging the river into existence. Yaw Hlo Klo has a straight waterway because it was created by a cobra snake, dragging its body in straight line across the forest floor. As for Pweh Hlo Klo, the slow loris had regular naps whenever it reached the corners therefore the waterway of Pweh Hlo Klo is flowing twisty.

Local communities in Lae Kee also explained that all birds return every year to Thawthi Kho for tax payment. These birds would collect fisheyes from the sea, spiraling around some of the scared mountains in the Salween Peace Park such as Kay Thi Kho, Pwor Mi, Ku Kho, Butho Kho, and Ler Hko Kho three times each before reaching the peak of scared Thawthi Kho and paying their tax in the form of fisheyes. It happens during the preparation time for rice harvest in October. After paying their dues and performing other ritual ceremonies, the flocks of birds then fly back home to their natural habitat.



Area of Pu K'Ter digging holes with T'Lay Boe spear



On the peak of Thawthi Kho is Paw Kha herbal medicine and it is an indigenous medicinal flower which only grows on Thawthi Kho. Paw Kha can be used in the prevention and treatment of various illnesses and diseases. For instance, it is used to treat fever, sexually transmitted infections (STI), body pains and aches. In line with local traditional practices, villagers must conduct annual controlled burning in order for the seeds of Paw Kha flower to spread and germinate in the surrounding area.

Paw Kha Herbal Medicine
(*Lomatogonium carinthiacum* (Wulf.) Reichb.)

The legend of Mughar's Pool (guardian spirit)

Before the British colonial troops set up their military base on the sacred Thawthi Kho during the second world war, the mountain had a natural pool in which Mughar spawned hampala barb fish. Local indigenous elders who visited the pool even made a poem about the pool and said went; *"Thawthi Kho Htee Oh T'Kar, Mughar Buder Nya Hsa Wah"*, literally meaning that there was a pool on the peak of Thawthi Kho where Mughar spawned hampala barb fish. There was a traditional taboo that prohibited the carrying of deadly or destructive weapons on Thawthi Kho, and that other peoples that didn't belong to this sacred mountain were also forbidden from using the mountain. After the establishment of the British military encampment, however Thawthi Kho, once perceived as the sacred habitat of Mughar and other deities, had its spiritual powers and values detrimentally affected. According to the local elders, Mughar and natural deities, who disliked the smell of gun powder, were eventually forced to migrate elsewhere. Local people also shared that before British colonial troops set up their military camp during the second world war, Rhinoceros (which is perceived as sacred animal of Mughar's ceremonial pig) came back to bathe once a year in Mughar's pool during the rice harvest preparation time.



A dry Mughar's pool on the peak of Thawthi Kho



The leftover military equipment from the British colonial troops on Thawthi Kho





Hta about Mughar's Pool on Thawthi Kho

မုာ်ဃါနီၣ်လၢသီသံၣ်ခိၣ်အထီ

သီသံၣ်ခိၣ်ကွံအိၣ်တကွံ. မုာ်ဃါမုာ်လီၤလိာ်ကွံထံ
သီသံၣ်ခိၣ်ကွံအိၣ်တခါ, မုာ်ဃါဘုၣ်အညၣ်ဆၣ်ဝါ
သီသံၣ်ညၣ်ဖျၢထီၣ်တတုၤ, တုၤညၣ်ဖျၢတီၣ်ညၣ်ဖျၢ

It was on 31st of January 1945 when the British colonial troops established their military base on Thawthi Kho. A military hospital, arsenal, food rations, and military training fields for the new Karen (K'nyaw) conscripts were constructed on Thawthi Kho. Trenches and landmine fields were set up around the military camp. The military encampment of the British troops in Thawthi Kho lasted for seven months during the second world war. Indigenous elders claimed that the British troops believed that there were valuable treasures in Mughar's pool and therefore they blew it up with explosives. After the explosion, the water in the pool dried up and the sacred hampala bard fish that Mughar had spawned were killed. On August 7, the imperial Japanese army who bypassed Lae Kee Kaw made a military move to attack the British troops and take over their fortress on Thawthi Kho. After a week-long intense and hostile battle between the British and Japanese troops, the imperial Japanese army declared their unconditional surrender on August 14, 1945 and withdrew^၉.

၉ စီဘီနီလု. (ဒံၣ်စဲဘၢၣ်, ၂၀၀၂). “သီသံၣ်ပျီၤဂီၤယုၤစု
ဘီဒီးအရူဒိၣ်လံၤဖျိၣ်သ့ၣ်”. နိးဖ်ဘူရံၤစဲကျဲးတး, ဝုာ်
ကံၤမဲ, ကီၢ်ကွီၣ်တဲၣ်

The traditional folklore of the Young Mughar and P' Yo (Dragon)

A local folklore revealed that Thawthi Kho was home to Mughar (guardian spirit) and Pwo Pwor Lay was the birthplace of P' Yo (dragon). Once upon a time, there was a young Mughar Mupoe (a female guardian spirit) who lived in Thawthi Kho and P' Yo (a young male dragon) from Pwo Pwor Lay. Once a year, the young male dragon from Pwo Pwor Lay traveled to the headwaters of Pwo Pwor Lay, located at the base of Thawthi Kho. Every year, the dragon would travel further, finally arriving at the pass between Thawthi Kho and Pworghaw Kho where there was a big rock and natural pool. In the pool there was a shoal of fish. Local elders wrote poem about it; “Thawthi Kho Htee Oh T' Kwee, Ler T' Har Htee T'law Hti, literally meaning there was a natural pool in Thawthi Kho and as long as the rock exists there the water wouldn't dry up”. When the dragon arrived at the pool, he suddenly met a beautiful Mughar Mupoe there. As years passed by, the two became friends and started to like each other. Finally, P'Yo and Mughar Mupoe agreed to have their own family. However, P'Yo (dragon) asked Mughar Mupoe “do you think would it be possible for us to live together on Thawthi Kho as I can't endure the heat?”. Mughar Mupoe immediately replied to P'Yo; “don't you worry about the heat as I will prepare seven big jars full of water for you and you can get into the jars and cool yourself when you feel hot”. Afterwards, the two finally agreed to get married and started to schedule their wedding ceremony. When the young male P'Yo's (Dragon) family from Pwo Pwor Lay traveled to attend the wedding ceremony, they were joined by their leader, named Maw Tray Tra. The local elders who shared the folklore also made poems about it as follows:

Karen (K'nyaw) poems

မိၼ်တြၢတြၢထီၼ်လၢယိၼ်ကျိ, တြၢမိၼ်တြၢထီၼ်လၢကိၼ်ကျိ
ထီၼ်ဒီးချံၼ်ဒီးပျၢ်စိမိ, ထီၼ်ဒီးပျၢ်ဒီးချံၼ်စိမိ
ထီၼ်ထီၼ်ဘးသီသံၼ်အစိ, သီသံၼ်န့ၼ်မိဒီးပယိ

မိၼ်တြၢတြၢထီၼ်လၢယိၼ်ဟ, တြၢမိၼ်တြၢထီၼ်လၢကိၼ်ဟ
ထီၼ်ဒီးချံၼ်ဒီးပျၢ်အိအိ, ထီၼ်ဒီးပျၢ်ဒီးချံၼ်အိအိ
ထီၼ်ထီၼ်ဘးသီသံၼ်ဖိလ်, ပယိဒီးသီသံၼ်န့ၼ်မိ

Despite the many years of staying with his wife Mughar Mupoe on Thawthi Kho, P'Yo still couldn't adapt himself to the weather of the mountain. Especially, when it came to summertime, he couldn't endure the heat and started to feel restless. His wife put him into the stored water jar to cool him down, but he couldn't bear it anymore so told

his wife, “I couldn’t bear the heat here anymore so will go back to Pwo Pwor Lay. You can either come with me or stay behind here”. Then, Mughar Mupoe replied, “As you live in the water, it’ll be difficult for me to stay with you”. Mughar Mupoe had a hard time making decisions. When her husband P’Yo left Pwo Hlo Klo’s headwaters, Mughar Mupoe quickly packed her traditional clothes *Nee Ghoe*, *Chay Ber*, tied her hair, picked up her betel nut box (*Eh Ko*) and followed her husband. As soon as P’Yo arrived at the base of Pwo Pwor Lay, he suddenly jumped into the pool without thinking about his wife. And he didn’t say a single word to his wife. The wife, Mughar Mupoe couldn’t do anything but patiently sit on the rock and wait for the return of her husband. She didn’t return to Thawthi Kho either.

As the days passed by, the father from Thawthi Kho noticed that his daughter Mughar Mupoe was sitting on the rock and looking into the pool every day, and began to feel pity on his daughter. Fearing his daughter would die there, the father went down and brought her back to Thawthi Kho. P’Yo started to get furious after learning that his wife had gone and to his anger, he said “I was so badly treated by Mughar and her father that my skin has become damaged (burned), so I vow to take revenge on them”. To attack Thawthi Kho, the only weapon that P’Yo had was a sickle. This sickle was believed to be sacred, powerful, and poisonous. The land, forests, and rocks would be removed from the mountain, cut by his sickle. Likewise, Mughar Mupoe’s father from Thawthi Kho also had a powerful sickle known as *Htar Ghei Tuko*. P’Yo with his people started to attack Thawthi Kho, destroying the mountain with their sickles.

Mughar’s father realized that his P’Yo enemy had almost reached the peak of Thawthi Kho, so he suddenly grabbed his powerful sickle and went down to Pwar Kar Lay (Stoney cliff in Khoe Kyaw Der Kaw) to block the water flow. After successfully blocking the waterflow, Mughar’s father returned to Thawthi Kho. After the river to Pwo Pwor Lay was blocked, the upstream areas such as Ler Mu Plaw, Hsi Day, and Yaw Day started to get flooded. Despite the blockage of water and the subsequent flooding of the foot path, P’Yo troops continued to attack Thawthi Kho. After descending Thawthi Kho and returning to T’ Bee Hta, P’Yo’s troops noticed the loss of their route. They faced difficulty getting back to their place in Pwo Pwor Lay. After getting lost, some of them traveled up to Beh Thaw Lu¹⁰, some to T’ Bee Lu, and some of them traveled to Ler Mu Plaw. After witnessing P’Yo and his troops getting trapped, unable to return home in Pwo Pwor Lay, a thunderbolt in the sky started to feel pity toward them. To save the lives P’Yo and his troops, a thunderbolt struck to break the blockage in the river that the Thawthi Kho’s king built. Eventually, P’Yo and his troops were able to return to their home in Pwo Pwor Lay.

10 Lu in Karen (*K’nyaw*) term means hill

Tadu Tahtoo (Taboos)

There are certain prohibitions outlined through local taboos that must be abided when visiting Thawthi Kho, the spiritual and sacred mountain. For instance, a visitor must speak only the truth, pay tribute to the sacred mountain without calling its name, instead one should refer to the mountain only as Pu Pwar Kho (grandfather mountain). Furthermore, spilling of blood, slaughtering of living organisms, cursing, lying, defecating, and urinating on the peak of Thawthi Kho are strictly prohibited. The visitor is also prohibited from taking orchids and *T'lay Boe* (*Phyllostachys nigra*) from Thawthi Kho.

Testimonials

According to local indigenous communities in Lae Kee's testimonials, violation of the taboos in Thawthi Kho occurred a couple of times. It once happened a long time ago during the era of a local elder named Pweh Lu Pu. Each year, Pweh Lu Pu would go to Thawthi Kho to perform spiritual ceremonies, offering local rice whiskey to Thawthi Kho's K'sar (owner). He travelled with his family and other relatives to join him for this ritual ceremony. While performing the rituals of offering a drink to the owner of the mountain, his daughter was unexpectedly possessed by the spirit. At that time, the daughter remained silent and didn't talk to anyone, not even her father. The father who performed the rituals started to get frustrated after seeing what happened to his daughter so without hesitancy, he splashed the spirit possessed daughter with a glass of alcohol. Then, the daughter started to question her father in a harsh and loud voice, "you splashed me with alcohol, I will also splash you with alcohol; and if you splash me with water, I will splash you with water in return". Uninterruptedly, the daughter continued to question her father, "by performing ritual ceremonies here, who has more power, you or the sacred spirit? Confidently, the father responded that, "I am stronger, and no one has helped me". The daughter who was possessed by the spirit commended her father to offer white buffalo to the Kaw after his return to the village.

There was heavy rain and thunderstorms right after Pweh Lu Pu performed the ritual Kaw offering ceremony with the white buffalo resulting in casualties to his livestock animals such as horses, elephants, buffalos, and cattle. Afraid of being punished by guardian of the spirits and Thawthi Kho's K'sar (owner), Pweh Lu Pu abandoned his village and migrated. Since this incident, indigenous elders in Lae Kee instructed local communities not to perform the offering of rice whiskey ceremony at Thawthi Kho anymore.

Additionally, due to its height and beautiful scenic landscape, different religious groups wanted to establish their religious buildings on the peak of Thawthi Kho. With regards to the establishment of religious infrastructure, an incident once happened to Reverend Wee Ler from Karenni State. Reverend Wee Ler and other church members were cooking

buffalo meat on the peak of Thawthi Kho while constructing a prayer house. As killing and spilling blood of living organisms is serious violation of the enforced taboos, the unexpected heavy rain and thunderstorm struck and destroyed their building.

The folktale of Thawthi Kho and Pwo Pwor Lay

Once upon a time, Thawthi Kho was the sacred birthplace of the sacred deities “Pwarthoo Pwarhpo”. There was a king living in Thawthi Kho and he had only one daughter. The daughter was gorgeously beautiful. Likewise, in the large pool of Pwo Pwor Lay was a king who had only one son. The son was handsome, tall, and smart and received considerable praise and admiration from others. One day, when the king of Pwo Pwor Lay encountered Thawthi Kho king’s daughter, he immediately wanted to marry her with his son to become his daughter-in-law. In order to get the daughter of Thawthi Kho’s king as his daughter-in-law, the king of Pwo Pwor Lay sent his *Saw T’Lo Pa* (the love matchmaker) seven times to visit Thawthi Kho’s king. The same responses that he received from the king of Thawthi Kho was “it is impossible for the terrestrial and aquatic beings to live together”.

After his proposals were rejected by Thawthi Kho’s king, Pwo Pwor Lay’s king planned to attack Thawthi Kho to abduct the daughter for his son. The story followed that Pwo Pwor Lay’s king had a huge sickle as his powerful weapon. In attacking Thawthi Kho’s king, he used his powerful sickle to destroy the mountain and its surroundings. Despite the fierce battle between the two kings that happened over a thousand years ago, scars across the landscape were left by the war, remaining until this day. According to indigenous storytellers, Pwo Pwor Lay’s king tried to wage war against Thawthi Kho six times, but never once succeed.

In response, Thawthi Kho’s king and his troops uprooted some of the big pine trees around Thawthi Kho to block Pwo Pwor Lay’s king and troops route up the river as a trap in Pwar Kar Lay (Stoney cliff in Khoe Kyaw Der Kaw). While the king of Pwo Pwor Lay and his troops were entrapped in T’Yu Plaw in T’Bee Hta area, they made every effort to look for someone who could direct them back home. After many days of searching, they finally met *Nya Per Baw* (Sisorid catfish (*Exostoma peregrinator*)). The king asked the fish whether it knew of a path leading them back home. The fish replied, “if water can go fish can also go”. And Pwo Pwor Lay’s king and his troops followed the direction of the Sisorid catfish (*Exostoma peregrinator*) and safely reached their home.

After learning about the escape, Thawthi Kho’s king started to investigate the sympathizer helping Pwo Pwor Lay’s king and his troops. Eventually, the king was informed that the Sisorid catfish (*Exostoma peregrinator*) was the main culprit who rescued Pwo Pwor Lay’s king. Furiously, Thawthi Kho’s king grabbed the Sisorid catfish (*Exostoma peregrinator*) firmly and hit his head with a stone until his head was completely flattened, as it is today.

In contrast, the king of Pwo Pwor Lay blessed Sisorid catfish (*Exostoma peregrinator*) with an abundant population. This time, king of Pwo Pwor Lay declared aggressive war against Thawthi Kho, and it would be the last offensive. To take preemptive measures, Thawthi Kho's king stationed his troops known as *Pwar Poe Pwar Wah* in Ku Mu Der Kaw as gatekeepers. The elders said that if you see the gatekeeper, *Pwar Wah*, who later became the stoney cliff wall, from the long distance and it appears to be white during rainy season, it is an indication of a good rice yield. Whereas, if you notice that the face of the gatekeepers *Pwar Wah* appear to be dark, it indicates that there maybe a pest infestation and crops are damaged as a result. Indigenous peoples around the area observe these signs until today.

According to the local storytellers, again the king of Pwo Pwor Lay and his troops failed to attack and overrun Thawthi Kho and were finally forced to withdraw back to their territories. After time passed, Po Hkeh, a young orphan from Thawthi Kho, travelled to Pwo Pwor Lay's pool for fishing. At night, the queen of Pwo Pwor Lay had nightmares about her son and shared this strange dream with the king but the king didn't take it seriously. Instead, the king told the queen to let her son roam around in the pool and play with his friends in the morning. The next morning, when Po Hkeh threw his casting net it fell precisely on Pwo Pwor Lay's prince while he was playing in the pool. Po Hkeh didn't take out his casting net immediately but kept in the pool for a while.

The king and queen of Pwo Pwor Lay realized it was already late in the evening, but their son hadn't returned home yet. They started to search for their son everywhere and finally spotted their son under the casting net, unresponsive. They noticed that their son suffered from skin infections from the casting net. As soon as he realized that his casting net caught the son of Pwo Pwor Lay's king, Po Hkeh instantly returned to Thawthi Kho. During those times, the king and queen of Pwo Pwor Lay had a depressing time, tirelessly looking for a healer for their son's skin infections. The king of Pwo Pwor Lay announced publicly that anyone who could cure his son's skin disease would receive whatever they desired. When



the news reached the king of Thawthi Kho, he declared that whoever could heal Pwo Pwor Lay's son would be granted his daughter's hand in marriage as a reward.

When Po Hkeh heard the good news, he confidently told the king that he could easily carry out the treatment. He then asked what reward the king of Thawthi Kho would request from the king of Pwo Pwor Lay. The king replied that he wanted Pwo Pwor Lay's powerful sickle. He also instructed Po Hkeh not to perform the treatment unless the sickle was promised in return.

Before beginning, Po Hkeh told the king of Pwo Pwor Lay that he would only treat his son if he agreed to give up the sickle afterward. The king was torn between his love for his son and his attachment to the powerful weapon. In the end, he made the painful decision to part with the sickle. True to his word, Po Hkeh cured the prince's skin infection by removing the casting net from the pool.

Po Hkeh returned to Thawthi Kho with the sickle after removing his casting net from the pool and presented the powerful weapon to the king. As promised, the king began preparing for the wedding ceremony and informed Po Hkeh of the chosen dates. However, before allowing his daughter to marry Po Hkeh, the king decided to give him one final test. On the day of the wedding, the king released several creatures along the path to startle Po Hkeh: a cobra, a rain quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*), a yellow-throated marten (*Martes flavigula*), a common sun skink (*Eutropis multifasciata*), a northern treeshrew (*Tupaia belangeri*), a red-headed trogon, and a bar-backed partridge (*Arborophila brunneopectus*). After being frightened seven times, Po Hkeh lost his courage, abandoned the wedding ceremony, and returned home.

