

Pgaz K’Nyau av Taj Leplez

Pgaz K’Nyau Folktales

Folktales of the Cgauz Karen of Northern Thailand

The 14 Pgaz K’Nyau folktales (*taj leplez*) included in this PDF collection were translated by Tony Boys from Thai to English, or from the original Pgaz K’Nyau language to English, mostly during June to September 2007. They are part of a larger collection of Pgaz K’Nyau folktales held by Mr. Thaworn Kamponkun, a Pgaz K’Nyau Roman Catholic catechist coordinator based at the Catholic Chiang Mai Diocese Mission Center. The folktales were originally collected by a Pgaz K’Nyau man, Mr. Lorence Keif Hpo Chareonkun in Chiang Mai Province in the 1960s and exist as a typewritten manuscript containing 32 folktales (see photos at end of file). This manuscript was computerized by Thaworn Kamponkun in 2007. In addition, many other folktales also exist as part of the oral tradition of the Pgaz K’Nyau people, but to our knowledge have not been collected or recorded in any organized way.

This short collection of Pgaz K’Nyau folktales in English was put together as part of the background research for the novel *Look Down, See the Women Cry* by Francis Ferguson. Most of the tales included here are used in the novel. In the novel, some of the tales have been partially rewritten, but all the folktales included in this PDF collection are translations of the folktales from the ‘original’ Pgaz K’Nyau or Thai, the translations being as far as possible faithful to the content and language of the ‘original’ tales. The English translations were checked against the Pgaz K’Nyau or Thai ‘original’ versions by Thaworn Kamponkun.

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Please send comments, corrections, questions, and so on to <pgazknyau@yahoo.co.jp>

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1. *Taj Leplez Htof Biqaf Hpi Muf Mai*

The story of the old widowed grandmother and the orphan boy

Once upon a time, there was an orphan boy who could only build a small house for himself in the outskirts of the main village where the king lived. He had no mother or father, no brothers or sisters, no neighbours, and lived all alone in his house. The king said to him, "I am the king. I am the lord of the sky and the earth. Whatever the people do, whatever they eat, wherever they clear a field or make a vegetable garden, they must receive permission from me first."

The orphan was very poor. He had no upland field, no paddy field, no cow, no water buffalo, no pig, no chicken, and only his little house where he lived all alone. The king would not give him permission to clear a field, nor would the king allow him to gather bamboo shoots. The king would not give him permission to do anything that he wanted to do. The orphan thus thought to himself:

"Well, if that's how it is, I'll go and beg the king to give me rice to eat."

So thinking, he got up and went to the king's house. When he got there, he said to the king, "Your majesty, I am hungry. I beg your majesty to give me some rice to eat!"

The king replied, "Hey, orphan. You're an extremely lazy fellow. You are sick in both mind and body. Don't come near me!"

The orphan said to the king, "Oh, your majesty, I am really very hungry! I cannot do anything to help myself because your majesty will not permit me to do anything."

The king said to him, "Let me be straight with you. I have a great number of subjects that I must look after. I cannot allow you to do anything. Even if I could, there's nothing you can do to help me."

The orphan did not give up trying and continued to speak directly to the king's face with great persistence. When the king saw that the orphan was not going to be turned away easily he bellowed at him threateningly. "Orphan, you are not welcome in my house. Go away! If you do not leave I will kill you right now!"

The orphan saw that the situation was turning nasty and so hurriedly got up and returned to his house. He was very hungry so he went around the houses in the neighbourhood begging for food. Sometimes he could eat his fill and sometimes he could not, but he got by somehow.

A compassionate angel (*Taj moo hkof hpo*) looked down on the life of the orphan from where she was in heaven and felt very sorry for him. She wanted to go down and help him, but had no opportunity to do so, and as well as that, if the king knew about it he would be very unhappy. Nevertheless, she felt that she should certainly go down and help him, but she would have to do it carefully and incognito.

One day, while the angel was waiting for an opportunity to go down and help the orphan, the king of another district put on a temple festival, where people can go to make offerings to 'make merit'. The king invited all his subjects and all the people from all the surrounding districts to come to celebrate the festival with him. Everyone was talking about going to the festival, and all the people who heard about it decided to go.

The angel looked down from above and saw all the events that were taking place. She anticipated that the king who was holding the festival would certainly have many visitors and that no doubt the

orphan would also go along like everyone else too, but on which day she did not yet know. As she was travelling to the festival, there was, by chance, a big tree that had fallen across the road, making it totally impassable. The way was completely obstructed by branches, twigs and leaves.

The angel took the opportunity to transform herself into a bird and fly down amongst the leaves and branches of the fallen tree. Once inside, she transformed herself again, this time into an old widowed grandmother and wriggled beneath the branches and leaves into the deepest part of fallen tree. Above her was completely obstructed with branches, twigs, vines, and other hindrances, and very difficult to get into.

The angel sat down to wait. After quite a while she heard the sound of people chatting as they approached. The old widow thought to herself, "This is it!" The sound of these people who were on their way to the festival continued to approach closer and closer, and finally they arrived. The old widow saw that they were young men and women who were certainly on their way to the festival, and that they were all dressed up in fine and beautiful clothes. When they came up to the tree they all cried out, "What! This tree has fallen and completely blocked the road. We can't go on and we can't go back!"

They all helped each other find a way around the tree. They walked up and down from one end of the tree to the other, thorns catching at their hands and feet until they were all noisily crying out "Ouch! Ouch!"

Just then the old widow began to speak. "Hey, grandchildren, where are you on your way to?"

They replied, "We're going to the festival. Grandmother, how on earth did you come to be in there?"

The old widow replied, "Oh, grandchildren, *please* help me! The tree fell on me. I was also thinking of going to the festival, but when I got here the tree fell on me. I can't go forward and I can't go back. Please cut me free so I can get out of here!"

The young people swept their eyes this way and that over the leaves and branches of the tree, and then they said to the old widow, "Grandmother, the branches are too dense. We're on our way to the festival and we haven't brought knives or axes with us. We cannot cut you free, grandmother. We have to be on our way or we will not make it to the festival on time."

The young people stood up and walked on by. The old widow watched them disappear in the distance and said to herself, "Those young men and women... I asked them to help me, but not one of them would. If they won't even help a poor suffering old widow like me, it won't do them any good to try and make merit at the temple."

After a good while, there came the sound of another group of people approaching, this one louder than the previous group. The old widow thought to herself, this group of people will certainly have someone who will help me. When they came up to the tree, they said to each other, "Eh? A tree has fallen over and completely blocked the road. How are we to proceed? We're trying to go to the festival, but faced with this, will we be able to get there or not?"

Some of the people said, "Well, we've come this far, we have to keep going."

Then they all helped each other look for a way through so they could pass by. They walked up and down from the trunk to the tip, climbing up on the branches and making a lot of noise, "Clunk, clunk, scrape, scrape."

The old widow under the branches spoke up to them, “Grandchildren, where are you on your way to? There are many of you, please help me to get free from under here! This tree fell on me. I was also trying to get to the festival, but when I got here this tree fell right on top of me. I can't walk forwards and I can't retreat, I can't go on and I can't go back. Please have pity on an old grandmother!”

The people asked each other, “What shall we do? The old woman is asking us to help her get free. Are we going to help her get free or not?”

Some people said, “Ahh, we're on our way to the festival and we haven't brought knives or axes with us. How are we going to cut her free? If we try to do it, we won't make the festival on time. Don't pay any attention to her. Let's go!”

They got up and walked past the old widow just like the first group. The old widow watched them disappear into the distance and mumbled after them, “These children... I thought they would help me and I got all worked up, but not one of them would help me. They walked by me without caring. If that's how they are, going to the temple festival won't bring them any merit.”

After waiting quite a long while more there came the sound of one person approaching, clearing the way as he came, making a loud ‘swish, swish’ sound. As he came up to the tree, the old widow saw that it was the orphan. He was also intending to go and participate in the festival, but was going all alone with no friends or group to go with, carrying a shoulder bag, and holding a broken knife with a blade only as long as a fist. When he came up to the tree, the orphan said, “Well, this tree has fallen over and completely blocked the road. When I passed here before there was no tree blocking the way. The road was quite clear and easy to come and go. This time a tree has fallen in the way. Which way are we going to go?”

All alone and talking to himself, the old widow under the branches of the tree could hear him and was sure it was the orphan. Then she spoke up saying, “Orphan boy, *please* cut me free and help me get out of here!”

The orphan heard the old widow's voice and asked, “Who are you, speaking from under the shrubbery?” The orphan then climbed onto the tree, stared down between the leaves and branches and saw an old woman down in the deepest part of the entangled tree. The orphan asked the old widow, “How did you get stuck in there?”

The old widow replied, “The tree fell on me. I cannot go on, nor can I go back. I will die in here. Please cut me free and get me out of here!”

The orphan replied, “Oh, grandmother, I've only got this one broken knife. I don't know if I'll be able to cut you out of there.”

The old widow said to him, “Grandson, if you have a will to help me, then please try to do so.”

The orphan said, “If you say so, I'll give it a try.”

The orphan immediately set about trying to clear away the branches, cutting and throwing away, cutting and throwing away, getting deeper and deeper and deeper. He had almost reached the old widow when he came to a big fork in the tree. It had to be cut through as there was no way to avoid it and take another route as he was now already too deeply inside. He had to go this way, otherwise he would have to start all over again from the top. The orphan thought to himself, “What am I going to do with just a fistful of knife, and I didn't sharpen it when I set out from the house again this

morning. Oh, dear! What the hell, I'll try to cut through it.”

So the orphan set to work cutting through the tree fork, and after quite a while it broke off. The orphan said to the old widow, “Grandmother, I've cut through the branch!”

The old widow replied, saying, “Grandson, if you have a will to help me you can do anything.”

After that, the orphan continued to cut away the branches, and as he was cutting he began to be aware that he was hungry, so he said to the old widow, “Grandmother, my arms and legs are becoming so weak, I cannot lift my knife. I have no power, I have no strength left. I don't know what's going wrong with me.”

The old widow said, “Grandson, you are hungry.”

The old widow plucked out one of her fingernails and a flat rice cake about the size of two fingers appeared. She extended her arm it and held it out to the orphan. “Here, eat this rice cake, grandson.”

The orphan took the rice cake and ate it all. When he had finished eating the rice cake, he felt his strength returning. He stood up and continued to cut. After a while, it seemed that he would reach the old widow after cutting for just a little while longer, but he felt hungry again. He told the old widow that he was hungry. The old widow removed another fingernail which became another rice cake and she gave it to the orphan to eat. He ate it and then began to continue cutting again. He continued to cut until the tops of the trees pierced the sun and then he finally reached the old widow. He was able to help the old widow out from under the tree. The orphan cut the old widow a walking stick. Then he said to her, “Grandmother, come back and stay at my house. We don't have to go to the festival. We won't make it there on time, anyway.”

The orphan took the old widow by the hand and set off back towards his house. Coming to a mountain on the way, the orphan began to feel hungry again as they were walking up the slope and he said to the old widow, “Grandmother, I can't go on any further, I can't walk another step.”

The old widow replied, saying, “Grandson, you must be hungry again.”

The old widow plucked another fingernail from her hand and a rice cake appeared again, just as before. The orphan ate the rice cake and his strength returned again and was finally able to take the old widow back to his house.

The orphan and the old widow lived together, just the two of them, until it became time to clear a field. The king sent out the following command to all his children and grandchildren, his subjects, and all the people:

“All my children and grandchildren, if you wish to clear a field, come and ask me beforehand. I will tell you where you can and where you cannot. If you do not have an instruction from me, do not go into the forest. I also order that if you want a field you must go and clear one today. If you do not do it today, I will not give permission.”

All the children, grandchildren of the king, the subjects, and the people in the district close to the king heard the king's order and went together to clear fields, one for each person. The orphan, however, did not hear the announcement because he lived on the outskirts of the village. He did not go to clear a field on that day like everyone else. When he heard about the order it was already many days after the king's command. Nevertheless, the orphan went to see the king in order to beg the king to allow him to clear a field. When he arrived at the king's house, the orphan asked the

king, “Your majesty, I want to clear a field like everyone else. Will your majesty allow me to do so, please?”

The king scolded the orphan, saying, “I launched the day for clearing fields several days ago. Didn't you hear about it? The others went to clear their fields together with a great noise, chop, chop, slash, slash! Where were you? I proclaimed the deadline, but you have just arrived. Don't come begging me. The land, the trees and the forest are mine. Don't come near me except on the appointed day. I cannot give you anything. You are an extremely lazy fellow and you are wretchedly poor. Even if I allow you to clear a field, you will just destroy the land and the forest. Go away! I will not allow you to clear a field.”

However the orphan begged, the king would not relent, and so he went home. When he arrived home, the old widow asked him, “Grandson, you went to see the king. How did he reply?”

The orphan said, “Grandmother, he will not allow me to clear a field.”

The old widow said to him, “Grandson, if the king will not allow you to clear a field, we will not have any rice to eat. We must have a little field. No matter that the king will not allow us to clear a field. Look for a shelf of rock. Then dig up some soil and spread it on the ledge, cut some branches and leaves, place them on top of the soil on the ledge to dry, and then burn them. When the fire dies down, sow rice and plant various different vegetables and fruits. If you do this we will be able to eat.”

The next morning, the orphan went out to look for a rock ledge. He searched around until he found one. He dug up some soil and covered the stone with it. Then he cut some branches and leaves and piled them on top of the soil. He left them to dry and then burned them. Then he sowed rice and planted vegetables and fruits as the old widow had told him to do.

It turned out that the rice sprouted very nicely, much more abundantly than in the fields of the other people. Every day the orphan went to weed his field on the rock ledge. When it became time to harvest the rice, he harvested it and then threshed it, and when that was finished the old widow said to him, “Grandson, build a field hut to store the rice.”

The orphan built a field hut, placed the mats and sheets in it, and when that was finished the old widow went inside the field hut. Then she said to the orphan, “Now pour the paddy down. I'll wait down in the hut.”

The orphan poured the paddy down into the hut and while the paddy was falling the old widow shook herself. Streams of rice gushed out from under her fingernails, her toenails, her eyelids, her hair, her nose, her mouth, and her clothes and began to fill the hut with a loud noise; swish, swish, swoosh, swoosh! The old widow's whole body became a beautiful golden yellow of paddy. Because of this, the orphan ended up with a big granary chock-a-block full of paddy.

The next day the sun rose again and the old widow said to the orphan, “Grandson, I have lived with you and helped you and told you many things up till now. You now have enough rice to eat and so it's time for me to go home. My home is in heaven above, and when I am gone do not speak my name.”

When she had finished speaking, the old widow flew up into the sky. The orphan watched her go, and when she was almost out of the orphan's sight he cried out to her with a great feeling of sadness, “Grandmother, are you going home? Who will I live with? Who will help me to have rice to eat?”

When he had spoken, the old widow dropped back to the ground with a loud thud. She said to the orphan, “I tell you again, grandson, you must not ever speak of me again. If you do, it will not be good for me.”

The old widow flew up into the sky for a second time. The orphan watched her go with great loneliness and unable to control his feelings, called out to her again. The old widow dropped down to earth again as she had done before. She said to the orphan that she had told him not to call her name, and then she flew away a third time. Just as she was almost out of sight the orphan watched after her, his heart nearly breaking, and then he called out to her again. This time the old widow fell to the ground dead, her neck broken.

The orphan was grief-stricken. He wrapped the corpse of the old widow in large fresh banana leaves and laid it on the shelf over the hearth hoping that the body would dry out and not rot so that she would stay with him for a long time to come even though she was just a corpse.

The next day, the orphan carefully lifted the leaves off the old widow's corpse, hoping to have a look at her, but he found that the body had disappeared and that in its place were the remains of a bird, all dried up and without any feathers on it, and a beautiful golden yellow.

Because of this, when it came time to thresh the rice each year, the orphan recalled the old widow and carried a walking stick when he carried the paddy to the granary, and when he had finished threshing the rice he performed a ritual to call back the old widow to heaven above. This ritual is called ‘the ritual to call the bird of the rice spirit back to heaven’ (*kauv htauf keiz htof biqaf*).

When the people of the district saw the orphan performing the ritual to call the bird of the rice spirit to heaven, and saw that he had harvested a great deal of paddy just by clearing a field on a small piece of rock, they all did the same as he had, and believed that to be the customary way of doing things from that time onwards. The Pgaz K’Nyau still practise this ritual today.

