

The History of the
**KAREN
PEOPLE**
of Burma

Online Supplemental Materials

Angelene Naw

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Judson Press

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The History of the Karen People of Burma

Online Supplemental Materials

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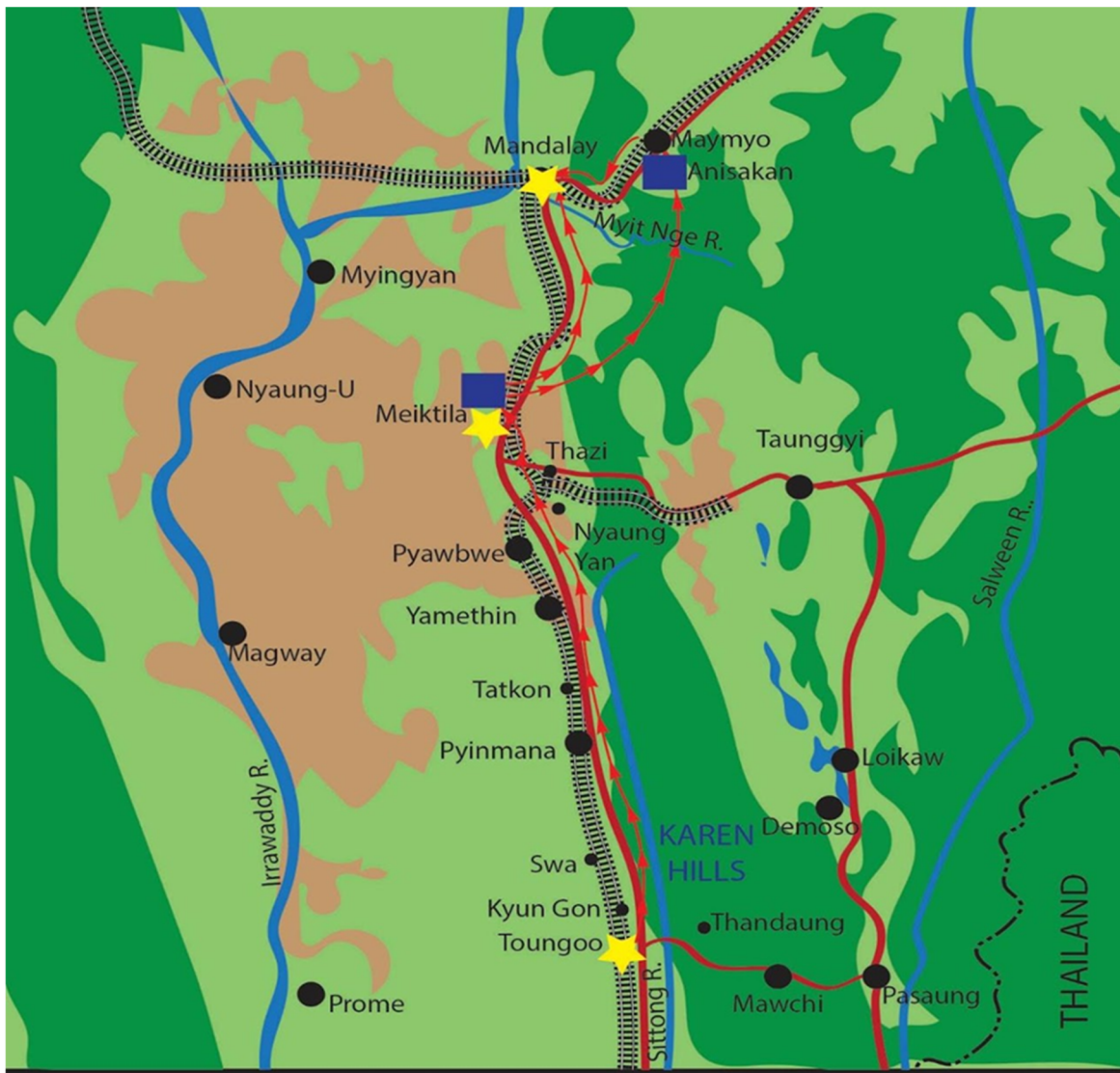
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Maps



Map 1. British Annexation of Burma (1824–1886)