According to the tale, ever since the king of Thawthi Kho received the powerful sickle from the king of Pwo Pwor Lay, landslides and erosion have ceased to occur in Thawthi Kho even to this day.



Paw Law Pu

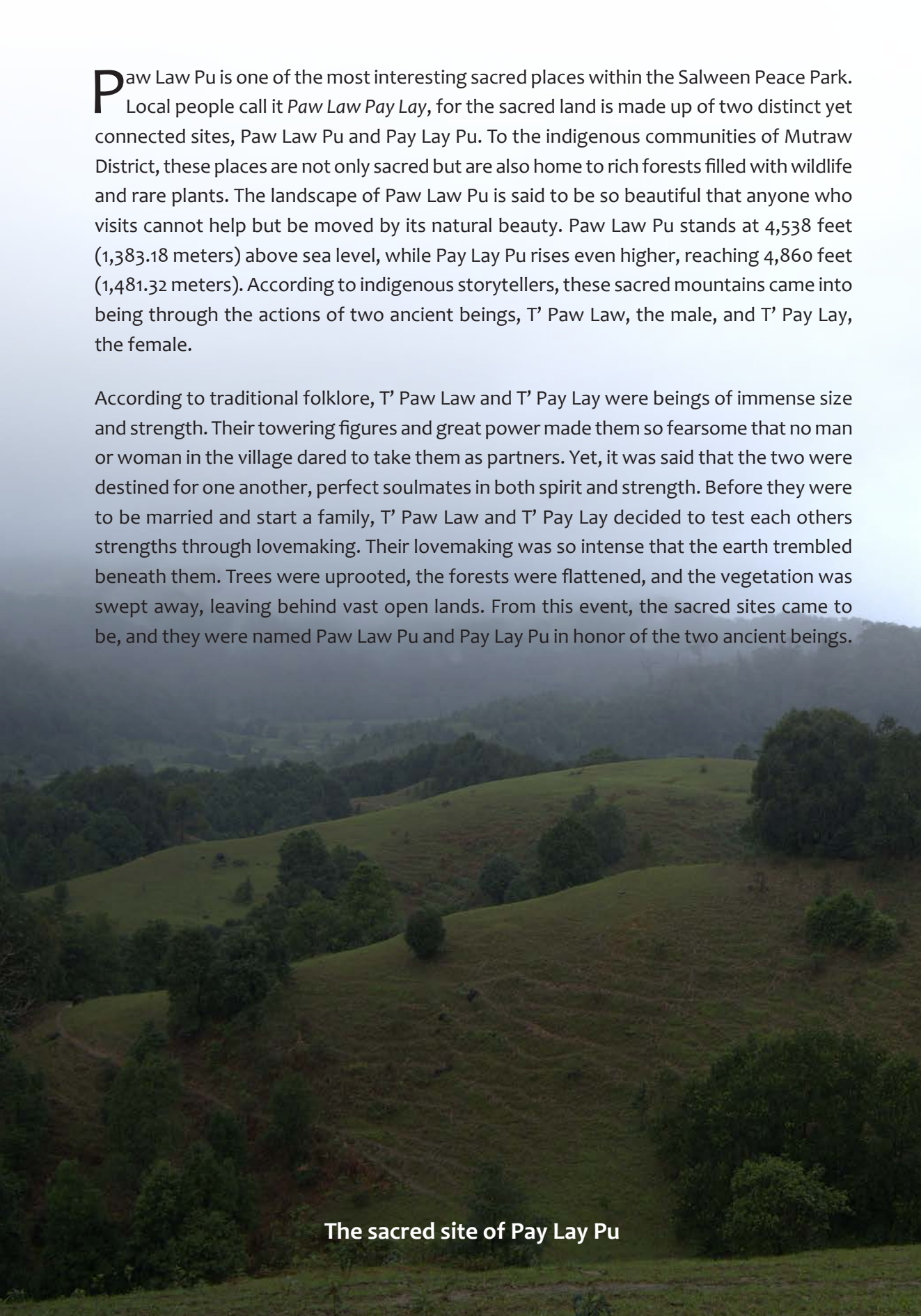
Kay Pu Village-Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei



The sacred site of Paw Law Pu

Paw Law Pu is one of the most interesting sacred places within the Salween Peace Park. Local people call it *Paw Law Pay Lay*, for the sacred land is made up of two distinct yet connected sites, Paw Law Pu and Pay Lay Pu. To the indigenous communities of Mutraw District, these places are not only sacred but are also home to rich forests filled with wildlife and rare plants. The landscape of Paw Law Pu is said to be so beautiful that anyone who visits cannot help but be moved by its natural beauty. Paw Law Pu stands at 4,538 feet (1,383.18 meters) above sea level, while Pay Lay Pu rises even higher, reaching 4,860 feet (1,481.32 meters). According to indigenous storytellers, these sacred mountains came into being through the actions of two ancient beings, T' Paw Law, the male, and T' Pay Lay, the female.

According to traditional folklore, T' Paw Law and T' Pay Lay were beings of immense size and strength. Their towering figures and great power made them so fearsome that no man or woman in the village dared to take them as partners. Yet, it was said that the two were destined for one another, perfect soulmates in both spirit and strength. Before they were to be married and start a family, T' Paw Law and T' Pay Lay decided to test each others strengths through lovemaking. Their lovemaking was so intense that the earth trembled beneath them. Trees were uprooted, the forests were flattened, and the vegetation was swept away, leaving behind vast open lands. From this event, the sacred sites came to be, and they were named Paw Law Pu and Pay Lay Pu in honor of the two ancient beings.



The sacred site of Pay Lay Pu

Within the sacred grounds of Paw Law Pu lie other spiritually significant places: Ei Tha Kyo (Salt Hill), Mo Ghee Kyo (Chili Hill), Ywar Ser Pu (God's Mortar), and Ywar Hoomo's Ground (God's Mother's Mourning Ground), which is surrounded by termite mounds believed to mark the spots where pinewood torches once burned. In ancient times, Paw Law Pu was also a salt lick and feeding ground for wild elephants, red muntjacs, sambar deer, and gaurs. It was said to be the roaming place of tigers and leopards, a landscape alive with both spiritual power and natural abundance.

Indigenous storytellers also explained that when Ywar (God), settled in Paw Law Pu, he collected a variety of vegetables and plants from the surrounding forests to cultivate, including spring onions, wild cabbages, medicinal herbs, *Neanotis hirsuta* (L.f.) W.H.Lewis, *Ophiopogon japonicus*, and *Ficus hispida* L.f. As part of traditional taboo, these plants were never to be over-harvested; some had to be left to regenerate. This practice reflects the ancestral teaching of *Or K'Taw*, which literally means "eat and preserve."

After the passing of Ywar's Moe, God's mother, Ywar performed funeral rites at Paw Law Pu. However, her body was cremated at Ler Mu Pu, another sacred site in Ler Mu Plaw. It was said that that Ywar had the ability to leap great distances with each footstep, his first footstep reached Lay Poe Day, and his second step landed at Klay Day. The indigenous elders even composed poems to honor Ywar's Moe's cremation. One verse says, "Kue Ywar Moe Ler Ler Mu Pu, Ler Mu Oo Ywar Moe T'Oo", which means that when performing the cremation, Lu Mu Cave was burned, yet Ywar's Moe's body remained undisposed. Another poem recounts, "Kue Ywar Moe Ler Paw Ghaw Boe, K'Lu Keh Htee Hpo Preh Preh",

Taboos in Paw Law Pu

Traditional taboos form an essential part of the Karen (K'nyaw) communities' way of life. They guide environmental stewardship and nurture spiritual relationships with ancestral lands, forests, waters, and wildlife. Among these taboos are prohibitions against grilling birds or squirrels on bamboo sticks, or consuming meat cooked in this way. Other rules include not striking the lid of a rice pot with a wooden spoon while cooking; avoiding the act of pulling sticky rice from the spoon, and refraining from cooking certain aquatic species, such as Kuhl's wart frog, dwarf snakehead, or crabs found in the forest.

In addition, individuals who have engaged in pre-marital sexual relationships are forbidden from visiting Paw Law Pu, as the site is regarded as sacred. Violating these taboos is believed to invite the presence of tigers, or even the sound of a tiger's roar, as a warning or punishment. Reciting traditional poems within Paw Law Pu is also prohibited, as doing so is thought to bring troubles and hardships to the community.



K' Hsor Ter Community Forest at a Glance!

In their efforts to protect and preserve the rich biodiversity, forests, spiritual territories, and sacred sites, Paw Law Pay Lay, consisting of Paw Law Pu and Pay Lay Pu, is included within the K'Hsor Ter community forest. Local elders explain that K'Hsor Ter is the ancestral gravesite of elephants. Just as the indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) have sacred burial sites, such as Hlo Pwor Bi, elephants are believed to return to this hallowed place as their final resting ground. The name K'Hsor Ter continues to be used to this day.

Elders recall that in the past, travelers would often find piles of dried firewood for cooking, which needed to be collected and carefully stacked after use. Recognizing the importance of this land for its biodiverse ecosystems as well as its spiritual and cultural significance, the indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities collectively established K'Hsor Ter as a community forest, ensuring its protection for future generations.¹¹



The sacred site of Paw Law Pu

11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rExDGB5jpOU>

The K'Hsor Ter Community Forest is a pristine ecological and social sanctuary for the indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples for many generations. Located on the western side of Luthaw Township, Mutraw District, within the Salween Peace Park, the forest is under the collaborative protection and stewardship of fifteen indigenous Karen communities across three village tracks: Kay Pu, Ler Mu Plaw, and Saw Mu Plaw.

As part of its governance and management system, the community forest is divided into three zones. The wildlife protection zone is dedicated entirely to the conservation of species. The community preserved forest areas allow the harvesting and collection of non-timber forest products while prohibiting timber extraction and hunting. The community-managed forest zone permits crop cultivation and limited hunting of non-protected species. K'Hsor Ter Community Forest spans a total area of 14,606 acres (5,910.83 hectares) and is home to one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth. It shelters 120 orchid species, 81 mammal species, 31 reptile species, 130 bird species, 13 amphibian species, and 200 medicinal plant species.¹²



¹² <https://kesan.asia/publication/indigenous-karens-community-forest-kheshorter/>

Ler Mu Kho Ser

Ler Mu Plaw Village-Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Ler Mu Kho Ser, the stoney cliff, is both a sacred territory and a historical site located in Kawthayghu, Ler Mu Plaw Village Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District, within the Salween Peace Park. Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities in Kawthayghu believe that Klo Klaw Hta, the river mouth of Klo Klaw Hlo Klo, is a Tadu Tahtoo area, a sacred site where spiritual offerings are made to the guardian of the water spirit.

At the base of Ler Mu Kho Ser, known as Ka Par Ler, lies what is believed to be Ta So area, a sacred site where the local communities perform ceremonies to honor the guardian of the land spirit. For these communities, Ta So involves traditional rituals offering sacrificial feasts to ensure the fertility of the land and the productivity of crops. These ceremonies are an integral part of indigenous land management and stewardship, emphasizing the importance of maintaining spiritual connections and reciprocal relationships with more-than-human beings.

Simply put, Ta Lu refers to water-related ceremonial rituals tied to livelihood activities, while Ta So embodies land-related ceremonial practices. The Ta So ceremonies are traditionally held in May, performed consecutively in the village for three years, and then carried out in the farms for another three years. Among the Kawthayghu Karen, Ta So is also commonly known as Ta Law Hee Ko Day.

Local ontology holds that Ler Mu Kho Ser marks the center of the world, a belief further illuminated by the following folklore.

The Folklore about Mulerker (aka) Naw Khoe

Once upon a time, in the Ler Mu Plaw area, there lived a young woman named Mulerker. Her family and relatives also called her Naw Khoe. Her family's traditional livelihood was Ku rotational farming, and while her parents went to work in the fields, Mulerker's responsibility was to care for her younger brother at home. As was their custom, before leaving for the farm, her parents would always instruct her to cook meals for him. One day, her parents left for the fields but forgot to remind Mulerker about the meals. As they walked a long distance from the house, they shouted instructions, but their voices were faint and barely heard. Not catching what they said, Mulerker asked, "What do I have to cook for my brother?"

At that moment, a Mukawlee, a devil tempter, interfered with the long-distance communication. The Mukawlee told Mulerker, "Your mother asked you to cook your brother." Confused and unable to hear her parents clearly, she asked them again, but the Mukawlee repeated the same deceitful message. Overcome with sadness, fear, and misunderstanding, Mulerker tragically carried out the Mukawlee's deception. In her grief and confusion, she placed her brother under the door, stamped him to death, and then cooked him. This sorrowful story has been passed down among the local community as a warning about the dangers of evil spirits, misunderstandings, and the heavy consequences that can come from being misled, even by forces beyond human sight.

After returning home from the fields, Mulerker's parents asked her, "Where is your brother?" Hesitantly, she told them that he was at the grandmother's house. When they went to check and did not find him there, they asked again, "Where is your brother?" This time, Mulerker said he was underneath the door. She continued to lie about her brother, hiding the tragic truth from her parents.

As the day passed and the parents completed their farm work, they decided to have dinner and look for their son afterward. While eating, the mother suddenly spotted her son's finger, the father had eaten his son's toe, and the grandmother discovered the testicle. Enraged, the parents tried to punish Mulerker, but she quickly jumped up and ran away.

Realizing that she could no longer live among people on Earth, Mulerker decided to travel and live in Moo Kho, the Sky. To reach the sky, she went fishing for *Schistura moeiensis* oil and mixed it with ceremonial pork fat. She poured this mixture into seven internodes of Weaver bamboo, adding some soil. With the bamboo prepared, she began digging into the ground, attempting to make a hole that would reach the sky.

Her first attempt was at a place called Bo Kaw Plaw, but no matter how many tries she made, she could not dig through. She then moved to the base of Ler Mu Kho Ser, and

there, finally, she succeeded in creating a hole that connected the bamboo to the sky. To the indigenous Karen communities of Kawthayghu, this place, where Mulerker pierced the earth and reached the sky, is known as “the center of the earth.”

There is a traditional poem that recounts her efforts:

"Seh Htoo Seh Htoo Por Waklaw, Lermu Htaw Dee Yee Dee Htor,"

which means, “The more Mulerker dug into the ground with the Weaver bamboo, the more Ler Mu, the stoney cliff, kept reaching the sky.”

Local elders explain that when Ler Mu reached the heavens, the communities living there no longer needed to farm. Instead, once a week, they collected and ate *Mooday*, the heavenly living bread obtained from the umbilical cord, which sustained them in the sky. But the Mukawlee, the envious devil tempter, grew jealous of the people enjoying *Mooday*. He complained, “These people go and collect *Mooday* every time without sharing it with me,” even though he had been informed about this great blessing. Overcome by selfishness and greed, the Mukawlee cut the stem of *Mooday* from the sky, causing the entire cord to fall. Because of this act, the communities of Ler Mu could no longer collect the heavenly living bread. With no choice left, they had to return to their traditional farming activities to survive.

When Mulerker arrived in the sky, she first met Mu, the Sun, and asked him to be her partner. But the Sun replied, “Wherever I go, suffering and hardships follow, so you cannot stay with me.” Undeterred, Mulerker then approached Lah, the Moon, with the same request. The Moon replied, “I am always traveling through days and nights, so you cannot live with me.”

Finally, she met Law, the Thunderbolt, and proposed that he be her partner. The Thunderbolt said, “I have an extremely loud voice. To love you and live with you, I must first make sure you can bear it. I will strike three times, and if you are not shocked, I will be your partner.” Before the Thunderbolt began, Mulerker cleverly covered her ears with dried chicken manure. When Law struck three times, Mulerker was unharmed. Impressed and pleased, the Thunderbolt finally fell in love with her, and their bond was sealed.

After spending considerable time with her husband, the Thunderbolt, in the sky, Mulerker began to miss her parents deeply and wished to pay them a visit. She assumed that her parents would be settled by now and that visiting them would cause no trouble. When Mulerker and her husband descended to Earth, a dog curry had been prepared for them without their knowledge. Upon seeing the dog’s head in his eating bowl, Law, the Thunderbolt, was shocked and furious. In a fit of anger, he instantly struck and destroyed Ler Mu before returning to his place in the sky. Quick-thinking Mulerker managed to hold onto Law’s leg, bringing her husband back safely with her to the sky.

Local elders explain that the Thunderbolt's strike that destroyed Ler Mu scattered soil and debris across seven households, and the peak of Ler Mu fell into Bweh (Karenni) territory. According to tradition, the soil around Ler Mu Kho Ser is poor for rice cultivation, yielding only tiny crops, yet the local communities never go hungry. Young people there may not be considered exceptionally attractive, but they will marry and raise families, never remaining single. As the center of the earth, Ler Mu draws people from different places who claim to be skillful and well-known. In the end, it is the indigenous communities of Ler Mu territory who are recognized as the most expert and capable. With their traditional weapons and tools, such as machetes and spears, these communities are able to face and overcome any challenge that comes their way.

Traditional taboos of Ler Mu Kho Ser

There are a number of enforced traditional taboos in Ler Mu Kho Ser as the following:

1. Men are prohibited from catching fish with nets among the stones.
2. Setting bamboo traps or digging holes to capture wildlife is forbidden.
3. Cooking and eating dogs are strictly prohibited.
4. Eating aquatic species such as Kuhl's wart frog and dwarf snakehead is forbidden.
5. Women are prohibited from fishing with rods.
6. Planting Weaver bamboo in the Ler Mu area is not allowed.
7. Rearing white buffaloes and elephants is prohibited.
8. Establishing cardamom plantations in the area is forbidden because the crop absorbs too much groundwater, which can lead to water scarcity and hardship in the community.
9. Selling elephant foot yam to other territories is not allowed, as it is traditionally believed that rice and elephant foot yam are cousins. According to the elders, the elephant foot yam once said, "If you separate me from my rice cousin and sell me to other places, the rice will no longer be healthy or productive."

