

CHAPTER III
NARRATIVE HISTORY OF THE KAYAN (PADAUNG); THEIR
MIGRATION TO THAILAND AND THEIR SETTLEMENT
IN HUAY PU KENG

From the pinch, literally “*La yan*”, the name *Kayan* derived. “*Kan*” means “*handful*”.

So from *Kan* and *yan* the name *Kayan* is derived.

The expression literally means “*land of a handful of people*”¹.

(Chapter 11, Formation of Tribes, The Kankhwan Genesis)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the myths and narratives of the Long-Necked Padaung. Their ethno-classification has been described in Chapter I and here I will emphasize their migration and settlement along the Thai-Myanmar border. There is almost no documentation of the Padaung’s early movements, but this chapter will try to map out their migration, the dynamics of their movements and their resettlements along the Thai-Myanmar border over the last two decades. This chapter will also describe the setting of Huay Pu Keng and its people, in particular the role of the women and men in the families and society, compared to the past in Myanmar. I will also explain about their traditional religious practices, their religious conversion and how religion has impacted upon their culture and daily life. This chapter also outlines the education system in Huay Pu Keng, what kinds of subjects are being taught and how NGOs have contributed to the educational institutions in place.

3.2 Myth of the Long-Necked Kayan

The history of the wearing of neck rings among the Padaung is not known; however, their elongated necks were discovered by modern medical science relatively recently. Robert Loaf (1961) studied the Padaung’s long necks at Mingalar Don

¹ In the Kayan language *La Yan* Means ‘land’ and *Kan* means ‘handful’.

Hospital in Yangon. He said that the result is totally natural and revealed that the Padaung women have necks no longer than any other human; they have the same number of ribs and the length of their spine is identical to others. However, what can be seen is that the Padaung women's shoulder blades are pushed down by the weight of the rings, so that the shoulders lose about 45 degrees of angle - this is why one gets the impression that the neck is longer and is the scientific reason for the illusion of the 'long neck'.

Before describing the many explanations given of the Kayan's long necks, I would like to introduce a Kayan (Padaung) legend.

One evening, Ko Law, a school teacher, showed me three pages of writing describing a Kayan legend. He explained that this legend comes from the Pa-O group, believed to be brothers of the Kayan². At the end of legend, it is stated that *"this legend comes from the Pa-O people who recorded it, so the legend would not be lost."*

The Legend of the Kayan People

A long time ago a wise female dragon lived in the sea. She had many friends in the sea, but she only longed to see what humans looked like, so one day she decided to leave the sea in search of humans.

When she left the sea she saw a frog in a stream and she asked the frog whether he knew where to find a human. The frog said he was not sure, but that every day he saw a creature flying through the sky. The creature would fly to the forest in the morning and fly back to the mountain every night. The dragon asked the frog if he could show her where the creature went at night. The frog said he could and he led the dragon upstream towards the top of the mountain where they came upon a cave. The frog said: "I think this is where the creature lives".

² The languages of the Kayan (Padaung) and the Pa-O are very similar. Pa-O history records the Kayan (Padaung) as their brothers and the Kayan people accept this. However, it does not explore how these two tribes were once connected since the Kayan belong to the Karenni and the Pa-O to the Shan lines - according to the ethnic classification used in Myanmar.

The dragon asked the frog to wait outside and she entered the cave. When she entered the cave the dragon turned into a human form. She looked around the cave and could see that someone had been living there as it was dirty and there was an unmade bed and cooking pot in it. She decided to clean the cave and make the bed. When she had finished she hid outside to see who would return that evening. That evening a man returned home and found his cave clean enough to go to sleep.

The next day he woke up and went to the forest to collect fruits and medicine. The dragon, in female form, came out of hiding and returned to the cave and once again cleaned it up and made the bed. Once she had finished she again went outside to hide and waited for the man to return. That evening the man returned home to find his bed made again and his cave neat and tidy. He was now very curious to find out who was doing this. He decided that the next day he would not go deep into the forest, but return early to find out who was visiting his home. The next day the man left as usual and the dragon women once again set about cleaning his cave. The man only traveled half way to the forest and then turned around and returned home.

Upon his return he saw a girl cleaning his home. He thought she was very beautiful. He entered the cave and began to ask her question, such as: "Where do you come from?" and "Why are you doing this?"

The girl did not want him to know that she was a sea dragon, so she lied to him. They talked for a while and they realized very quickly that they were in love, so from that night the girl stayed with the man in the cave. However she had to be careful as when she slept as her shadow was that of a dragon not of a human, so she was always careful to fall asleep after him and wake up before he did.

Many months passed and the girl was now pregnant. She felt very tired, so one day while the man was in the forest she decided to sleep a little in the afternoon. Unfortunately that day the man decided to return early and he found his wife asleep. He noticed that her shadow resembled a dragon. He was very angry as he realized he had been tricked and he left her.

Later on the girl woke up and waited for the man to return, but days passed and he did not return. Broken hearted she left the cave to return to the sea, but before she entered the sea she laid two eggs on the beach and then she disappeared into the ocean.

A monk called Tay Taa came to the beach to wash some medicinal herbs in the ocean. He saw the two eggs and decided to take them to his home on another mountain. When he returned home he built a fire to signal his friend, another monk called Dee Ha, to come and visit him.

He showed his friend the eggs and they decided to keep one each. Dee Ha returned to his home with his egg and soon after his egg hatched and inside there was a baby girl. He named her Shway-nan-dor and she was the first Kayan women. Tay Taa's egg also began to hatch and he was so excited that he had to crack open the egg. Inside was a baby boy. He named him Tay Taa Dee Ha Ya-sah and he was believed to be the father of the Pa-o people.

Dee Ha couldn't keep the baby girl as he was a monk, so he took her to a village nearby and gave her to the headman of the village. Tay Taa decided to give the boy to the King and he added Ming to his name, so he became Tay Taa Dee Ha Ya-sah Ming.

Eighteen years passed and the King wanted Ya-sah to marry, but Ya-sah didn't like any of the girls he had seen so far. One day the King's soldiers visited Shway-nan-dor's village and they saw her. They returned and told the King and Ya-sah about this beautiful girl, so Ya-sah traveled to the village with the soldiers and immediately they saw each other they fell in love. He invited her back to the palace and she accepted. The King was delighted that Ya-sah had found a girl he loved so he gave his approval and they married.

They lived happily in the palace and had two children, a girl and a boy. After the children were born, Shway-nan-dor wanted to visit her adopted father in the village. She'd only been there for a day when she fell ill and died because the spirits were angry as on their wedding day they had not made offerings to them.

When their children grew up, the daughter wanted to follow the traditions of her mother and returned to the village where her mother had lived and did her hair in a style that resembled a dragon. The son followed the example of the King, his adopted grandfather. This is the reason why in Kayan culture the women follow the path of the mother and it is believed that they wear the brass coils around their neck to resemble their ancestor, the female dragon.

There are many explanations and ideas given regarding the wearing of the neck rings. Pascal Khoo Thwe (2002), the Padaung writer, says that the rings are one long coil made from an alloy of silver, brass and gold, and only girls born on auspicious days of the week and while the moon is waxing are entitled to wear them. These girls start wearing the rings from the age of five, when the neck is encircled only a few times, and as they get older, more rings are added. In his book, Khoo Thwe mentions that the rings are meant to connect the women who wear them to the

memory of their dragon mother. The Kayan themselves believe they are descended from a female dragon that mated with a male human/angel hybrid.



Figure 3.1: Illustration of the Dragon (left), and Dragon Dress Style, as Influenced by the Burmese Style (right)

Khoo Thwe records that the girl's grandmothers would allow them to touch their 'armor' when they were ill - one should touch them only to draw on their magic, to cure illness and to bless a journey, as the rings are considered portable family shrines. He mentions that this was a practice before Buddhism arrived, but which was later absorbed into the Christian religion. Khoo Thwe writes that the women would also tuck money into their rings, and for Padaung children, the women were like walking Christmas trees, full of family treasures and miraculous powers. The number and value of the rings signifies the status and level of respect of the wearer's family.