Source: Buhpau (Thaworn Kampongun), *Raimunwian: The Karen System of Forest Field Rotation – The Rotational Swidden Farming System and Annual Cycle of Life of the Pgaz K’Nyau People in the Forest Highlands of Northern Thailand*, Rice Merit Network, Thailand, 2004, (in Thai). English version in preparation.

Content: This folktale refers to the mythical origin of Pgaz K’Nyau rotational farming. The orphan is a central motif in the Pgaz K’Nyau identity, referring probably to the historical background of the Pgaz K’Nyau, who have often found themselves situated as a minority, many times pushed out or onto the periphery of their homeland by a larger and stronger invading power, or treated as second-class people in the aspects of rights, culture, language and so on, especially by the majority lowland people.

2. Taj Leplez Kauz Klaif **Kauz Klaif: a giant, evil, lion-like spirit**

Deep in the middle of the beautiful, but at the same time fearful and awesome forested mountains and valleys, with their streams and river basins, deep within the convoluted folds of nature, there is a Karen (*Pgaz K’Nyau*) community, and in that community is a small family with a mother and father and two children, both daughters, the elder being 17 or 18 and the younger 12 or 13.

Each year the family farmed a swidden field (in the usual way), which was one part of the large swidden field that the whole community farmed together (*quv s’bliv* or *quv dau pleif*) according to the rules and customs of the *Pgaz K’Nyau* rotational swidden field farming system. The land in the village was delineated clearly and strictly such that the land used for the cultivation of food and the land not used for that purpose was well known to all from those rules and customs. However, this year the mother and father chose a plot of land that looked satisfying to them as a swidden field in a narrow, blustery valley (ravine, *taj dei dof*), which would be land forbidden for use as farming land according to custom or taboo (*taj duf*). Unheeding of the warnings of the village elders and their neighbours they went ahead and broke the taboo by making a swidden right there in the valley.

In the process of cultivating the swidden as normal, from clearing the swidden through to sowing the rice, the family, especially the mother and father, felt deep misgivings in their hearts because they had broken the taboos and cleared a swidden on forbidden land. The mother and father said nothing, however, except simply to warn their daughters that when they went to work in the swidden they were not to say anything mean or cynical because the spirits might hear and come in disguise to do some mischief.

As the white tips of the rice shoots began to appear, the weeding (*klauj nauif*) season arrived. Every day the two sisters walked together to the family swidden to do the weeding. One day, as they were beginning to feel very tired from the work, the elder sister burst out impetuously without thinking, “If a very handsome young man were to appear and help us clear all the weeds from this whole swidden, I would be ready to follow him anywhere!”

Just by chance, a *kauz klaif* (an evil, lion-like spirit) was passing by and just happened to overhear what the elder sister had said. Transforming himself into a handsome young man, he walked over to the elder sister and said, “Well, shall I help you weed your field, then?”

The astounded girl replied, “If you please, sir.”

“Well, then,” said the *kauz klaif*, “I shall do it, on the condition that when the weeding is finished you will go with me, as you said.”

“I will, sir.” she promised.

“And one further condition,” continued the *kauz klaif*, “that while I’m doing the weeding both of you completely cover your faces with your headdress until I have finished.”

This is described in the *hta* which says;

Klau nauif hkai yez htauf hpau prei, hpau prei hai keiz kif dauv hkei.
Klau nauif hkai yez htauf hpau bau, hpau bau hai keiz kif dauv htau.

So much grass to weed in the field, I think “you” might come and help,
But when “you” come, you look like an evil striped tiger
So much grass to weed in the field, I think “you” might come and help,
But when “you” come, you look like an evil striped bear

[“You” in this case being a potential boyfriend or marriage partner.]

The elder sister covered her face with her headdress as she was told, but the younger sister, being yet a very young girl, did not wear a headdress and so held her hands over her eyes. Daring to peek through her fingers she saw the handsome young man change back into the ugly and ferocious lion-spirit, who proceeded to use his tongue to lick all the weeds out of the soil of all the swiddens on the seven summits, as in the *hta* of this tale which goes;

Kej be maix le hkof hpef hkau, leij lauz av loz saf minyau.
Kej be maix le hkof hpef wa, leij lauz av loz minyauz hpa.

Kej be maix le cunyasav, taj nwi looj kauz klaif klau wav.
Kej be maix le cunef hki, taj nwi looj kauz klaif klau wiz.

Covering her face with the edge of her headdress, she sees the cat licking its body clean,
Covering her face with her white headdress, she sees the cat licking his body clean,

Covering her face with her hands, the *kauz klaif* weeds from around all seven summits.
Hiding her eyes in the crook of her arm, the *kauz klaif* weeds from all seven summits.

When he had finished licking the weeds from the whole swidden the *kauz klaif* changed back once again into the handsome young man. “I have finished weeding your field. You may look now,” said the *kauz klaif*. The sisters saw that astonishingly it was true. To the elder sister the *kauz klaif* said, “Now you must keep your promise to me.” Thus the elder sister then went off with the *kauz klaif*. The younger sister hurried off in the other direction, towards home, her heart quaking and beside herself with grief. However, terribly worried that her sister did not realize the true identity of the young man, she sang this *hta* for her as she ran;

Kif le huv toz le av hkle, taj k’auf naz waij nauj eh.
Kif le huv toz le av sav, taj k’auf naz waij nauj ah.

Or as some people say...

Taj kif le av huv, taj toz le av hkle, taj k’auf naz waij nauj eh.

[*Kif*: vertical stripes, *Toz*: horizontal stripes]

Striped belly and striped back, oh, elder sister, he is going to eat you!
Striped belly and striped breast, ah, elder sister, he is going to eat you!

Hearing her younger sister’s faint voice, the elder sister stopped and spoke to the young man. “I heard my sister calling. I think she wants to tell me something.” The young man hurriedly blurted out, “It’s not the voice of your sister, but the sound of the branches brushing in the wind!”

When the young man had led the young woman to his house, he told her to cook some rice and then wait for him. There is a *hta* about this which says;

Hpau pax neif kauz klaif av meiz, kauz klaif laiz qu s’ei hsgei

While cooking the *kauz klaif*’s rice for him, the *kauz klaif* goes to look for galanga

When telling the young woman to cook the rice for him, he forbade her to pour off the waste water left after cooking the rice to the south of the hearth (in the *hpaf hkof hki*, in the south, where people usually throw the waste water and so on), telling her to be sure to pour it off to the north. The young

woman was suddenly very suspicious about this because people sleep with their heads to the north and so this was a taboo area that must not be defiled. Wanting to know the reason for this instruction she decided to ignore what she had been told and pour the rice water off to the south as she normally did. Suddenly, an old woman with shining white hair appeared, as in the *hta* which goes;

Hto siv meiz le hpaj hkof hki, pej htauf le hpi av pgaj si

Pouring off the water in the *hpaf hkof hki*, an old widow suddenly appeared

The old woman said, “Come and help me pick the lice out of my hair, dear. I have something important to tell you.” (In Pgaz K’Nyau society, having someone groom your hair is a good time to have a little talk with them. Grandmothers are especially fond of this strategy.)

Taj liz kwaj hpi av hkof iz, hpi k’tai n’taj t’miz

Granddaughter, come and look at granny’s hair, granny will tell you something

The old woman loosened her hair, and when the young woman parted it with her fingers she gasped in surprise! The old woman’s white hair was teeming with various kinds of animals, which were crawling around on her scalp; centipedes, millipedes, scorpions, snakes and other unpleasant creatures.

The young woman was traumatized, but because she wanted to know what the old woman wanted to tell her that was so important, she excused herself for a moment to go into the forest to pick some *s’dwi saf*, a kind of small fig.

When she returned, she crushed the *s’dwi saf* fruits over the head of the old woman to make a noise like she was crushing lice, so that the old woman would think she was crushing lice for her. [This is because she is afraid of killing the various animals, but has to pretend that she is crushing the lice.]

Then the old woman began to speak. “Why have you come here? Don’t you know this is a *kauz klaij*’s house? He brought you here to eat you, and now he has gone out to collect ginger and galanga root for seasoning the stew he will make from you.” The young woman was terribly shocked and hurriedly asked the old woman, “What should I do?” The old woman advised her, “Call the hawk and the weevil to come and help you. They can help you escape from here in the fastest way possible.”

The young woman went outside and called the hawk with the promise that she would feed the hawk chicken for seven generations. Then she called the weevil to come and help her with the promise to allow the weevil to eat the bamboo wall of the house forever, as in the *hta* which says;

Liv eh liv eh yooz caux yaz, duv auf n’hsau nwi coz pgaz.

Gej eh gej eh wax lauz yaz, y’nga naz gauz hpaux gauz paz.

Oh, hawk, take me away, I’ll feed you chicken for seven generations,
Oh, weevil, gnaw and send down dust for me,
In return I’ll let you eat the bamboo wall of the house.

As soon as he heard the promise, the hawk quickly swooped down to snatch up the young woman into the sky. A few moments later the *kauz klaij* returned to the house to find the young woman gone. He was furious and hurried after her to try catch up with her.

After a while the hawk became tired and so drifted down to a perch on the top of a tall mahogany tree. The angry *kauz klaif* rushed up and started to tear away at the tree with its teeth, and just as it looked as if he would pull the tree down the weevil realised its role and started to gnaw at the tree just above the *kauz klaif*, causing wood dust to fall into its eyes, temporarily blinding it.

The hawk had now had enough time to recover and was able to fly off with the young woman again. He flew on for quite some time, but began to tire again. He circled down to come to rest on the top of a big Bo tree (*don sai, Ficus benjamina, hklef*, banyan tree). The *kauz klaif* again caught up with them and immediately set about tearing down the tree with his teeth, but the weevil again gnawed at the tree to produce wood dust, which once again fell into the eyes of the *kauz klaif*. When the hawk felt refreshed he flew off carrying the young woman again. Just at that instant, the *kauz klaif* finally managed to bite through the Bo tree and fell it, but not finding the young woman there knew she had escaped again. In this way, flying from tree to tree, the hawk finally collapsed from exhaustion and could no longer fly on to the next tall perch. This time he circled down to a perch on the top of some big wild banana trees.

The *kauz klaif* was also becoming quite exhausted, and seeing the stalks and leaves of the wild banana trees, said to himself quietly, “Just now, with those trees with the tiny little leaves I was just about able to bite the trunk, but with these huge leaves I will certainly not be able to chomp these trees down.” (because it thinks that if the leaves are larger then the trunk must be harder and stronger too.) The *kauz klaif* therefore admitted defeat and slunk off home full of strong feelings of revenge, as in the *hta* which says;

Pax htauf nauj le nyax dof hki, kauz klaif keiz keiz av lauj hki.
Pax htauf nauj le nyax dof tauz, kauz klaif keiz keiz av dailau.

Leaving the young woman at the top of the tree, the *kauz klaif* returned from whence he came,
Leaving the young woman at the top of the tree, the *kauz klaif* returned feeling very disheartened.

When he saw that they were safe, the hawk took the young woman home. They came down onto the roof just as the younger sister was weaving cloth. The older sister saw this and pulling the ring off her finger rolled it towards the loom where her sister was weaving. The younger sister immediately recognized it as her older sister’s ring and looked up on the roof. Seeing her older sister there, she hurriedly helped her down. The elder sister thus returned to the bosom of her family and community once again.

After returning to her family for quite a long time, the elder sister had forgotten all about the terrible affair with the *kauz klaif*. One night, however, she had a dream that she met the *kauz klaif* again. When she told her father and mother about it, they were extremely worried and instructed their daughter saying, “Because this is a bad dream, you must stay in the house and not go out for a while.” Not long after that, however, the store of rice that the family had at the house was almost gone and it became necessary to go and carry home some of the rice which had been stored following the rice harvest in the temporary granary at the swidden field. The elder daughter told her mother and father that she would go and carry home some of the rice from the “old” swidden. Since it was not very far, they gave their daughter permission to go.

Off she went along the path, but was very shocked along the way to bump into the *kauz klaif* again! It was just as if he had been lying in waiting for her to come. The *kauz klaif* appeared to be furious, and confronting the young woman shouted at her threateningly, “Oh, lass, you are so clever! You escaped from me on the back of a hawk when I was out of the house looking for galanga roots. But you won’t get out of my grasp this time. Now I’ll catch you and have my fill of you!”

Still in a state of utter shock, but out of an instinct for self-protection and with the quick self-control that she possessed, the young woman summoned up her courage to put on a causal air and replied to the *kauz klaif* saying, “Don’t you know I’m going to fetch rice to steam and brew *sake* for our wedding ceremony? Do you still want to carry me off to eat me like you did before?” This is expressed in the *hta* which says;

Auf yaz t’geiz auh waij hkwa, p’sEIF moov p’auf dauv naz.
Auf yaz t’geiz auh waij cau, p’sEIF moov p’auf dauv cau.

Do not eat me young man, I will prepare our wedding ceremony and await you,
Do not eat me young sir, I will prepare our wedding ceremony and await your pleasure.

The startled *kauz klaif*, hearing the young woman reply in this way, hurriedly asked her, “Is this true? If you are preparing a wedding feast for me, kindly tell me the day appointed for the wedding that I may come to visit you at the correct time.”

The young woman answered, “The ceremony will take place in 7 days, 7 nights, 7 hours and 7 minutes from now,” which sounds like a very exact reply, but in fact when the Pgaz K’Nyau say “seven” they simply mean “many”. The *kauz klaif* agreed to the time of the ceremony and then went off down the path.

The young woman hurried home to tell her mother and father what had happened. The parents were aghast and fearful and so sought the advice of the people in the community. Everyone was in agreement that they should not brew the rice wine (*sake*) as usual, but make it from “*hkli*” (*Dioscorea hispida*, *hkli av tij* = tuber, *hkli av muj* = vine, *glooi*), a climbing plant with a tuber that can be used to make a pleasant-tasting wine which is extremely potent. This would render the *kauz klaif* unconscious and give the villagers time to think of a way of doing away with him. A *hta* says;

N’mei hpau siv hpau le hkli, kauz klaif au kauz klaif moosi.
N’mei hpausiv hpau le mav, kauz klaif au kauz klaif moo hsa.

Prepare wine from *hkli*, the *kauz klaif* will drink and become drunk,
Prepare wine from *hkli*, the *kauz klaif* will drink and become unconscious.

The preparations for the ceremony were carried out until the wine, the food, and everything for the ceremony were ready. When the day arrived, seven *kauz klaif* appeared transformed into handsome young men. The leader was the *kauz klaif* as a young man who was to be the bridegroom and he had brought six of his friends with him to take part in the ceremonies.

The villagers were all prepared and welcomed the groom’s party with all their hearts, while at the same time bringing out the wine they had brewed for them from *hkli*. The groom’s party was invited to drink the wine, and soon the seven *kauz klaif* were so drunk that they lost consciousness and fell about on top of one another in a heap on the veranda of the house. At the moment they lost consciousness the tails of the *kauz klaif* appeared through the cracks in the bamboo floor, causing the pigs, dogs and chickens to cry out in fright, the noise echoing all through the village, as in the *hta* which says,

Hsau kauf k’dauv kauf k’daiv, taj nwi du av maij lauz caiz.
Hsau kauf k’daiv kauf k’dauv, taj nwi du av maij caiz lauz.

The chickens squawked cock-a-doodle-doo, the seven tails of the *kauz klaif* hung down,
The chickens screeched doodle-cock-a-doo, down hung the tails of the seven *kauz klaif*.

As soon as the seven *kauz klaif* had lost consciousness in their drunken stupor, the villagers worked together to carry the seven bodies into an iron cage with seven layers, which they had prepared beforehand. Six of the *kauz klaif* were hacked and chopped up by the villagers until they were completely dead, but however they hacked and chopped, the leader, who was the groom, would not die. As soon as he realized he was being hacked and slashed, the leader began to bite open the iron cage, gnashing again and again and growling furiously and frighteningly, as in the *hta* which says;

Kauz klaif nwi du p'maz si, maz t'si av tij hkof qi.
Maz t'si av tij hkof qi, kauz klaif eif qau gux hkauf htiv.

We killed 7 (=many) of the *kauz klaif*, we could not kill the leader,
We could not kill the leader, the *kauz klaif* started to eat away the iron cage.

The *kauz klaif* was biting away at the iron cage layer by layer until only the final layer remained, but just as he was biting away at the last and final layer, he bit off one big toe of the young woman who was to be his bride. At that moment the young woman collapsed and died. At that point the *kauz klaif* gave up the fight and died. (The young woman died and so he was satisfied at having reached his goal, i.e. to kill the young woman. It would not die when its neck was cut because its work was not finished.), as in the *hta* which reads,

Hkauf ne le kauz klaif eif toox, k'laz uf hpau geij t'pooz.
Hkauf ne le kauz klaif eif taix, k'laz uf hpau geij t'hplaiv.