Poems about Ler Mu Kho Ser

ကုန်လီမုန်ကျမုန်တခီ, မလီဝဲကျမုန်တခီ
မိလဲတော်လဂီလဂီ, ပ်လဲတော်လဂီလဂီ
မိမလိာ်ဖီအိန်ခုာ်ထီ, ပ်မလိာ်ဖီအိန်ခုာ်ထီ
ဝံဒဲးမုန်မဒဲးမဒဲး, တန်နီမုန်မဒဲးမဒဲး
ဖီခုာ်ထီဖီဘုာ်ပုာ်ကွီ, ဖီခွဲာ်ထီဖီဘုာ်ပုာ်ကွီ
မုာ်ဟါလီဘီယဲာ်ယုာ်လီ, လါဟါလီဘီယဲာ်ယုာ်လီ

မိလဲတော်ဟဲကုလံမီ, ပ်လဲတော်ဟဲကုလံမီ
မိဝံဒဲးပုာ်ဒုလဲဆူလီ, ပ်ဝံဒဲးပုာ်ဒုလဲဆူလီ
လီန့ာ်မိလဲဖီအိန်အီ, လီန့ာ်ပ်လဲဖီအိန်အီ
မိလဲကွာ်ဖီတစိာ်အီ, ပ်လဲကွာ်ဖီတစိာ်အီ
မိခွဲးလီမုာ်မိအိန်လီ, ပ်ခွဲးလီမုာ်မိအိန်လီ
မိအိန်ဘုာ်အစုတခီ, ပ်အိန်ဘုာ်အစုတခီ

မိၵ်းပုၵ်းအံၵ်းလီၤ, ပၵ်းပုၵ်းအံၵ်းလီၤ
 လဲၵ်းပုၵ်းအံၵ်းလီၤ, လဲၵ်းပုၵ်းအံၵ်းလီၤ
 ဖျၢတထံၵ်းလီၤပုၵ်းအံၵ်းလီၤ, ဖျၢတထံၵ်းလီၤပုၵ်းအံၵ်းလီၤ
 သံကွၢ်ဝၵ်းသိတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, သံကွၢ်ဝၵ်းသိတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 တၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤယၢ်ဝၵ်းန့ၵ်း, ကျိၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 ကျိၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, ဝါန့ၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 ဆဲးထူဆဲးထူဝၵ်းန့ၵ်း, လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ

သံကွၢ်လဲၵ်းပုၵ်းလီၤ, သံကွၢ်လဲၵ်းပုၵ်းလီၤ
 သံကွၢ်ဆၢၵ်းပုၵ်းပုၵ်း, ထီၵ်းသံကွၢ်လီၤအံၵ်း
 လီၤကလိၵ်းသ့ၵ်းလၢ်ဘီ
 လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, ကၢ်မ့ၵ်းလီၤသ့ၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, ကၢ်တၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤသ့ၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, လီၤပုၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, လီၤပုၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ

A short story about Yo Poe (Young Tai) jumping cliff

Once upon a time, there was a young Tai man named Ler Hoe Lay who came to settle and work in Ler Mu Plaw. Ler Hoe Lay was a hardworking young man. During his time in Ler Mu Plaw, he met a beautiful Karen (K’nyaw) woman, and the two soon fell deeply in love. When the parents of the Karen (K’nyaw) woman learned about their love and relationship, they strongly objected and tried to stop their daughter. However, the love between the two was so strong that no one could separate them.

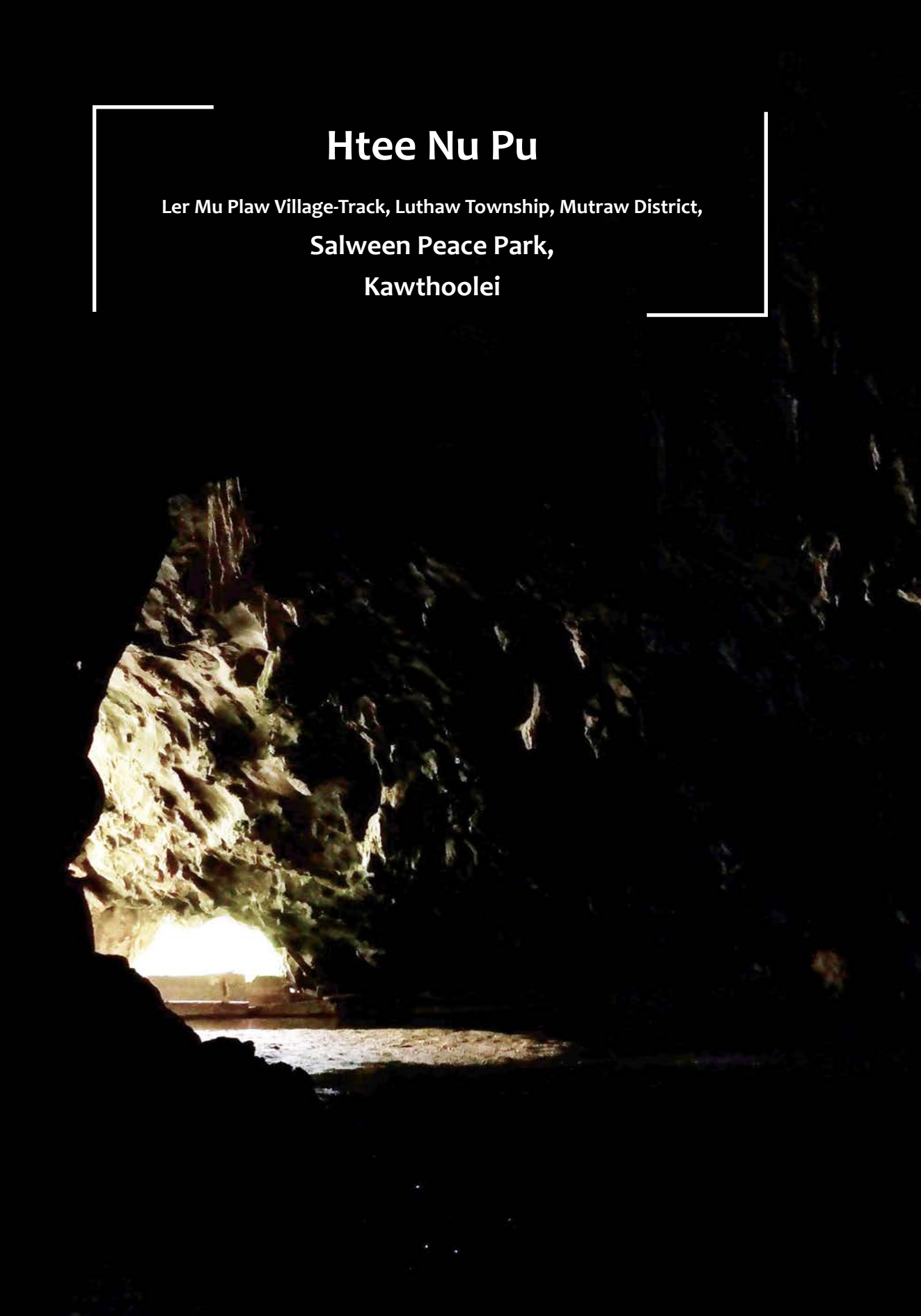
Distraught that they could not be together, the young couple decided to leave their homes. Accompanied by a white buffalo, they searched for the highest peak of the cliff in the area, determined to end their lives together. When they reached the summit, they mounted the white buffalo, ready to jump off. But the animal was too frightened to move. So, the young couple blindfolded the buffalo’s eyes with a scarf they had brought, and together they leapt from the cliff, ending their lives in eternal union.

With deep sorrow and grief, Ler Hoe Lay’s grandmother gathered the flesh and remains of the young couple and the white buffalo in a fishing net. She then performed the funeral rituals and ceremonies to honor the deceased. Traditionally, the prohibition against rearing white buffaloes in Ler Mu Kho Ser is directly connected to this story. The stony cliff where the young lovers and the white buffalo leapt to their deaths is still known today as **Yo Poe Si Law Lay**, meaning “the cliff where the young Tai jumped.”

လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 ဖုၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, တၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 ကျိၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 မူခိၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, ဟီၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 ထီၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, ထီၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ
 ထီၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ, လၢၵ်းတၢ်န့ၵ်းလီၤ

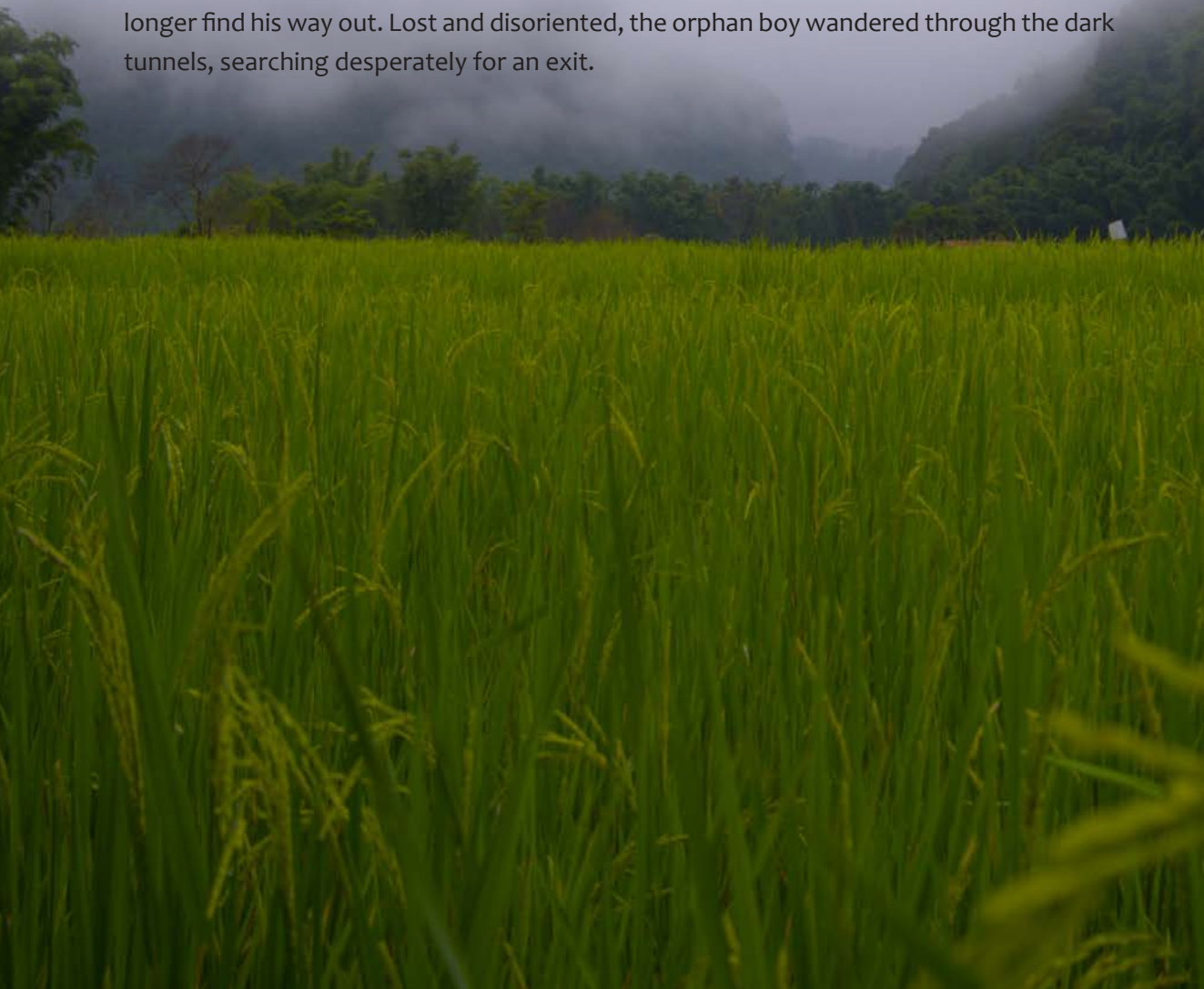
Htee Nu Pu

Ler Mu Plaw Village-Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei



Htee Nu Pu, meaning “*the water entering cave,*” is a sacred site rich with oral traditions and ancestral histories. This enormous cave lies within Ler Mu Plaw Village, Ler Mu Plaw Village-Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District, in the Salween Peace Park of Kawthoolei. The cave sits at an altitude of 2,627 feet (800.70 meters) above sea level and is known among local communities as a place of deep spiritual and historical significance. According to local elders, long ago there were thirty young men and thirty young women who set out together on a journey to visit Htee Nu Pu. When they arrived, they saw white bats nesting inside the vast cave. Curious and hungry, the youths caught the bats and cooked them for their meal. However, soon after eating the white bats, strange things began to happen. The group lost their way inside the cave and could no longer find the exit. No matter how far they walked or how carefully they searched, they could not return to their village. When news reached the community that the sixty youths were trapped within Htee Nu Pu, an orphan boy named Po Hkeh bravely volunteered to go and rescue them.

When the orphan boy arrived at the cave, he found the fireplace where the youths had cooked the white bats. Out of curiosity, he tasted the leftover food and soon realized that he had eaten the meat of the white bats himself. From that moment on, he too could no longer find his way out. Lost and disoriented, the orphan boy wandered through the dark tunnels, searching desperately for an exit.





When the villagers learned that not only the thirty young men and thirty young women but also the orphan boy had gone missing inside Htee Nu Pu, they quickly organized a rescue mission. Those who knew the landscape and pathways of the cave waited near the exit passage of Wee Pli, now known as Wee Pi Lay Cave, hoping to rescue anyone who might emerge. Through their collective efforts, the villagers managed to save only the orphan boy. The rest of the thirty young men and thirty young women were never seen again. In remembrance of this event, the elders composed a traditional poem:

“Or Ba Blawah Er K’bu, Lehthaw Lehthei Ler Mu Pu,” which means, *“After eating the leftover of white bat meat, a noisy journey continued within the cave.”*

Local indigenous elders explained that Htee Nu Pu is one of the sacred sites that holds spiritual and cultural significance. Within the cave, there are three important geographic features that local indigenous people highly value: Lu Kay Baw (a large yellowish pumpkin-shaped rock), Ler Ser (stony mortar), and the Mughar (sacred deity) path.

The elders shared that during the rainy season, the color of the large pumpkin-shaped rock turns green, but during the summertime it becomes yellow, like a ripe pumpkin. They also explained that in the rainy season, a stream in the cave flows over the pumpkin-shaped rock, while in the summer it flows underneath it. Regarding Ler Ser, the stony mortar, local elders said that when someone stamps their feet on it, they can hear a pounding sound.

Another interesting feature is the natural clear path of Mughar. Local elders said that whenever the path is blocked by dried leaves, sticks, or ashes, it will be naturally cleared by the next day. This phenomenon has been observed by local indigenous people in Ler Mu Plaw.

Opposite Htee Nu Pu is Ler Mu Kho Ser, where Mughar’s pool existed long ago. According to local elders, when Mughar left Htee Nu Pu, she would travel across the fields and go up to Ler Mu Kho Ser, where she had her swimming pool. There used to be water in the pool, but it has dried up in recent times.

There are four streams in Htee Nu Pu, and Peh Par Klo is different from the others because its water remains clear during both the rainy and summer seasons. Local communities have observed that when the color of this stream changes to resemble starchy rice water, it is a sign that misfortunes will occur in the community, such as war, displacement, disease outbreaks, or death.

Another stream in Htee Nu Pu is known as Naw Daw Hlo Klo, and there are also oral traditions associated with it. Once upon a time, there was a widow who was deeply in debt to other villagers. She had a dog that always accompanied her. One day, at the beginning

of the rainy season, the widow and her dog went out to collect food and came across a large number of Sisorid catfish (*Exostoma peregrinator*). The widow caught all the fish and sold them to local villagers. With the money she earned, she was able to repay all her debts in the village.

Afterward, the widow cast a curse on the Naw Daw Hlo Klo stream, saying, “My descendants may fish in this stream, but anyone who is not my descendant will face the burden of indebtedness.” She also declared, “I was able to pay off my debts because of my dog, so no matter how difficult life becomes, as long as you have a dog, you will not fall into complete despair.”

Apart from the three sacred and spiritually significant sites mentioned earlier in Htee Nu Pu, there are other culturally important places such as Tar Kor Hlo Khee Pu (the leg bone or skeleton hole), Ler Klu Tu, and Ler Ghu Kee, which are also found within the cave. In the past, indigenous people who practiced animism performed spiritual ceremonies at these sites, but these practices were discontinued after local villagers converted to Christianity. However, a few indigenous people still continue to perform these traditional spiritual ceremonies.

Within Htee Nu Pu, there are also several long tunnels, including Baw Htaw Pu, Taw Kyar Lay, Htor Moe Pu, and others. These cave tunnels are located in Ler Ko Kho Mountain, which lies opposite Ler Mu Kho Ser.





Hlo Pwor Bi (Spiritual Gravesite)

Ler Mu Plaw Village-Track, Luthaw Township, MutrawDistrict,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei



Lohti (spiritual gravesite) is one of the various categories of sacred lands in the Salween Peace Park. Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples believe that Lohti is the spiritual territory or spirit world of the dead, the final resting place of the Pwar Or Khei Or Bwar animists. Hlo Pwor Bi is one of the well-known and revered Lohti sites among Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities in Luthaw Township, Mutraw District of the Salween Peace Park, as well as in other areas such as Kawthoolei Klerlwehtu and Taw Oo Districts. Traditionally, after the mourning and funeral services of the deceased are completed, a small woven bamboo basket called Ku Ter Ti is prepared and sent to Lohti, the spiritual gravesite of the dead.

In the past, Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) peoples from Ler Mu Plaw and Saw Mu Plaw in Luthaw Township would prepare a Ku Ter Ti for the dead after the ritual ceremonies were performed. The spiritual territory where the Ku Ter Ti of the dead was once kept and stored was known as Kay Thoo Kho Mountain, located between three hills shaped like three cooking stoves on the mountain. One day, local people from Kawthayghu noticed that all the Ku Ter Ti baskets from the Lohti at Kay Thoo Kho Mountain had disappeared without their knowledge. However, they found 54-inch footsteps (the Karen (K'nyaw) measurement of three Plar) near the Lohti. When they followed the tracks, the footsteps led them to Hlo Pwor Bi, where the missing Ku Ter Ti were found stored and kept. Local elders also explained that Hlo Pwor Bi is known among local Indigenous communities as the independent gravesite of the Karen (K'nyaw) legend Pu K'Ter.

The revered spiritual gravesite of Hlo Pwor Bi is adjacent to three Indigenous Kaw customary territories, including Kawthayghu, Khoe Kyar Der, and Tar Wah in Luthaw Township. Hlo Pwor Bi has an altitude of 4,116 feet (1,254.55 meters) above sea level. After the spiritual entities transported and kept the Ku Ter Ti of the dead at Hlo Pwor Bi, Indigenous communities collectively decided to designate it as the spiritual gravesite or spirit world of the dead, a status it maintains to this day. According to oral traditions, during the great ancestral flood, the peak of this forested mountain remained only the size of a T' Bi (Karen (K'nyaw) wooden bowl), which is why the name Pwor Bi Kho (Pwor Bi Mountain) and Hlo Pwor Bi (Pwor Bi spiritual gravesite) continue to be used. In honor of this revered spiritual territory, local communities refer to it as K'Ser Doh, meaning "Big Mountain."

There are certain taboos enforced by local communities in Hlo Pwor Bi, including strict prohibitions on deforestation, cultivation for Ku rotational farming, and forest fires. Local elders explained that when the ancestral spirit world, known as Lohti, is burned or destroyed, the remaining family members and relatives on earth will suffer from physical illnesses. In cases where Lohti is accidentally burned due to nearby Ku rotational farm fires, a ritual offering of twenty-five cents to the guardian of the land spirit must be performed, and this ritual must be carried out only by the person responsible. Elders also shared that ignoring this ritual to cool down the land spirit can result in death. Traditionally, each

cultural material sent to the spiritual territory of Lohti must be slightly damaged so that the deceased can use it in the spirit world. For example, the blade of a machete must be notched, the buttstock of a handmade gun must be broken, and vases or glass bottles must be cracked before being sent.