For the Long Neck Padaung the rings signify beauty and the young Kayan men favor those rings that contain brass, rather than those without. The Kayan say: "the longer the neck is, the more graceful the look" (Khon Eden Phan 2005). The body decorations express the Padaung women's own concept of beauty and social ranking, but there are other narratives concerning the wearing of the brass rings. It has been claimed that the rings were first placed around the women's necks in order to make them undesirable to slave traders. Another explanation for the neck rings is that

they were originally intended to make the women of the Kayan tribe distinctive, so that they might be ransomed back from captivity during times of inter-tribal warfare - the rings would single the women out so that they would not be taken away by other tribes. Another Padaung legend states that the rings are a protection against tigers, which are known to seize their prey by the scruff of the neck, a constant hazard in their homeland. One story says that the wearing of a large amount of jewelry, including the rings, is a way of stopping valuables being stolen by melting them down and wearing them.

The Kayan author, Khon Eden Phan, puts forward four main reasons for the wearing of the rings, covering the key narratives, these being:

- (1) To avoid the unwelcome advances of the Shan (their neighbor) and the Burman (majority group) chiefs
- (2) To distinguish themselves from other races
- (3) To exalt the status of their womenfolk. As they are the descendants of the Mother Dragon, they should adorn themselves in her likeness, and
- (4) To prevent the women from mixing with alien races.

According to Khon Eden Phan, the primary reasons for wearing them now are for beauty purposes and to preserve their culture while they are in exile.



Figure 3.2: Dragon Drawn by a Middle School Student (in Huay Pu Keng)

3.3 Migration, Being Trapped in Ethnic Tourism and Settlement

3.3.1 Migration to Thailand and Being Trapped in Ethnic Tourism

Conflicts and continual fighting between the ethnic armed groups and Myanmar military regime has caused many ethnic people to migrate to the Thai-Myanmar border. The Padaung, people known for rarely moving out of their home region, have also become victims of Myanmar's civil war. In particular, thousands of Karenni, including Padaung, fled to the Thai-Myanmar border during fighting between the Karenni and Myanmar military regime in the 1990s.

Table 3.1: Migration Phases - the Influx of Refugees to Thailand

Migration Period	Myanmar Government Action	Impact on People
The First Wave (1988)	SLORC launched a major offensive under the name <i>Thai Lone Hein</i> into Karenni State, to the east of the Salween River	Inhabitants in the mountainous areas fled into the jungle and the displaced people gradually headed to the east and came across the Thai border early in 1989
The Second Wave (mid-1996)	The military regime carried out a massive forced relocation program in the eastern and southern parts of Karenni State, ordering the rural populace living between the Pon and Salween Rivers to move into two forced concentration camps located near SLORC military bases	The troops began to search for the displaced people. The displaced people gradually came to the border in groups, with the help of the Karenni forces; camp populations doubled
The Third Wave (October 1996)	Second forced relocation of people living in the middle and southern parts of the state	Many people from the southern area went into hiding, a few of them moved to the Karen State-Thai border and sheltered with Karen refugees for months, before arriving at the Karenni refugee camps
Subsequent Arrivals	Starved due to the restrictions placed on their movements, which have prevented them from farming, victims of forced labor and false accusations; the girls fear being raped	Lack of documented evidence has led to subsequent problems gaining recognition as refugees

Since the Padaung migrated to Mae Hong Son, their Long-Necked women have quickly become an important financial asset, since a large number of tourists have come to 'gaze' upon them. At the beginning, the Padaung were separated from

other Myanmar refugees and special villages were created for them by local business people and the authorities.

Popular tourist destinations have increasingly spread across Southeast Asia over the last two decades (UNEP 2002), and Thailand has been particularly aggressive in launching a number of promotional tourism campaigns, such as ‘Visit Thailand Year’ in 1987, ‘Unseen in Thailand’ in 1997, followed by ‘Amazing Thailand’ in 1998, and these campaigns have focused the attention of both domestic and foreign tourists on the country at the national level (Prasit Leepreecha 2005).

The Padaung have recently been living as refugees in three Long-Necked villages: Huay Sua Tao, Ban Nai Soi (Kayan Thar Yar) and Huay Pu Keng, in Mae Hong Son Province in the north of Thailand. In early February, 2007, the Thai authorities held a meeting in Bangkok and decided to merge and relocate Huay Sua Tao and Ban Nai Soi to a place close to Huay Pu Keng, in order to help preserve their culture under the initiative ‘The Kayan Ethnic Populace (Padaung) Living Culture Preservation for Mae Hong Son Provincial Security Project’. They have been trying to implement this project since that meeting, but the media has reported that their objectives seem to be aimed at only attracting tourists (Chapter V, section 5.4).

The Padaung face as many hardships as the other ethnic peoples in Thailand. They are not recognized as Thai citizens, do not have access to adequate medical care, education or citizens rights; moreover, since they are considered displaced persons, they are not permitted employment in Thailand. However, more than the other ethnic groups, their exoticness has been promoted for tourism purposes, and as a result, the Padaung have become trapped within the process of ethnic tourism along the Thai-Myanmar border.

3.3.2 The Dynamics of Movement and Settlement

During the Huay Pu Keng villagers’ early migration movement, between 1990 and 1996, they had to move from one camp to another, settling four to five years in

one camp and later moving to another, in another location. According to Kayan elders from Huay Pu Keng, they were first resettled during the period 1990 to 1995 in Nan Pai, then in 1995 they were moved to Ban Nai Soi, and even later, during 1995 to 1996, to Mae Saring. Since 1996, the Padaung have been settled in Huay Pu Keng. When they first settled in Huay Pu Keng, there were only three Long-Necked families among the Karenni sub-groups. Among the three Long-Necked Kayan villages eventually established, Huay Pu Keng was the first to be settled - in 1989, Ban Nai Soi was the second to be settled - in 1992 and the last to be settled was Huay Sua Tao - in 1995. The Kayan people from these three villages then moved around between villages, depending on where their relatives and family were located, or due to marriage.

Table 3.2: Movement and Settlement

Year	Place
1990-1995	Nan Pai
1995	Nai Soi
1995-1996	Mae Saring
1996 to now	Huay Pu Keng

Among all the Karenni refugees, 300 Padaung took part in the early migration phase, then later, in 2008, the number of Padaung migrants increased to 500³, including around 120 Long-Necked Padaung women, who spread out into refugee camps, the three Long-Necked villages and a few into other provinces.

Most people in Huay Pu Keng have no legal certificates or identity cards recognized by the Thai authorities (Table 3.1). Although the local Thai authorities promised to issue cards to these people, they did not carry this out (see Chapter V, section 5.4.1). During my visit, a Long-Necked woman reflected on her experience in terms of holding a card:

³ Tribal Research Institute, Service and Publicity Section, Chiang Mai, 1995.

I do not want a card. Even card holding Long-Necked women cannot go anywhere; we have found that holding a card doesn't make any difference.” (Interview with a Long-Necked woman: September 2008)

Some Padaung have been recognized as refugees by UNHCR if they live in camps, but this does not apply when they live outside the camps, and when the Padaung want to apply to live in a third country, they have to move to and live in a camp.

3.4 Ecological Setting

Huay Pu Keng is situated in an isolated area along the Pai River, is surrounded by thick forest, and is located between the slopes of mountains to the west and north, with the Pai River to the east. There is a common vegetable garden on the slopes of the mountain to the west, where people can cultivate seasonal vegetables for family consumption. There is a plain at the other side of the Pai River and formerly people cultivated there, but later, the local authorities prevented them from cultivating in that area.