The *kauz klaif* bit off the toe of the young woman, she cannot escape her fate,
The toe of the young woman the *kauz klaif* bit off, her fate she cannot escape.

The mother and father of the young woman and all the people in the community were filled with sadness from the loss of such a lovely young woman and all gathered to plan the cremation of the young woman separately from the *kauz klaif*. Immediately, the sky began to darken all over and the villagers all said to one another, “The young woman and the *kauz klaif* must have been a couple made in heaven from a previous time and certainly should not be separated.” They then agreed to cremate the two bodies together in the same place. As they did so the sky brightened up again.

Both of the bodies were cremated together at the summit of Mt Sau Sif Pgauz Gauz (the holy mountain of the motherland of the Pgaz K’Nyau whose location is now lost in the mists of time). At the time of the cremation ceremony, a straight upright flame rose up from the cremated bodies. It floated up into the sky and gave out a roar like thunder, as in the *hta* which says;

Laiz kuj le sausif hkof dau, kuj meif poj div lau k'nyau.
Laiz kuj le sausif av co, kuj meif poj div lau av sov.

Cremation at the summit of Mt Sau Sif,
A tongue of flame floated high and roared like thunder,
Cremation at the top of Mt Sau Sif,
A tongue of flame floated high and echoed like thunder.

The people who came to participate in the cremation all said with one voice that the sky and the earth had promised that the two had been born to be together.

Source: Pamphlet in Thai with interpretation of the tale by Prasert Trakansupakon. Published only as a photocopied pamphlet. Also in the typewritten manuscript.

Content: the tale of *Kauz Klaif* warns that severe consequences may arise from breaking the taboos, restrictions and customs concerning the clearing of swiddens for rotational farming.

3. Taj Leplez Puj S'da The Youngest Brother

Once upon a time there was a husband and wife. The wife's name was Nauj Soo Kwauv and the husband's name was Kauj Soof Lauz. They had seven sons. Before the sons grew up and got married, however, the wife died. Not long after his wife had died, the husband found a new wife, who was a witch. The new wife, the witch, was named Deif Muf Bau. When Deif Muf Bau married Kauj Soof Lauz, she hated the seven sons very much and did all kinds of nasty things to them. In the end, she said to her husband, Kauj Soof Lauz, abusively, "Your sons eat such a lot! Go and kill them!" Because Kauj Soof Lauz was very much afraid of his wife Deif Muf Bau, he had no option but to go and kill his seven sons by leaving them on top of a big mahogany tree. When they arrived at the base of the mahogany tree, he hammered bamboo poles (like bamboo banisters) into the tree trunk to climb up on, climbed up to the top of the tree, and then had his seven sons climb up to the top of the rubber tree after him. He stayed there with his sons and had them go to sleep. When all the sons had fallen asleep, he went back down to the ground, removing the bamboo pitons as he went. When he arrived back on the ground, he went back to the village leaving his sons on the tree.

When his sons woke up, they could not see their father anywhere. They called out to him, but they could not hear him respond at all. They asked one another, "What did you dream of?" The elder six brothers all replied with the same words, "As many frogs as the size of a fist and some fish on a skewer." But the youngest brother, when the elder brothers asked him, replied, "Myself, I dreamt that we worked together to get some honey to eat on the top of this mahogany tree. When we had finished eating the honey together, we rubbed it in our hair, then we whistled and the wind started to blow (*these activities are unusual and taboo – not pleasing to the Supreme Being, who makes the wind blow to show displeasure*). This made the top of the bamboo trees wave so that one bent down to where we are, we grasped the top of the bamboo and slid down the bamboo trunk to the ground, and then went back to the village." Then the seven brothers did as the youngest brother had dreamt. They looked around themselves and saw bees really hidden there. They worked together to get and eat the honey, and also rubbed it onto their heads, and then whistled altogether. After a while, the wind came wickedly. The wind blew the top of one bamboo stem towards them. They grabbed the top of the bamboo stem and slid down the trunk of the bamboo to the ground, and when they had done that they went back to the village together.

When Deif Muf Bau saw her step-sons returning to the village again, she was furious and once again ordered her husband to go and kill the seven sons. There was nothing he could do about it, so he went and dug a covered pit trap. When he had finished digging it he had his seven sons follow him and fooled them into falling into the pit. He stayed with his sons until they fell asleep and then got up furtively, pulled himself up out of the pit and made his way back to the village. When the seven sons awoke, they could not see their father, and since he was no longer there they could not get out of the pit. They asked each other again what they had dreamt. The elder six brothers, from the eldest to the sixth replied as they had done before that they had "dreamt of as many frogs as the size of a fist and some fish on a skewer." When they asked the youngest brother what he had dreamt of, he replied to his elder brothers, "I dreamt that we stood on each other's shoulders to make one person go higher and higher until in the end he reached the top and climbed out of the pit. The person who got out of the pit then went to get a bamboo ladder and returned to the people still inside the pit to help them climb out, and then we return to the village together." Again, they did as the youngest brother had dreamt. They stood on each other's shoulders, one on top of the other, from the eldest to the youngest, the youngest brother reaching the top and climbing out of the pit. The youngest brother then got a ladder and returned to help his brothers out of the pit. Then they returned to the village together.

When Deif Muf Bau saw her seven step-sons return to the village again, as they had done before,

she was once again very angry with her husband. She went to her husband and once again demanded that he kill the seven sons, as she had done before. This time he made a boat (by digging out a log), and took his seven sons to the river, and left them in the boat to flow away down the river. The boat went down the river and got caught in a bamboo fish trap set by an giant widowed grandmother. The next morning, the giant grandmother went to retrieve whatever was in the fish trap and saw the boat with the seven humans in it. The giant grandmother said to herself, “Hmmm, do I smell humans? Oh, look! Seven little red rats (humans) have fallen into my trap. Yummy, I’ll eat this delicious little morsel all up in an instant!” When the seven brothers heard that, they replied, “Oh, grandmother, please do not eat us! We will go to live with you and help you get food and help you with your farm work.” When the giant grandmother heard this she was very pleased and decided not to eat the seven brothers after all. She took them back to her house and asked them to do the farm work. The seven brothers stayed with the giant grandmother and did the farm work for her. The giant grandmother treated them like her grandchildren and loved them very much.

The seven brothers stayed with the giant grandmother, and when they had all grown up very tall they talked together and decided to escape from the giantess and go back to their village. They agreed to go and cut down a tree in the virgin forest and make a boat out of it. As they should not be seen, they asked the *htof lai* bird (also *htof koov rax* bird, a small bird that lives in flocks, is grey with a white head, and cries out “waaa, waaa, waaa” when humans or large animals approach) to guard over the paths, the path in and the path out, one flock on the path in and one flock on the path out. Then they worked together to carve the outline of the boat (from a log) all day till evening. If anyone came, the *htof lai* bird would cry out, and when they heard the *htof lai* bird cry out, they would hide from the path and look out together furtively from behind the bushes. A group of people came and saw the boat that was being carved out and they took some charcoal and said, “This person cutting out the boat, it would be better if he carves it a bit more like this.” Having said this they drew lines on the boat with the charcoal and then went on ahead again. When the group of people had gone, the seven brothers came back to cut their boat again just as the other people had drawn on the boat and before long had carved out a nicely-shaped boat. Then they dug out the inside of the boat. They cut again for a short while and then heard another group of people coming so they ran to hide by the path and looked on in secret. The people in this group said to each other, “The person cutting the inside of this boat is not doing it quite the right way. If they cut it like this a little it will float a bit better.” Having said that they took some charcoal and drew more lines showing how and where to cut it properly. When this group of people went off, and the seven brothers came back to cut their boat again they did it in the way that the people had drawn on the boat. As groups of people came and drew lines on the boat, the boat got better little by little. They cut the boat according to the lines the people had drawn, continuing on until they had completely finished making the boat.

When the boat was completed, the seven brothers brewed a pot of rice wine and gave it to the giantess to drink. The giantess drank the rice wine and got very drunk and could not even tell male from female (could not feel anything at all) and fell asleep. Then the seven brothers helped each other to get some resin from a certain insect and press it into her eyes, grabbed all her money and riches and then got in the boat and headed towards the village. When the giantess sobered up and woke up again, she could not open her eyes and she called out for her grandchildren but no one answered. Because of that, she walked here and there, bumping against objects in all directions until she found the three hearth stones (used for placing pots on) in the hearth. She touched her eyes onto a hearth stone and the resin melted away, making her eyes better again. The giantess went to look for her grandchildren, but could not find even one of them. Moreover, all of her money and riches were gone. Because of that she knew that her seven grandchildren had run away taking everything with them.

Then the giantess rushed off after the seven brothers. She pursued them until they came into sight at

a great distance away. This giantess had three golden hairs among the hair on her head. When she spied the seven grandchildren she pulled out one of the hairs and said this *hta*:

“*Hpi hkof soo htoo hkof soo cei, hsaiv hkli hkof hkli hkof wij keiz.*”

Granny’s golden hair, silver hair, pierce the boat and turn it back to me.

Then she pierced the seven brothers’ boat and the boat headed quickly back to where she was. However, when the boat had almost arrived back the hair broke and the boat moved away again. The giantess pulled out the second hair and pierced the boat with it again, but as the boat was nearly back the hair broke again and the boat moved farther off again. Because of this, when all three hairs were used up she had not managed to bring back her grandchildren, the seven brothers. She went back home feeling very sad.

The seven brothers landed the boat at the bathing place at their father’s village. When they did, they shouted out altogether, “Our mother is Nauj Soo Kwauv, and our father is Kauj Soof Lauz, and our step-mother is Deif Muf Bau, who fooled us into dying on top of the mahogany tree, dug a pit trap for us to fall into, let us flow down the river, said that we were dead, but we did not die and have returned to our place here; we will cut Deif Muf Bau’s throat and drink down the blood.” The villagers heard this speech and so they brought the brothers some chicken’s blood. The brothers smelled it, but they didn’t know what it was. The youngest brother smelled it and knew it was chicken’s blood and so said to his brothers that it wasn’t Deif Muf Bau’s and they shouldn’t drink it. The people brought pig’s blood, water buffalo blood, and cow’s blood and whatever blood it was the younger brother smelled it and knew what it was and would not drink any of it. He demanded they give him the blood of his step-mother Deif Muf Bau. After that the people took some blood from Deif Muf Bau’s finger and took it to them. The youngest brother smelled it and knew that it was only the blood from Deif Muf Bau’s finger and would not drink that either. Because there was nothing more the villagers could do, in the end they cut Deif Muf Bau’s throat and brought the blood to the brothers. This time the youngest brother smelled the blood and knew it was from Deif Muf Bau’s neck and so he drank some and gave his elder brothers the blood to drink also.

After Deif Muf Bau had died, her husband buried her body. When going along the path back to the village he met a wild ox who killed him there with its horns. When the seven brothers heard that the wild ox had horned their father to death they decided to go and kill the ox. Each of the six elder brothers made horns with the heartwood of the *soo* tree, but the youngest brother only made horns using the *htaunez* tree. They fixed the horns on their heads. When they had done that they went to look for the wild ox that had killed their father. When they came to the area where the ox lived and knew that the ox itself was not far off, they called to it, saying, “Why did you kill our father? Come here and fight with us.” When the ox heard that people had come calling it like this, it ran over immediately, bending trees and pushing aside bamboo and in a cloud of dust until nothing could be seen. The eldest brother rushed ahead with his horns and fought with the beast first. But he could not defeat the ox and the ox’s horn killed him. The second brother rushed forward with his horns in place but the ox horned him to death also. The ox horned them to death one after another until six of the brothers had died. Only the youngest brother was left and he fought with the ox like his six brothers had also done. He locked horns with the ox and he felt that the wild ox would not be defeated. But as they fought, he heard a bird chirp to him, saying, “Youngest brother, flick his balls, flick his balls, flick them now and it will die, flick now and it will be dead!” The youngest brother heard the bird chirping like this and so he rushed round to the ox’s backside and he flicked its testicles a bit with his horns. The ox rolled over and died right there. The youngest brother used his horn to cut open the ox’s stomach and pulled out his six elder brothers. Then he hit them with a large crossbow string (like a magic wand) and the six brothers came back to life. After the ox had died, all the elder brothers were able to take their off horns, but only the youngest brother could not take his off. Because he had become the ox, he had to stay in the forest just as the ox did, but his six

brothers returned to the village.

Before long, the close relatives of Deif Muf Bau heard that the villagers had killed Deif Muf Bau and so they intended to come and fight with Kauj Soof Lauz's children do the same to them in revenge for what they had done to Deif Muf Bau. Because of this, Kauj Soof Lauz's six sons went to call back their youngest brother from the forest. When they saw him there, they climbed up to the top of a tree and called down to him, saying, "Youngest brother, come back, come back. An army has come to the village. Youngest brother, come down to the village, come down to the village. An army has come to the village." The youngest brother heard his brothers call him and ran very quickly, bending trees and pushing aside bamboo, flattening the grass, making rocks fly and career about, and a cloud of dust arise so that nothing could be seen. In a second he came to the base of the tree, crashed into the tree with his horns and almost caused his elder brothers to fall down from the top of the tree. His brothers were very frightened and cried a lot. The elder brothers' tears dripped down on him, the youngest brother looked up at the top of the tree and saw his brothers because of the tears. He remembered them and said back to them, "Elder brothers, here my eyes have become dim. I don't know who you are anymore, and wait here to kill you. For what reason have you come here to call me now?" The elder brothers replied, saying, "Because we killed Deif Muf Bau, her relatives are coming to get revenge. Because of that, won't you please come back and help us?!" The youngest brother heard his brothers say this and followed them back to the village. When the enemy, Deif Muf Bau's relatives arrived, the youngest brother waved his horns backwards and forwards to spear the enemy until they were all dead. When the youngest brother had finished helping his elder brothers, he went completely back to a wild animal and became completely a wild ox, right up until this day. His elder brothers thus lived happily ever after. And because of this they also do not kill wild oxen right up to this day.

Source: Typewritten manuscript

Content: The story deals with problems arising from remarriage, since the Pgaz K'Nyau are strictly monogamous, even to the extent of frowning upon remarriage following the death of one partner. The taboo against hunting wild cattle results in the youngest brother becoming the wild bull at the end of the story. The importance of the youngest brother being the cleverest of the brothers is not clear. In the oral tradition of the Pgaz K'Nyau, the elders mention that the peoples of the world originated as three brothers. The eldest brother was a Pgaz K'Nyau, the second was a Thai, and the youngest brother was a *Kauz Laz Wa*, a white man, and the three of them were on their way to their homeland. *Ywaz* (God) had three books of wisdom – a gold copy, a silver copy and one of parchment, which he intended to give to the three. However, only the youngest two brothers came to claim the books. *Ywaz* asked the two brothers to give the gold copy to the Pgaz K'Nyau brother, but it turned out that the *Kauz Laz Wa* took the gold copy and the Pgaz K'Nyau ended up with the parchment one. Later on, the Pgaz K'Nyau left the book in a swidden and it was burnt by the fire, leaving only ashes. The ashes were eaten by a chicken, who thus came to possess wisdom. This is the reason why chicken bones are used in various Pgaz K'Nyau rituals, including divination, as they are the signifier of wisdom, which leads the diviner to accurately predict or forecast future events for the community. Finally, the old Pgaz K'Nyau script called *lix hsau waiv* or literally 'chicken scratch' had something to do with chickens. In other words, knowledge, which is represented in script, originated from the first chicken that ate the knowledge. However, it is unclear whether the youngest brother in the story is intended to represent the white man or the Pgaz K'Nyau themselves.

4. *Taj Leplez Muf Lez Kez* The story of *Muf Lez Kez*

In this tale there are a husband and wife. One day (in the morning) they went to work and told their eldest daughter Muf Lez Kez to stay in the house and look after her younger siblings and cook taros and yams (*hkuf hkof nwaif hkof*) for them when they got hungry.

When the parents had gone off to work, a witch came and said to Muf Lez Kez, “Your mother and father told you to cook your little brother’s head and legs (*av hkof av hkauf*, i.e. his whole body).” Muf Lez Kez replied, “That’s not so. My mother and father told me to cook yams for my brother.” The witch said again, “Your mother and father told you to cook your little brother. If you don’t, when your parents come back, they will beat you to death. If you do not dare to beat your little brother to death, I will do it for you.” When she had said this the witch immediately beat Muf Lez Kez’s little brother to death and then ordered Muf Lez Kez to cook him for her mother and father. Because Muf Lez Kez could not do otherwise, she cooked her little brother for her mother and father as the witch had commanded her to do.