The traditional processes of transporting Ku Ter Ti to Lohti

The carrier of the Ku Ter Ti, the person responsible for transporting the deceased's basket to the spiritual gravesite, must dig four small holes to mark spots where white and red cotton threads are tied around sticks, leaving a small open space for the deceased's plate. According to ancestral beliefs, the carrier must build a symbolic bridge for the deceased by tying a white cotton thread across any stream or river he passes, and he must also mark the entrance of Lohti with the same white thread before entering. On the plate, the carrier places a small piece of the deceased's fontanelle, betel quid, cheroot, dried leaf, and other ceremonial offering materials. For the local rice whiskey that the carrier brings to Lohti, he takes a sip and pours the rest for the deceased. Usually, two people take part in this ritual, the carrier and a companion who accompanies him to the spiritual gravesite. After the carrier completes all the required rituals, his companion hooks his shirt collar and pulls him back three footsteps before they return home. Upon leaving Lohti, the carrier and his companion finish the two bottles of rice whiskey and wine they brought along with the Ku Ter Ti.

The folklore about Saw Hser and Hlo Pwor Bi

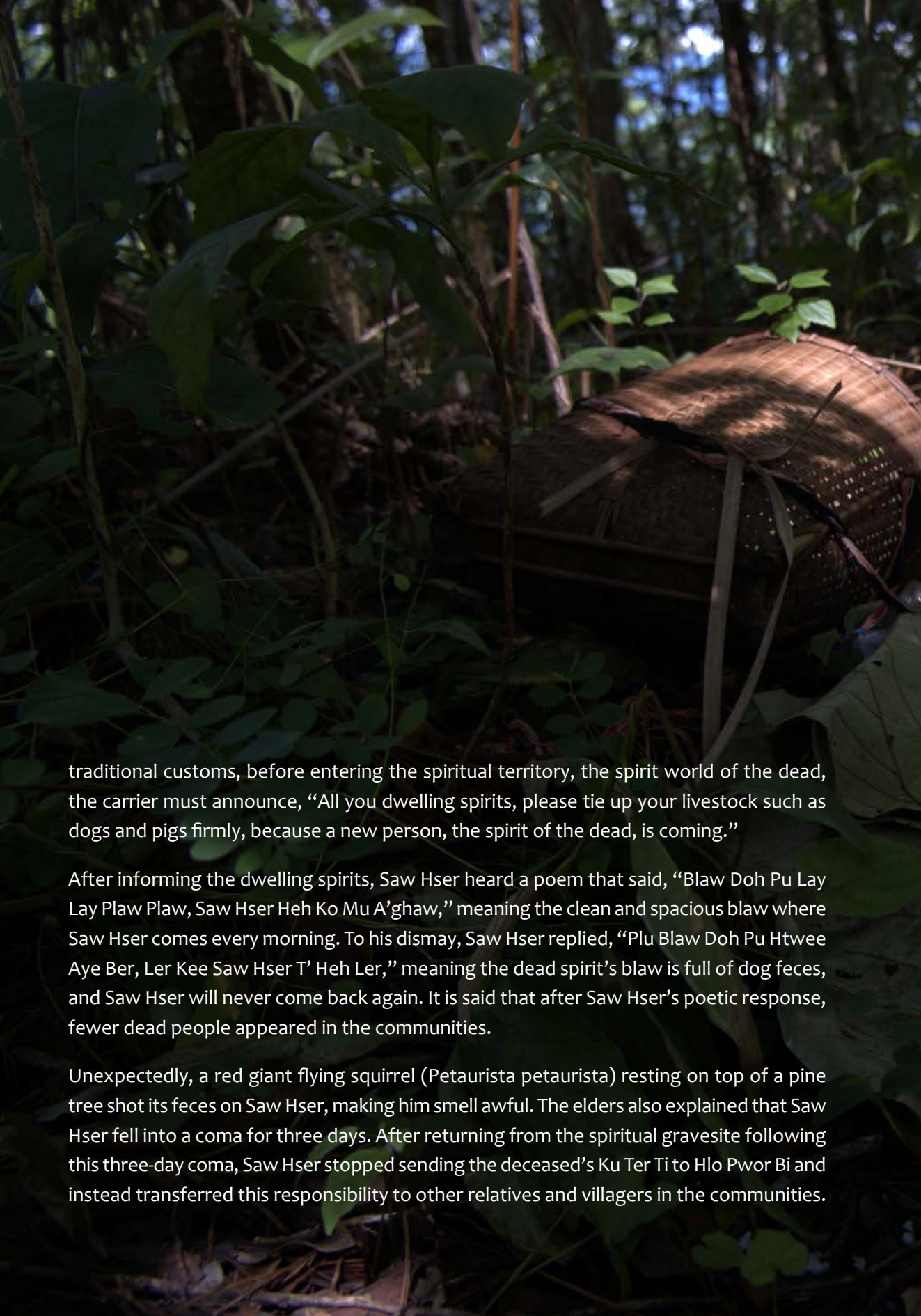
Once upon a time, there was a man named Saw Hser who lived in Ter Kweh Hta, also known as Twee Thi Au Lu, in P'Nar Aye Per Kho, Ler Mu Plaw Village Track, Luthaw Township. In the past, any carrier of the deceased's Ku Ter Ti would first pass by Saw Hser's house and rest there before and after returning from Hlo Pwor Bi. Saw Hser was well known for his kindness, hospitality, and willingness to help others. Years later, carriers from different places began to stop by and leave the deceased's Ku Ter Ti with Saw Hser, asking him to continue transporting it to the spiritual territory of Hlo Pwor Bi. Some even left written notes requesting his help. Being a kind and humble person, Saw Hser never refused and always completed these spiritual tasks with devotion. Because there were many nearby villages, and people passed away every day, every Indigenous community whose ancestral spiritual gravesite was in Hlo Pwor Bi would send their deceased there for their final resting place. Saw Hser faithfully dedicated himself to delivering all the Ku Ter Ti that others had left at his house to K'Ser Doh of Hlo Pwor Bi, the spirit world of the dead.

One day, after Saw Hser returned from his Ku rotational field in the late afternoon, a carrier of the Ku Ter Ti came and asked him, “Saw Hser, can you continue sending this Ku Ter Ti to K’ser Doh?” After a long and tiring day on the farm, Saw Hser felt exhausted, so he told the carrier to leave the basket in the corner of the house, promising to take care of it later. Soon after, he fell asleep from fatigue. According to the local elders, it takes about an hour and a half to walk from Ter Kweh Hta to Pwor Bi Kho, where the spiritual gravesite is located. When Saw Hser woke up from his nap, he remembered the Ku Ter Ti that needed to be transported to Hlo Pwor Bi. However, as it was already midnight, he decided to do it the next morning and went back to sleep.

While he was sleeping, Saw Hser heard a clear and loud voice coming from the Ku Ter Ti saying, “Saw Hser, you need to take me to Hlo Pwor Bi now.” After hearing the voice several times, Saw Hser replied, “My friend, it’s already midnight. Please stay overnight here and let me send you tomorrow morning.” After that, the voice from the Ku Ter Ti went silent for the rest of the night. The next morning, after having his breakfast and offering a meal to the spirit of the deceased, Saw Hser carried the Ku Ter Ti to Hlo Pwor Bi. As part of the



The cultural materials of vases in Hlo Pwor Bi



traditional customs, before entering the spiritual territory, the spirit world of the dead, the carrier must announce, “All you dwelling spirits, please tie up your livestock such as dogs and pigs firmly, because a new person, the spirit of the dead, is coming.”

After informing the dwelling spirits, Saw Hser heard a poem that said, “Blaw Doh Pu Lay Lay Plaw Plaw, Saw Hser Heh Ko Mu A’ghaw,” meaning the clean and spacious blaw where Saw Hser comes every morning. To his dismay, Saw Hser replied, “Plu Blaw Doh Pu Htwee Aye Ber, Ler Kee Saw Hser T’ Heh Ler,” meaning the dead spirit’s blaw is full of dog feces, and Saw Hser will never come back again. It is said that after Saw Hser’s poetic response, fewer dead people appeared in the communities.

Unexpectedly, a red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) resting on top of a pine tree shot its feces on Saw Hser, making him smell awful. The elders also explained that Saw Hser fell into a coma for three days. After returning from the spiritual gravesite following this three-day coma, Saw Hser stopped sending the deceased’s Ku Ter Ti to Hlo Pwor Bi and instead transferred this responsibility to other relatives and villagers in the communities.



Ku Ter Ti



Pwo Pwor Lay

Tay Mu Der Village-Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District,

Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei



Pwo Pwor Lay is one of the spiritually significant sacred and historical sites in the Salween Peace Park. In honoring this well-revered site, local Indigenous communities refer to it as Pu Pwar Lay, meaning grandfather cliff. In Karen (K'nyaw) culture, Pu, meaning grandfather, is a highly revered family title. Pwo Pwor Lay is a renowned sacred territory with distinctive natural beauty and scenery that embodies spiritual and cultural values. It is located in Tar Oh Der Kaw, Tay Mu Der Village Track, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District.

Geographically, Pwo Pwor Lay is situated in the middle of Luthaw Township's political administrative boundary. The crest of its waterfall begins from the western side of Ler Shu Kho Mountain base, the eastern side of Par Mee Kho Mountain base, the western side of Daw Peh Mountain, and finally descends to Wee Klo Village. From the eastern side of the cliff, the waterfall descends from the west of Tar Oh Der Kaw to Maw T'Kyaw Kaw mountain base. There is an enforced taboo that forbids calling the site Pwo Pwor Lay; instead, it must be referred to as Pu Pwar Lay.

In the past, the stewardship of Pwo Pwor Lay was traditionally based on customary practices and belief systems through the performance of cultural and spiritual ceremonies. In the Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) Kaw governance system, Htee Poe Kaw K'sar (masters of Kaw), the elders council, wisdom keepers, skilled diviners, and groups of thirty male and female youth played an important role in protecting this sacred and spiritual territory through ritual performances.

Local elders explained that the ecological and cultural uniqueness of Pwo Pwor Lay is due to its waterfall, cliff, stoney eggs, sacred plants known as Sue Gaw Sue Baw (red and yellow *Kaempferia* herbal plants, a type of aromatic ginger), and the white drum. Additionally, one of the interesting but mysterious stories shared by the Indigenous community concerns the natural stone piles near the pool and river, which resemble human-made piles. Despite attempts to separate these stony piles, they would mysteriously restack themselves by the following day, without anyone's knowledge or understanding.

Local elders instruct that if you want to visit this sacred place, you should first converse quietly among yourselves and travel silently. By doing so, you will reach your destination and experience the beauty, serenity, and wonder of Pwo Pwor Lay. In contrast, visiting this sacred place without showing respect to the land spirit through unacceptable behaviors such as shouting, rudeness, or loudly calling the name of the sacred site can result in sudden darkness, thunderstorms, and heavy rainfall.

Furthermore, if you wish to go fishing in Pwo Pwor Lay's natural pool, you must approach quietly and respectfully, performing the spiritual ritual of cracking and offering an egg to the spiritual entity. Regarding the sacred plants known as Sue Gaw Sue Baw (red and yellow *Kaempferia* herbal plants, a type of aromatic ginger), local elders explained that nearby

communities can sense their pleasant scent once a year, especially during the rice crop flowering period. The elders also instructed that only single and virgin male and female youth are permitted to obtain these sacred plants. To do so successfully, they must pass an ethical test of self-control and moral integrity: they must sleep naked together with only a Crepe ginger (*Cheilocostus speciosus*) placed between them. This is considered a serious temptation test for young people.

A story about the acquisition of these sacred plants once occurred in the local community. Local elders shared that a young male and female in the village planned to visit Pwo Pwor Lay to collect the sacred plants while bathing in the river. After thoroughly discussing the traditional taboos and enforced protocols, they reached a final agreement. They slept naked at Pwo Pwor Lay for the whole night without committing any wrongdoing. When they woke in the morning, they found a bamboo basket for keeping chickens, called Chaw Thu, with a peep of chickens inside. Amused, they picked up the basket and began their journey back to the village. Unfortunately, before arriving, they engaged in sexual relations while bathing together in the river. As a result, the Chaw Thu basket with the peep of chickens suddenly disappeared.

The traditional folklore about Pu Saw Mot and the White Drum

Once upon a time, there was an old man named Pu Saw Mot (Grandfather Saw Mot), who was believed to have the supernatural ability to communicate directly with the spirits of the mountains, land, and water. He had a plot of Ku rotational farming on Pu Pwar Lay, the sacred stony cliff of Pwo Pwor Lay.

Traditionally, the Indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) community would always keep a set of Porku bamboo xylophones at their agricultural hut. After clearing the land, preparing firebreaks, burning the cultivated area, and building the agricultural hut, Grandfather Saw Mot would play the Porku to relax after long days of intensive work. His Porku produced a beautiful and captivating sound, and he played it every day after finishing his rotational farm work.

During the weed-clearing period, heavy rainfall caused the water level in Pweh Hlo Klo (Pweh Hlo River, called Yuzalin River in Burmese) to rise. The river flooded, carrying waste, pieces of logs, and debris, creating a loud, intense sound as the water rushed around Pu Pwar Lay (Grandfather Cliff). Pu Saw Mot was very amused by the floating logs and became so entertained that he temporarily forgot about his farming duties. Not only did he enjoy watching the logs float, but he also tried to clear the waterway to help the trapped logs flow freely in the river.

While observing the floating logs in the river, a mysterious person visited Pu Saw Mot at his hut and said, “My friend, as you have helped me during my difficult times, let me

also help you clear the weeds in your farms in return.” Pu Saw Mot happily accepted the offer. After their short conversation, the mysterious man suddenly disappeared. Pu Saw Mot realized that this person was not ordinary but a divine being, and he decided to communicate further with them. Soon after, he returned to his hut and began playing the *Porku* bamboo xylophones continuously for days and nights. One day, while he was playing, three ladies appeared in the middle of the pool and slowly moved toward the riverbank where Pu Saw Mot was. They said, “The sound of the *Porku* you are playing is gratifying. Can you make one for us?” In return, Pu Saw Mot asked for their names. The three ladies, who were guardians of the water spirit, introduced themselves as Naw Taylay Talay, Naw Piteh Piteh, and Naw K’pru Nge Nge.

Afterwards, Pu Saw Mot went into the nearby forest to find the most suitable and durable bamboo to make a *Porku* for the three water spirits. Once he finished and presented the *Porku* to them, the three spirits returned to the pool and instantly disappeared. Pu Saw Mot, remaining on land, and the three water spirits, from within the water, began playing their *Porku* at the same time. The sounds of the two *Porku* blended harmoniously, prompting the three water spirits to visit Pu Saw Mot again. This time, they said, “You are such a kind and generous person, you saved us from the floods and even made a *Porku* for us. To show our gratitude for your generosity, we would like to present you with this white drum.”

After giving him the white drum, the three water spirits further instructed him: “Do not play this drum until you have reached your home. If you truly wish to play it before then, you must first tie it with a *Lum* (*Cissus repens*) vine.” Pu Saw Mot carried the white drum and began his journey home. When he reached Tar Oh Der village, he took out a *ki baw mu* vine, tied the drum to a tree trunk, and started to play. After playing the drum several times, the vine binding it broke, and the drum fell into the pool that the local indigenous communities call Pu Pwar Lay’s Pool.

Pu Saw Mot tried his best to recover the fallen drum, but his efforts were in vain. Upon receiving the drum, the water spirits said, “Pu Saw Mot did not want our gift, so we will return his *Porku* to him as well.” When Pu Saw Mot reached the edge of the pool, he saw the *Porku* he had made for the water spirits floating on the water. Regretting that he had not followed their instructions, he lamented the loss of the precious white drum.

Local indigenous communities believe that the white drum still lies within Pu Pwar Lay’s Pool. Recalling this story, local elders continue to recite the following poem:

ကျိုက်ဝါအပျံသန်မှဆံ, ကျိုက်ဝါရုံးကွအလီခံ
ကျိုက်ဝါရုံးကွပျံပျိုလှ, ပီကူထီဉ်ဖီအဘျ
ကျိုက်ဝါရုံးကွလှပျံပျို, ပီကူထီဉ်ဖီအဘီ

This poem explains that by tying the white drum with Lum vine (*Cissus repens*), it caused the white drum to return to its original place, to Pwo Pwor Lay, the yellow Porku floating on the river.

Local indigenous peoples still believe that whenever they hear the sound of the white drum coming from Pwo Pwor Lay, it is a sign that something bad will happen to the community. According to their traditional practices and belief systems, the elders gather to perform a ritual called “Tar Wor He Wor Ghaw,” which means *village encirclement to prevent evil spirits or misfortunes*. As part of this ritual, they sharpen bamboo sticks, tie them with Lum (*Cissus repens*) vines, and place them around the village boundaries. Afterwards, the entire community performs a spiritual observance known as Tadu, which involves the enforcement of taboos and a period of collective rest. During Tadu, community members refrain from farming and other livelihood activities. No one is allowed to leave the village, and outsiders are forbidden to enter. Throughout the three-day observation of Tadu, local trading is also prohibited. The indigenous Karen (K’nyaw) community believes that if all members observe Tadu collectively and in harmony, they can overcome any unforeseen misfortune that may befall the community.

The folklore about Po Hkeh (orphan boy) from Thawthi and White Drum

Long ago, there was an orphan boy named Po Hkeh who lived on Thawthi Kho (Thawthi Mountain), and he was known as *Po Hkeh Thawthi*. Po Hkeh owned a *Porku*, a bamboo xylophone, which he played every day, especially whenever he felt bored. It is said that a Mughar, a water spirit from Pu Pwar Lay (Pwo Pwor Lay), would become restless and long to visit Po Hkeh whenever she heard the sound of his *Porku*. After visiting Po Hkeh at Thawthi Kho, she wished to exchange her white drum for his *Porku*. After exchanging gifts, Mughar from Pwo Pwor Lay advised Po Hkeh to play the drum only after tying it with a Lum (*Cissus repens*) vine rope.

With great joy, Po Hkeh carried the drum home. However, his temptation to play it before reaching home was too strong, so he tied it with the vine rope and began to play. As soon as he did, the vine broke, and the drum fell to the ground. When Mughar, the water spirit, recovered the white drum she had exchanged with Po Hkeh, she immediately returned the *Porku* to its owner, who lived upstream of Pwo Hlo Klo (Pweh Hlo Klo) in Thawthi Kho. Normally, the water would flow downstream from the headwaters, but after Mughar returned the *Porku* to Po Hkeh, the water was said to have flowed back upstream.

Tatawklay, community practice of collective fishing

Traditionally, fishing around Pwo Pwor Lay's pool is strictly prohibited, and in the past, older generations would never fish in the surrounding areas. Local elders recount a terrible incident that once occurred in Tar Oh Der community concerning Tatawklay, a collective fishing practice that violated the enforced taboo of Pu Pwar Lay (Pwo Pwor Lay). Not long ago, villagers from Tar Oh Der organized a Tatawklay that extended beyond their ancestral designated area and into the vicinity of Pwo Pwor Lay's pool. Although nothing happened to those who participated in the fishing, the people who remained in the village experienced severe thunderstorms and lightning strikes that tore the roofs off nearly every household.