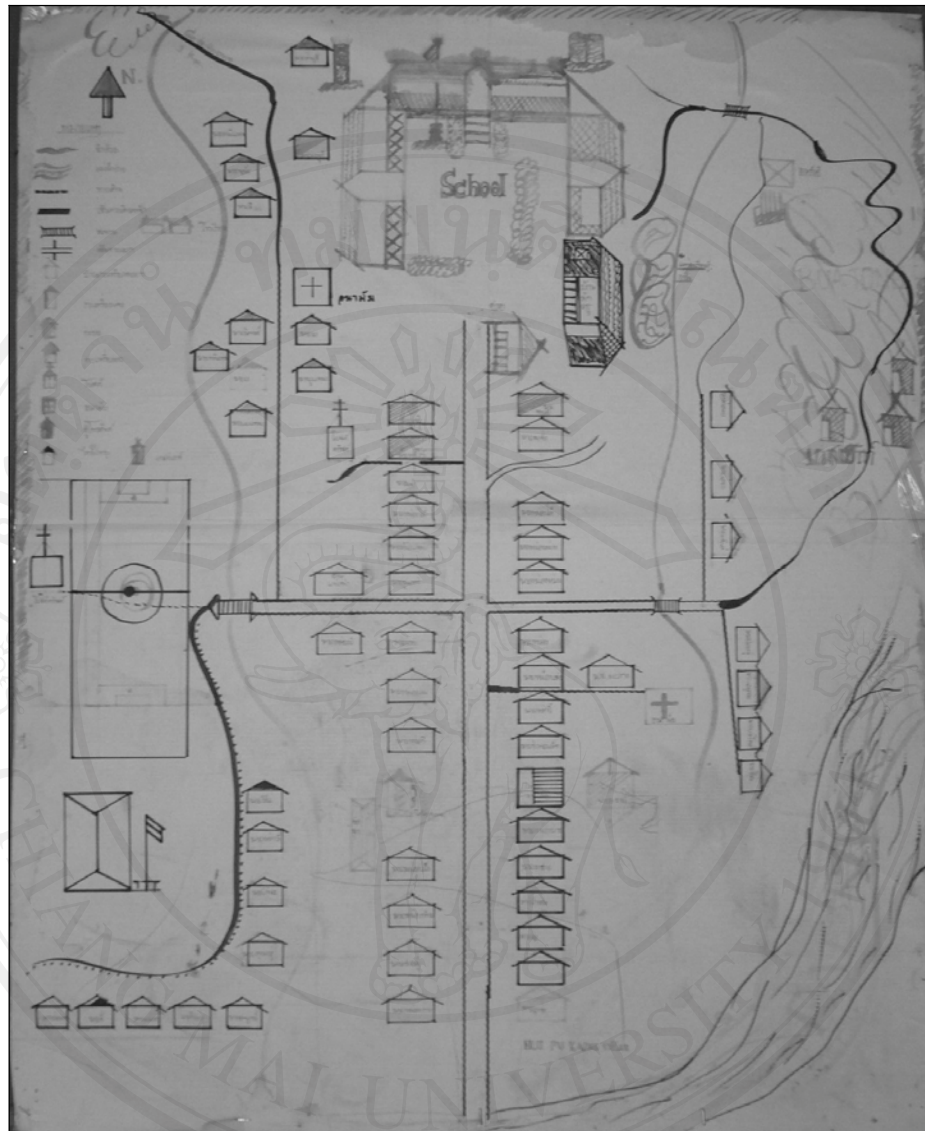
Figure 3.3: Huay Pu Keng

There are two ways to get to Huay Pu Keng from Mae Hong Son; by boat and by car. The water route to Huay Pu Keng has two stages. Visitors from Mae Hong Son first need to go to the Huay Dua boat landing, seven kilometers from the town. From Huay Dua, visitors must continue by boat for half an hour along the Pai River.

as the land route to Huay Pu Keng is rarely used by visitors, because half of the route is stony, muddy and there is no public transportation. I noticed that only the NGOs and religious groups use the land route - to send food and medicine. There is also a footpath through the forest that connects Huay Pu Keng and Huay Sua Tao, and to avoid the police, the Padaung women use this path to visit the neighboring Long-Necked villages.

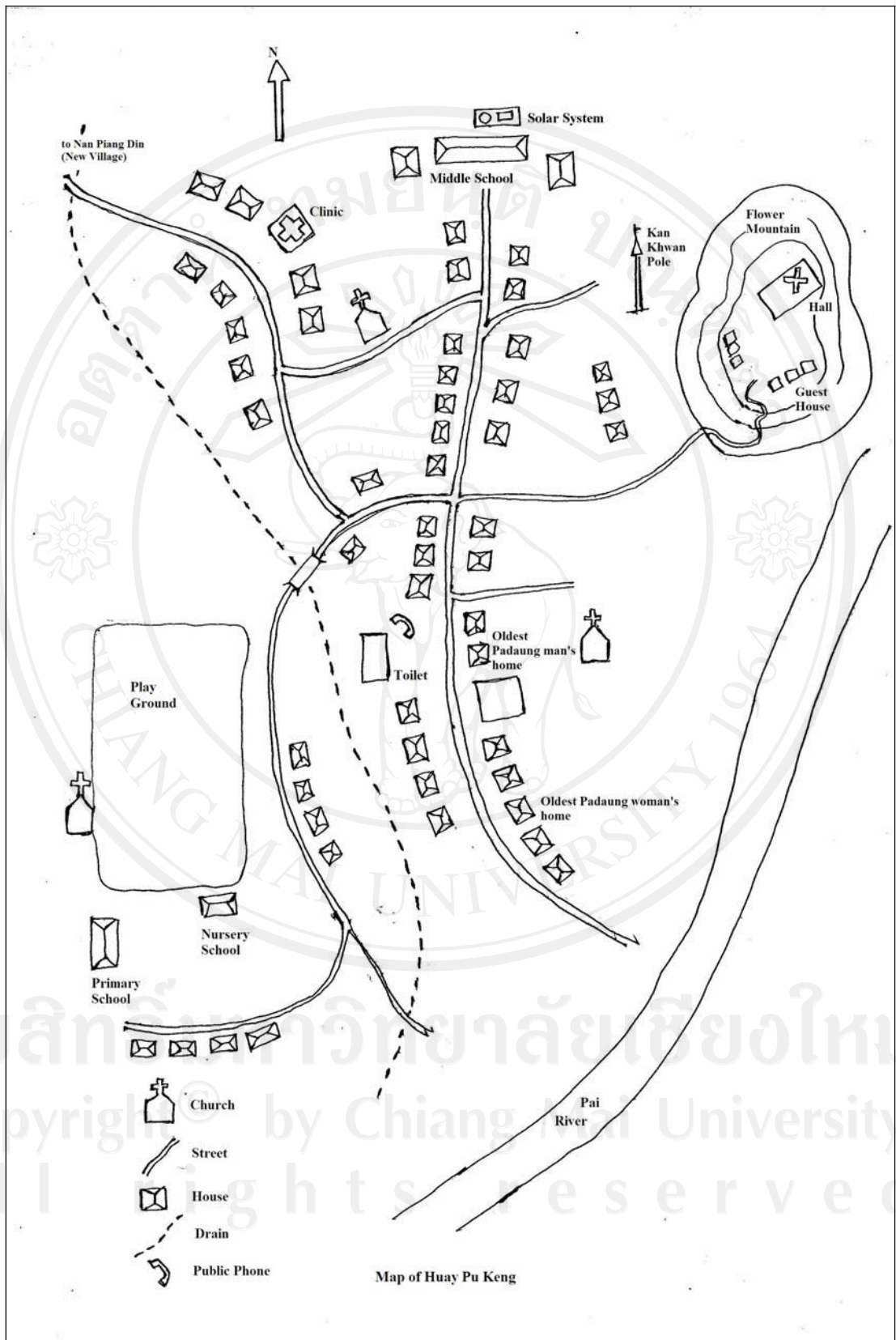
The villagers are very experienced at exploring the forest. The women collect bamboo, vegetables and mushrooms from the thickest parts, including bamboo shoots, water cress (water convolvulus), roselle, soap, acacia leaves, mustard, white costus, bitter gourds, gourds, truffles and *nwar-pwint*. Herbal plants collected include *pan phyu pin* (for cuts and injuries) and *pin nae* leaves (for abscesses).