When the sun went down and it became close to the time when her mother and father would return, Muf Lez Kez became anxious that her mother and father would scold her and beat her very much. When her mother and father returned and asked Muf Lez Kez, “Where is your little brother?” she lied that he was at his grandmother’s house, and then started to prepare the meal. When they were eating, her mother ate her brother’s hand and her father ate his leg. Because of that her mother and father knew that their daughter Muf Lez Kez had cooked and served her little brother for them to eat. Muf Lez Kez’s mother and father were furious. The next day they went together to carry back some thorny vine (*hsoof hsabo*) at the wide open space, each person bringing a bundle each, and when they had finished they came home and whipped their daughter Muf Lez Kez all over with the bundles of thorny vine. Because of that, the vine’s thorns were sticking in her skin all over her body.

At that time some people had just finished temporarily damming a part of the stream to catch fish. When they had finished looking for fish to eat and had abandoned the dam for a while Muf Lez Kez went to the dam and scooped up (with a bamboo fish scooper) three full baskets of fish to eat. When she came back to the village, the people saw that she had a lot of fish and so they begged her for some to eat. Muf Lez Kez said to them, “Pull out the thorns in my skin and I’ll give you the fish.” The people pulled out the thorns from her skin enough to fill three baskets and she gave them the whole three baskets of fish. She had left only one *do p’loox* (a small fish) and one *nyaf pauj bau* (a small, flat, yellow-spotted fish only seen above about 600 m asl). These two fish Muf Lez Kez let them go in the bathing place and fed them, giving them crushed rice powder (rice flour) as food to eat every morning and evening.

One day, her younger sister that was still remaining went to watch her secretly and saw that she went to feed the two fish in the bathing area. The younger sister went back to the house and told her mother and father, who fooled her into going to her grandmother’s house to stay to pound rice into flour for making rice wine. This is made into a small ball containing yeast. To make one ball she would have to stay over one night, and to make two balls she would have to stay over two nights. (People usually make them much quicker, making many balls at once.) Muf Lez Kez knew that her mother and father planned to take and eat her fish, so before she went she told her little sister, “If you take my fish to eat, leave one for me! Don’t eat both of them!” Then Muf Lez Kez went to stay over at her grandmother’s house to make the rice balls as her mother and father had told her to. After Muf Lez Kez had gone, her mother and father ordered people to go and catch the fish to eat. At first they decided to spear the *do p’loox* fish, but they hit the *nyaf pauj bau* fish. The blood from the *nyaf pauj bau* fish went into the *do p’loox* fish’s eyes and so even today the *do p’loox* fish looks like it has bloody red eyes.

When Muf Lez Kez had finished pounding the rice balls and came back to look at her fish, she saw that only the *do p'loox* fish remained. This *do p'loox* fish when it was remaining by itself had become wild and afraid of humans, not tame as it was before. Then Muf Lez Kez went to look something in her house and saw only the fatty oil of her *nyaf pauj bau* fish. She went to look for some bamboo to make into tube containers in which to place the *nyaf pauj bau*'s fatty oil. But wherever she went to ask the bamboo is she could cut them, the bamboo would not let her cut even one stem. In the end, she reached the place where a kind of bamboo, *waf klau*, a very small and thin kind of bamboo was growing. She asked if she could cut it, the *waf klau* said it was OK and she cut one stem. That stem had one white section, but the other sections were all red (which is very unusual, which is a sign of something, because the white one is good. The red ones are red because some insects eat them, so they are not so good). Muf Lez Kez chose the white section and when she had cut the bamboo container went back to the house and put the *nyaf pauj bau* fish's oil in it.

She went to the open space to get some rocks, but could not find any there, only one tiny stone just like a *swi* (a kind of rice) seed or a *nau* (a kind of sesame) seed and brought it back to the house. When she was alone, Muf Lez Kez took the *nyaf pauj bau* fish's oil outside the house and hit the stone that she had found with the container. She pounded the stone for a long time and it got larger and larger. When the stone got to be quite big, she got up on top of it and hit it continually and the stones continued to get bigger and bigger. When the stone had got big enough so it brushed the roof of the house, she looked down towards her grandmother's house and saw that a chicken had come to eat her rice, which was spread out to dry in the yard. Muf Lez Kez called down to her grandmother, saying, "Grandmother, a chicken is eating your rice." The grandmother didn't notice her grandchild, but was engrossed in her work and thought that her grandchild would chase it away for her and so answered, "Chase it away for granny, will you?" A moment later, she looked and saw the chicken eating all her rice and also saw the huge rock pushing up into the sky. Her grandchild, Muf Lez Kez was pounding the rock with the oil container continually and the rock went up and up and reached the moon!

When she reached the moon, she asked the moon if she could stay with the moon, but the moon answered her, "Myself, because I travel in the dark in the night, you cannot stay with me." Muf Lez Kez continued to pound the stone and her height went up as far as the sun, and she asked if she could stay with the sun. The sun replied, "Myself, I travel with heat and light. You cannot stay with me." She went up higher and came to the place where Thunder lived. She asked if she could stay with Thunder. Thunder replied, "Myself, I have a very loud voice. If you stay with me will you be able to stand it? I'll test you by thundering over you three times and under you three times. If you do not flinch/jump you can stay with me. Muf Lez Kez shut her ears with dried chicken dung, one piece in each ear. Thunder clapped three times above her and then asked, "Did I make you jump?" She answered, "No, I didn't jump." Then Thunder clapped three times underneath her and asked, "Did I make you jump?" She replied again, "No, I did not jump." Then Thunder said, "If that is so, you may stay with me." Because of this, Muf Lez Kez stayed with Thunder and married him there.

When Muf Lez Kez had a son, she came back to visit her mother and father with her son and her husband. Muf Lez Kez's son was very good (pretty and handsome) and shone, glittered like a diamond and she was afraid that if people saw him they might die. Because of that, she wrapped up her son very tightly in a piece of cloth.

When she came back to the earth, the witch saw Muf Lez Kez's son and wanted him very much. Because of that the witch made a secret plan to get him. When she had finished making holes in the bottom of bamboo water vessel, she asked Muf Lez Kez to go and fetch some water to drink. Muf Lez Kez did not fill the vessel because she saw the holes in the bottom of the vessel and went

immediately back to the house. But when she got there saw that all the people there had died, because the witch had tried to untie her son to get him and carry him away. Muf Lez Kez's son, when someone had tried to untie him he did a little turd just like the end of a little finger. Muf Lez Kez picked up her son's little turd, pushed a little bit of it into the gum of each of the dead people and they came back to life as they had been before.

Another time the witch cooked a dog. She had a very spiteful intention towards Muf Lez Kez. She put rice on the serving dish, put the dog's head in the middle of the dish, and covered the dog's head with the rice. Then went to call Muf Lez Kez to come and eat. Muf Lez Kez didn't know what was going on and so called her son and husband to go and eat with her. When Thunder picked up (with his fingers) some rice from the dish and was about to eat it, he saw the dog's skull appear from the plate of rice with its teeth grimacing menacingly. He was quite disgusted, he called out in a loud voice and went back up to the sky immediately. When Thunder returned into the sky, Muf Lez Kez grasped his ankle to follow and the three of them went back to the sky together.

Thunder asked his wife Muf Lez Kez to go down to tell the people of the earth, "In the next seven days, thunder and lightning will strike and kill Lej Muj (the huge rock)." Muf Lez Kez came down to tell her mother and father and all her friends, saying, "In the next seven nights and seven days, thunder will strike Lej Muj. When Lej Muj breaks up, it will be dark for seven nights and seven days, and all the animals will be afraid and will all run away from you flee and into the forest. Because of that, prepare rope to tie the animals carefully!" When Muf Lez Kez had finished announcing this, she went back up into the sky. Then, the people twisted rope from hemp and all the people tied their buffaloes up with it.

At that time there was an orphan who had just one (male) pig and he also twisted a rope to tie the pig up with. He twisted one rope but the king took it, he made a second one but the king took that too. It was getting close to the time for the seven nights and seven days of darkness, but the orphan still didn't have a rope to tie up his pig with. Because of that, he twisted a rope out of his hair and went to tie up the pig under the *dwi* (fig) tree. The king and all the people tied up their buffalos, chickens and pigs with hemp rope. The witch had two buffalos and she tied them with rope to her ankles, one to each ankle.

At the completion of the seven nights and seven days, thunder struck Lej Muj and Lej Muj broke up with great noise and the darkness came down for seven nights and seven days. All the buffalos, horses and elephants, pigs and chickens that the people had tied up with hemp rope jumped out of their skins, struggled ferociously, broke the hemp ropes and all went wild and fled off into the forest. There is a hta all about all these events:

Lej muj kaj nwi naz nwi sau, poj cif miz p'naj cif hplauv.
Lej muj kaj nwi naz nwi niz, poj cif hplauv p'naj cif miz.

Lej Muj broke up for seven nights and seven days,
The cattle went wild, the buffalo ran away,
Lej Muj broke up for seven nights and seven days,
The cattle fled and the buffalo went wild.

The witch, because the two buffalo ran off in different directions, was split into two parts and died immediately. The orphan's pig also jumped out of its skin and struggled very ferociously, but because the rope of hair held solidly, it did not break when the pig pulled on it. Because of that, the *dwi* tree that the orphan tied it to bent badly and was almost pulled up by its roots. This is mentioned in the hta, which says:

Hpof qai ce htauv le seif dwi, seif dwi keif tuz muj hsa iz.

The orphan tied his pig to a *dwi* tree, the *dwi* tree is still bent today

People say that in ancient times all the *dwi* trees were straight. Because the orphan tied his pig to a straight tree, the pig struggled and all the *dwi* trees bent and that's why all the *dwi* trees are crooked even today.

Source: Typewritten manuscript and interview with Hpa Tij Mo Lei in Maif Cau Hki Village, November 27 October 2007. The interview was very useful in clarifying some doubts about the manuscript version of the story.

Content: Although all Pgaz K'Nyau agree that this is a very well-known and interesting folktale, nobody seems to be very clear about what (if any) "message" it is intended to convey to the listeners.

5. *Taj Lplez Nauj Deif Kwauj dauv Nauj Taz Ho* **The story of Nauj Deif Kwauj and Nauj Taz Ho**

This story is about Nauj Deif Kwauj and Nauj Taz Ho, who were friends and companions. They went weeding in each other's fields every day. The day that Nauj Deif Kwauj went to weed in Nauj Taz Ho's field, at noon Nauj Taz Ho went to have lunch in her field hut and in the evening went back to the village. However, on the day that Nauj Taz Ho went to weed in Nauj Deif Kwauj's field, at noon Nauj Taz Ho told her to come back and eat, but Nauj Deif Kwauj replied, "Children mustn't eat at noon, and in the evening children mustn't come back to the village." So on that day, Nauj Taz Ho did not eat and weeded until the evening. When it became dark, Nauj Deif Kwauj cried out, "Kwauj! Kwauj! Kwauj!" and jumped into a pile of cut grass and disappeared. Nauj Taz Ho was very scared and got all out of breath running back to the village as fast as she could. When she was running across the middle of the field she trod on a green gourd stem and snapped it.

The gourd rolled down and bumped into a *nau* tree, *a kind of sesame with larger seeds*
The *nau* seeds fell into the wild fowl's eyes,
The wild fowl flew up and perched on the dead and decayed bamboo tree,
The bamboo tree fell and stabbed the cobra in the back,
The cobra slid into the wild pig's nest,
The pig jumped up and crashed nose-first into the banana tree,
The broken banana tree fell and killed the water spirit's son.

Then the water spirit got up and went to get revenge for her son's life from the banana tree, saying, "Hey, banana tree, because you fell and killed my son, you have to pay the price." The banana tree replied, "Go and ask the pig! I was here minding my own business, so why did he come and knock me over? Because he crashed into me I just happened to snap and crash into your son killing him. It's not my fault."

The water spirit continued on and asked the pig, "Pig, because you smashed down the banana tree and the banana tree fell and killed my son, you have to pay the price for his life." The pig replied, "Go and ask the cobra! I was in my nest so why did he come slithering in? He frightened me to death so I jumped up and just happened to crash into the banana tree."

The water spirit went to see the cobra and asked him, "Cobra, you slid into the pig's nest. The pig jumped up and crashed into the banana tree. The banana tree fell and killed my son. You must pay the price for my son's life." The cobra answered the water spirit, "Aunt, go and ask the rotten bamboo! I was minding my own business so why does he fall and stab me in the back? Because my back was hurt I was writhing around on the ground and slid into the pig's nest."

The water spirit then went to see the rotten bamboo, and asked him, "Rotten bamboo, you fell down and stabbed the cobra's back. The cobra slid into the pig's nest. The pig jumped up and smashed into the banana tree and knocked it over. The banana tree fell and killed my son. You must pay the price for my son's life." The rotten bamboo answered him saying, "Go and ask the wild fowl! I was minding my own business, and it's hard for me to stand up by myself, so why did he come and perch on me? Because he perched on me I fell and stabbed the cobra in the back."

The water spirit went and asked the wild fowl, "Wild fowl, you flew up and perched on the rotten bamboo. The bamboo fell down and stabbed the cobra in the back. The cobra slid into the pig's nest. The pig jumped up and crashed into the banana tree, which fell and killed my son. You must pay the price for my son's life." The wild fowl answered saying, "Aunt, go and ask the *nau* tree! I was just feeding as I always do so why did he drop seeds in my eyes? I couldn't see anything and flew up and just happened to perch on the rotten bamboo."

The water spirit went to see the *nau* tree and asked him, “*Nau* tree, you dropped seeds in the wild fowl’s eyes. The wild fowl flew up and perched on the rotten bamboo. The rotten bamboo fell and stabbed the cobra in the back. The cobra slid into the pig’s nest. The pig jumped up and crashed into the banana tree, which fell over and killed my son. You must pay the price for my son’s life.” The *nau* tree answered, “Go and ask the gourd! I was minding my own business so why did he come rolling down and crash into my trunk? Because he rolled into my trunk, my seeds fell into the wild fowl’s eyes.”

The water spirit was getting pretty tired of this, but went up to where the gourd was. When she got there she asked, “Gourd, why did you roll down and crash into the trunk of the *nau* tree? The *nau* tree’s seeds fell into the wild fowl’s eyes. The wild fowl flew up and perched on the rotten bamboo. The rotten bamboo fell and pierced the cobra’s back. The cobra slid into the pig’s nest. The pig jumped up and crashed into the banana tree, which broke and fell on my son, killing him. Now you must pay the price for my son’s life.” The gourd answered, “Go and ask Nauj Taz Ho! I was just here minding my own business in the usual way, so why did she come and snap my stalk. Because she stamped on my stalk and cut it, I just happened to roll down the slope and bump into the *nau* tree’s trunk.”

The water spirit went to see Nauj Taj Ho and asked her, “Nauj Taz Ho, you trod on and broke the stalk of the gourd. The gourd rolled down the hill and bumped into the *nau* tree’s trunk. The *nau* tree’s seeds fell into the wild fowl’s eyes. The wild fowl flew up and perched on the rotten bamboo. The rotten bamboo fell and stabbed the cobra in the back. The cobra slid into the pig’s nest. The pig jumped up and crashed into the banana tree, which broke and fell on my son, killing him. Now you must pay the price for my son’s life.” Nauj Taz Ho told her everything that had happened, saying, “Aunt, Nauj Deif Kwauj and I are good friends and we exchange labour weeding our swiddens every day. When she came to my swidden to weed, at noon I invited her to have lunch with me, and in the evening I invited her to go back to the village with me. But on the day I repaid her labour by going to her swidden to weed, at noon she didn’t invite me to come and have lunch with her, and in the evening she did not invite me to go back to the village. Instead, we were in the swidden till it got dark and then she jumped under a heap of cut grass and cried out “kwauj, kwauj, kwauj!” and disappeared. I was very scared and rushed back to the village. On the way, I don’t know what I trod on. It wasn’t my fault. Go and ask Nauj Deif Kwauj!”