After the disaster, the indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) community of Tar Oh Der realized that they had violated the sacred taboo of Pwo Pwor Lay, angering its guardian spirit, who warned them through the destructive storm. Since then, the area known as "Hee Hko Kar," meaning the *broken-neck village*, has remained abandoned to this day. It is also referred to as Ler Lah Day.

Traditionally, fishing around Pwo Pwor Lay's pool is strictly prohibited and older generations in the past would never go fishing in its nearby areas. Local elders shared a terrible incident that once took place among Tar Oh Der's community, regarding Tatawklay, literally meaning the community practice of collective fishing, a practice that was in violation of the taboo of Pu Pwar Lay (Pwo Pwor Lay).

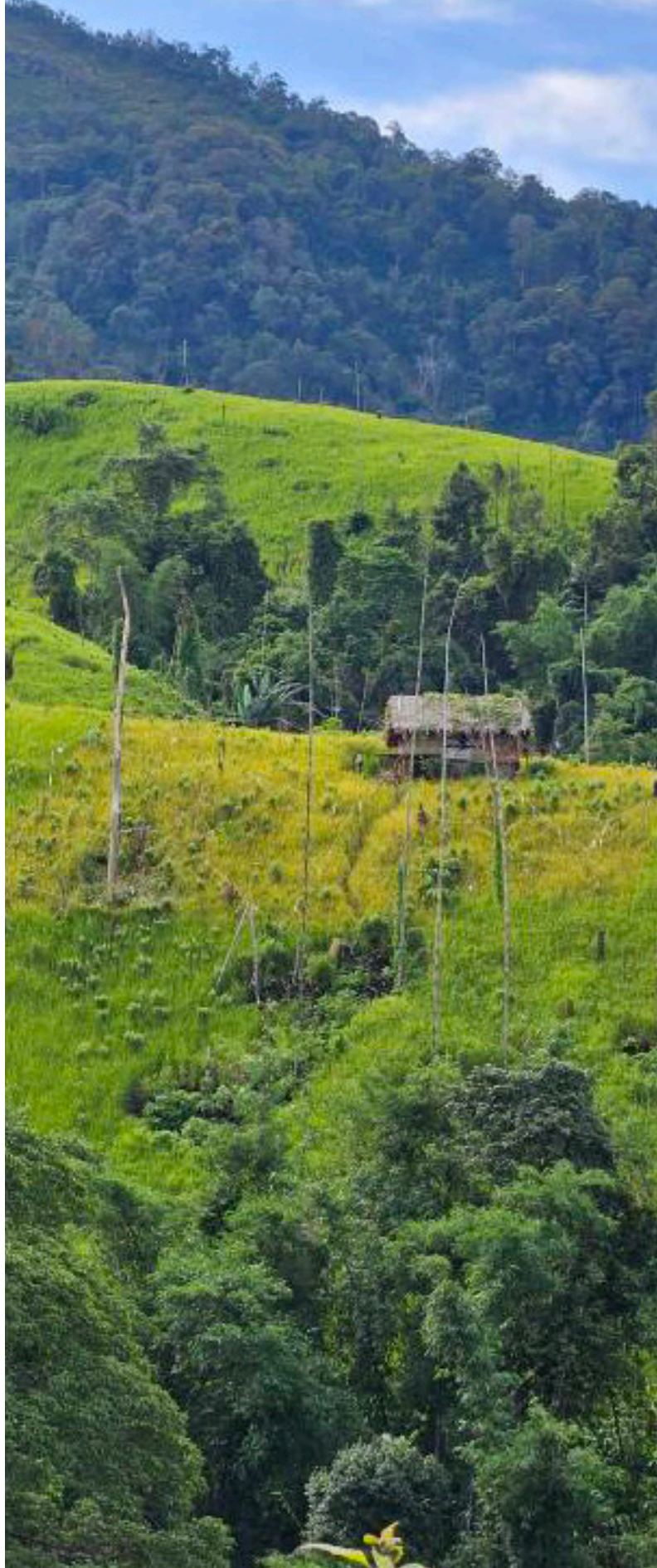
Not long ago, villagers from Tar Oh Der village carried out Tatawklay that extended beyond the ancestral designated area and occurred around Pwo Pwor Lay's pool. Though nothing happened to those who went fishing, those who remained in the village experienced terrible thunderstorms and strikes that caused all the rooves in the village to be destroyed. Following the disaster, indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) community in Tar Oh Der realized that they had violated the taboo of Pwo Pwor Lay, its owner (natural spirit) would become angry and warn them through thunderstrikes and storms. This particular area, "Hee Hko Kar" meaning, the broken-neck village has remained abandoned until today. And it is now referred to as Ler Lah Day.

Taboos in Pwo Pwor Lay

There are certain traditional taboos about this scared and revered spiritual territory. Some of the taboos prohibit the calling of its actual name Pwo Pwor Lay, but in honoring and recognizing its personhood it should be referred to as "Pu Pwar Lay" Grandfather Stoney Cliff instead. Those who visit this sacred site are forbidden from taking or bringing back any materials from there. For example, local people believe that if you try to take sacred materials such as stoney eggs from Pu Pwar Lay, you will get lost, and never find your way back home. They believe that it will only be when the stoney eggs are returned to their original place that you will be able to find your way back home.

The folktale of Cicada and Pu Pwar Lay

According to our ancestors, the Cicada (*Thi Thway*) is a species of insect whose spiritual resting place lies within Pu Pwar Lay. Once a year, during the months of April and May, they emerge. Some fly toward the upstream headwaters, others to the downstream areas, and still others to the north, south, east, and west. Their life span is relatively short, yet the Cicada brings many benefits to our indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities. For example, when the sound of Cicadas fills the air, men begin preparing their agricultural tools and equipment for the upcoming farming season, while women ready their weaving tools and materials, spinning cotton threads before the arrival of the monsoon rains. For us, the Cicada is an insect of deep spiritual and cultural significance. It signals the changing of the seasons and guides us in preparing for essential livelihood activities.



Hkeh Pa Lay (Hkeh Pa Cliff)

Hkeh Pa Village-Tract, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District,

Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Hkeh Pa Lay, literally meaning Hkeh Pa Cliff, is another sacred and revered site located in Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw, Hkeh Pa Village Tract, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District of the Salween Peace Park. Hkeh Pa Lay sits at an altitude of 4,127 feet (1,257.91 meters) above sea level. In the past, local indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities practiced traditional animist belief systems, and once a year they would visit the clifftop to perform a spiritual offering ceremony to the guardian spirits. However, after the majority of local indigenous peoples in Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw converted to Christianity, these traditional spiritual practices were discontinued. Similar to the traditional taboos of other sacred lands within the Salween Peace Park, there is a strict prohibition against slaughtering living organisms or spilling their blood on the clifftop. In addition, setting wildfire is another taboo, as it is believed that whenever a wildfire occurs during the rice flowering season, heavy rainfall will always follow. After such an event, local indigenous communities return to the clifftop to perform the spiritual offering ceremony.

Another interesting taboo associated with this sacred site, which local people still firmly believe in, concerns challenging the mountain spirit regarding one's married life. For example, if someone reaches the clifftop and boldly declares, "I will not get married and will remain single for the rest of my life," it is said that shortly after returning from the clifftop, they will get married. According to local people, this actually happened to a monk who visited Hkeh Pa Cliff for pagoda construction in the past. After reaching the clifftop, he challenged the mountain spirit in this way, yet he got married not long after returning to the village.

Local elders also shared that Hkeh Pa Lay is home to sacred plants known as Sue Gaw Sue Baw, red and yellow *Kaempferia* herbal plants, a type of aromatic ginger. Once a year, during the rice flowering season, the aromatic scent of these sacred plants can be experienced by local villagers. Local elders said that these sacred plants are very difficult to obtain, and anyone who wishes to take them must first pass an ethical test of temptation. For example, a young unmarried man and woman must sleep naked together for three consecutive nights without committing any wrongdoing, such as engaging in sexual relations, with only a small bamboo placed between them. If they succeed in overcoming this temptation, they are granted the sacred plants. Elders also recounted a story of two cousins, a young unmarried man and woman, who visited the clifftop in search of these plants. They successfully passed the ethical test after three nights and obtained the sacred plants, Sue Gaw Sue Baw (red and yellow *Kaempferia* herbal plants, a type of aromatic ginger). However, on their way home, they could not resist temptation and committed wrongdoing, causing the sacred plants to disappear instantly.

The folklore about Hkeh Pa Lay

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful lady named Naw Hkeh Pa who lived on the clifftop known as Hkeh Pa Lay. Her daily activities included weaving traditional clothes and other handicrafts, as well as raising livestock such as chickens and pigs. According to local elders, Naw Hkeh Pa would sit on the clifftop while weaving, setting her weaving looms across two giant trees on the other side of the mountain, in an area now known as Htar Kho Hkhaw. Today, only one of these giant trees remains. She kept her weaving materials, including cotton threads, in a woven basket or container called Kyor Per, which she placed at Kwee Doh Kho on the other side of the Bue Hlo Klo (Bilin River in Burmese). Naw Hkeh Pa's wooden weaving blades later turned into a large flat rock on Hkeh Pa Lay. The mountain base where her pigs once lived is now known as Hto Par K'lo, meaning the male pig ground, and a clump of large bamboo on the riverbank of Hkeh Pa Klo (Hkeh Pa River), where her chickens rested and crowed, is now called Saw Toe Boe.

As a beautiful and attractive woman in her time, Naw Hkeh Pa had two boyfriends, Saw Law and Saw Nu. She loved both of them equally and found it difficult to choose one as her soulmate. To make the right decision, Naw Hkeh Pa created a contest between them. She asked Saw Law to travel to Bue Hlo Klo (Bilin River) and collect thirty rattans to bring back to her, while Saw Nu was tasked with going to Maw Hlo Klo (Maw Hlo River, located on the eastern side of Hkeh Pa) to bring back a large rock to the clifftop. The only rule of the contest was that the one who returned first with the required material would be allowed to marry Naw Hkeh Pa and become her soulmate.

It is said that during the competition, both Saw Law and Saw Nu were constantly tempted by a little bird called the Red-billed Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps*), which acted as a devil tempter. For example, before Saw Law reached the clifftop with his thirty rattans, the devil bird told him that Saw Nu had already arrived at Naw Hkeh Pa, so there was no need to continue carrying the rattans. Disappointed, Saw Law dropped the rattans to the ground and rushed to Naw Hkeh Pa to check whether the bird's words were in fact true. When he realized that the devil bird had been lying, he returned to retrieve the rattans and carry them back to Naw Hkeh Pa on the clifftop. Meanwhile, the little devil bird flew to Saw Nu and tempted him in the same way. Upon hearing the false news, Saw Nu suddenly dropped the large rock he had carried from the river and rushed to see Naw Hkeh Pa. After discovering that the news from the bird was untrue, he quickly ran back to the rock, but it kept rolling back to Maw Hlo Klo. By the time Saw Nu returned to Naw Hkeh Pa with the rock on his shoulder, Saw Law and Naw Hkeh Pa were already together. In a fit of extreme anger, Saw Nu threw the large rock at Naw Hkeh Pa and Saw Law, killing them both instantly. According to local elders, after their deaths, the couple transformed into sacred plants known as Sue Gaw Sue Baw.

Poem about Naw Hkeh Pa

နီၵ်းယဲၵပုၤသုၤပုၤဖျါ, ထီၣ်အူတယံၤလၢတၢ်ကို
နီၵ်းယဲၵထံတၢ်သၢဆံ, ထီၣ်ကတၢၢ်အူဒီးတယံၤ
ဖိဆံၣ်သၣ်လီၤဘျၢၣ်ခိၣ်ဟံ, နီၵ်းယဲၵထံတၢ်ဝးချာ
ယဲၵခိၣ်ခိၣ်လီၤဒံၣ်လီၤ, ညၣ်ဝါဒံၣ်ထံသဘျီ
ကတၢၢ်ယဲၵနဝၣ်ဖျါ, နခိၣ်နိးဆိးဒံၣ်ဘျၢၣ်အိ
နီၵ်းယဲၵပုၤဒိၣ်တၢ်ဂ့ၤ, စီၤနူးစီၤလီၤသးလီၤက့ၤ
စီၤနူးစီၤလီၤပြာလိာ်သး, စီၤလီၤက့ၤဟဲတုၤလၢညါ
စီၤလီၤလဲၤတံၢ်ဂ့ၢ်ခွံၣ်ဒိ, စီၤနူးယိးထီၣ်လၢမိကျိ
စီၤလီၤဟဲက့ၤတုၤလၢညါ, စီၤနူးအသးဘၣ်သ့ၣ်ဖး
နီၵ်းယဲၵစီၤလီၤခံၤ, လၢတၢ်သးတိအဲၣ်လိာ်သး
စီၤနူးထံၣ်အသးတမံ, မၤသံယဲၵစီၤလီၤလံ

A brief historical timeline of Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw

Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw, the customary territory of the indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) people, is composed of three villages: Hkeh Pa Hta, Maw Lay Khaw, and Por Raw Hta. The territorial landscape of the Kaw covers 7,687 acres (3,110.81 hectares), and local indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities belonging to K'nyaw Shaw (S'gaw Karen) have settled in this Kaw since ancestral times. Before the arrival of Christian missionaries, local indigenous peoples practiced traditional animist belief systems. During that period, the Kaw Kho (hereditary leader or master of the Kaw) was known as Saw Ter Mu, and his son-in-law, Saw Pah Ker, succeeded him as master of the Kaw. However, after the leadership of Kyaw Hla, a nephew of Saw Pah Ker, traditional animist practices declined, as some community members converted to Christianity while others became Bar Paw flower worshipers. The current Kaw Kho, master of Ler Wah Kho Der, is Saw Wah Lay, who remains responsible for performing Kaw ceremonial activities.

Primary livelihoods of the local indigenous communities in Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw include lowland paddy and Ku rotational farming, agroforestry, and orchard plantations such as betel nut, mango, turmeric, chili, tobacco, sugarcane, palm, banana, elephant foot yam, pineapple, and cardamom. They also engage in operating local convenience shops, trading, and livestock rearing. The indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities of Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw practiced animism before the arrival of Karen missionary Thera Poe Lah in 1946. Since then, many local indigenous Karen people converted to Christianity. While carrying out his missionary work, Thera Poe Lah collaborated with the local community to establish a primary school, serving students from kindergarten to grade 3, which they named Ler

Wah Kho Der School. Originally from Shwegyin, Thera Poe Lah was the only teacher who supervised and managed the school from 1946 to 1948.

During the Second World War, between 1946 and 1947, the indigenous Karen communities of Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw were forcibly displaced from their ancestral territory during the incursion of the imperial Japanese Army in Burma. The Japanese Army committed systematic killings, persecution, torture, and other forms of oppression, accusing the Karen of being allies of the British Army. Burma gained independence from the British colonial government in 1948, and in 1949, the Karen revolution began. Since its inception, the Burma Army has launched constant military offensives against the Karen National Union (KNU), resulting in mass displacement of indigenous Karen peoples. During these military operations, numerous human rights violations were committed, including looting, killing livestock, and burning entire villages, particularly during the era of General Ne Win's military regime and the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP).

In 1956, the indigenous peoples of Ler Wah Ko Der were forcibly displaced and took refuge in Klay Day Village when the Burma Army's Battalion 19 attacked their village. Some villagers sought safety in Ku Gaw Kee and Htee Ler Wah Kee villages. In 1957, the Burma Army built a helipad at Hto Kaw Kyaw K' Wah Khu Klei Kyo, located within Ler Wah Ko Der Kaw. While establishing this military base, the army caused forest fires that destroyed the rotational farms of local indigenous Karen villagers, including those of Saw Mya Shwe and the father of Saw Ler Moo. Between 1958 and 1963, the local Karen people were repeatedly displaced, moving from place to place, including temporary stays in Ku Gaw Kee and Htee Ler Wah Kee, to protect their lives. In 1966, they were forced to flee once again to Maw Lay Kaw when the Burma Army's Light Infantry Battalions 19 and 30 attacked their village.

In 1971, the indigenous peoples of Ler Wah Ko Der Kaw returned to their abandoned lands and established Hkeh Pa Village, along with social infrastructures such as a school serving students up to grade 7 and a church. However, during the Burmese military dictatorship's oppressive Four Cuts Policy from 1974 to 1975, the entire village was destroyed. Local people were forced to become internally displaced, with some fleeing to Thailand as refugees. The Burma Army, particularly Light Infantry Battalion 30, carried out the Four Cuts Policy and committed numerous human rights violations against the Karen people. In 1980, further military offensives by the Burma Army's 44th Light Infantry Division forced villagers, including IDPs, to seek refuge in Thailand once again. In 1984, the army burned down eleven houses in Ku Gaw Hta belonging to Saw Eh Pwa, Htee Way, Kyi Lwe, Bo Htoo, Thay Kay, Saw Lu Doo, Par Kaw Na, Maung Tin, Ra Tay, Ka Moo, and Hpar Per Dei.





In 1990, the local indigenous peoples returned and re-established Hkeh Pa Hta Village, along with the school and church. According to local accounts, they lived peacefully between 1990 and 1994. However, in 1995, a splinter group called the Democratic Karen (K'nyaw) Buddhist Army (DKBA), in collaboration with the Burma Army's Battalions 19 and 33, conducted joint military operations against the KNU in Mutraw (Papun) District. These operations led to massive displacement and numerous human rights abuses, including burning entire villages, rice barns, churches, schools, and houses; looting property; randomly killing villagers' livestock; and committing systematic killings. Two years later, in 1997, the Burma Army's 77th Light Infantry Division attacked and destroyed the village, causing another wave of mass displacement.

Between 2003 and 2011, the political situation was relatively stable, allowing local communities to return to their former village, rehabilitate their livelihoods, and undertake locally led community development projects, including constructing a public clinic, student dormitories, community fish conservation areas, and schools. In 2012, the indigenous communities of Ler Wah Kho Der collectively established the Ta Mar Ghaw Kee Community Forest, covering 702 acres (284.089 hectares). In 2018, the village experienced massive flooding that destroyed nine rice paddy farms and three irrigation canals, and the KNU built a car road crossing the village. Since the Burmese military junta seized power in 2021, local indigenous peoples in Ler Wah Kho Der Kaw, along with other communities in the Salween Peace Park, have endured ongoing threats and intimidation, including airstrikes and aerial surveillance by the military regime.

Ker Kaw Lay

Mae Thu Village-Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Ker Law Lay (Ker Kaw Cliff) is a sacred and spiritually revered site located in Ker Kaw Hlaw Village, Mae Thu Village Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District of the Salween Peace Park. Historically, the first person to settle and establish the village was Pu Thoo Di (Grandfather Thoo Di). Before settling here, his birthplace, or what the indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) people call "Daypor," meaning umbilical cord forest, was Ler Bi Bar Village. According to local elders, while Pu Thoo Di was roaming and searching for fertile land to clear and farm, he eventually arrived in the Ker Kaw Hlaw area. He first constructed a small farmhouse and began working the land. Gradually, other family members and relatives joined him, and the area developed into a village. The village was named Ker Kaw Hlaw after the Ker Kaw Hlaw Hlo (Ker Kaw Hlaw River), which originates at the waterhead of Ker Law Lay (the cliff).