Bamboo shoots are the main item in their diet, and rice is their staple food. Rice, oil and salt are provided by NGOs. In the old days, they made salt by burning big trees and producing salt from the ash, and they still make their staple drink *khaung* by spreading yeast powder on the cooked rice or millet, then fermenting it in a suitable container for one week to two years. Sometimes, people from nearby villages come and sell pork and beef. The Kayan keep chicken and pigs for their religious and social ceremonies, and they prefer to roast the meat. Some foodstuffs are not meant to be eaten together, and are thus taboo, including buffalo and mushrooms, partridge and the Indian trumpet, and palm-sugar and buffalo meat.



Map 3.1: Map of Huay Pu Keng. Drawn by Students and Teachers from the Middle School

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Map 3.2: Map of Huay Pu Keng

3.5 Huay Pu Keng

I could not find out the exact meaning of the name ‘Huay Pu Keng’ from the Kayan elders, but when I asked Mu Yan, she told me immediately that Huay Pu Keng means “the edible crab from the stream”. However, when I remarked that I could not see any crab in the nearby the Pai River, she made no comment. In reality, her answer, which included the words ‘edible crab’ and ‘stream’, comes from her limited knowledge of Thai, but a Kayan journalist gave me a possible explanation:

Most of the names in these places were given by Shan people, after the Kayan migrated. There is a longstanding relationship between the Shan and Kayan; even the name, *Padaung* comes from the Shan.” (Interview with a Kayan journalist: July 2008)

Huay Pu Keng is often referred to as Nan Piang Din by Thai people, and actually, Nan Piang Din village is nearby. The spelling of Huay Pu Keng also varies with the accent, being called Hway Pu Ket⁴, Huay Pu Kaeng and Huay Poo Kang. Supposedly, the name Huay Pu Keng was given by the settlers during the 1980s.

I noticed that Kayan people call Huay Pu Keng the ‘old village’ (*Ywa Haung*), to differentiate it from the local authority arranged ‘new village’ (*Ywa Thit*), which is just twenty meters away from Huay Pu Keng. The ‘new’ Huay Pu Keng is the place where the three original Padaung villages were resettled by the local authorities (see Chapter V, section 5.4.1).

Huay Pu Keng is controlled and managed by Thai business people from Huay Dua (the boat landing village), and the villagers call them *Puyai Ban* (Thais who run the village and collect the money). Tourists must use the boat service at Huay Dua village, because only half the road to Huay Pu Keng is smooth; the other half is stony and muddy. People in Huay Pu Keng told me that Huay Dua village was against the completion of the road to Huay Pu Keng, because they were afraid of losing their boat transportation business.

⁴ Khon Eden Phan 2005

The village headman and six committee members from Huay Pu Keng help to keep a list of the Long-Necked women, for salary purposes and to manage other village affairs. The total population of the village is 333, consisting of 169 men and 164 women. Among them nine are Thai nationals, 59 hold a Thai Ethnic Card and 101 have no ID card at all. There are 32 Padaung families among them and 26 women wear the neck rings.

Table 3.3: Population of Huay Pu Keng

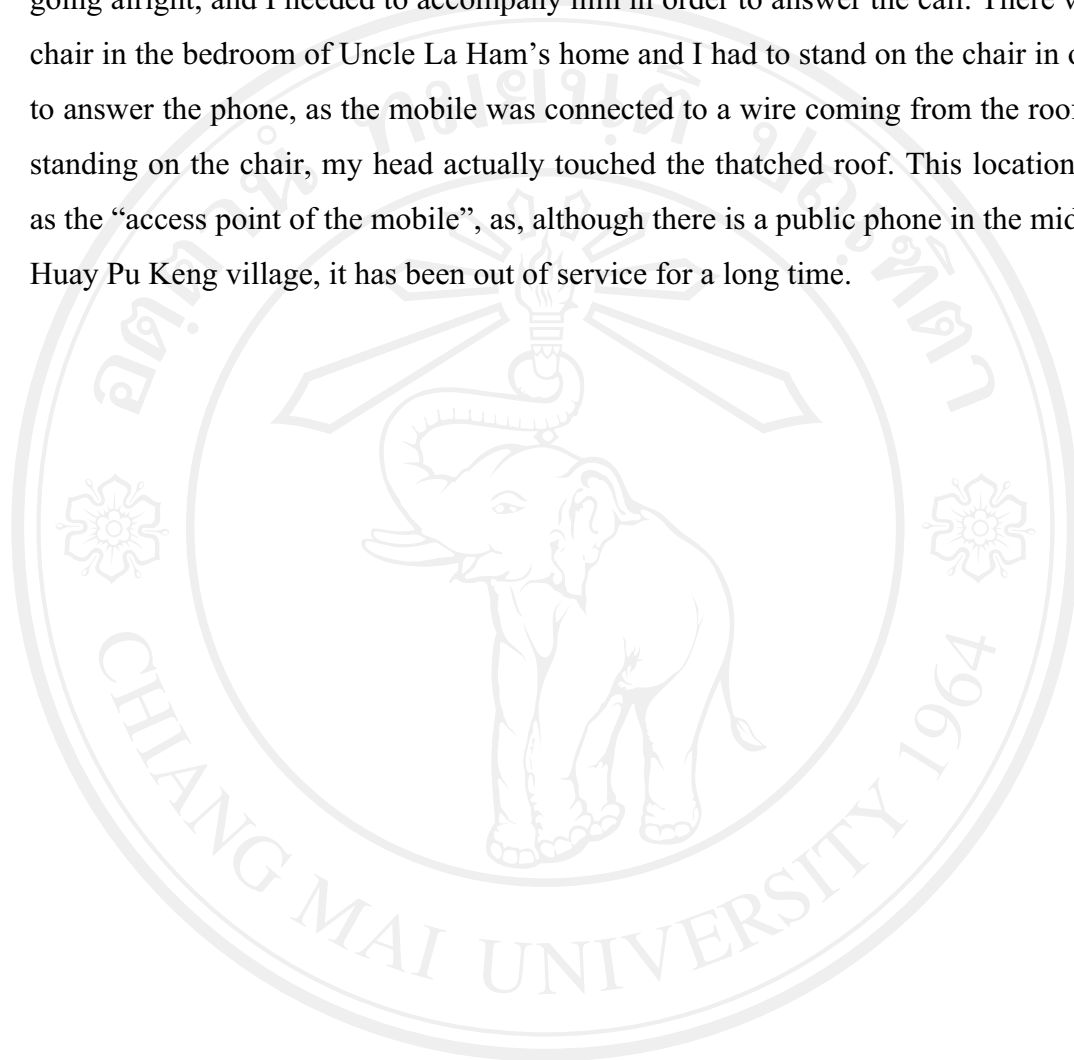
	Thai	Ethnic Card	No Card	Total
Households	3	39	38	80
Men	5	73	91	169
Women	4	59	101	164
Total Population				333

Note: There are 26 Long-Necked women and six 'Big-Eared' Kayaw women (early 2008 list)

Huay Pu Keng people share duties for the village affairs. For example, one day during my visit, I did not see Mu Yan's stepfather at home when I was there, so I asked where he was, and Mu Yan explained to me about the water supply system in Huay Pu Keng and her stepfather's duties with regard to that. There is a pond in the upper forest area of Huay Pu Keng, and the villagers bring water through a pipe from the pond to Huay Pu Keng. The distance is rather far and sometimes the water is blocked by dry leaves, or the pipe loses a joint. As a result, every year villagers assign a group of men to look after the pipe, and for the year of my visit, Mu Yan's stepfather and some others had been assigned to that duty.