This time the water spirit went to see Nauj Deif Kwauj. She found her sitting weaving “klauj, klauj, klauj” deep inside a cave in a cliff and so could not go inside to see her. Because of that, the water spirit asked a crab to go into the cave. The crab went inside as the water spirit had told it to. When it arrived, it asked Nauj Deif Kwauj, “Aunt, what are you doing?” Nauj Deif Kwauj replied, “I am weaving something.” Then in return she asked the crab, “Grandchild, what have you come here for?” The crab answered, “I have come to visit you.” When she heard that the crab had come to visit her, Nauj Deif Kwauj took off the loom and moved a little closer to the crab, saying, “Is it OK if I just stay here and talk to you.” The crab replied, “Oh, grandmother, it’s so dark down there I can’t see you. Come further up towards the entrance.” The crab continued to persuade Nauj Deif Kwauj to come out further and little by little brought her up closer to the entrance of the cave.

When Nauj Deif Kwauj came close to the entrance, the crab made all kinds of small talk with her, and in the end praised her saying, “Grandmother, your waist is very slender and beautiful.” Nauj Deif Kwauj was very glad and replied to the crab, “Grandchild, I can make my waist even slimmer than this if I want to.” Then Nauj Deif Kwauj inhaled and held her breath, making her waist look very slim. The crabs praised her again saying, “Grandmother, can you make your waist even slimmer than that?” Nauj Deif Kwauj inhaled and held her breath again. The crab asked Nauj Deif Kwauj to hold her breath like this over and over again until her waist became very, very thin. Then

the crab rushed forward and swiftly cut her waist with its pincer, and in an instant Nauj Deif Kwauj died.

Then, the water spirit, the crab, the *taz ho* (barking deer), the wild fowl, the cobra, the pig, the tadpole, the praying mantis and the anteater worked together to cook Nauj Deif Kwauj's flesh into a stew. When they had finished, they ate it all together, except the tadpole and the praying mantis. The tadpole said, "I am small and round, keep some of the soup on a spoon for me to eat later." The praying mantis said, "I'm long and thin, keep a piece of the bone for me to eat later." When they were eating the stew, the tadpole and the praying mantis sat behind everyone else. Because the tadpole could only drink the soup, his stomach is bloated even today. The praying mantis, because he could only eat the bone, has a flat and thin throat even today.

When they had all finished eating and drinking, they asked the cobra to dance. The cobra told his friends that, "If I dance, don't laugh at me!" Then the cobra got up and danced. The anteater watched the cobra dance and could not prevent himself from bursting out laughing, "Hee, hee!" At that instant all his teeth fell out. The cobra said to the anteater, "I told you not to laugh!" Then the cobra put the anteater's teeth back in his mouth again. The cobra danced again, but because the anteater could not stop himself from laughing, when he laughed again all his teeth fell out once again. The cobra put them back again and told him again not to laugh. Then the cobra danced for a third time. The anteater laughed again and his teeth all fell out as before. This time the cobra ignored the anteater and did not put his teeth back in his mouth again. He slid away and disappeared. Because of this the anteater does not have any teeth even up until today.

Source: Typewritten manuscript

Content: Breaking the customs to do with labour exchange leads to big problems for Nauj Deif Kwauj. In the end she is killed and eaten as a curry stew, even her friend Nauj Taz Ho attending the feast in the form of her spirit, the *taz ho* (barking deer) itself.

6. *Taj Leplez Nauj Muf Ei dauv Soo Lau Lei* **The Story of *Nauj Muf Ei* and *Soo Lau Lei***

A horned crocodile (a small crocodile) lived by itself and laid many eggs. However, one of them was different from the others, and because of that the crocodile gave it to a python to keep it warm. The python took it and looked after it and when the egg hatched, a human child was born from it. Seeing that it was a human child, the python went to give it back to the humans. The people accepted the child, a girl, fed her and called her “Nauj Muf Ei”.

Nauj Muf Ei grew until she was a young adult (about 15 years old), when she became friends with a young man whose name was “Soo Lau Lei”. When the day came the two of them were married.

Not long after the wedding was over, Soo Lau Lei went into the forest and met the very same python who had brooded and hatched Nauj Muf Ei. The python asked Soo Lau Lei for the shirt he was wearing, but Soo Lau Lei told it that he could not give the shirt to the python because it was the wedding shirt that Nauj Muf Ei had woven for him. Because of this the python became very angry. When Soo Lau Lei went to sleep that night he dreamt that the python wound itself around his pig.

The next day was the day when Soo Lau Lei had to go off trading to a distant area. Because his dream had not been a good one, before he set off he cut for his wife Nauj Muf Ei a bamboo eating container (a bamboo trough) of seven sections (which is very long because we usually only cut one with two or three sections) for the pigs. However, one section of the bamboo was red (this sometimes happens). Then he said to her, since you will be in the village after I have gone, don't let the pigs run free for seven days and seven nights (a long time). Having said that, he set off on his trading journey.

Soolaulei miz mauf taj kau, Nauj muf ei su t'plaj htauv.
Soolaulei miz mauf taj sei, su t'plaj htauv Nauj muf ei.
Bef htauv klau hsiyaij k'hpauv, maz laux hpau av taj klau klau.
Bef htauv klau hsiyaij k'da, maz laux hpau av taj kla kla.

Soo Lau Lei had a bad dream, Nauj Muf Ei mustn't let the pig run free
Soo Lau Lei likes to have many dreams, don't let the pig run free, Nauj Muf Ei
Cut 15 sections of bamboo pig trough, he repeatedly told her (don't let the pig run free)
Cut a bamboo pig trough of 15 sections, he kept on telling her (don't let the pig run free)

Soo Lau Lei arrived at the village and began to hammer silver earrings and silver headbands to trade. Meanwhile, Nauj Muf Ei followed the instructions of her husband Soo Lau Lei very well, and kept the pig tied up in the pen every day. She did this for six days, but on the seventh day she forgot (herself) and let the pig roam free. In the evening, when it was time to call the pig back to tie it up again she tried to call the pig back by (calling and) banging on the bamboo pig trough, but it did not come back. Not until she had banged on and destroyed all seven sections of the bamboo container would the pig come back. However the pig came back dragging the huge python wrapped around it like a large mat and making a lot of noise audible from the other side of the valley as it pushed through cane bushes and bamboo grass bushes with a great deal of swoosh, swoosh, shash, shash...

Plaj htauv t'geiz naij plaj htauv, htauv hai keiz neij dauv k'lau.
T'poj sai le wax iv iv, htauv hpa hai keiz k'lau bi.

You shouldn't have freed the pig, but you did, and the pig came back with a python,
Making a noise with the cane bush on the other side of the valley,
The pig returned with a python wrapped round it.

Nauj Muf Ei called the people of the village to come and help her. Many villagers came and hit and stabbed the python, but though they hit and stabbed, they could not stab or cut into the flesh of the python and it was nicely entwined around the pig without feeling anything at all. Seeing as how the people were not getting anywhere with it, Nauj Muf Ei herself picked up a pig stick and started to beat the python with the stick. At that moment, the python loosened itself off the pig, wound itself around Nauj Muf Ei and dragged her away into its hole.

*Htauv nauf gaux do guj maiv maiv, guj lauz hsgaf bi nauj raiv raiv.
Htauv nauf gaux do guj mauv mauv, guj lauz hsgaf bi nauj rauv rauv.
Hsaiv toj htauv le luj cauj bo, guj lauz hsgaf bi htauf nauj loz.
Hsaiv toj htauv le seif muf dei, guj lauz hsgaf bi Nauj muf ei.*

Lightly smack the pig with a stick, tap, tap,
The snake unwinds, and winds completely around the girl,
Smack lightly the pig with a stick, pat, pat,
The snake unwinds and winds snugly all around the girl,
Hit the pig with a thick bamboo pole (used to dry and stretch cotton),
The python winds up around the girl's body,
Hit the pig with a piece (branch) of firewood,
The python winds up around Nauj Muf Ei.

The villagers couldn't help her at all and so they said to each other that they should send someone to call her husband Soo Lau Lei to come back. But if they were to send a human they were afraid he could not catch up with Soo Lau Lei so they decided to send a dove.

*Taj gux taj gaz laiz t'hklei, me htof lwij laiz auf gaux keiz.
Taj gux taj gaz laiz t'nyau, me htof lwij laiz gaux keiz auz.
Soolaulei laiz hpaux naj div, le hki av ma k'lau bi.
Soolaulei laiz hpaux hkof klauz, le hki av ma k'lau kwauz.*

No other thing could go fast enough, so they sent a dove to call him back
No other thing could go so easily, so they sent a dove to get him back
Soo Lau Lei went to hammer earrings, later his wife was entwined by a python
Soo Lau Lei went to hammer headbands, later his wife was entangled with a python.

When the dove arrived at the village where Soo Lau Lei was staying, he flew down onto the roof and cooed like this:

*S'ku kru ku,
Soolaulei hai keiz hai keiz, k'lau bi si Nauj muf ei.
Soolaulei keiz lauz keiz lauz, Nauj muf ei k'lau bi auz.*

Coo, coo, coo
Soo Lau Lai, come back, come back, the python is squeezing Nauj Muf Ei to death
Soo Lau Lei, come back down, come back down, Nauj Muf Ei, a python has entwined her.

Just at that time the people were having a wedding feast, people playing the drums and cymbals and *cwav* (small hand cymbals), and singing *hta*, and making a lot of festive noise. Some people (outside the house) heard the dove cooing extraordinary things very loudly, and so they said to each other, "Hey, quiet, quiet! Let's listen to see what the dove is cooing. It's cooing very loudly and strangely." So all the people present listened in silence together. Then the dove cooed its message

again as before. Thus they knew that the dove had come to call Soo Lau Lei back and that a python had entwined itself around his wife. They told to Soo Lau Lei (who had not heard the dove because of the noise in the house) what the dove had cooed and Soo Lau Lei then set off back to the village immediately. When he arrived, Soo Lau Lei was very upset and angry that his wife Nauj Muf Ei had not followed his instructions. So he said:

Nauj muf ei av naj t'loz, si le htauv hpix maij av go. (Grasp tail)
Nauj muf ei av naj t'bga, si le htauv hpix maij av twav.

Nauj Muf Ei was disobedient, and so she died because she could not discipline the pig
Nauj Muf Ei is not very bright, and so she died for the sake of disciplining the pig

The he picked up some digging sticks (ten in each basket of seven baskets) and went to dig his wife Nauj Muf Ei back out of the python's hole. When he had dug with seven digging sticks he looked down to see his wife Nauj Muf Ei surrounded (like a spiral) by the python in the hole, and she was working at a spinning wheel of silver and gold spinning round and round.

Hkoof keiz muf ei hkoof tootoo, bau hkof hsoo nwi beif kaj htoox.
Bau hkof hsoo nwi beif kaj htoox, kaj le muf ei av gauj pooz.
Muf ei of le guj klauz pooz, lej k'haf cei k'haf htoo.
Muf ei of le guj klauz sav, lej k'haf htoo k'haf htav.

Dig Muf Ei out, dig, dig (sound of digging), seven digging sticks broken
Seven digging sticks broken, broken because of Muf Ei
Muf Ei surrounded by the python, working at a spinning wheel of silver and gold
Muf Ei trapped in the coils of the python, working at a spinning wheel of gold and steel

Soo Lau Lei dug again further until all the digging sticks in the seven baskets were broken and useless, but he could not dig her out. Therefore he said:

Bau hkof hsoo nwi kraf nwi de, hkoof keiz Muf ei t'nej lez.
All the digging sticks from seven baskets could not dig Muf Ei out again.

For her part, Nauj Muf Ei replied to her husband Soo Lau Lei:

Hkoof Mufei caivhkwaiv caivhkwaiv, bau t'kaj ke kaj nej wai.
Hkoof Mufei cauvhkwauv cauvhkwauv, bau t'kaj ke kaj nej auz.

You dug Muf Ei halfheartedly, the digging sticks did not break but you broke them (on purpose)
You dug Muf Ei weakly, the digging sticks did not break but you broke them yourself

The python, for its part said to Soo Lau Lei, "If you will give me the blood of your throat, I will release your wife Soo Lau Lei." Then Soo Lau Lei killed a dog and a pig and poured down their blood, but the python smelled it and knew what it was and so would not let Nauj Muf Ei free. Soo Lau Lei then killed a cow and a water buffalo and poured down the blood to it again, but as before the python smelled it and would not let Nauj Muf Ei go again. This time Soo Lau Lei cut off one of his fingers and let the blood flow down. The python knew what he had done and said to Soo Lau Lei, "If it is just your finger only and not the blood of your neck I will not let your wife go. As there was no other way, no other thing he could do, in the end Soo Lau Lei cut his throat himself and died. When the python saw that Soo Lau Lei was dead, he released Nauj Muf Ei in that same instant.

Soolaulei dauf lauz cune, taj sav k'nyauz t'of lez.
Soolaulei dauf lauz cunya, taj sav k'nauz t'of mav.

Soo Lau Lei cut off his finger, such a pity he is no more
Soo Lau Lei cut off his hand, such a shame he is no more

Nauj Muf Ei came back up to the ground and killed her pig. She cut out the fat of the pig and cooked it until it became oil enough to fill 30 bamboo tubes. She stopped the tops (with leaves, etc.) quite loosely. When she had finished that she poured water in another 30 bamboo tubes, but stopped the tops very tightly. When the people went to cremate her husband Soo Lau Lei, she asked some people to carry together the 30 bamboo tubes of oil and the 30 bamboo tubes of water as well. When the people cremated her husband Soo Lau Lei, the fire burst up, and Nauj Muf Ei lied to the villagers, "Look at the big hawk flying in the sky!" The villagers all suddenly turned and looked up together. At that moment, Nauj Muf Ei jumped into the fire. All the villagers hurriedly picked up the bamboo tubes to pour the water on the fire to help her. Because the bamboo tubes which were tightly stopped could not be opened easily, they picked up only those which were stopped loosely. Because of that, the people made the fire burn even more strongly. At that time the python also came over and wanted to help Nauj Muf Ei. It waved its tail at the fire, but it could not help her at all. Because of that, Nauj Muf Ei died in the fire with her husband Soo Lau Lei. As for the python, because its tail caught fire, it became short and blunt (not sharp) and red in colour at the end, as if the fire had burned it, as it is even up to this day.

Source: Typewritten manuscript

Content: Another Pgaz K'Nyau folktale about which the intended "message" is not clear.

7. *Taj Lplez Nauj Htof K'Maiz dauv Cau Seif Laf Geiz* **The story of *Nauj Htof K'Maiz* and *Cau Seif Laf Geiz***

1. Once there were two sisters who loved each other very much. Soon after they were married they realized that they were both pregnant. When the time for birth came, the two sisters gave birth to their children on the same day. The elder sister gave birth to a boy and he was named Cau Seif Laf Geiz. The younger sister gave birth to a girl, who was named Nauj Htof K'Maiz.

Not long after the children were born, the elder sister left the fireside at the hearth and fell seriously ill until she was about to die. (The Pgaz K'Nyau believe that a new mother must stay near the fire for one month and not touch anything cold, like water.) Before she died, she ordered her younger sister to become the guardian of her son (and look after her nephew in her place), saying, "Little sister, if I die, become the guardian of your nephew. Look after him like he was your own son and do not treat him badly! But (on the other hand) you must love him well, let him be with your daughter always. Don't make them go to different places, don't let them be separated from each other, and don't let them be separated in their work at anytime!" Her younger sister promised to do as she had asked and then the older sister passed away in front of her younger sister.

After the elder sister had died, the younger sister became the guardian of (and looked after) her elder sister's son and brought him live with her and drink her mother's milk together with her daughter Nauj Htof K'Maiz. The two cousins grew up together and loved each other very much. The two of them continued to grow up together, until she became a young woman and he a young man, cultivating the field together, weeding and making their living by farming, coming together, going together, working together, as if bound together and never being apart at any time. Cau Seif Laf Geiz's friends tried to get him to exchange labour with them, but he would not listen to them. Instead, he would go and return with his cousin Nauj Htof K'Maiz every single day.

2. When Cau Seif Laf Geiz was fully grown, his uncle and aunt were happy with him and his work every day. Because he did not associate with his friends, none of them exchanged labour with him. Nauj Htof K'Maiz also, when she became an adult, was a skillful worker. Her mother and father were happy with her and relied on her every day. Her friends often invited her to exchange labour with them, but she would not go with (listen to) her friends, and so (on the other hand) went to work with her cousin Cau Seif Laf Geiz. Her friends invited her to exchange labour with them like this every day, saying all kinds of bad things about her. This made her feel very bad and so one day she went to exchange labour with them. When this happened, her cousin Cau Seif Laf Geiz went to work in the field all alone. Cau Seif Laf Geiz reached the field and feeling very lazy, did no work and simply (went into a deep sleep) lay down motionless (because he is feeling bad and thinking) in the field hut.