Local indigenous elders explain that Ker Kaw Hlaw Village, historically comprised of Behkli Kee and Ler Bi Bar villagers, has existed for over a hundred years. While it is primarily a K'nyaw (Karen) village, a Shan family settled there over twenty years ago. Ker Kaw Hlaw Village, located in Wah Kha Poe Kaw (customary land), currently consists of 63 households with a total of 406 family members. The majority of the local indigenous community practice Buddhism, while a few households follow Christianity. Primary livelihoods include lowland paddy farming, upland Ku rotational farming, livestock raising, and subsistence trading. As the village is under the political administration of the Karen National Union (KNU) in Mutraw District, certain legal matters, such as premarital sexual relations or marital infidelity, are resolved according to KNU judicial procedures.

Regardless of religious affiliation, local indigenous peoples continue to maintain and preserve their ancestral belief systems and ceremonial practices, including Tar Lu Ku Thet Ku (offering feasts to rice and land spirits), Tar Lu Htee Baw Hko (spiritual rituals for water spirits), Tadu Tatue (traditional taboos), and cultural wrist-tying ceremonies. For example, the ancestral taboo of Tadu T'lar, observed to prevent spiritual imprecation, hardship, and natural disasters, is still practiced today. Traditionally, this taboo is observed twice a year: once during the dry season when tree leaves fall, and again at the start of the rainy season when new leaves sprout. During Tadu T'lar, the entire community rests and refrains from livelihood activities, trading, and traveling. The village also has designated sacred areas, including the burial ground, water-based sacred sites for water spirits called Na Htee (such as Ler Hue and Kyaw Ta ponds), fish conservation zones (Or Lay Kwee), and Ker Law Lay (Ker Kaw Cliff). Local elders emphasize that forest fires in burial grounds are strictly prohibited, as burning these areas is believed to bring crop failure.

The Sacred Ker Kaw Lay

Local indigenous communities believe that Ker Kaw Lay is a fallen piece of Ler Mu Kho Ser, the stony cliff from Ler Mu Plaw, which is why they consider it a sacred and revered site. A large hole on the clifftop is said to have been the dwelling of a mysterious monk for many generations, who was occasionally seen by locals in the past. The clifftop also contains other spiritually and culturally significant sites, including the footprint of a white elephant and a natural pool. Ker Kaw Lay serves not only as a spiritual territory but also as a social and physical sanctuary for local indigenous peoples during periods of atrocities and militarization under the Burmese military regime and civil war.

At the base of the cliff lies a sacred moving stone, and calling its name aloud is strictly prohibited. According to local people, violating this taboo may cause bodily ailments, which must be treated through a ceremonial offering of a red rooster, betel, and tobacco. The stone is said to remain unstable during the full moon and new moon periods. Local indigenous communities assert that unless one commits a wrongdoing or violates a taboo, the sacred stone will cause no harm. In honoring and revering this sacred site, local people always mention Ker Kaw Lay during their ceremonial rituals.

A brief historical timeline of Ker Kaw Hlaw Village

Ker Kaw Hlaw's indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) communities have endured decades of oppression and atrocities at the hands of Burma's repressive military regime. In 1980, the Burma Army's Light Infantry Battalion 30 invaded the village, committing gross human rights violations, including burning houses and rice barns, looting property, arbitrary arrests, and forced portering. Local villagers were forced to flee and take refuge in the forests for many years.

Hand-drawn map of a village in Myanmar, showing a network of roads, rivers, and various landmarks. The map is titled "ကျေးရွာသစ်မြို့နယ် - 20.9.2024" (New Village Township - 20.9.2024). It features a central area with several buildings and a large orange-colored area, possibly a field or a specific landmark. The map is surrounded by a blue border, and there are various labels in Burmese script throughout.





They were compelled to carry food rations, supplies, military equipment, and ammunition for the Burma Army. Some villagers, unable to bear the atrocities, fled to refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border.

In 1995, the Burma Army's Light Infantry Division 66 returned to the village, ordering residents to relocate to a designated relocation site in Mae Way. Two years later, in 1997, the Light Infantry Division 77 again forced the villagers to move, this time to a designated relocation site in Wah Tho Kho, Mae Way area. During these incursions, the army burned houses and rice barns, looted property, and slaughtered livestock. Some villagers once again fled to refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border.

Because of these repeated violations and atrocities, the entire village was abandoned. In 2010, some villagers returned and began rehabilitating their livelihoods. However, after the military regime unconstitutionally overthrew Burma's democratically elected government in 2021, the local indigenous communities in Ker Kaw Hlaw have faced ongoing threats and challenges, including airstrikes, aerial surveillance, and long-range artillery shelling, which continue to endanger their physical, social, and livelihood security.

Hkoe Ler Phar

Mae Thu Village-Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw
District, Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Hkoe Ler Phar is a sacred and historical site located in Mae Kaw Hlaw Village, Mae Thu Village Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District. Mae Kaw Hlaw village is home to 52 households comprising 360 indigenous Karen people (178 female; 182 male). Historically, the village was established by Saw Titus, also known as Par Thoo Pu, who was originally from Paw Ler Hta Village but settled permanently in Mae Kaw Hlaw after cultivating paddy farms and Ku rotational fields in the area. According to local elders, the village has existed for over a hundred years and was named after the Mae Kaw Hlaw Klo River. Traditionally, Mae Kaw Hlaw Kaw's customary territory is considered to be a female Kaw. While the Kaw Kho and Kaw Khar (hereditary male leaders and deputies) are responsible for spiritual ceremonial arrangements, the Kaw Naw Parmu (literally "queen of Kaw"), though not holding a hereditary leadership title, plays a vital role in all Kaw ceremonial events. Local people believe that as a female kaw, women's leadership is essential in the governance of Hkoe Ler Phar.

Crucial spiritual practices in Mae Kaw Hlaw include the taboo for premarital sexual relations and marital infidelity, which, if broken, requires a ceremonial feast offering of a pig and rice whiskey to the land spirit, with offenders obliged to slaughter the pig. During this offering, the entire community, including children, participate to ensure such wrongdoing does not recur. Another important ritual is the ceremonial offering to the Hlo (gravesite). When villagers learn of a disease outbreak, forest fire, or hear groaning sounds at gravesites, they perform offerings to the guardian of the land spirit using chicken and rice whiskey. Only the masters of

Kaw (Kaw Kho and Kaw Khar), Kaw Naw Parmu, and indigenous elders are required to perform this ritual. The governance of Mae Kaw Hlaw Kaw's customary territory follows an integrated approach to land and natural resource management, encompassing water-based sacred sites (Kyaw Khar Day and Ler Htu Kaw), Hloti (spiritual gravesites), forest reserves, Kaw offering sites, burial grounds, agricultural lands and Ku rotational farms, as well as sacred and historical sites such as Hkoe Ler Phar.

Traditional folklore about Hkoe Ler Phar

The local elders say that the folklore of Hkoe Ler Phar is connected to a white elephant from the Klaw Maw area of Klerlweehtu District. Long ago, a man named Par Thu Ghei, meaning “hostile man,” hunted the white elephant, which eventually arrived at Ler Phar Hlu (Ler Phar Hill), now known as Hkoe Ler Phar. After catching the elephant, Par Thu Ghei stabbed his knife into a rock, chaining the elephant to the knife so that it could not escape. However, while he was cooking, the elephant escaped. In anger, he struck the rock with his machete handle, cutting one of his stone cooking stoves, and chased the elephant until he finally captured it again, tying it up at Hkoe Poe Si. Later, Par Thu Ghei rode the elephant and traveled to another place.

Remarkably, the rock marks from Par Thu Ghei's stone cooking stoves, charcoals, rice water, locked elephant chain, machete strikes, his elbow and hand measurements, and the elephant's footprints have naturally remained on Hkoe Ler Phar to this day. Local indigenous communities maintain that women are forbidden from visiting Hkoe Ler Phar, as violating this traditional taboo is believed to result in thunderstrikes. Elders also recount Ler K'saw, a stone shaped like an elephant, believed to be the king's box for his clothes, which is said to open instantly when its owner returns.

Because of its spiritual significance, in 1968 the revered monk U Sandar Thiri from Mae Way came to build a pagoda on the mountain. Oral traditions and historical accounts connect the construction of the pagoda to two orphan brothers, Maung Aung and Myat Eh. According to local elders, the elder brother, a revered monk, mysteriously disappeared without a trace, though over time villagers discovered his monk's robe hanging on a bamboo at the Hkoe Ler Phar sacred site. Upon learning of his brother's disappearance, the younger brother, Myat Eh, known by his monkhood title as U Sandar Thiri, traveled from Mae Kaw Hlaw Village to search for him but only found his brother's clothes hanging on the bamboo. Recognizing the site as sacred, he returned to Ler Phar Hlu and built a pagoda there, which has since been known as Hkoe Ler Phar.

Before monk Myat Eh built Hkoe Ler Phar in Mae Kaw Hlaw Village, he visited a revered monk at Hkoe Thee Yu (Kyaiktiyo Pagoda) in Doothathu District to receive divine power.

Because of his virtuous life and good deeds, he was granted this divine power. In 1968, the revered monk U Sandar Thiri constructed the pagoda on Ler Phar Hlu, and the sacred site was later renamed by local indigenous communities as Hkoe Ler Phar, a place the monk also referred to as Ler K’Baw (a ferry stone). Spiritually, local indigenous peoples firmly believe that before death, either mentioning the name of Ler K’Baw or praying there will transport one to heaven.

For local indigenous Karen (K’nyaw) communities, Hkoe Ler Phar holds deep cultural and spiritual significance, particularly in relation to Buddhist beliefs and practices. The site is also crucial for ecological conservation, as the community has designated it as a protected area for forests and wildlife. Cutting down trees or hunting wildlife is strictly prohibited within the sacred site. Slaughtering or consuming living organisms is also forbidden, as local people believe Hkoe Ler Phar is where Mooday, the heavenly living bread obtained through the umbilical cord forest, is collected and consumed. Traditionally, villagers visit Hkoe Ler Phar in June, July, August, and September to perform prayers, devotional services, and rituals.



The white elephant’s footprint



The natural mark of Par Thu Ghei stabbing his knife to trap the elephant and the drag of its chain



The natural mark of the cut stone by Par Thu Ghei (hostile man)



Mo Htaw Nar (the long gong)



Ler K'Baw (ferry stone)



Taboos about Ler K'Baw (a ferry stone)

Local indigenous peoples firmly believe that before death, either mentioning the name of Ler K'Baw or praying there will transport a person to heaven. Furthermore, hunting wildlife in this area is strictly prohibited, as local people believe that taking an animal's life will result in divine retribution, causing the hunter's life to be taken in return. In the past, a tragic incident reinforced this belief, as an old man once hunted a monkey in this sacred place, and that night, the natural spirit warned him through a dream. A few days later, one of his healthy children suddenly became ill and passed away.

Mo Htaw Nar (the long gong)

Mo Htaw Nar, which literally means "the long gong," was discovered by a child in the village, who brought it back to his grandfather. The grandfather cleaned the gong using turmeric and *Acacia concinna* to wash away any evil influences. This long gong has since been used in cultural ceremonies such as wrist-tying rituals and house-moving events. Before it is used for any occasion, a ritual performance is required, which includes offering food to the spirit at an altar, preparing betel and tobacco, and reciting prayer chants. For local people, the sound of the long gong signifies the performance of spiritual rituals to expel diseases, protect the community, and bless them with abundant crop yields and livelihood prosperity. Local elders explained that the gong is crafted from a combination of gold, hepatizon, silver, and black, red, white, and yellow coppers. The community believes that having a Mo Htaw Nar in the village brings peace.

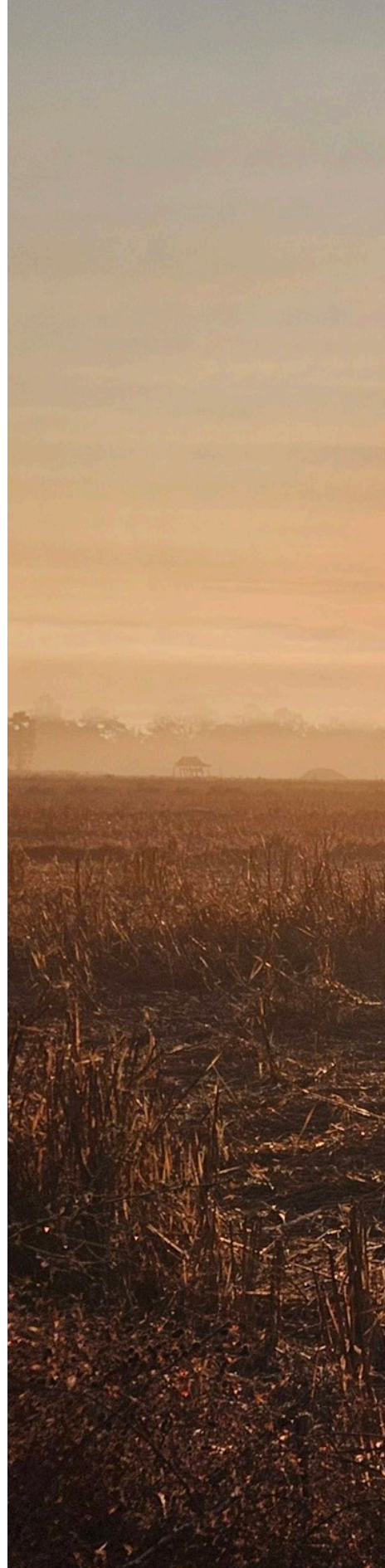
Brief historical timeline of the village

Like other Karen (K'nyaw) communities in Mutraw District, the villagers of Mae Kaw Hlaw have endured decades of brutality and atrocities by the Burma Army. In 1980, the Burma Army's Light Infantry Battalions 26 and 30 launched a severe military operation against the Karen

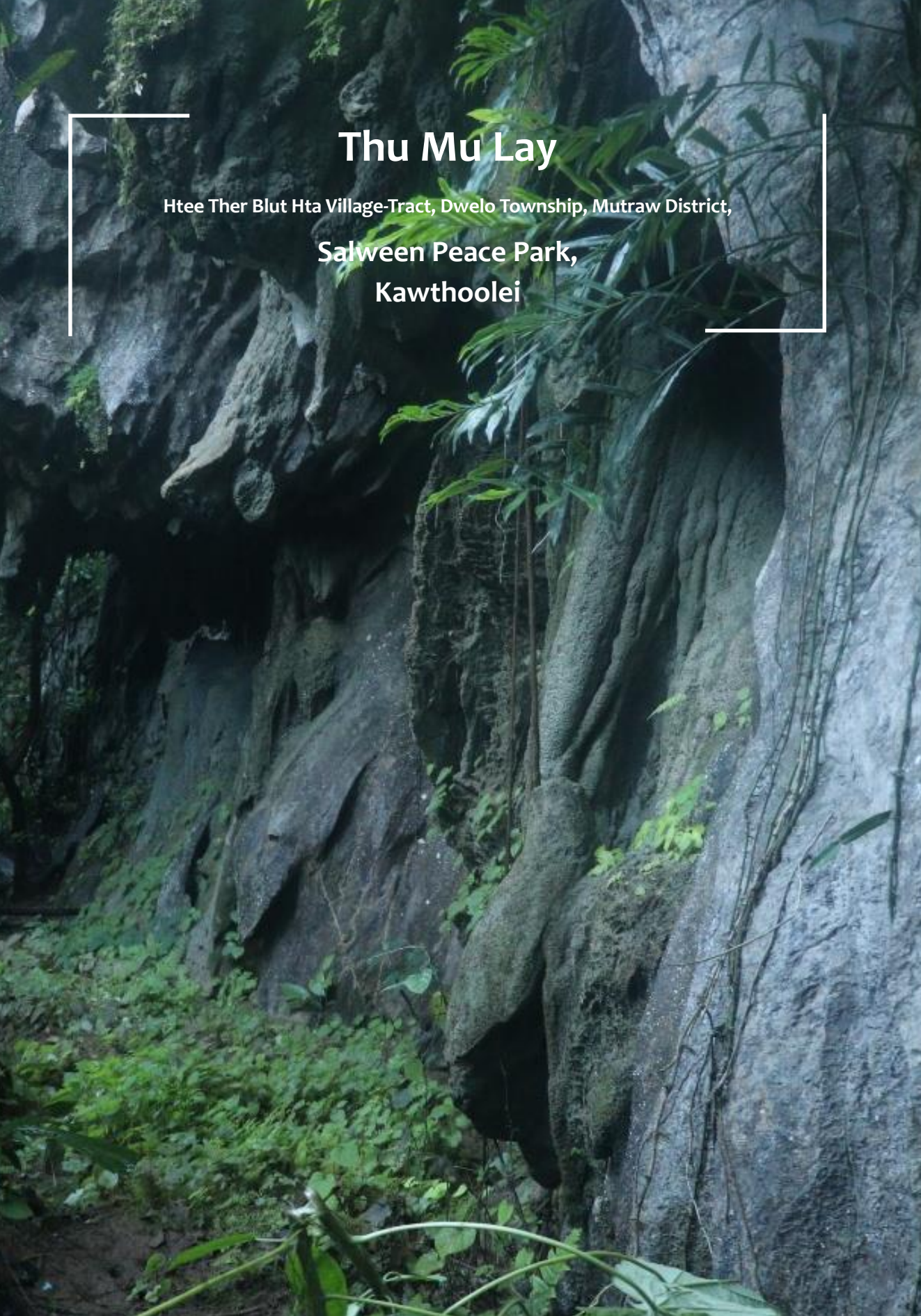
National Union (KNU). During this operation, they committed gross human rights violations, including killing, torture, and burning the entire village, forcing the local community to take refuge in the forests for three months. In 1981, the Burma Army established a military camp in Khaw Poe Kee and maintained a presence there for eight consecutive years, with soldiers attached to Light Infantry Battalions 53, 57, 59, and 60. After eight years of militarization, they eventually left the area.

In 1993 and 1995, the Burma Army's Light Infantry Divisions 44 and 66 carried out further aggressive military operations in Mae Kaw Hlaw. In 1997, the Light Infantry Division 77, in alliance with the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), conducted offensives against the KNU and established a military base in Wah Tho Kho in Mae Way. During this period, villagers from Mae Way and Mae Thu Village Tracks were forced to relocate to designated sites in Mae Way, on Klo Hta's farms. Although the Burma Army built a school for local people, the construction materials were collected from the remains of the houses they had previously burned. Those who refused to move hid in the forest, and some fled to refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border. In 1999, after facing multiple hardships, the villagers petitioned the Burma Army and DKBA to allow them to return, and permission was granted in 2000.

In 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement between the Thein Sein government and the KNU created relative political stability, enabling villagers to gradually return and rehabilitate their livelihoods. KNU governance was strengthened through the establishment of education and healthcare systems in the village. In 2015, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), which included the KNU as a signatory, further contributed to stability, although sporadic skirmishes occurred when the Burma Army violated the protocols. On March 29, 2021, a month after the military coup, villagers experienced a devastating airstrike that killed one person and seriously injured six others. The military junta carried out three indiscriminate airstrikes that destroyed 42 houses, marking one of the most unprecedented attacks on the community.