Huay Pu Keng uses electricity from a solar-power system provided by the Thai Government in 2006. There is a television for public use in a small hut near the Middle School. Mobile phones can be used at two points in Huay Pu Keng - one point

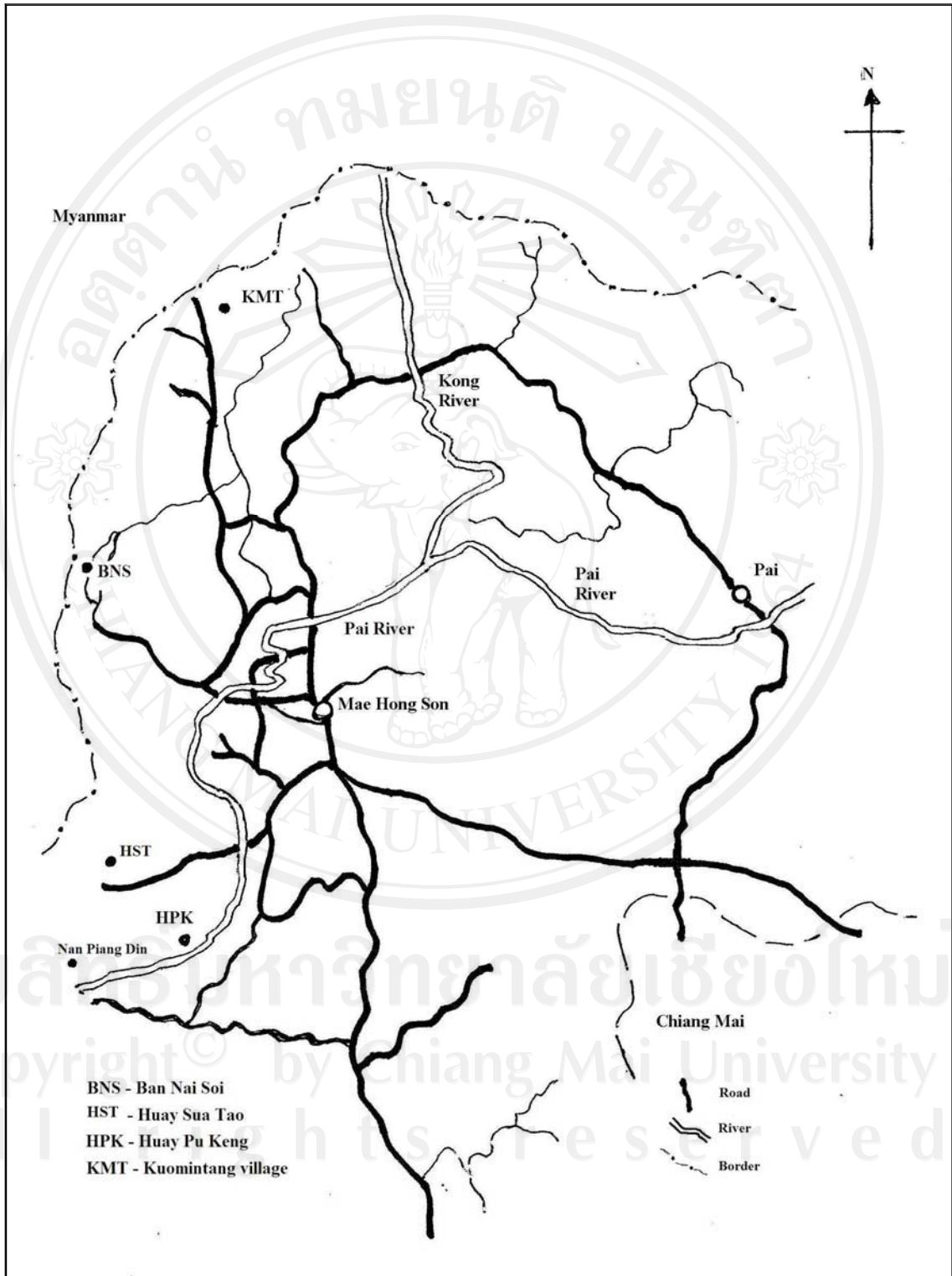
outside of the village and another at Uncle La Ham's home. One day, Uncle La Ham informed me that Mu Sa had been on the line to ask if my stay was in the village going alright, and I needed to accompany him in order to answer the call. There was a chair in the bedroom of Uncle La Ham's home and I had to stand on the chair in order to answer the phone, as the mobile was connected to a wire coming from the roof. By standing on the chair, my head actually touched the thatched roof. This location acts as the "access point of the mobile", as, although there is a public phone in the midst of Huay Pu Keng village, it has been out of service for a long time.



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Map 3.3: Area Map of Mae Hong Son Province and the Three Long-Necked Villages

3.6 The People

Huay Pu Keng villagers belong almost exclusively to two of the Kayan sub-groups: the Long-Necked Kayan and the Big-Eared Kayaw. The Big-Eared Kayaw put large earrings in their ears to make the lobes bigger, and in the village there are only three Big-Eared families, including six women, and they live near the Middle school. The rest are Karenni, Karen-Karenni, Karenni-Shan and Karen-Shan.

They predominantly speak their own Kayan language (among the Padaung) or Kayaw language (among the Big-Eared). Some villagers can speak Thai, and a few know a few basic phrases of other languages as well. In terms of their own language there are six types of Kayan language spoken, all of which are slightly different in terms of pronunciation and accent. These slight differences have come from mixing between the Karenni sub-groups and due to their origin dialect in Myanmar. They also wear their own traditional dresses that vary among the Karenni, Kayan and Kayaw.



Figure 3.4: Big-Eared Kayaw and Long-Necked Padaung School Girls

After six Padaung families had first arrived in 1989, another three Long-Necked Padaung arrived at Huay Pu Keng in 1996. Mu Hto, one of the three Long-Necked Padaung to arrive at that time, still lives in the village, one has moved to another village and one became a victim of human trafficking and has disappeared.

One adventurer who visited both sides of the border remarked that “cultural villages”, like the one in Kyaing Tong, a Myanmar town near the Thai-Myanmar border, are the most horrible examples of the exploitation of human rights by the Myanmar authorities he has ever witnessed. On the Thai side of the border, the Padaung are also exploited, but not to such a degree as inside their own country - Myanmar.

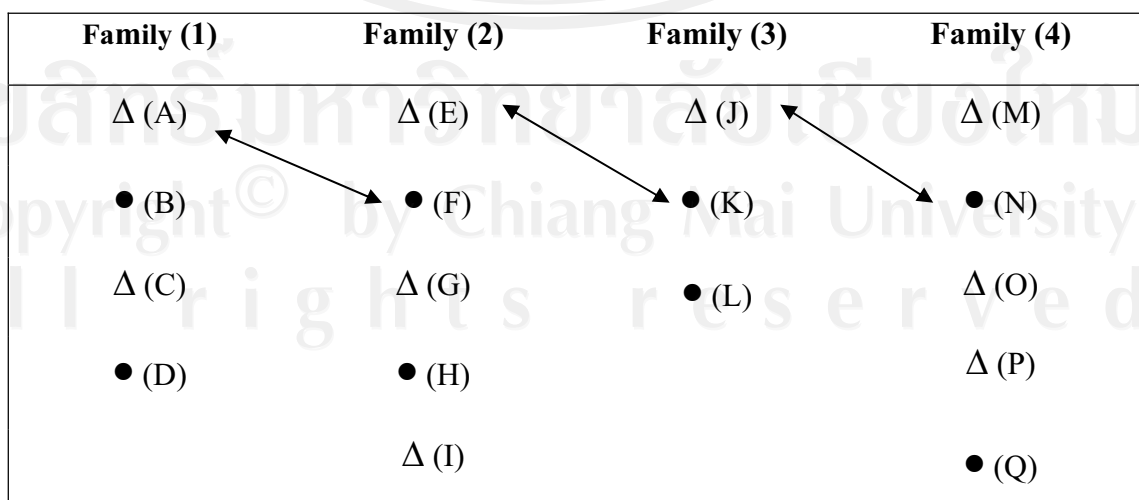
3.6.1 Family System and Kinship

The Kayan believe that it is appropriate to maintain distinctive family connections. The Kayan are comprised of many sub-groups, but the genealogical link between generations can be traced without much difficulty (Khon Eden Phan 2005). Marriages between cousins are allowed, and as the Kayan saying goes “good seeds will bear good fruits”.