At that time, his aunt and uncle back in the village were also being very lazy. At sunrise a woodpecker was singing around/near the village, saying, "Tei lei lei, tei lei lei". Because of this, his aunt asked her husband, "Father of Htof K'Maiz, are you going to the field for a moment to see the two cousins? I feel so lazy after getting up this morning, and a woodpecker has come to sing in the neighbourhood of the village, so what is going on?" Her husband said to her, "Mother of Htof K'Maiz, I'm also feeling very lazy after getting up this morning. What is going on?" Having spoken like this, her husband shouldered his shoulder bag and went off to the field after his daughter and nephew.

When he got to the field, he could not see anyone in the field (early in the morning there should be people weeding in the field), and could not hear anything either. Because of that, he felt as if perhaps something bad might have happened. He searched here and there, but could not find

anyone. In the end, he went to look in the field hut and saw his nephew Cau Seif Laf Geiz in there sleeping (lying) alone in the field hut, a great deal of blood coming from his nose. His breathing was very shallow and he could no longer move. The uncle asked his nephew what had happened and his nephew told him everything about himself and his daughter Htof K'Maiz.

He asked his nephew, "Have you eaten this morning?" His nephew replied, "No, I haven't eaten yet." Because of that he (the uncle) immediately cooked some rice. As soon as he placed the rice pot on the fire, a wood pigeon came to sing beside the field hut, singing, "T'ku kru ku, t'ku kru ku." Then the uncle asked his nephew, "Would you like to eat the meat of the wood pigeon?" Cau Seif Laf Geiz agreed with his uncle, who shot the wood pigeon with an arrow from his crossbow. His uncle carried the pigeon back to the hut and roasted it. When the rice and the pigeon were properly cooked, the uncle took the rice from the pot and placed it on a leaf and he (the nephew) began to eat, but after eating just a few mouthfuls he said to his uncle, that he had had enough and could not eat anymore. Because of that, his uncle carried him back to the village on his back. When they arrived back at the village, his aunt and uncle looked for some medicines of many kinds, but he did not recover his health.

When Nauj Htof K'Maiz, for her part, went off to work with her friends, at first she was very happy. However, as time went on she began to feel more and more lazy. She began to miss her cousin Cau Seif Laf Geiz all the more as time went on. Her friends knew that she was unhappy and so they tried to say various things to cheer her up, but she did not get any happier. She worked listlessly/reluctantly up until noon and then told her friends that she did not feel very happy (any more) and then went back to the village.

When Nauj Htof K'Maiz returned to the house and saw that her cousin Cau Seif Laf Geiz was seriously ill, her heart sank. She lay down beside her cousin and could not say anything. Cau Seif Laf Geiz said to her, "Cousin, I'm so ill I can no longer do anything," and lying back down very gently, he died. Nauj Htof K'Maiz cried for her cousin and cried her heart out beside the dead body of her cousin very broken-hearted. Her friends came and tried to say various things to cheer her up, but she did not get any happier. Her mother and father saw what was happening both to their nephew and to their daughter and were very unhappy, but tried to put on a brave face.

3. After that, Nauj Htof K'Maiz's mother told her husband to do for her the *k'lauv p'caux* ritual (*in which the spirits are called to make a request for some task to be done and a promise is made to the spirits that if the request is granted the promise will be kept and the spirits thanked later in another ritual, the complete sequence of the two rituals sometimes being called P'cauj taj- lujkeiz taj*) so that she could follow her nephew to the land of the dead and bring him back. When her husband had prepared the *k'lauv p'caux* she begged the Supreme Spirit with offerings and entreated his power from the bottom of her heart. When she had done that she instructed her husband saying, "Father of Htof K'Maiz, I'm going to bring back our nephew back from the land of the dead. Stand guard over me very carefully! Don't let the candle on the *taj k'lauv p'caux* ritual tray (*a small square tray made with a banana trunk, into which is put many things, such as a little rice, tobacco, chicken, betel, betel leaves and so on, and a candle*) go out at all! When three days have passed, if I am not able to return, you will have to cremate my body." When she had finished instructing her husband in this way, she lay down beside her nephew and her breathing became shorter and shorter, weaker and weaker. In a short while she had stopped breathing completely.

Her husband carried out his instructions as his wife had asked him to. He stood guard over the *taj k'lauv p'caux* very carefully. When the candle was coming close to the end and about to go out, he lit up a new one again and again. When Nauj Htof K'Maiz's mother reached the land of the dead, she had to ask permission of the "Pluz Dof* – the Head of the Dead" before she could enter the land of the dead. When she had received permission from the Head of the Dead, she went to the "Cgez

Dof – the Head Spirit” to ask permission from the Head Spirit. When the Head Spirit had given her permission, she went to the “*Hkoof Seif Dof* – the Head of the Burial Tree” to get permission. When she had received permission from the Head of the Burial Tree, she went to the “*Qav Mau Dof* – the Head of the *Qav Mau*” to ask for permission, and when she had received permission from the Head of the *Qav Mau*, she went to the place of the “*S’mi-i*” to ask for permission to be allowed to go on ahead. When the *S’mi-i* had allowed her to go on ahead, she went to the place of the “*S’mipruj*”. When she got to the place of the *S’mipruj*, she asked permission to see her elder sister, the mother of Cau Seif Laf Geiz who had died. The *S’mipruj* asked her all about what had happened and so she told him everything about her nephew Cau Seif Laf Geiz and her daughter Nauj Htof K’Maiz from beginning to end. When the *S’mipruj* had heard everything he felt great pity and gave her permission to see her elder sister.

**Pluz Dof, Cgez Dof, Hkoof Seif Dof, Qav Mau Dof, S’mi-I, S’mipruj* – these are groups, or ‘villages’, of “*pluz*” (the dead), which act as bureaucrats or bureaucratic organizations in “*pluz kauj*” the land of the dead.

When the two sisters saw each other, the younger sister told her elder sister all about her nephew and her daughter and that (she wanted to) recover her nephew and have him come back to be with her daughter Nauj Htof K’Maiz. Then the elder sister said, “I told you not have the two cousins separated from each other or work apart from each other. Because you allowed them to be separated and to work apart from each other, I called him back to be with me.” When she heard her elder sister say this, the younger sister implored her elder sister, saying, “Myself, I never did allow the two of them to be separated or to go off to work apart from each other at all. But the one time, because I did not see them go, they made a mistake in not going together. From now on I’ll look carefully at where the two of them go and I will never again let (it happen again) them do as they have done this time.” Because she made a firm promise and begged her elder sister sincerely, her elder sister had pity on her and gave her back her nephew Cau Seif Laf Geiz. Then Nauj Htof K’Maiz’s mother took her nephew Cau Seif Laf Geiz back to the world of the living again. When three days had passed the aunt and nephew began to breathe again ever so slightly, and in a short while the two of them came back to life again.

4. At that time, Nauj Htof K’Maiz and her father, who were standing guard, were very happy. Nauj Htof K’Maiz asked her cousin Cau Seif Laf Geiz if he wanted anything to eat. Cau Seif Laf Geiz simply told her what wanted to eat, and Nauj Htof K’Maiz made everything he asked for and gave it to him to eat. Not long after, Cau Seif Laf Geiz became quite well and healthy as he had always been in the past. When he was well again, Cau Seif Laf Geiz went to the fields and the fallows as he had done before. As they had not been to the fields and fallows for quite a long time, the weeds were growing wildly all over the place and they had great difficulty with the weeding. Then Nauj Htof K’Maiz’s mother said to her daughter, “Daughter, this time I promised your aunt, Cau Seif Laf Geiz’s mother, that I would never again let the two of you be separated or work apart from one another. Because of this, you must be extremely careful never to do what you did before.” Nauj Htof K’Maiz did as her mother had told her and from that time on she never again went anywhere without her cousin. She always talked in a pleasant way with her cousin, so that her cousin would feel happy and be in good humour always. Her (male and female) friends went to be with them, to sing songs and to play the kwaiz cheerfully and boisterously, and they invited her to go with them, but she did not listen to them anymore. Instead she went to work with her cousin every day. The two cousins went to work together day in day out, week in week out until at the end of the year the field was covered with yellow and red flowers.

5. When the work in the field was finished at the end of the year, in the season of the yellow and red flowers, Nauj Htof K’Maiz’s mother and father told all the villagers that their daughter Nauj Htof

K'Maix would be married with Cau Seif Laf Geiz. They fixed a firm date for the ceremony and then brewed rice wine, cooked rice and prepared everything for the wedding. When the appointed day came, they joined their daughter and their nephew together in marriage. The wedding guests came and enjoyed a great feast, singing songs of joy and happiness amidst a lot of noise. After the day when Nauj Htof K'Maiz and Cau Seif Laf Geiz were married, the two of them lived together in their love for one another, in peace and understanding and nothing got in the way between them. When the mother and father died, the two of them prepared to bury their bodies very carefully and reverently. The two of them received all of the inheritance of their mothers and fathers. Having found happiness, they had many grandchildren and lived to be a ripe old age.

Source: Typewritten manuscript

Content: The close ties between children who are close relatives. More detailed explanations of the bureaucratic groups in the land of the dead would be nice, but I have been unable to find anyone who can help me with this.

8: *Taj Leplez Nauj Dof Hkof Ba* **The story of *Nauj Dof Hkof Ba*, the only daughter**

Once there was a wife and a husband who had just one daughter. They called her Nauj Dof Hkof Ba, the only daughter. When Nauj Dof Hkof Ba was growing up onto a young lady, her mother passed away. Her father was not happy living without a wife, so he remarried. His wife was called Muf Kauz Lij, the witch. At first Muf Kauz Lij loved Nauj Dof Hkof Ba, but later, when Muf Kauz Lij had children of her own, she began to hate her, bullying her, beating her and accusing her to her father of being lazy and shiftless as well as being gluttonous, extravagant with food by even stealing food from her younger half-siblings.

Not being satisfied with this, Muf Kauz Lij asked her husband to take his own daughter away and kill her. Her father did not dare contradict Muf Kauz Lij, because he was very much afraid of her. Muf Kauz Lij nagged her husband like this every day until he just could not stand the pestering any further and made up his mind to take the flesh of his own body, Nauj Dof Hkof Ba, away and kill her.

The next morning, the girl's father shouldered his shoulder bag and a spear and took her into a deep forest. She knew very well that she had to be murdered because of the vicious plan of Muf Kauz Lij. She was not afraid, and thought only that it was better to die than to endure the bullying and spitefulness of her step-mother.

Walking deep into the forest, they came to a towering cliff. Her father pounded wedges into the fissures in the rock and led her up to the top of the cliff. At the top of the cliff there was a space large enough to sit and walk around. Before her father killed her, she smoked a pipe, chewed betel nut and betel leaves, and spat out the betel juice, staining the whole area red. Then she asked her father to kill her. Her father grasped the spear and plunged it into her till she died up on top of the cliff.

The angels who were watching from above saw everything that took place and were very sorry for Nauj Dof Hkof Ba. They went together to where Nauj Dof Hkof Ba lay and struck her body seven times with their long and powerful wands (like thin sticks about 1 m long) that they carried. Nauj Dof Hkof Ba returned to life again. Then the angels took her back to live with them.

Before she returned with the angels, Nauj Dof Hkof Ba called an orphan chick (a baby chicken) to come to her. She instructed the chick saying, "If my father comes back here to look for me, please bring him to see me. Bring him along the path which is straight and clear. But if my father's wife comes to visit me, bring her along the path that is twisted and overgrown!" The orphan chick indicated that it would carry out all the instructions just as she wished it to do. Then Nauj Dof Hkof Ba left the orphan chick and went off with the angels, where she lived very happily.

After many days had passed, Nauj Dof Hkof Ba's father began to miss Nauj Dof Hkof Ba so much that he was no longer able to control his emotions. He went to the cliff where his daughter had died just in the possibility that he might see some sign of her former existence. When he arrived there he met the orphan chick, who told him everything that Nauj Dof Hkof Ba had instructed it to do. The chick then took him along the straight and clear road to visit his daughter. When they arrived and met Nauj Dof Hkof Ba, the orphan chick then returned to stand guard again at the cliff.

Nauj Dof Hkof Ba asked her father, "Father, what kind of stairway (a short ladder-like set of stairs as on a Pgaz K'Nyau house) do you wish me to put down for you to come up, a stairway of silver or of gold?" Her father replied, "My child, I only wish there were a stairway. Whether it be of silver, or gold, or of bamboo I would leave completely up to you." Nauj Dof Hkof Ba put down a stairway

of gold and silver and her father climbed up to her house. She welcomed her father well with food and a place to sleep. When it was time for her father to return she prepared some fine food to take with him and beautiful clothes for him to wear on his return journey.

When he arrived home, Nauj Dof Hkof Ba's father told his wife Muf Kauz Lij all about his visit with his daughter. When Muf Kauz Lij heard about the visit she told her husband that she was also going to visit Nauj Dof Hkof Ba's house and prepared her things to go off to the area of the cliff where Nauj Dof Hkof Ba had died. When she arrived there she met the orphan chick just as her husband had told her. The orphan chick took her along the winding and crooked path, which was very overgrown, and she followed on behind, complaining as she went. "A good clear path as straight as an arrow? Why are you taking me along this winding and overgrown path like this? Do you want to die, orphan chick?" Muf Kauz Lij raised her voice threateningly and struck the orphan chick with a switch until it lost consciousness. When she saw that the orphan chick had lost consciousness and could no longer lead her, she blew into its backside until it revived and led her further along the path. She continued to flog the orphan chick and revive it again by blowing into its backside many times during the journey. At last they arrived at the angels' house where Nauj Dof Hkof Ba was staying.

Nauj Dof Hkof Ba asked her step-mother, "Step-mother, what kind of stairway do you wish me to put down for you to come up, a stairway of silver or of gold?" Muf Kauz Lij replied haughtily, "Why do you ask? Of course a stairway of silver and gold! Hurry up! I'm very tired from my journey!"

Nauj Dof Hkof Ba put down for her a stairway of rotten bamboo, each section of the bamboo being filled with wasps and hornets. When Muf Kauz Lij stepped on a rung it snapped and she tumbled down to the ground in great pain. Not only that, but the wasps and hornets flew out stinging her on the face and flesh till she was swollen all over. Then Nauj Dof Hkof Ba put down a stairway of firm bamboo and Muf Kauz Lij was finally able to climb up to the house.

Nauj Dof Hkof Ba welcomed Muf Kauz Lij in a cold and unfriendly manner. She gave her rice of which some was cooked well and some was hard and not cooked at all, and gave her rotten leftovers to eat. When it was time to sleep she spread for her the dirty mat from the bottom of a chicken coop, so that fleas and bedbugs bit her and she was unable to sleep the whole night through. When it was time for Muf Kauz Lij to return home, Nauj Dof Hkof Ba prepared rice wrapped in leaves and a water gourd filled with wasps and hornets. She also prepared two water buffalo for her to take back with her.

When eating lunch on the journey Muf Kauz Lij tied the buffalos to her ankles, one on each ankle, because she feared that they would get away while she was having lunch. Having finished her lunch, she opened the water gourd to have a drink and suddenly out swarmed the wasps and hornets, chasing and stinging her and the buffalos. Being in pain from the stinging, the buffalos rushed off in different directions, pulling Muf Kauz Lij apart into two pieces and killing her.

When Nauj Dof Hkof Ba heard of Muf Kauz Lij's death, she asked the angels if she could go back to visit her father. The angels gave permission because they knew that there was no longer anyone who would do harm to Nauj Dof Hkof Ba. However, when she arrived at home she saw that her father had committed suicide by hanging himself because of his shame in having killed his own daughter and because he knew that she was still alive. Nauj Dof Hkof Ba looked at the corpse with great sorrow. Feeling that she no longer wanted to be in the world of the living anymore, she then decided to hang herself and follow her father into death.

Source: Typewritten manuscript and Thai pamphlet

Content: This story concerns the impact on a family, especially the children, of having more than one husband or wife, even when this is a remarriage after the death of a spouse.

9. *Taj Leplez Nauj Seif Laf Gauz dauv Cau Seif Laf Bau* **The story of Miss Red Leaf and Master Yellow Leaf**

There were two brothers who loved each other very much. When they became fully grown adults, they were both married at the same time. The elder brother had a son, who was given the name Cau Seif Laf Bau. The younger brother had a daughter, who was given the name Nauj Seif Laf Gauz.