Thu Mu Lay

Htee Ther Blut Hta Village-Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District,

Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei

Thu Mu Lay, literally meaning Thu Mu Cliff and formerly known as K'Saw Wah Lay, is a sacred site located in Baw Tho Hta Village, Htee Ther Blut Hta Village-Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District, within the Salween Peace Park. Baw Tho Hta is the native village of an indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) community and has existed for over 160 years. The first settler who established the village was Pu Khei Khar Pa. According to local elders, before settling in Baw Tho Hta, the Karen (K'nyaw) people lived in Htee Ther Blut Kee village. The village's name originates from the frequent tiger attacks in the area, as "Baw Tho" in Karen refers to tigers. These tigers attacked villagers and livestock, dragging them to the river, which was initially called Wah Tho Klo (Wah Tho River) but later became Baw Tho Klo (Baw Tho River). For local indigenous peoples, Baw Tho Hta is not just a village but also a Kaw customary territory.

Baw Tho Hta comprises 115 households and 785 family members. The main religious practices include Buddhism and traditional animist beliefs. Primary livelihoods include lowland paddy farming, upland Ku rotational farming, agroforestry of betel nut and durian trees, livestock rearing, and subsistence trading. The village continues to uphold traditional Kaw governance systems under the spiritual leadership of the Htee Poe Kaw K'sar (masters of Kaw). A ceremonial offering of the Baw Tho Hta Kaw is performed every three years, using a male pig weighing 7 Mer (approximately 112 kilograms) to honor the guardian of the land spirit. Social events, such as weddings, are prohibited during the Kaw ceremony. If a wedding occurs, the couple must perform a feast offering at the Kaw altar.

A ritual offering of rice whiskey and a pig is also required for those who commit premarital sexual relations or marital infidelity to appease the guardian of the Kaw spirit. Offenders must prepare boiled turmeric and Acacia concinna and perform a cleansing ritual over the Kaw Kho and Kaw Kha. During the ceremony, only the masters of Kaw, elders, and offenders participate. The woman offender carries the altar offering bowl, and she holds the pig's head while the man offender slaughters the pig. These rituals are believed to protect the community from diseases, bless crops, and safeguard villagers during daily life and travel.

To sustainably manage and conserve forests, rivers, and biodiversity within their Kaw, Baw Tho Hta has established community-managed wildlife sanctuaries and fish conservation zones. Sacred sites within the Kaw include Na Htee (water spirit dwelling areas) such as K'Saw Wah Hta, Wah Mi Hta, Htee Daw Klo Hta, Baw Tho Hta, Wah May Klo Hta, Mu Kli Hlor Klo Hta, and Thay Hpue Khar Klo), Kaw offering sites, spiritual gravesites, burial grounds, and Thu Mu Lay.

Traditional folklore about Thu Mu Lay

The folklore of Thu Mu Lay is also connected to Par Thu Ghei and the white elephant, as mentioned in previous sacred site accounts. Local elders say that the white elephant, which had escaped from Par Thu Ghei, took refuge on the clifftop of Thu Mu Lay. While roaming, the elephant accidentally slipped from the cliff and fell into the river, which is now known as K'Saw Wah Klo (K'Saw Wah River). According to the local indigenous community, the Mae Way area was once invaded by the Siamese (Thai) army for gold mining during the era of their great-grandparents. While the Siamese (Thai) army did not achieve their goals, they established an encampment at K'Saw Wah Lay. They brought substantial amounts of silver and gold, enough to fill ninety carts, and hid them in a cave.

Indigenous elders further shared that inside the cave, there is a drum and three gongs, a small, medium, and large gong, whose sounds are occasionally heard by locals. The big drum is believed to signify peace, the medium drum signals death, and the small drum warns of famine; the different sounds are easily distinguishable. A mysterious monkey occasionally appears inside the long, dark cave tunnel, and its pointed direction is believed to indicate hidden wealth, though villagers rarely see it. Local people also believe that a python resides within the cave.

As a sacred site, the clifftop of Thu Mu Lay is strictly prohibited from having any religious infrastructure or buildings constructed. Whenever the indigenous community performs ritual ceremonies, such as water and land offerings to the spirit guardians, they always chant the name of Thu Mu Lay in their prayers. Visitors are forbidden from calling out or shouting the name of Thu Mu Lay upon arrival. Historically, this sacred site was known as K'Saw Wah Lay but was renamed Thu Mu Lay following the arrival of the Siamese (Thai) army.

A brief historical timeline of Baw Tho Hta Kaw

Local elders who are still alive shared the hardships and terrible experiences they endured under the oppression of the Burmese military dictatorship. In 1979, during the execution of the “Four Cuts Policy” military campaign, the Burma Army’s Light Infantry Divisions 44, 66, and 77 carried out severe offensives that resulted in gross human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, killings, and forced portering. In 1990, during the Burma Army’s military operations against the Karen National Union (KNU), local villagers, especially women, were forced to act as human shields and minesweepers almost daily. They were also compelled to provide security for Burmese troops as sentries.

From 1994 to 2005, during the Burma Army’s Light Infantry Division 11 operations and its alliance with the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), houses in Baw Tho Hta were burned down, villagers were tortured and killed, and ancestral forests were logged and deforested for financial gain. The movement of local villagers was heavily restricted, and if they wanted to leave the village for work or other livelihood activities, prior permission from the Burma Army and DKBA was required; otherwise, they risked being shot on sight. After the military coup in 2021, the lives of local villagers have remained under constant threat. The military regime’s troops stationed at K’ Ter Ti and Htee K’Saw Meh have indiscriminately attacked local villagers with long-range artillery shelling, and jet fighters frequently flew over the village, bombarding neighboring areas.



The indigenous elders from Baw Tho Hta Village checking the Kaw map

Htee Theh Lay

K' Ter Ti Village-Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District,

Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Htee Theh Lay is a spiritual territory that has been well-revered since ancestral times. It embodies distinctive natural beauty, with a magnificent waterfall and a vast water source that provides multiple benefits for local livelihoods, ecological services, and cultural significance. Htee Theh Lay Waterfall is situated in Htee Theh Lay Village, K'Ter Ti Village-Tract, Dwelo Township, Mutraw District, within the Salween Peace Park of Kawthoolei. The name Htee Theh Lay originates from the roaring water of the river, literally meaning the “roaring water of the waterfall cliff,” while the river itself is known as Htee Theh Hlo Klo, or the roaring water river. The first indigenous settler who established the village was Pu Htaw Na Day, known as the longnose grandfather.

Historically, before settling in this village, local indigenous communities lived in Paw Ghay Pu, then relocated to Ta Thoo Kee, and eventually established Htee Theh Lay Village. The community is primarily composed of indigenous Karen (K'nyaw) people, with Buddhism as their main religious practice. Local livelihoods include lowland paddy farming, upland Ku rotational farming, livestock rearing, orchard plantations, agroforestry, and small-scale subsistence trading. In addition to their religious beliefs, the community continues to maintain and preserve traditional practices, taboos, and belief systems in Kaw customary territory management and governance. They have customary leaders, Kaw Kho and Kaw Kha (masters of Kaw), and perform Kaw ceremonial rituals every three years by offering a male pig weighing 3 Mer (48 kilograms and above). In cases of premarital sexual relations or marital infidelity, a ceremonial offering of a 7 Mer (112 kilograms) male pig, along with rice whiskey, betel, and tobacco, is required to cool down the land spirit.

The taboo

“If a visitor breaks the ladder while entering the house, he/she is obliged to cool down the house spirit by offering a one-baht coin to the house owner. In contrast, if the ladder is broken when the visitor is leaving, the house owner must pay a visitor a one-baht coin. In case both the visitor and house owner don’t have the one-baht coin, substituting it with betel quid also acceptable”.

Other significant taboos in the community include the performance of Tadu, a period of communal resting observed during the birth of a newborn, and the taboo “Tadu T’lar,” during which the entire community refrains from engaging in livelihood activities, trading, and traveling. Crucially, if someone commits a wrongdoing against you, such as defecating, urinating, insulting, provoking, or jumping out of your house, they are required to offer you one egg. During the family ritual of *Tar Or Khei Or Bwar*¹³, visitors, pastors, and monks are not allowed to enter the house, as their presence would obstruct the deity Mughar from joining the ceremony. Other taboos include prohibitions against sleeping in a house before its construction is complete, halting or demolishing construction if bees make a honeycomb in the new house, cooking new rice crops with snake or deer, carrying corpses through the village to prevent disease spread, and specific dietary restrictions for relatives-in-law, such as not eating cooked turtle, Mottled eel (*Anguilla bengalensis*), Masked palm civet (*Paguma larvata*), or slow loris together. Additionally, father and son-in-laws are forbidden from wearing each other’s sarongs.

The folklore about Htee Theh Lay

Htee Theh Lay Waterfall is one of the sacred sites in the Salween Peace Park, holding profound historical, ecological, and spiritual significance. According to customary leaders, a water elephant and sacred plants known as Sue Gaw Sue Baw (red and yellow *Kaempferia* herbal plants, a type of aromatic ginger) exist in the waterheads of the waterfall, and only honest and righteous people can smell the fragrance of these plants. Name calling or shouting of Htee Theh Lay while fishing in its area is strictly prohibited. During the incursion of the Burmese King Alaungpaya’s forces into Indigenous Karen ancestral territories, Htee Theh Lay cave provided refuge and sanctuary for local communities. Geographically, Hkoe Mae Htee Klar, also known as the mirror pagoda, is another sacred site located next to Htee Theh Lay. In the past, local hunters staying overnight in the area would offer ceremonial

¹³ *Tar Or Khei Or Bwar* is a unique Indigenous K’nyaw ritual in which family members, including cousins across generations, gather to perform an ancestral ceremonial feast. The feast honors their ancestors while also strengthening bonds and connections among family members across generations. The role of ceremonial chief is usually carried out by the family’s great-grandmother, who leads the main rituals. Mughar, a Karen sacred deity, is also invited to join the feast. During *Tar Or Khei Or Bwar*, family members are expected to show repentance, patience, humility, unity, and love toward one another. They must refrain from cursing, performing magical spells, reciting inappropriate Hta traditional poems, or speaking foreign languages. As the ceremonial chief, the great-grandmother prays for the good health and well-being of all family members.

feasts at the altar of Hkoe Mae Htee Klar, which, according to customary leaders, was built by their ancestors over the past four generations. Breaking this enforced taboo would disrupt the natural spirit for the entire night.

Local communities also believe that during times of hardship, mentioning the name of Hkoe Mae Htee Klar in prayers or touching the pagoda can bring protection and assistance. Nearby, there are two Mughar natural pools, which are also sacred and revered. The water in these pools never dries under normal circumstances; however, local belief holds that if a sinful or dishonest person drinks from them, the water could dry up. In such cases, the wrongdoer must apologize to Mughar, the water spirit, under the guidance of customary elders. If the person is unaware of the taboo, the elders may seek forgiveness on their behalf. Another sacred site near the Mughar pools is Ler Hto Par, the male pig stone, which has inspired local indigenous elders to create poems honoring it.

Traditional Poem

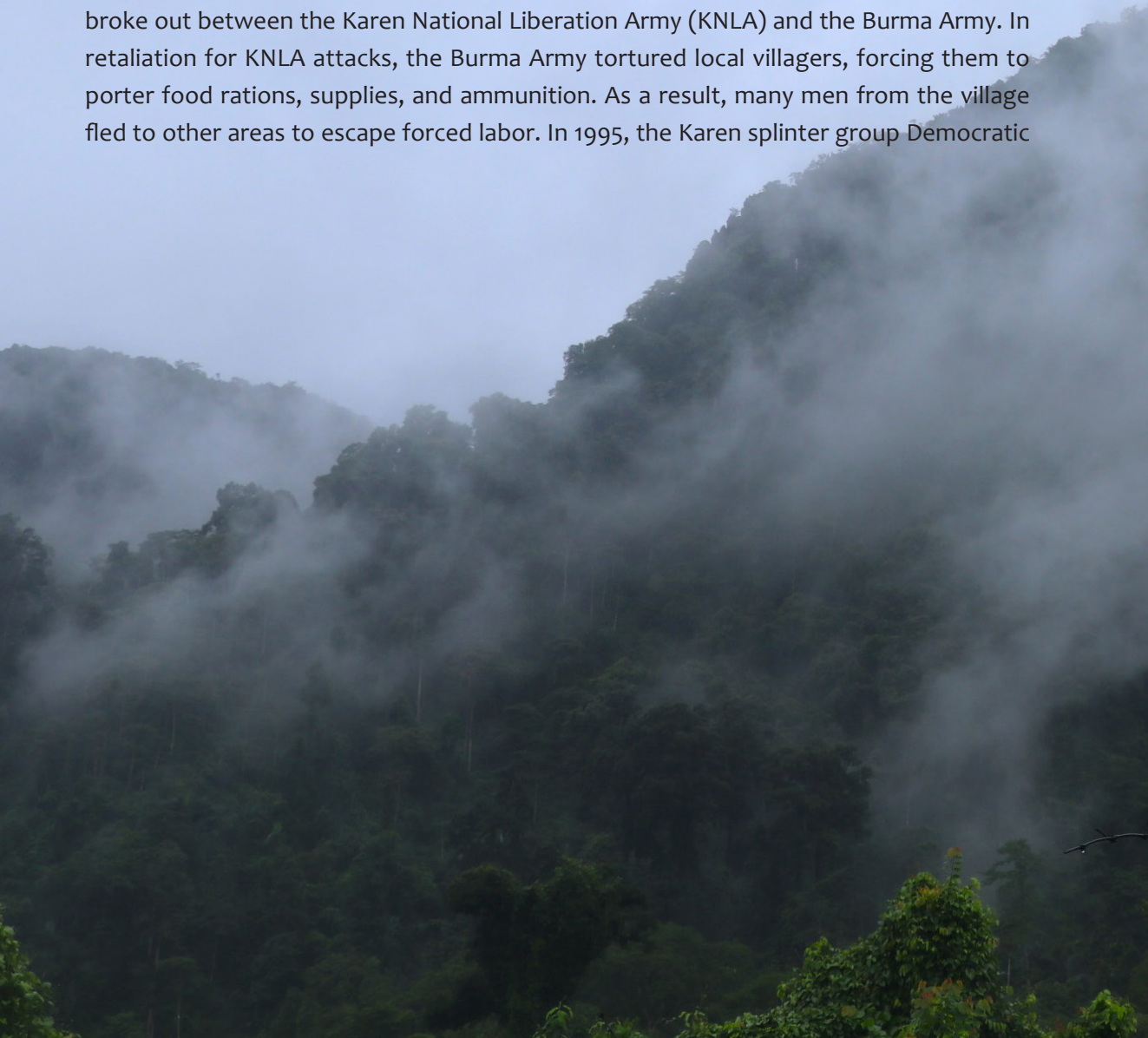
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The customary elders further shared that during the British colonization, the indigenous community warned outsiders not to use dynamite for fishing in Htee Theh Lay Waterfall. By disregarding the community’s warning, those who attempted dynamite fishing mysteriously disappeared without a trace. Htee Theh Lay Mountain holds significant ecological importance, supporting diverse ecosystems, forests, waters, and wildlife. Local indigenous communities reported the presence of important wildlife such as serows, wild boars, brush-tailed porcupines, pangolins, and many other species. On the mountaintop stands a sacred giant tree known as Thay Hto Tho Su, revered for its herbal properties and cultural significance.

Brief historical timeline of Htee Theh Lay

During the invasion of the Imperial Japanese Army in Burma, particularly in Indigenous Karen ancestral territories during the Second World War in 1942, some of the local elders who are still alive today had to flee from Japanese atrocities. In 1975, during General Ne Win's implementation of the "Four Cuts Policy" to annihilate the Karen revolution, many innocent Karen people were killed, including the village chief of Htee Theh Lay, who was brutally murdered. As a result, all men in the village fled for their lives, leaving only women and children behind. During those years, women assumed leadership roles, serving as village chiefs and taking responsibility for local administration and governance. Under General Ne Win's dictatorship, villagers were forced to relocate to the Burma Army's designated camp in the K'Ter Ti area. However, some Htee Theh Lay villagers escaped to other communities, while others hid in the forests to survive.

In 1991, during the Burma Army's dry season offensives in Baw Kyot Traw, fierce fighting broke out between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Burma Army. In retaliation for KNLA attacks, the Burma Army tortured local villagers, forcing them to porter food rations, supplies, and ammunition. As a result, many men from the village fled to other areas to escape forced labor. In 1995, the Karen splinter group Democratic



Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), together with the Burma Army's Light Infantry Division 11 and Light Infantry Battalions 211 and 220, launched ferocious military offensives against the Karen National Union (KNU). Villagers from Htee Theh Lay were forced to serve as sentries and security guards for the Burma Army and DKBA. During this period, local villagers suffered from food shortages, travel restrictions, constant surveillance, displacement, and casualties. Anyone wishing to leave the village had to obtain prior permission from the Burma Army and DKBA, or they risked severe punishment or execution without a travel permit. Furthermore, the Burma Army and DKBA established several lumber sawmills and conducted widespread logging operations in the area, which led to extensive deforestation and forest degradation. After four years of occupation and exploitation, the DKBA troops finally withdrew to K'Ter Ti.