Four family systems can be found: basic or simple families, extended families, joint families and compound families. The favored Padaung family type is the basic or simple family system, but when the sons got married, the family system changes to become an extended family; however, if the daughters marry they follow the patrilocal residence rule.

The Padaung follow a patrilineal kinship system. Children from a husband (A) and wife (B) become members of family (A) - the husband's family. Kinship by adoption is very rare. There are two main family groups in Huay Pu Keng: Ma Pan's and U Kham's. They are the oldest woman and man in Huay Pu Keng, and the later generations can all be drawn from those two main families.

Table 3.4: Family Connections



From Table 3.3, if the father from family (1) and the mother from family (2) were second cousins, and also the mother of family (3) and the father from family (4) were second cousins., then children from the all of the families would share the same status, so (A) and (F), (E) and (L), (J) and (N) could marry each other. It would be forbidden for (A) to marry (K), because (C) and (F), and (H) and (J) are married. Another forbidden connection would be if (A) and (F), (E) and (L), (J) and (N) were married; then (G) and (Q) could not marry one another. This means (F) would be blocked in the first case and (L) in the second case.

If (C) and (K) wanted to marry then a marriage would not be allowed because the families are already too closely related. If these taboo customs are violated then incurable illnesses are likely to occur, with relatives affected and the process of family growth hindered. As a result, the Kayan used to keep to the correct relationship level when they considered marriage; but nowadays, the Kayan intermarry with various races and these traditional customs have been relaxed.

3.6.2 Padaung Women: Money Makers

The Padaung women need to support their families with the income they earn from posing for tourist's photographs, and from selling traditional textiles and crafts. The visitors therefore provide a much needed source of income.

The Long-Necked Padaung women from Huay Pu Keng are the breadwinners in their families, and every single Long-Necked woman makes between 1,500 baht and 2,000 baht per month, as described previously. Mu Yan told me her mother does not want her to take-off her rings, as she is worried about the family income, but is not against her daughter taking the rings off. The village headman and six committee members produce a list of the ring-wearing population every month, for salary purposes, and these salaries partly come from the village entrance fee, plus every Padaung household runs a souvenir shop. Padaung women weave scarves and bags, each having a traditional design to attract female tourists. Padaung women weave in

their free time during the day, and selling the scarves and bags is also a key source of income.

There is not so much difference between the old and young Long-Necked women in terms of their position with the commoditization process. Salaries differ according to marriage status rather than age, and the adult Long-Necked women sit at home in their shop waiting for visitors, while the young girls go to school. Young girls help with the housework, with weaving and help in the souvenir shops during holidays, but gradually education is beginning to differentiate between the old and young women in terms of the way they think, their lifestyle and their future hopes (Chapter V, section 5.4).

Padaung women speak softly and are shy, especially with strangers, and during my stay in the village, I never heard a woman speak in a loud voice. Only the old Padaung women wear the full traditional dress, most women simply dress in a traditional blouse and *longyi*. Their traditional garment is not a *longyi*, but looks rather more like a skirt (Figure 3.4).

When I arrived in Huay Pu Keng, the villagers informed me that they had not received any salaries or dry rations for three months. Generally, the business people do not give them salaries during the off-peak season, and it is interesting to consider why the Thai business people ignore the Padaung during this time, and I will analyze the perceptions of the local Thais in Chapter V, section 5.4.3. The Padaung do receive some rice and cooking oil from local NGOs, but in terms of their shortages, they cannot complain to anyone official, and the women are quite depressed regarding the income crisis in their families.

I met one man with two children who had been abandoned by his wife. His wife was one of eleven women who had disappeared from the village prior to June 2008, during my field research. The man told me that his wife was often depressed about their lack of income and the fact that, since they did not receive salary, they had to rely on the tourists by selling souvenirs. Their average income then was only 100

baht on some days, and from this his wife was unable to meet their daily needs. He said that his wife often grumbled and said that she would sometimes go away in search of money, maybe illegally to another province. Later she became one of Padaung's victims – having been trafficked to Chiang Mai.

In this case, it is interesting to compare the role of the Padaung women when they were in Myanmar to that in Thailand today. The Padaung families I spoke to were hillside cultivators in Myanmar, and there was no clear separation of duties between the men and women during their daily lives. They woke up early in the morning, making breakfast and lunch, and then went to their farm two or three miles from the village. The Padaung women worked together with the men on the farms; men cut the trees to expand the cultivatable area, while women collected wood and burned the bushes. Women also helped the men in the sowing, seeding transplanting, reaping and threshing activities (Shin Htwe Yin 2005). Ma Lo, a 25 year-old Padaung girl, told me about her childhood in Myanmar:

I had to work hard every day. In the morning, at 5 a.m., I had to wake up to cook breakfast, then after breakfast we went to work on the farm. Before I went to the farm, I always picked up my small basket and small chopping hoe to take to the farm.”

In Myanmar, after the farming season was over, the men went hunting, collected fire wood and repaired the homes, while women weaved and made earthenware pottery (Khon Eden Phan 2005, Shin Htwe Yin 2005). They hollowed-out large trees or kept bees for honey. Apart from salt, they relied on their own produce, only buying ploughshares and mattocks, sliver betel containers, sliver lime containers, swords and yarns from the Shan. Their farm produce was grown solely for local consumption and any surplus paddy and millet was lent and interest charged, or borrowed against. The men weaved mats and made sifting trays, round trays and drinking cups out of bamboo strips, smearing them with resin for durability.

Their lifestyle in Huay Pu Keng has changed since those days. They now have no farms and no hunting to occupy their time. The local authorities allow them

to reside there, but do not permit them to own or cultivate their own land. The Padaung women sit in their small shops and pose for photos. Men help with the housework, visit nearby friends and relatives in the villages or camps, and play football, and this situation drives some Padaung men to alcohol. In terms of the family relationships, although Padaung women are the money earners in the family, the men are still the heads of the families and the children obey their words.

3.6.3 The Status of Men

Some Padaung men are skilled at handicrafts and some at making traditional musical instruments. A few act as boatmen, though the boats from Huay Pu Keng are only for the villagers' transportation and to cross the Pai River. A visit to Huay Pu Keng by car or bike stops at the Pai River, which needs to be crossed in order to reach the village, but the Huay Pu Keng boatmen are not allowed to take tourists (see Chapter V, section 5.4.2). The Huay Dua boat costs 700 to 900 Baht for a round-trip, but compared to this, the Huay Pu Keng boatmen receive only twenty Baht for one crossing of the river.

Several months before I started my research, the Padaung men had received an income from logging, and I then learned how they had been able to cut wood on Thai soil - though this is illegal. Thai businessmen and police ordered them to cut a certain number of trees and for this they were given 200 or 300 baht per day as wage labor. The Kayan men did not use any modern machines, only hand saws, knives and axes to cut the trees, and afterwards they had to prepare the wood ready to take it to the businessman and police. However, since the beginning of 2007, they have no longer been asked to carry out this kind of activity, as part of an initiative "to prevent deforestation" under 'The Karen Ethnic Populace (Padaung) Living Culture Preservation for Mae Hong Son Provincial Security Project' (Chapter V, section 5.4.1).

Some men still make traditional rice whisky and rice wine (*thi*), but secretly, since it has been banned by the Thai local authorities. Previously, one's skill at

making rice-wine had a kind of social status, but recently the practice has gradually disappeared due to the restrictions. A few young men, those who can speak Thai, have gone to Mae Hong Son to work in restaurants there, and some travel to nearby villages to carry out temporary agricultural or construction work for local Thai people. A Padaung girl told me that her father collects empty beer cans and sells them for money, but that he feels ashamed because they have to live off the money his wife earns. Many of the men get drunk on rice wine, because they have nothing to do and suffer from a sense of hopelessness.