Not long after Cau Seif Laf Bau was born both his mother and father died. Because of that he came to live with his aunt and uncle, the mother and father of Nauj Seif Laf Gauz. Nauj Seif Laf Gauz and Cau Seif Laf Bau grew up together and loved each other very much. They grew up together and studied handicraft and weaving together all the time. Nauj Seif Laf Gauz practiced weaving clothes with flax, and Cau Seif Laf Bau practiced braiding umbrella-hats and shoulder-baskets. The two of them played together calling each other “cousin, cousin”. If they ate a frog they would eat it together and if they ate a fish they would eat it together. The two of them were very frank and honest with each other right from the time they were born.

When the two children grew up to be adults, they were very suited to each other. But Nauj Seif Laf Gauz’s mother and father were not happy about their nephew Cau Seif Laf Bau and tried to chase him out of the house. They said that Cau Seif Laf Bau was lazy. One day Cau Seif Laf Bau set a trap and caught a big male wild boar to eat. His aunt and uncle ate the boar even though they were still not very happy with him and scolded him very much. A short while later he caught a deer. His aunt and uncle ate it and scolded him again saying that he was lazy, as they had done before. At that time, his uncle (Nauj Seif Laf Bau’s father) asked his wife, “Mother of my daughter, this nephew is simply a good-for-nothing! Wouldn’t it be better if we drove him out of our house?” His wife agreed with him, and they drove Cau Seif Laf Bau out. Before leaving, Cau Seif Laf Bau sang out a *hta* (traditional Pgaz K’Nyau song-poem), saying, “Aunt, uncle, why are you making me go away? Didn’t you eat the meat of the wild boar and didn’t you eat the meat of the deer. Aunt, uncle!” Having sung his *hta*, he left.

After Cau Seif Laf Bau left, Nauj Seif Laf Gauz was not happy. Because she missed her cousin so much, she could not sleep, could not eat, and she became very thin because she felt so unhappy. One day, Nauj Seif Laf Gauz went off to weed the swidden field, and because she missed her cousin Cau Seif Laf Bau so much, hanged herself in the field hut. After Nauj Seif Laf Gauz had hanged herself in the field hut, her mother and father could not eat because nothing they did brought any results (as their rice would not grow and their livestock would not fatten). Every morning and every evening, the two of them could only go around asking others for food.

One day a year later, Cau Seif Laf Bau, was far away and thinking about Nauj Seif Laf Gauz. He decided to return to the village. When he arrived there he asked all the villagers where his cousin was and they told him that his cousin Nauj Seif Laf Gauz had hanged herself. Having heard this, Cau Seif Laf Bau went immediately to the field where his cousin had hanged herself. He started to look for where the field was so he could cultivate it, and then cleared it, burned it, cleared up the burnt wood, sowed the rice in it (by making holes with a pole), and weeded it every single day. One day, Cau Seif Laf Bau saw his cousin Nauj Seif Laf Gauz appear right in front of him. Because of this Cau Seif Laf Bau went and questioned the *wi* (the village shaman), who told him, “If you wish to get your cousin back, look for a black chicken to eat, get some of Nauj Seif Laf Gauz’s old clothes and belongings and go and leave them in the field hut. Then hide and watch it all secretly. When your cousin comes back, go and hit her on the head with a sickle, grab the black chicken and cut its neck, and then wash your cousin’s face with the blood of the black chicken using your hand in the opposite direction (wiping up instead of down)! If you do this, she will no longer be able to return to the land of the dead, and you will get her back.”

Doing as he had been told, Cau Seif Laf Bau looked for a black chicken, a sickle, and grabbed his cousin's clothes and blankets, headdresses, earrings, headrings and necklaces, put them in the field hut, and then hid himself to watch secretly what happened. In a short while, Nauj Seif Laf Gauz appeared and dressed herself in the things that her cousin had put there. Cau Seif Laf Bau quickly approached her and hit her on the head with the sickle, cut the neck of the black chicken and made the blood come out and immediately washed his cousin's face with the blood. His cousin Nauj Seif Laf Gauz returned to being a person as before. The two of them looked at each other with joy and happiness and later they got married.

When they got married and had a child, the child was not very strong. Because of that Cau Seif Laf Bau went to ask the shaman about it and the shaman told him that the child should go to its grandparents, the mother and father of Nauj Seif Laf Gauz and have them perform a "*maz qaiz auf guz av taj*" (a special ceremony to cure sickness) and then the child would regain its health. Cau Seif Laf Bau got up and went to look for his two in-laws. But when he saw them, he saw that they lived in a tiny hut outside the village and were extremely poor, had no clothes to wear, nothing to eat or drink, and endured great suffering from the elements. Cau Seif Laf Bau took his in-laws to his house and asked them to perform a "*maz qaiz auf guz av taj*" ceremony for their grandchild. When the grandmother and grandfather had finished the ceremony, the child of Nauj Seif Laf Gauz and Cau Seif Laf Bau became well again. Also, when this was finished they were happy and peaceful again, and were able to eat and be happy all together as they were before.

Source: Typewritten manuscript

Content: Close relations between cousins. Pgaz society does not recognize marriage between first or second cousins. "Cousins" in this story (and in similar stories) may refer to different but related peoples, such as the Pgoj (Pwo Karen, Ploung), or the Bgai (Bwe Karen, Karenni – the "Red Karen")

10. *Taj Leplez k'lau kauf kei dauv htof bgef*

The story of the Mountain Forest Partridge and the Deciduous Forest Partridge

A Pgaz K'Nyau Folktale and its Interpretation: The Mountain Forest Partridge and the Deciduous Forest Partridge – the deceitful acquisition of highland community forest land by the state.

by Buhpau (Thaworn Kampolgul)

Folktale: The k'lau kauf kei and the htof bgef

It is said that there once was a bird called the “*htof bgef*” (mountain forest partridge), which lived in the deciduous forest, the sparse forest in the flat areas in the foothills where the weather is hot and humid whose trees shed their leaves each year. Another bird, the “*k'lau kauf kei*” (deciduous forest partridge)*, lived in the virgin evergreen forest of the big trees, where the sources of the streams are, high in the mountains, where it is refreshingly cool.

* *These two birds are quite similar in appearance and size.*

One day the *htof bgef* went up the mountain to visit the *k'lau kauf kei* because he lived in the areas at the foothills of the mountain where the weather is very hot and humid. By deceitfully saying that down below there is plenty of food to eat and there is a very wide river and great wide areas of flat land the *k'lau kauf kei* was tricked into believing that it would be far better to live in the lower areas and allowed the *htof bgef* to change places by exchanging a vow with the *htof bgef*. Since that time the two birds have changed places with each other, the *htof bgef* going to live in the virgin evergreen forest of the big trees and the *k'lau kauf kei* going down to live in the deciduous forest in the foothills.

However, when the *k'lau kauf kei* went down to the deciduous forest in the foothills, it turned out that he felt very hot and humid. He didn't know where to go at all because everywhere he went the weather was very hot, not at all like in the virgin evergreen forest, which is always cool, refreshing and comfortable. But now there was nothing he could do about it except to be very sorry for what had happened, because having agreed to change places with the *htof bgef*, he could not now very well go back on his vow and ask the *htof bgef* to change back again. That was because when the *k'lau kauf kei* agreed to change places he was so very happy about being able to live in such a cool place that he immediately flew off and disappeared into the virgin forest where he would be very hard to find. Because of this the *k'lau kauf kei* went around screeching in the middle of the hot humid weather: “*K'lau kauf kei auh hkaj hkaj, htof bgef kauj bgei auf lau yaz*” which means, “The *k'lau kauf kei* cried oh, kaa kaa, the *htof bgef* has cheated me!”

When he could no longer exchange back the territory with the *htof bgef*, the *k'lau kauf kei* went to try asking the *hsau miz hti** to change places with him, but the *hsau miz hti* knew what was going on and would not be outwitted, because he knew very well that the climate was very hot in the deciduous forest in the foothills and that no one wanted to live there, so he screeched at the *k'lau kauf kei* “*guuhuu guuluak, guuhuu guuluak, guuhuu guuluak*” (northern Thai dialect), which means “I know, I'm smart! I know, I'm smart! I know, I'm smart!” Because of this the bird from the deciduous forest in the foothills came to live in the high virgin forest, while the bird of the high virgin forest came to live in the deciduous forest in the lowlands, right up until this day.

* *Thai: nokguak, white-breasted waterhen (amaurornis phoenicurus)*

Interpretation

Our Pgaz K'Nyau (Karen) ancestors told us the tale of the *htof bgef* and the *k'lau kauf kei* to reflect on the situation of the age of grabbing of natural resources by all of mankind in today's society,

which is causing contradictions in the ways of thinking about the management of natural resources of many different groups of people. Because of disparities in power, knowledge, and their auxiliary systems, the contradictions just mentioned tend to result in the creation of the advantaged and disadvantaged groups of people, with disparities in access to justice or observance of human rights, and in the end leads to a society in which the advantageous look at the disadvantaged with a spirit of bias and discriminates against them.

The story presented here starts with the trickery of the *htof bgef*, who goes up the mountain to visit the *k'lau kauf kei* and asks him to change places by telling him about all the wonderful things he could have there if the *k'lau kauf kei* would move down to the flat land in the deciduous forest where there are expansive flat lands in the river basin and plenty of food. The *k'lau kauf kei*, however, is totally naive, without any cunning or trickery, unwitting to any kind of deceitfulness, without experience of people who compete to improve their position by deceiving others, and lacking knowledge or understanding of the world of the grabbing of resources, and agrees to the request to change and the proposal put to him by the *htof bgef* without the slightest doubt or suspicion on the understanding that the *htof bgef* must have an honest and naive heart which is loving and just exactly like himself, who of course certainly would not deceive anyone.

However, the situation changed very quickly. When the *k'lau kauf kei* moved down to the lowlands, he found the climate to be extremely hot and humid. The ground was dried out and without trees, grass or bushes in which to hide, and no moisture, to the extent that he felt that he was unable to adjust himself to the (condition of the) environment. If that was so then the *k'lau kauf kei* became aware that he had been deceived and so he thought he would travel back to find the *htof bgef* to tell him that he could not live in the deciduous forest in the lowlands, that he wanted to change back to his old place, but he could not find the other bird, and even if he could find him he certainly would insist that he could not change back, because of the fact that they had made a firm agreement. This can be compared with the Pgaz K'Nyau saying: "*Lauz p'qax le seif hpoo hkle, pauj yaj nax kei loj lax lez*", which means, "If you are lying under a log, even if you are aware of it, there is not much you can do about it." So if you do something stupid, it's no use even being aware of it if you can't change it. Another Pgaz K'Nyau saying is: "*Pgaz hkau laiz taj hki gaz, ngau t'gaz hsga t'gaz*", which means, "Two people exchange things, one is stupid, one is smart." The *k'lau kauf kei* is the stupid one because he is naive, the *htof bgef* is the clever one because he is the "owner" of the trickery, and because of that the only thing left for the *k'lau kauf kei* to do was to censure the *htof bgef* by going around moaning in order to beg for justice.

The Pgaz K'Nyau elders wanted to reflect through the telling of this story to their descendants their way of thinking about the present situation. The *k'lau kauf kei*, who in the past lived in the high virgin forest in this story, but who was cheated into going to live down in the lowlands, they believe is a symbol for the groups of people who have knowledge systems for managing natural resources that are consistent with living a sustainable human existence, have a way of thinking and practice that cooperates with nature in harmony and balance, and have built a civilization which has a relationship between humans and nature that enables them to carry out a livelihood together with nature that is happy and secure. But these groups are often groups that lack political power and the power to defend their society and economy, and external or larger societies often view these people as a problem, an obstacle to the development of the country, as backward, not modern or up-to-date, and importantly they are very often pushed out to the periphery of society.

The descendants of the Pgaz K'Nyau today look rather like the *k'lau kauf kei* in that although by nature and cultural upbringing are supposed to be honest and pure of heart, without trickery or guile, in today's situation with the flow of globalization reaching into every nook and cranny of the world, the village society of the Pgaz K'Nyau has been forced to open up to the wide world by every kind of trickery, capitalism and consumerism squeezing their way into the villages in every

form, officialdom, commerce, marketing and trade have all come in along with the structure of politics, administration, society and the economy of the government units, which is all very hard to resist and refuse. Because of this, the Pgaz K'Nyau descendants of today and henceforth, if they have only honesty and naivety it will certainly not be enough. They will also need to have wisdom and shrewdness along with the honesty – wise like a snake but with the honesty of a pigeon. One must know how to accept and how to refuse; accept things that help us to develop towards having a better quality of life both physically and mentally, that help promote the way of life, culture and customs, as well as beliefs that are very good for enhancing progress, and to refuse things that come to destroy us, even those things that help us have a better quality of life physically, but which destroy the way of life, culture, customs and beliefs, and which go as far as to destroy the values and sacredness of being the humans that we are. We must know how to learn about the changing situation, about the changes in the world that is coming into being very rapidly and continually, and we must consider the warnings of our ancestors who told us the proverb, “*Pgaz pauv neij n'klai su t'laiz, pgaz bo neij n'toz su t'weiz,*” which translates as, “Don't follow a person down a road he wants to go down, don't cross a stream over a bridge that another person has set up.” In other words, think about whether there might be some reason to believe that the other person may be planning some trickery and therefore cannot be trusted.

At the same time, the descendants must have confidence in the body of knowledge concerning the management of natural resources which the ancestors have accumulated over the generations and have passed directly down to their descendents from generation to generation. The basis is to stick to the way of thinking of production by relying on oneself because this is the most sustainable way of looking after the cooperative existence between humans and nature. Don't tear out the roots and the trunk of your way of life and completely jump into the way of thinking of producing crops for sale, because if you do that the land, the forest, and the water that you depend on for life will be ruined.

The *htof bgef*, which the folktale says used to live in the lowland deciduous forest in the past, is a symbol for the groups of people who have knowledge and ways of thinking about managing natural resources which are different from the worldview of the group of people mentioned above. With regard to natural resources, there are two groups of these people whose ways of thinking is often at the exact opposite extremes. One group considers natural resources such as land, water, and forests to be simply materials which can be taken and used without limit, can be broken down into parts to be exchanged for money, can be put into the commercial trading distribution system in the search for utility in the pursuit of happiness and to fulfil their own limitless demands. At the other extreme is a group of people who consider that humans and natural resources cannot be together in the same place and at the same time and must be completely separated. They see humans as a big obstacle to the conservation of natural resources. This group of people often are the group of people who have power and social standing, in politics in administration, in society, and in the economy.

The Pgaz K'Nyau elders want to communicate the meaning of what is happening now to the outside and larger society. Especially, they very much want to communicate this to the people who defend the country, people who have power, whether it be in politics, administration, society, economics or in the various committees of the government, those who have received power to administer the country by being elected by the people to make them realize about the way of thinking in going to develop the ethnic groups who inhabit the highlands. This development must take into consideration the basis of the livelihood of these people and the truth in terms of the culture and customs, the way of life of each of the groups, and must respect their rights and duties as well as the value and sacredness of their being human, listen to their opinions and proposals which truly come from the communities. Instead, policy these days has usually been determined and implemented in a top-down, unilateral way, and this is really a way of doing things which has been mistaken down through the ages and is ready for correction.

One clear example is the effort to correct the problem of seeing ethnic minority society as the cause of the destruction of forests and watersheds and having them reduce the area of land which they cultivate by introducing the system of production for the market and trade to increase the cash incomes of the ethnic people's groups. This is considered to be the standard for carrying out extension work and support. In order to do this the state has invested very large amounts of money in the highland communities both in the past and currently, and which is increasing greatly by the day, such as the "Money-change Scheme", "Correction of the Problem of Poverty Scheme" (*Kor Khor Khor Jor*), "Stimulate the Economy of the Community Scheme" (*Mi yaa saa waa*), "The One-Million Baht Lump Sum Per Village Scheme" and the "Annual Allocate Land Budget for Each Village of 200,000 to 300,000 Baht Scheme" (or SML) As well as this, there are still a great many units, both governmental and non-governmental, which go to carry out such work as mentioned, but this way of doing things, even though they increase cash incomes somewhat, also result in severe impacts on the environment, the societies and the cultures of these people's communities.

At the same time, together with carrying out extension work and support for the system of production for trade as mentioned, the state has used its political power to come in and limit the rights and duties in the management of natural resources of the communities of ethnic groups in all kinds of strict ways, including legal measures, i.e. by proclaiming various kinds of preservation areas such as national parks, national forest parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation forests, watershed forest areas and so on, and administrative measures such as implementing family planning to control births compulsorily, by limiting the right of movement of abode in protected areas, limiting the right of choice of abode, and limiting the development of infrastructure and so on.