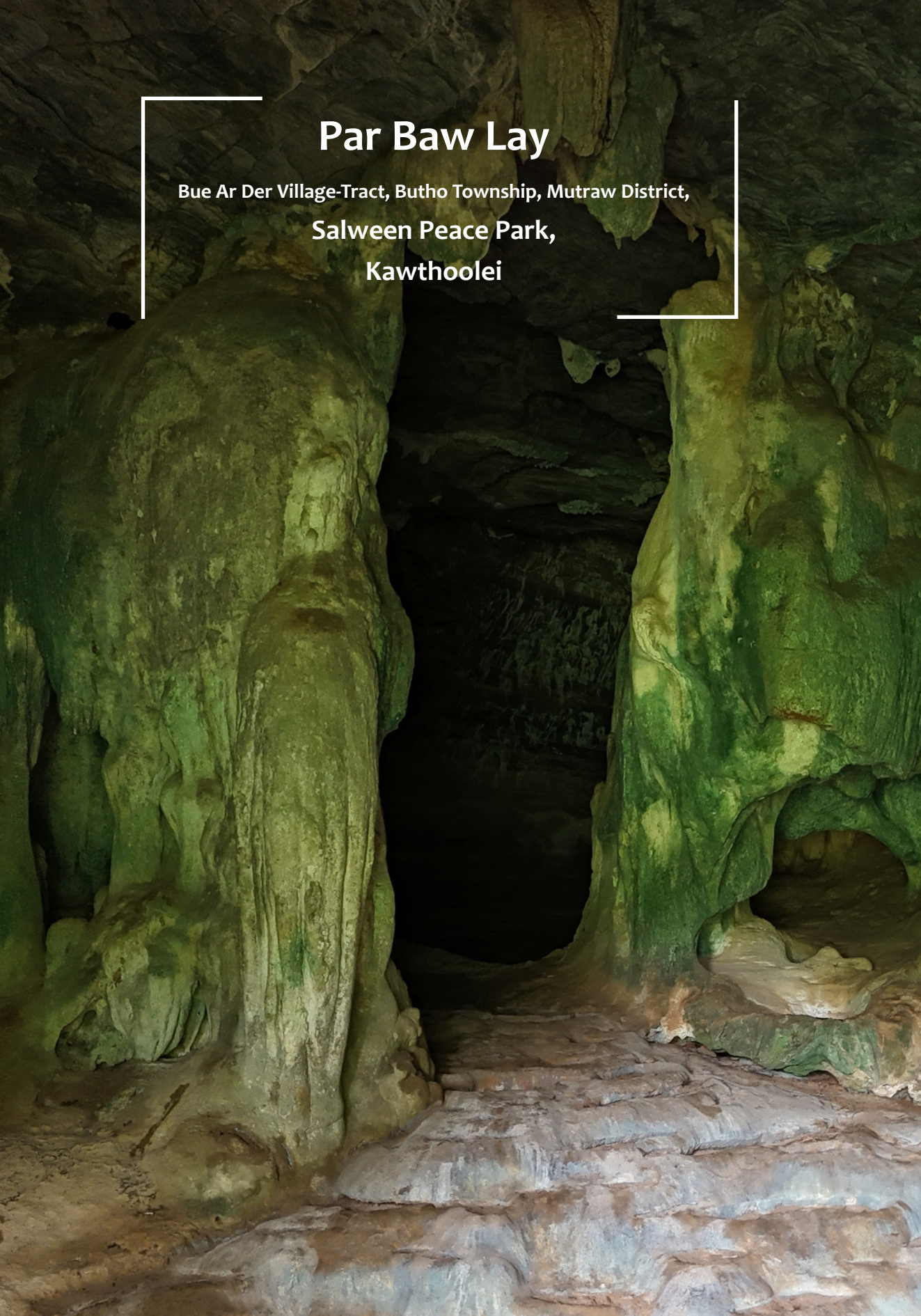
In 2021, after the military regime of Burma overthrew the constitutionally elected civilian government, its forces intensified attacks across the country. Villagers in Htee Theh Lay have since faced severe threats from airstrikes, drone surveillance, and indiscriminate long-range mortar shelling. For instance, regime troops stationed at Htee K'Sar Meh, Taung Thone Lone (Three Hills), and K'Ter Ti frequently launched artillery attacks on the village and surrounding communities. Several houses and even the local Buddhist monastery were struck and destroyed by these shellings, leaving villagers in constant fear for their safety.





Par Baw Lay

Bue Ar Der Village-Tract, Butho Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei







Par Baw Lay, also locally known as Par Baw Ler, is one of the sacred and historical sites located within Bue Ar Der Kaw customary territory. Bue Ar Der Kaw, also known as Noh Hpu Kaw, lies in Bue Ar Der Village-Tract, Butho Township, Mutraw District of Kawthoolei, an Indigenous Karen ancestral territory within the Salween Peace Park. This Kaw shares borders with several others; Khaw Poe Der Kaw to the east, Toe Nyoe Kaw to the west, Saw Wei Der Kaw to the south, and Saw Moe Hpu Kaw to the north. According to local leaders, the origins of Bue Ar Der Kaw trace back to seven brothers named Hpar Bue Ar, Hpar Saw Leh, Hpar Paw Di, Paw Thay Ghay, Hpar Hto Nyeh (later known as Hpar Toe Nyoe), Hpar Mar Mu, and Hpar Kaw Mu. These brothers played a foundational role in shaping the community, with Hpar Kaw Mu eventually migrating to Thailand and establishing his own Kaw there, symbolizing the deep ancestral connections and movements of the Indigenous Karen people across the region.

Bue Ar Der Kaw is one of the oldest Indigenous Karen customary territories established within the Salween Peace Park, though the exact time of its founding is not remembered. The traditional animist belief systems that once guided the community's spiritual life gradually declined after local Indigenous Karen people converted to Christianity. The first Indigenous elder to embrace Christianity was Grandmother Wah Ker, who was baptized in the Kwee Hto Klo (Kwee Hto River) in Bue Ar Der Kaw. Historical accounts also reveal that Bue Ar Der was home to the first Karen Baptist Church established in Mutraw District, marking a significant transformation in the community's religious and cultural history.

Originally Bue Ar Der Kaw encompassed several villages, including Bue Ar Der, Noh Hpu, Paw Kar Kyoe, T'Ri Kyoe, and Htaw Yaw Hpu. However, as communities expanded their livelihoods through Ku rotational farming and the establishment of agricultural lands, these villages eventually became separated. Customary leaders explained that in the past, Bue Ar Der Kaw's governance system was unstable when it included too many settlements. The Kaw customary governance and practice were lost for a time until Saw Hpar Khlo from Noh Hpu village became the Kaw Kho (master of Kaw). Under his leadership, the community revived and continues to uphold the traditional systems of land management and stewardship to this day.

The primary livelihood activities of the indigenous Karen communities in Bue Ar Der Kaw include lowland paddy farming and upland Ku rotational farming. Some villagers from Bue Ar Der have also inherited paddy fields located in Toe Nyoe Kaw. In addition to these main livelihoods, local indigenous Karen people rely on their ancestral forests for the collection of non-timber forest products such as elephant foot yam, dogfruit (jengkol), and honey.

The taboos of Bue Ar Der Kaw

- Outsiders who wish to cultivate lands for Ku rotational farming must have secured permission from the Htee Poe Kaw K'Sar (maters of Kaw).
- Traditionally, in Bue Ar Der Kaw the ritual Kaw offering ceremonies are undertaken every three years and/or seven years.
- In cases of premarital sexual relations, a ritual to cool down the land spirit is performed through the ceremonial offering of a pig, while a buffalo is used for a ceremonial feast in cases of marital infidelity.
- In the past, during the performance of “Tar Wor He Wor Ghaw”, meaning village encirclement in preventing evil spirits, anyone who enters the village has to offer a fine of a bottle of rice whiskey and a pair of chickens in order to cool down the land spirit. These days, the ritual is performed once a year and outsiders who enter the village during the ritual performance have to pay Htee Poe Kaw K'sar (mater of Kaw) a fine of 70 Baht.
- Provocation of internal conflict and hostility within the Kaw is strictly forbidden.
- Discrimination and unfair treatment of community members based on their socio-economic status, belief systems and religious practices are strictly prohibited.
- Sacred sites such as burial grounds, spiritual gravesites, umbilical cord forests, Htee Meh K'lar (the mirror water of the water spirit dwelling sites), and Bue Mar Law cannot be used for deforestation and/or expansion of agricultural lands.
- Hillside cultivation for upland Ku rotational farms is prohibited.
- Cultivation of upland rotational farms around the village is prohibited.
- Saw Ha Ghaw, demented chicken that signal spiritual warning for misfortune or disasters cannot be raised in the village¹⁴
- Drinking water directly from the stream that flows to the river is prohibited.
- Terrestrial and aquatic species are strictly forbidden for cooking together.
- Eating the grilled meat on bamboo stick and cooking spoon is forbidden.
- In laws are prohibited from eating slow loris, Asian palm civet, Kuhl's wart frog, dwarf snakehead and turtle together
- The hunting wildlife animals, birds and edible plants from forest such as jungle fowl,

¹⁴ Saw Ha Ghaw is a chicken believed to be possessed and to signal spiritual warnings of misfortune or possible disasters for the owner and their family. Because of this, such chickens should not be kept or raised; instead, they are killed and cooked. However, when Saw Mo Kho, the spiritual female chicken associated with Tar Or Khei Or Bwar, behaves unusually, it is not immediately killed but used for ceremonial rituals. A chicken may be seen as possessed for several reasons. For example, if a rooster's feet become tangled in rope, if two male chickens mate, if a rooster crows at sunset, if a hen eats its own eggs, if hens hatch eggs together in the same basket, if a hen crows like a rooster, or if a chicken flies over a person. In some villages, hens that lay or hatch eggs on the ground are also considered Saw Ha Ghaw. According to local taboos and beliefs, if a possessed or strange chicken appears before the burning of cultivated fields, it must be killed immediately. Otherwise, people believe the fire used to clear the fields could spread beyond the firebreaks and cause serious damage.

red muntjac, rattan shoots, lesser racket-tailed drongo, red-headed trogon, emerald dove are strictly prohibited and cannot be brought home during house construction or moving periods. During the observation of this taboo, family members and children are not allowed to sleep in others rooms.

- Based on traditional belief system, for the construction of a new house, certain tree species such as Thay Nya Mae (a tree with dichotomous branching), Thay Mae Tee Plar (weeping tree), Thay Ghue (rubbing trees), Thay Kar K' Au (the broken groaning tree), Thay Tar Oo Hsay Naw (a tree with curved trunk), Thay Kar Htoo Kee, Thay Kler Htaw Bee (the woven banyan tree), Thay K' Sar Thee (the dying tree), Thay Lee Hue (a tree-way branching for eagle nesting), and thunderbolt struck trees are prohibited from using. The used wooden beams are not allowed to be reused in the construction of a new house.
- Before moving to a new house, every household in the community has to bring a bottle of rice whiskey to Htee Poe Kaw K'sar (masters of Kaw) and should come and finish the drinking on the third day, which is the last day of observing the new house taboo.
- The owners of the farm will perform the spiritual ritual and after sending back the rice spirit, they are prohibited from collecting and eating rattan shoots, wild banana flowers, and ferns.
- Any wildlife entering the village must not be killed.

The taboos relating to spiritual territory

If there is any wrongdoing such as premarital sexual relations and/or marital infidelity in the village, the sacred site Noh Hpu Klo (Noh Hpu River) will instantly start to get dirty as a warning sign. Furthermore, Par Baw Lay is another spiritual territory that has a pair of caves (female and male caves) capable of holding hundreds of local people. These caves were once the battlefield of the Karen legends Ei Maw Lay and Htaw Plaw Paw.

Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe

Bue Ar Der and Mae Nyu Village-Tract, Butho Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei





Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe is a sacred mountain geographically located between four Kaw customary territories: Saw Leh Der Kaw, Klaw Kho Kaw (also known as Paw Di Der Kaw), Oo Thaw Khee Kaw, and Pwo Ler Kaw. Customary leaders explained that Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe is the highest mountain in the Butho Range of Butho Township. It is taller than the historic Twee Par Wee Kyoe 3 plar (54 inches). Local elders said this sacred mountain receives the first sunrise due to its tallest peak compared to surrounding mountains. The name Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe, also called Tar Ko Hlaw Soe Kyoe, means “the first peak to receive the sunrise” in Karen. This site is highly revered for its spiritual, cultural, and religious significance. It is situated between Bue Ar Der and Mae Nyu Village-Tracks, Butho Township, Mutraw District of the Salween Peace Park in Kawthoolei, with an altitude of 4,888 feet (1,489.86 meters) above sea level.

According to local folklore, seven Mughar (the seven sisters of the sacred deities) came to Earth and constructed seven pagodas. These pagodas are Hkoe T’Ri (T’Ri Pagoda), Hkoe Peh (Peh Pagoda on Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe), Hkoe K’Paw in Mutraw District, Hkoe Thee Yu (known in Burmese as Kyaiktiyo Pagoda), Hkoe Mae Kyi in Doothahtu District, and Hkoe Klaw Maw in Klerlwehtu District. Customary leaders explained that Hkoe T’Ri was constructed by the eldest Mughar sister, while Hkoe Peh on Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe was built by the youngest sister.

Before coming to Earth, the Mughar sisters agreed that after completing the pagodas, they would return to their original place once the Hkoe Th’ Der (the umbrella-like structure on the pagoda) was installed and lit. While constructing the pagodas, the youngest sister at Hkoe Peh noticed her sister at Hkoe K’Paw lighting a lamp for her crying child in the dark. Believing that all her sisters had completed their pagodas and were ready to return, the youngest sister hurried to join them, leaving the Hkoe Th’ Der unfinished on her pagoda atop the sacred mountain of Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe.

Between 1992 and 1993, the controversial monk U Thuzana, founder of the Democratic Buddhist Karen Organization/Army (DKBO/DBKA), planned to construct pagodas on the highest mountains, including Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe. Initially, despite considerable efforts, he was unable to complete the pagoda construction on Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe. To achieve his goal, U Thuzana instructed his followers to dig a hole on the mountaintop and place magical paper, called “Yantra.” After concealing the Yantra, the monk and his supporters successfully constructed two pagodas on the sacred mountain.

Following the construction, religious conflicts emerged within the Karen National Union (KNU), significantly impacting the revolutionary struggle. In 1994, the Burmese military regime, which played an instrumental role in instigating these conflicts, supported DKBA attacks against the KNU. During this period, DKBA troops committed gross human rights

violations, including forcibly relocating local communities to concentration camps in Khaw Taw (Myaing Gyi Ngu). Villagers who refused to relocate fled to other areas. To reclaim Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe, troops of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) launched a military offensive, and on January 23, 1995, after a fierce day-and-night battle, KNLA forces successfully recaptured the sacred mountain.

According to local elders, before Monk U Thuzana built pagodas on Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe, indigenous Karen communities from Saw Leh Der and Pwo Ler conducted ceremonial rituals at the sacred pagodas built by the Mughar sisters. Every three years, the entire community including family, relatives, and friends from nearby and distant areas participated in a pilgrimage to the sacred site. Prior to the pilgrimage, the pagoda caretakers publicly announced the schedule to the local communities.

During the pilgrimage, villagers wore traditional Karen clothing and brought offerings such as local seeds, cucumber, yam, taro, and a bottle of water. Upon reaching the sacred pagoda, they placed the water bottle on the stone structure built by Mughar. After completing the spiritual rituals, the pilgrims returned home, planting the seeds in their cultivated lands and sharing the water with their family members. Local communities believed that placing the water bottle on the sacred pagoda would protect them from diseases and could even cure existing illnesses.

During the pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe, local villagers and pilgrims perform the chanting of traditional Hta poems about the revered pagoda throughout the night. According to customary leaders, the chanting of Hta Hkoe, the pagoda poem, is distinct from wedding or mourning poems. The following morning, the caretakers of the sacred pagodas sprinkle water mixed with turmeric and *Acacia concinna* over the pilgrims and the pagodas. The pilgrims then sprinkle the pagoda themselves for purification and spiritual cleansing before returning to their villages.

Local communities maintain a firm belief that visiting these sacred pagodas and performing the rituals provides protection during times of hardship and disaster. During periods of DKBA militarization and territorial influence, local indigenous communities ceased pilgrimage trips to the sacred mountain. However, after 2012, communities from Saw Leh Der and Pwo Ler resumed the pilgrimage. Traditional taboos enforced during the pilgrimage include prohibitions on eating meat or any living organisms, forbidding pilgrim women from tying up their hair, requiring remaining community members in the village to refrain from livelihood activities and eating meat, and prohibiting villagers from calling out the name of the mountain Tar Ko Hlaw Kyoe because of its sacredness.



The two pagodas built by the youngest sister of Mughar (sacred deity)
on Tar Ko Hlaw Kyo

The Indigenous People Hta (poem) chanting about pagoda

- ဟိန်တရုံးအကစာ်လာအံ၊ ဟိန်လာတာ်မူခိန်လီတု၊ ဟိန်ထံထင်ဆဲးဟိန်လာအံ၊ ဟိန်ထံခံဆဲးဟိန်လာအံ၊ ဟိန်လာတာ်မူခိန်လီတု၊ ဟိန်မုန်နင်ဆဲးဟိန်လာအံ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ထိန်ဆဲးဟိန်လာအံ၊ ဟိန်လာတာ်မူခိန်လီတု၊ ဟိန်လာလင်ဟိန်လာလိန်ဆဲးဟိန်လာအံ၊ ဟိန်လာတာ်မူခိန်လီတု
- ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မဘူင်ဟိန်အဲးဟိန်ကွဲးကွဲး အဲးဟိန်ကွဲးကွဲး၊ အဲးဟိန်ကွဲးကွဲး ဟိန်အသး၊ ဩးကလံဟဲ ဩးကလံဟဲ
- ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မဘူင်ဟိန်ပိအအာဘီ ပိအအာဘီ၊ ပိအအာဘီ ဘီတာဘီဟိ၊ ဘီအကယီ ဘီအကယီ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ နှင်ဖိပွာလာဟိန်ခိန်ထံး လာဟိန်ခိန်ထံး၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ လာဟိန်ခိန်ထံးကစာ်ယွာ၊ အထိန်နှင်ထံ အထိန်နှင်ထံ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မုန်တြိထံဆဲးဟိန်ခိန်ထံး ဆဲးဟိန်ခိန်ထံး၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ ဆဲးဟိန်ခိန်ထံးကစာ်ယွာ၊ ပုခိန်လုာ်ထံ ပုခိန်လုာ်ထံ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မုန်တြိထံဆဲးဟိန်ခိန်လုာ် ဆဲးဟိန်ခိန်လုာ်၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ ဆဲးဟိန်ခိန်လုာ်ကစာ်ယွာ၊ ပုခိန်ပျိုသွါ ပုခိန်ပျိုသွါ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မဘူင်ဟိန် ခွဲဟိန်ခိန်ထံး ခွဲဟိန်ခိန်ထံး၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ ခွဲဟိန်ခိန်ထံး ခွဲကစာ်၊ ယွာအလီမံ ယွာအလီမံ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မဘူင်ဟိန် ခွဲဟိန်ခိန်လုာ် ခွဲဟိန်ခိန်လုာ်၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ ခွဲဟိန်ခိန်လုာ် ခွဲကစာ်၊ ယွာအလီဒါ ယွာအလီဒါ
- ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မဘူင်ဟိန်လာပနီဆံး လာပနီဆံး၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ လာပနီဆံး နှာ်ဘူင်ပု၊ တုပပုာ်သံ တုပပုာ်သံ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ မဘူင်ဟိန်သိးဒီးဆုသူ သိးဒီးဆုသူ၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ သိးဒီးဆုသူ ကတြိန်ဒီးကျူးမိာ်ပုာ်ယု၊ ကျူးမိာ်ပုာ်ယု၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ နလုာ်ပုာ်ခိန်ပအိန်တမုန် ပအိန်တမုန်၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ ပအိန်တမုန်ကစာ်ယွာ၊ ထူးထိန်ပစု ထူးထိန်ပစု၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ လုာ်ပုာ်ခိန်ပအိန်တကွဲးပအိန်တကွဲး၊ ဟိန်မုန်ပျိုထူစ၊ ထူကစာ်ယွာစ၊ ပအိန်တကွဲး ကစာ်ယွာ၊ ထူးထိန်ကုာ်ပု ထူးထိန်ကုာ်ပု

Tari Kyoe

Ktawpa Village-Tract, Butho Township, Mutraw District,
Salween Peace Park,
Kawthoolei



The sacred Tari Kyoe in Butho Township, Mutraw District of the
Salween Peace Park

“The Salween Peace Park is a living vision and physical space that embodies the self-determination of the Indigenous Karen people of Mutraw, and is governed through a decentralized approach”

Salween Peace Park Charter Article 13