I befriended one Kayan man named Ka Lam, and often visited his home during the time I was in Huay Pu Keng. His home is situated on the right hand side of the village, on the banks of the Pai River. He married a Long-Necked woman two years ago and has a baby boy. He loves his baby and works very hard for his baby's future⁵.

In his home, I saw three electric guitars that worked very well when I tested them with a battery. He explained that he had simply cut some wood into a guitar shape when a foreigner visiting the village noticed them. After the foreigner returned home, he sent a guitar plectrum set and other necessary electronic tools to Ka Lam, and the resulting guitars have proved useful for Huay Pu Keng's festivals and special events, as well as for other Long-Necked villages and refugee camps. He explained that:

... An English man⁶ saw me making an electric guitar and he was surprised. He asked me what kind of tools I used and I showed him my simple tools. After he went back to the city, he sent me the tools and instruments needed for making an electric guitar. (Interview: July 2008)

He is not only an expert at creating modern electric guitars and traditional musical instruments, but is also known as a talented wood carver in Huay Pu Keng,

⁵ After I visited Ka Lam his expectations for the future forced to him to move to a camp in order to apply for resettlement in another country.

⁶ Kayan people call all white Westerners 'English', whether they are Americans or Europeans.

and his work is liked by tourists. His theme is often about creating a relationship between humans and the environment, and he told me the ideas behind each piece of work. He creates wood carvings with a simple chisel, a knife and other pointed instruments, and told me that if he has enough tools, he can create more artwork with wood.

When compared to other Kayan men, he rarely drinks traditional rice wine or alcohol. He said that before his marriage, he was a bad Kayan boy and suffered from stomach problems due to heavy drinking. Now he has a family and he has renounced his bad practices of the past. Like other Kayan men from Huay Pu Keng, he is also a good football player, as the men from Huay Pu Keng have plenty of free time and often spend their time playing football and volleyball, such that morning or evening, rain or shine, the Huay Pu Keng playground is full of men and boys playing football.

Ka Lam owns a motorbike and also works as a courier if some villagers need to get to Mae Hong Son or elsewhere. Sometimes during my visits I called him to go to Mae Hong Son, and whenever I visited him, he was always busy with his handicrafts and his wife, looking after the baby and doing housework. They are a young couple and are not satisfied with their current situation. They also think a lot about their baby's future, and Ka Lam told me that life never changes in Huy Pu Keng⁷.

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⁷ After I had returned from the village, Ka Lam's family moved to Nai Soi refugee camp, with the expectation of applying to go to a third country.



Figure 3.5: A Padaung Man making a Traditional Guitar and Woodcarvings

3.7 Daily Life

I stayed at Ko Law's home during my data collection exercise. He is a teacher and his wife, Mu Pe, is a headmistress. Over the last two years, Ko Law has been the headmaster of the school, but there is an election held by the village head and the NGOs⁸ every two or three years for this position. They are one of the most educated Padaung families in the village, and Ko Law's father was a former headman in Huay Pu Keng. Their home is situated in the middle of the village, beside the main road. Ko Law and his wife go to school in the morning, taking their two year-old baby daughter with them, after which they return back home for lunch and continue teaching in the afternoon, until 3 p.m. When I was staying with them, they left me alone and told me to help myself to lunch from the kitchen. Some days, I visited other houses with Mu Yan, and on others I observed the daily life of the villagers and joined them in their activities.

Padaung women wake up early to cook and clean the home, while some of the men go around the village with radios listening to Burmese programs, those broadcast for Myanmar exiles. Around 8 or 9 a.m. they have breakfast, with the meal for

⁸ NGOs provide salaries for the teachers, so they are members of the group which elects and appoints teachers.

breakfast and lunch being the same. Every three or four days, the women go together into the forest to collect bamboo shoots, mushrooms and other vegetables, for which they wear long-sleeved shirts and long boots, with their hair covered in a scarf. One morning, while I was sitting on the veranda drinking coffee, I saw women coming back from the forest having collected vegetables. It made me smile to see them, these Long-Necked women in long-boots, *longyi* and long-sleeve blouses. Their brass rings shone in the morning sun light, and on their backs they were carrying bamboo baskets full of vegetables - enough for three or four days.

Their daily food is simple and every day during my visit I would see them carrying different kinds of bamboo shoot, or a strange kind of vegetable that I had never seen before. Sometimes they eat meat, when they have slaughtered pigs, but this is very rare. Every home keeps pigs and chickens; the pigs also used for bartering and as compensation payments in accordance with Kayan traditional law. Hens and other fowl are also important for the Kayan; they eat the meat and tell their fortunes by 'reading the chicken bones'.

Sometimes fortune tellers, vendors and street sellers come to visit Huay Pu Keng, as the Padaung are interested to see their future. During my stay, a Shan fortune teller came and stayed for a week, and many women, including Mu Yan, went and asked about their future. The fortune teller stayed at the home of Mu Yan, and I saw some villagers, including Long-Necked Padaung, listening to the fortune teller talking about the outside world and religious matters, until dawn.

I noticed that the Padaung women are very hard working; they do all the housework as part of being a good wife. They cook and wash the clothes, and during the day they weave scarves, traditional blouses or bags, plus make dresses and bags from cotton fabric. When visitors request it they oblige and pose for photographs. Meanwhile, the children go to school and the men spend their days wandering around the village or visiting other Long-Necked villages scattered throughout the forest. They know the path used to reach Huay Sua Tao from Huay Pu Keng, through the forest.

All the Padaung men are football crazy, and there is a wide playground beside the village where they play football every evening.

Daily life is routine without change; we have nothing to do, so we play football and volleyball. We participate in sports festivals at the refugee camps. A Kayan man from Huay Pu Keng is the coach of a football team in Nai Soi camp. (Interview with a Padaung man: September 2008)

Some Padaung girls play volleyball also, and Mu Yan told me that she plays volleyball regularly, sometimes even playing football, even after she started wearing the rings. At night, villagers go to sleep early. Children revise for their lessons and do their homework before going to bed. Their electricity from the solar power system lasts just three or four hours after dark.

One night, I slept at Mu Yan's house, and at midnight, I heard some Kayan people come and wake up Mu Yan's step-father, saying that a couple of Padaung were quarrelling - the husband was drunk and arguing with his wife. Their problem had come about due to insufficient income, and their argument was annoying the neighbors. The next morning, Mu Yan explained to me that her step-father was a member of the village security group for Huay Pu Keng.

When I first arrived in Huay Pu Keng, the Padaung gathered at Ko Law's home, drank rice wine and sang together; Padaung women are very good at playing the traditional guitar. I came to know one Padaung lady, Ma Play (Ms. Player), who can play the guitar and sing very pleasant songs - her musical style is a modern classical style. All the men and women sing songs together, and their old songs played on traditional musical instruments are about love, the beauty of Kayah (Karenni) State, and about their farm work. The more recently composed songs are about their experiences during the Japanese colonial period in Myanmar, about their fight against the Myanmar military regime and their expectations for the new generations. There is a music album, called 'I Will Return' written by by Nine Stars, and which features songs composed and performed by Kayan students. The themes of the songs reflect

their former life in Myanmar and the current situation in Thailand. On some nights the Padaung gather at a person's house, drink and sing songs.

All the men, women and children drink the rice wine, as is their tradition. When I was in the village I developed a very close friendship with Uncle La Han, and whenever I visited his home and drank with him, he often shared rice wine with his eight year-old son, as it is their tradition to drink rice wine from childhood.