We can see that doing these two things is contradictory. One mouth promotes the destruction of the watersheds by the ethnic groups, because it wants the groups to follow the line of production for trade, which has severe impacts on the state of the environment. Far from protecting the forests, the forest land has been encroached upon to make many more permanent fields for planting. The other mouth says that the same group should prove that they take care of the land, water and forest through the use of regulations, and that if they cannot then legal measures will be introduced, such as the very many incidents of removal of ethnic groups to the lower areas, rightfully through the law of the country by claiming to protect and reclaim the state of the environment, which has been damaged. The result has been that places where ethnic groups used to live have become tourist areas, workplaces of government units, summer houses of the influential, and business resorts of the capitalists, while the descendants of the ethnic peoples are scattered as itinerant labourers in the big cities without the solidarity of the family, community or ethnic group because they have nowhere to live. This state of affairs is comparable with and easily seen as exactly the same as the situation of the *k'lau kauf kei*, who was cheated into moving down to the lower areas of the mountain and who went around complaining that, "*K'lau kauf kei auh hkaj hkaj, htof bgef kauj bgei auf lau yaz*" "The *k'lau kauf kei* cried oh, kaa kaa,) the *htof bgef* has cheated me!"

Nevertheless, at the end of the tale we can summarize that while the *k'lau kauf kei* fell into a state of trouble and poverty, the condition of justice and the condition of being taken advantage of in this way still surely has a window of opportunity for thought about being saved, which even though one cannot put it into practice oneself, one can still tell one's descendents about it as a lesson that the descendents can use as a precedent for being careful about things in the future. Although being absolutely destitute because of having this profound experience this time and which is a very big lesson, the way of thinking for the way out is that the *k'lau kauf kei* goes to see the *hsau miz hti* to ask her to exchange places but the *hsau miz hti* would not do so. At the same time the *hsau miz hti* indicates the bright road to the method of safety by the formula statement of "*guu ruu than, guu chalart! guu ruu than, guu chalart! guu ruu than, guu chalart!*" (standard Thai) which is a symbol

of knowing sufficiently well that the *k'lau kauf kei*, should learn and should search for his own sanctuary where he could be safe in the midst of the hot and muggy weather.

This tale can be related to and indicate that the *k'ne*, virgin forest, in the way of thinking of the Pgaz K'Nyau believe that it is an area of perfect fertility, because when we talk of the *k'ne* the Pgaz K'Nyau have the viewpoint of feeling optimistic always. In the opposite way there is the viewpoint towards the *kauf bgei* (deciduous forest) which is always pessimistic. If so then we can indicate that the *k'ne* is the land area that is aimed at by the Pgaz K'Nyau people, the land of the highest dream aspiration for setting up a base for living and for making a livelihood. The Pgaz K'Nyau believe that the *k'ne* is the area which is the best for them, rely on it for sustenance and take care of and manage it, make use of it for timber, and gather useful forest products from it carefully, because they know deeply the value of the beauty and the life which is given to them, the life which is sustainable and which they can realize together. It is certainly very hard for them to be deprived of the *k'ne* by people who come in, but the problem started when the state decided that the *k'ne* should be forbidden or protected forest. The state then has means and strategies to force people who live in the virgin forest *k'ne* to move out and down and down to the deciduous forest, as has been seen very clearly with the schemes to transfer highland communities by cheating and deceiving them into migrating through the system of education, schools which can attract the children and youth of the new generation, prepare their way of thinking, and inculcate a feeling into them that they do not want to live in the *k'ne* anymore, and induce the wish to move to the city in the future. This is the second image of the image that goes with the events that have taken place. One person wants to exchange, and in order to change has to resort to some means of deceit. The person living in the *k'ne* is deceived into coming down to live in the deciduous forest. This is deceit in order to seize in which the state itself is the person doing the deceiving in order to get a place to control and manage in any old way just as it pleases. Because of this, this tale is thus about the important issue of land concerning the direct seizure of natural resources, because the other party has been deceived into moving down the mountain, while the other party uses every kind of deceitful means. When the one person has moved down, the other person moves up to control absolutely and the party who has been deceived into moving down never has another chance to return.

The thinking behind this seizure of natural resources in the highlands and the *k'ne* has become an important issue in the way of thinking about or the viewpoint towards the *k'ne* of the Pgaz K'Nyau and the state. The two ways of thinking are in contradiction. For the Pgaz K'Nyau, the *k'ne* is an area which is very good for living in, a suitable area, a perfect place, a place of happiness, briefly summarized it is an area of perfection and prosperity, but the way of thinking of the state is that it is a place of the forbidden forest and so it proclaims it a watershed, a preserved forest, a pristine forest that people should not touch, and cannot use, forbids people to go and live there and if they do then it is against the law, it is a place integrated with the ecology, not suitable for people to live in, and the state must then have the power to control this area, which we can see clearly as an issue of contradiction concerning the two ways of thinking that have made the relationship between the villagers and the RFD officials always one based on power. Who can access and oversee the rights over the natural resources in the area of the *k'ne*; the method of the state is to use laws and cabinet resolutions, personnel to go in and manage, hold, control and suppress, a thing that we believe is an issue the same as the *htof bgef* deceived the *k'lau kauf kei*, into descending from the *k'ne* to the deciduous forest in which in the end the *htof bgef* gained the rights over the natural resources in the area of the *k'ne* by laws or regulations which he himself had established. If this is so, concerning the issue of the legitimacy of rights of the indigenous people and justice for the people who have made their livelihood in and have looked after the *k'ne* over many generations can thus be asked, "Is it thus appropriate that these things should be given acceptance by society...?"

Source: Thai pamphlet

11. Taj Leplez Pgaz dau ma waz hki gaz av waz laiz maz ka taj **Story of the wife whose husband goes trading**

Once there was a husband and wife. One day the husband said to his wife, "I am going to go far away on a trading trip, and I will be away for about a month." His wife agreed gracefully to this idea. Before the husband set out on his trip, the wife did everything that she could to help her husband. She arranged all the provisions he would need for his trip and put them all nicely in a shoulder bag; the things he would need, some cooked rice, and some uncooked rice in reserve. Before he went, she also ritually poured into his hands some water scented with acacia pods (*hpoov hsif saf*) and turmeric. When it was time to go, the husband set off on his journey.

While the husband was off on his trading trip, the wife stayed at home performing her duties nicely. You could not find even a small deficiency or anything to make the least criticism of. She was always careful to keep the house swept clean, the bamboo floor always looked a beautiful yellow colour, comfortable, nice to eat on or sleep on. The bedroom was always clean and neat, the kitchen was always free of ash, charcoal, and soot, the earthenware pots and bamboo water containers were always full of water every day, and the space under the house was always clear and free of pig and chicken excreta. The pigs and chicken were all properly fed every day, and she looked after all of them very conscientiously as well.

As for herself, she always bathed and washed her hair well, and combed and gathered her hair in a neat bun every day. The clothes she wore were always clean and bright, she herself was always bright and cheerful, and showed a smiling, friendly face to all the neighbours and any guests who came to visit the house. She always put aside a 'first rice' offering for her husband, and always thought of her husband before she started to eat.

Meanwhile, the husband was on his trading trip finding that the trade was going wonderfully every day and that everything he had brought to sell was selling like hot cakes. Every time he arrived in a village the people would crowd around and choose some of his things to buy, and before long he had sold everything. By that time he had scooped up a fair bit of profit, so he set off on his way home extremely pleased and proud with himself that he had managed to make such a lot of money.

When he arrived home, he showed his wife the profit that he had made. Looking at the money, his wife was overjoyed and said to her husband, "We have helped each other to make this money!" But it turned out that these words that the wife had uttered with such honesty and purity, instead of making her husband happy, were extremely offensive to his ear. The husband replied to his wife, saying, "All you did was stay at home, and now you have the gall to say you helped me in some way?" The wife replied, "Not so. Even though I was at home, I have also supported you in some ways in the things you have done." The husband, however, was firm in his position that he had done everything by himself, and his wife became quiet and begrudgingly allowed her husband to have it his way.

When nearly all the money had been used up on all the various daily expenses of the household, the husband consulted with his wife again about going far away on another trading trip, but the wife did not express an opinion or show any clear interest that indicated whether she consented to the trip or not. She did not say even one word about it to her husband. Before her husband set out on his journey, she did not prepare any provisions for him. She just let her husband get things together for himself. She did not steam any rice for him, nor put any uncooked rice in his bag, nor did she perform the ritual pouring of scented water into his hands as she had done before.

While the husband was far off on his selling trip, she did not perform any of her household duties, leaving the house dirty and untidy. The chickens came up to scratch around, the dogs came in and

defecated, the whole floor became dirty and stained with ash and charcoal, the sleeping space became full of dirt and sand, the earthenware pots and the bamboo water containers became completely dry of water, the space under the house became a repulsive mire of pig and chicken excreta, all the pigs grunted and squealed and all the chickens squawked and screeched with hunger and discontent because she was completely lackadaisical about feeding and taking care of them all.

As for herself, after her husband set off on his trip, she did not bathe or wash her hair even once, her hair became totally dishevelled, sticking out all over the place like a chicken coop. When visitors or neighbours came to the house they could hardly recognize her. Before eating she did not do anything like put aside a 'first rice' offering or a 'pure water' offering for her husband

Meanwhile, when the husband arrived in a village on his trip he found that no one came to welcome him or to look at his goods and to choose something to buy as they had before. The knives did not sell well, the axes did not sell well, the bangles hardly sold at all, no one was buying earrings, and the more he sold the more money he lost. In the end, he set off for home empty-handed, and to boot with debts to pay to other people as well.

When he got home, he was so stunned to see the condition of his house and wife that he almost failed to recognize them. When he went inside his house, his wife asked him, "How did the trip go?" The husband answered her in a weary and gloomy way, "I lost all my money and on top of that I have a mountain of debts to pay." The wife replied to her husband, saying, "I told you that the profit from the trading last time was partly due to my helping you, but you did not believe me. See how I have not helped you this time and you have ended up by losing all the money." When he heard this, the husband could not think of anything to say back to his wife, not even one word. All he could do was secretly swallow his saliva in guilt and accept in his heart that she was right. From that time on, the husband accepted and recognized his wife's role and did not look down on all the work that she did.

Source: *Raimunwian*

12. *Taj Leplez Muf k'nauz se hsi, paux saf hkwa se hsi*
The story of the 30 young women and the 30 young men

Once upon a time, 30 big-headed men claimed that they were stronger than 30 women. When the time came to choose a field to clear, they chose a place in the virgin forest. When they had finished firing the field, they helped each other heave all the logs and pieces of bamboo out of the field until it was completely cleared, hoping that it would look neat and be done properly according to custom. The 30 women, however, being humble in their frailty and not as strong as the 30 men, chose a fallow field to clear, where the trees and bamboo were not too big, being only about the thickness of an arm or a leg. It turned out, when harvest time arrived, that the field cultivated by the 30 women produced much more rice than that of the 30 men. This resulted in the 30 men not having enough rice to get them through the following year, and in the end they had to go and beg rice from the 30 women. (In general, clearing a field in the virgin forest will result in atrophied rice, since there is too much moisture and humidity there.)

Another time, the 30 big-headed men claimed that they were strong and the 30 women were weak and frail, and that whatever the women did, it would not amount to much. When the time came to build a house, the men went to cut all the bamboo they needed. They cut big pieces and chopped them to the right length and then laid them out in a row on the frame as a roof. The 30 women went and cut smaller pieces of bamboo. They split each piece into two lengthwise sections and laid them out as a roof by overlapping them in an alternating pattern, one face up and one upside down and so on. When it rained, what happened was that the roof of the house of the 30 men leaked, making it impossible for them to stay there. At the same time, the 30 women's house was dry and snug. The 30 men ran out of their house and crowded into the house of the 30 women, which saved them from getting a thorough soaking from the rain, but at the expense of having to go to the house of the women, whom they had ridiculed.

Source: *Raimunwian*

13. *Taj Leplez bu dauv cei eif laux av sav* **The Debate between Money and Rice**

In the lifestyle of us *Pgaz K'Nyau*, we believe that rice is of the utmost importance. Our ancestors said that, "*Bu mei koov auf, taj le av gaz qu keiz le hki sei*" (If we have enough rice to eat, then everything else will follow on of its own accord.) Our ancestors told us tales to warn us repeatedly of this, to give us illustrations of this, to make us aware, to teach us and to help us grasp its significance unswervingly in our lives. They told us:

"Once upon a time, the money god said to the rice god that even if there were no rice he could continue to live. The rice god said to the money god that this was not so. If you don't have me, you cannot live. However, the money god stuck to his opinion. Because of this, the rice god went away from the money god and hid in a cave which no one could enter, because the mouth of the cave was opening and closing all the time.

The next morning the children and grandchildren of the money god were crying. The money god tried to pacify the children and grandchildren by giving them money, but however much he gave them they would not stop crying. By chance the money god spotted a small amount of rice stuck to the bottom of the pot, so he gave it to his children and grandchildren to eat and it turned out that the children and grandchildren stopped crying quite nicely.

The money god thus understood that the only thing which could make his children and grandchildren stop crying was rice, so he asked his servants to enquire where the rice god had run off to. The servants made enquiries and found that the rice god had hidden in a cave that was very difficult to get into. The person who can go into the cave must be very swift and nimble. The money god called the *htof hpgiv* bird (Indian pipit) and asked it to go and get the rice god back out of the cave. The *htof hpgiv* bird flew into the cave and catching the rice god, flew out again with him. When the bird was flying out of the cave, the mouth of the cave pinched the bird's throat just a little, and made its wattle move down onto the back of its neck, where it is to this day. When the rice god returned the children and grandchildren had rice to eat once again. The life of the money god and his children and grandchildren returned to its usual happy state."

We believe that rice is the *object-person* that gives us real life, and we also believe that having enough to live and sufficient to eat is the mainstay of our lives. We cultivate our fields, planting rice and other food crops, and we know that we are not rich with property and money, we know that we will not be rich and wealthy, that we just have enough rice and other food crops to eat through the years, but we choose to carry on our lives in this way.

This is the ideal of our ancestors, who passed on to their children and grandchildren over many generations, as in their teachings, which say:

Maz auz hpai krev, auf auz hpai baf.
Maz cu duf auf kaux pooz.
Naj gaj t'geiz nez tez t'geiz.

Work the right amount, eat the right amount of food,
Work with your hands, eat with your mouth,
Don't be greedy, don't be avaricious.

Source: *Raimunwian*

14. *Taj Leplez Mauj keiswa* The story of the Mauj Keiswa

A long time ago, there was a person who finished threshing the rice on a certain day, and the next day he went to his field. When he got to the field he saw the *Mauj keiswa* grazing on the rice stubble in the field. When the *Mauj keiswa* saw the man he immediately chased after him. The man was able to evade the *Mauj keiswa* by running around the field hut, running around and around until he was exhausted. Just as he was about to get so tired he could run no more, he heard a bird singing, and its song said:

*"Civ co ca, cif le hpaugauz hpaubau kla, Ji jor jar! Run among the cock's comb flowers,
dof seif hpo eh dof neij pgaz, The young trees have grown larger than people,
dof waf hpo eh dof neij pgaz". The young bamboo has grown larger than people.*

("Do not run out of the field into the forest because you will be seen more easily among the big trees and bamboo bushes. It would be better to hide among the cock's comb flowers in the field, with their dazzling colours.")

Hearing the song of the bird, he said to himself, "The bird is singing something really odd..." and then he realized that the bird must be telling him how to escape his predicament. Without any hesitation he ran among some cock's comb flowers and the *Mauj keiswa* was unable to see where the man had gone because the dazzling colours of the flowers confused the eyes of the *Mauj keiswa* and forced it to give up trying to find him. The man was able to hide himself among the cock's comb flowers until the *Mauj keiswa* had gone away. He then came out from among the cock's comb flowers and ran home as fast as he could.

Ever since then, when we have finished the threshing, no one dares to go to the fields on the following day, and in the end everyone has come to consider this a day of prohibition. Our ancestors said that on this day the *Mauj keiswa* comes to eat the rice stubble, and if we go to the fields it will eat us. They also said that the *Mauj keiswa* is very large, as big or bigger than an elephant!

Source: *Raimunwian*

Content: Going to the swidden the day after the threshing is over and the *htof biqaf* has been called back to heaven is thought to be taboo as it is a time when (symbolically) nature is left free to regenerate and allow the spirits who were driven out when the swidden was cleared to return to the area again. Going to the field on this day is a taboo, the breaking of which will lead to severe consequences.