3.8 Religions

The villagers believe in animism (*Ka Khwan*), Buddhism, Ka Khwan with Buddhism and Ka Khwan with Christianity (Baptist or Roman Catholic). The Kayan people have practiced their traditional Kan Khwan beliefs since they migrated from Mongolia and during their wanderings towards the Salween River in Karenni (Kayah) State, and in present day Myanmar (Khon Eden Phan 2001:54). Although some Kayan people have converted to Christianity, many still follow their traditional Kan Khwan beliefs and at festivals everyone participates in the traditional ceremonies. I found that there are different beliefs between family members; the children might be Christian while the parents are animist or Buddhist. Mu Yan's parents are Buddhist, Mu Yan is devoted to Kan Khwan, while Mu Yan's two half-sisters are Christian. Mu Yan told me:

I choose to devote myself as I believe in tradition. There are different religious beliefs among the family members. My mum is Buddhist, but she is happy to 'sign' at a Christian ceremony, as this is her hobby.

The word Kan Khwan is derived from *Kan*, meaning the land, and *Khwan* meaning the center. So the Kayans interpreted the Kan Khwan as the "center of our land" or the "center of our land." The Karenni use the practice of Kan Khwan as their national identity (Khon Eden Phan 2005:35).

A brief background on their traditional beliefs is needed here. According to Kayan beliefs, the world was created by an eternal creator God Phu Kabukathin, assisted by two creator deities: Pika hao and Kabukaban, and their four messengers: Mann - who created heaven, Ti - who created the earth, La Taon - who created trees and plants, and La Nan - who created man and the animals. All components of the universe are linked together by a web; thus the earth is connected to the stars and the moon by a spider's web. At the creation of the earth, there was still a lack of density and the land and water were fluid, so the God Phu Kabukathin planted a small post in the ground. As the post grew, the earth also developed into seven outer and inner layers and became firm. The post was named "The means of the formation of the earth" – or *Kan Htein Bo* in Kayan (Khon Eden Phan 2001).

3.8.1 The Kan Htein Bo Poles

For the stability of the world and prosperity of mankind, the Kayan must pay homage to the Kan Htein Bo bestowed by God. God also gave the people five commandments to guide their lives, these being: uprightness, purity of heart, cleanliness, peace and unity. Next to each Kan Htein Bo is a podium, the *Kantan*, where offerings are made to the Gods and to the guardians of the forest, land, mountains and water.

The Kayan erect a Kan Htain Bo pole between March and April of each year. The *Eugenia* tree, the first tree in the world, is the preferred tree to use for this. The pole is selected with much ceremony and ritual, over a number of days. Groups of young men, or *pwai*, perform a homage dance around the pole to venerate it; dancing and playing drums, gongs and bamboo flutes. The women sprinkle the pole with *Eugenia* leaves, fetch rice wine and sprinkle the men with water to keep them cool.

The pole is decorated with symbols representing, at the top, the sun, the moon, the sanctuary shrine and a streamer (banner), and at the bottom, a bunch of bananas, the *Kantan* post, the Sanlu shrine and a spider's web. The sun is at the top – venerated as the only self-illuminating planet in creation, while next to it is the moon, the sun's mate and man's means of telling the time. Then comes the sanctuary – where the

eternal deities reside and the streamer, and a ladder connecting heaven and earth, at the top of which is a spider's web through which humans must pass to reach heaven.

The main festival rotates between the three villages and the camp in a four year cycle. Visitors from other villages and tourists are served with traditional food and drink, and they perform traditional dances.



Figure 3.6: The Kan Htain Bo Pole

3.8.2 Reading the Chicken Bones

The Kayan have traditionally read chicken bones as a way to guide everything in their lives, based on a story in which a deluge was caused by mankind's misdeeds, so to avoid another deluge, prescriptions were set through an interpretation of chicken bones. Legend has it that the art of prognostication started because a man of advanced

years wished to pass on his legacy to his three sons. I noticed that the background story to the reading of chicken bones is the same as the Karen story about losing their literature on a golden scroll. In this story a dog first eats a golden scroll then a chicken eats the dog's excrement; hence, the Kayan have to find knowledge in the chicken bones. Shaman consult chicken bones to foretell the fate of the village for the forthcoming year, and to ask for advice on matters of importance in the village.



Figure 3.7: Reading the Chicken Bones

3.8.3 Christian Organizations in Huay Pu Keng

There are three churches (one Baptist and two Roman Catholic) and a Kan Htein Bo sacred place in the village. Most of the Christian Kayan are Baptists and all of the Kayaw (Big-Eared) are Roman Catholic. Religion plays a critical role in the culture as well as the lifestyle of the Kayan. The pastor and priest are of Kayan ethnicity, but the pastor does not stay in Huy Pu Keng; he travels to all the Long-Necked villages and camps. Before, religious organizations chose some Kayan men to go for religious training in Mae Hong Son or Chiang Mai, and the husband of Musa, one of the girls who has taken off her rings, went for religious training in Chiang Mai prior to my study visit.

Religion-based organizations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), also provide material items like blankets, clothes and food rations, and some Roman Catholic families receive financial support. There is competition between the Baptists and Roman Catholics for having the chance to provide for and seek favor from the religious organizations. After the Kayan have converted, the Christian organizations discourage them from wearing the neck rings.

3.9 Education

Modern education is seen as important for IRC and the other religion-based organizations, and they support the schools and pay the salaries. Sometimes, foreign volunteers teach at these schools, and there are a nursery school, kindergarten and primary school, plus a middle school in Huay Pu Keng village. The nursery provides pre-school care facilities for two to four year olds, the kindergarten and primary school are located on the far side of the playing field in the village and there are about 50 pupils who attend kindergarten and primary school levels 1 to 4. The schools in Huay Pu Keng are not part of the Thai education system.

The middle school is situated at the other end of the village main street, at the top of village near the solar power building. There are three small buildings for classrooms and 89 middle school students for the 2008/09 academic year. The middle school provides education up to the 8th standard level.

Students go to the main Karenni refugee camp to continue their education, as there is a post-ten school in Nai Soi refugee camp which offers a two year program in four subjects. Graduates from this school receive a diploma, but there are many problems with education in the camp because there are not enough teachers or books. Foreign teachers are not allowed to teach in the camp and Karenni teachers are normally not qualified enough; they therefore receive very little education themselves, but they try their best.

The subjects taught are English, Mathematics, Geography, History, Burmese, Karenni, Thai and Science, and the curricula were developed by KNPP and the NGOs. The main languages used in the schools are Burmese and Kayan, and some of the text books are based on Myanmar school text books. The education system is divided into primary, middle and high school, following the Myanmar education system. It does not follow the Thai system.

Table 3.5: Myanmar Education System

School	Standard	Age
Primary School	0 to IV	5 to 10 Years Old
Middle School	V to VIII	10 to 14 Years Old
High School	IX to X	14 to 16 Years Old

Source: Education and Democracy in Burma by Dr. Thein Lwin

The teachers are all village residents and the schools are funded by donations from tourists and charitable organizations. Mu Pe passed her 'Ten Standard' in Myanmar and is the Headmistress of Huay Pu Keng School. She went on a short teacher training course in Chiang Mai, but other teachers have been trained by the Karenni education system, passing their 'Post-Ten' in the refugee camps and returning as teachers in Huay Pu Keng. Mu Yan's sister took off all her neck rings after passing her Post-Ten and becoming a teacher at Huay Pu Keng. Volunteer teachers sometimes come and teach English.

3.9.1 The Role of the NGOs in Education

The schools in Huay Pu Keng are mainly provided for by NGOs and religious organizations, for which teachers receive 1,000 Baht per month as a salary - given by IRC.

The United Kingdom based charity group, the Karenni Student Development Programme (KSDP) supports the Primary and Middle School. KSDP was founded in 1999 by Stephanie Lee, who helped the Karenni people but tragically died at the age of 21 as a result of a motorbike accident near Nai Soi camp in 2001.

The ‘Children on the Edge’ program, supported by the Forster Company, provides this school with finances, books, white boards, educational supplies and materials for school repairs. The KSDP, which is based in Mae Hong Son, coordinates the program for this project, and also supports Huay Pu Keng, funding the village's kindergarten, primary and middle schools, and donating clothes, toys and other supplies whenever possible and providing help, support and advice when needed. The KSDP built two new school buildings in Huay Pu Keng during 2008.



Figure 3.8: Huay Pu Keng Middle School