Drawn by Sally Myint Oo

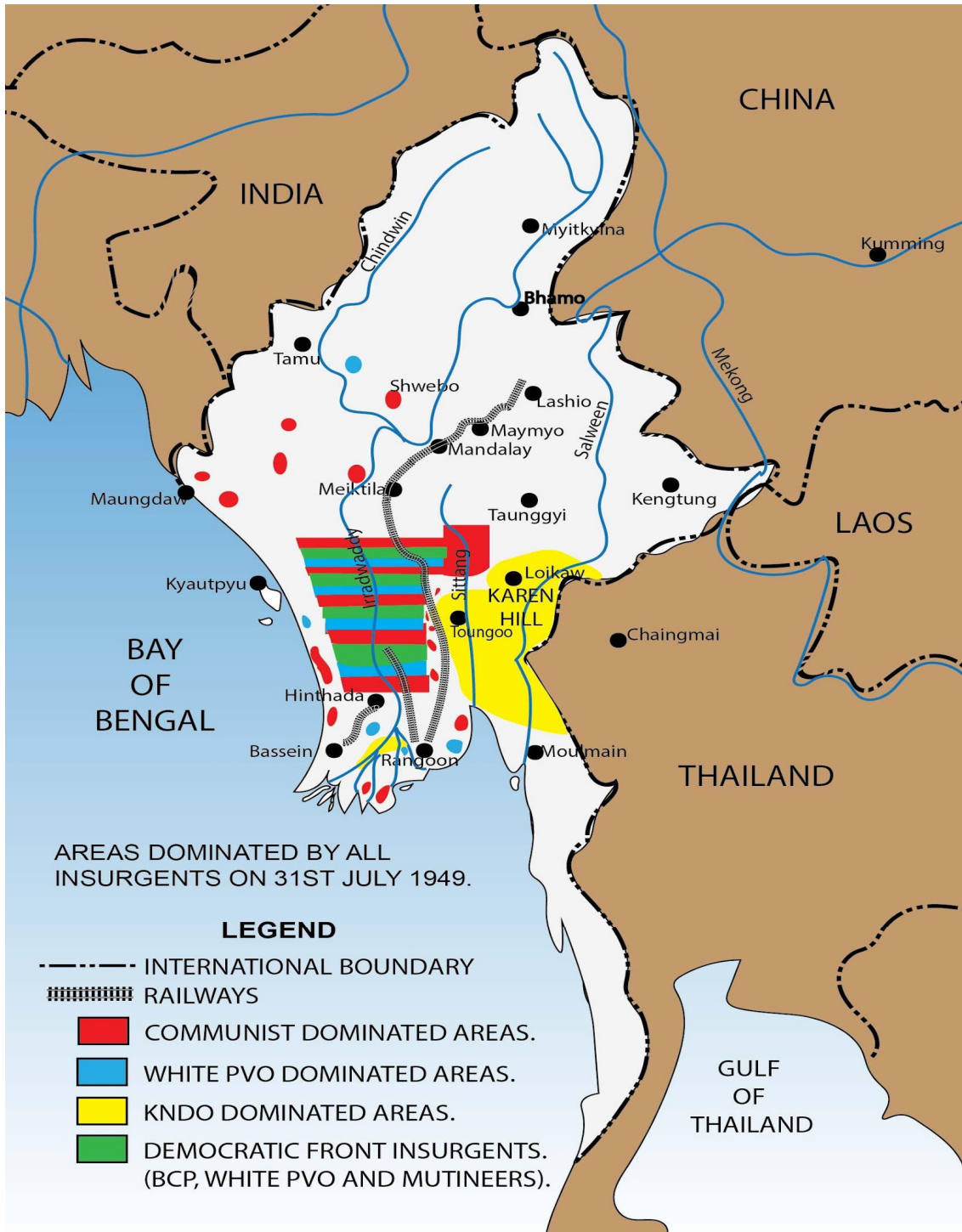


OBJECTIVE MAYMYO

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Key | |
|  | INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES |
|  | MAIN ROAD |
|  | RAIL ROAD |
|  | KNU EARLY OPERATION ROUTE |
|  | AIR FIELD |

Map 3. Karen National Defence Organization Toungoo Brigade Operation—Objective Maymyo in Upper Burma (February to May 1949)

Drawn by Sally Myint Oo



Map 4. Karen National Defence Organization-Controlled Areas (1949)

Map drawn by Sally Myint Oo

Photos



Photo 1. T. Thanbyah, founder of Karen National Association and the first graduate (1871) from an American university (courtesy of his great-grandson Saw Mie Tha Lah)



Photo 2. Sir San C. Po (CBE, MD), the first Karen and the first from Burma to become a citizen of the United States of America (1886–1893). After he returned to Burma he withdrew his citizenship.

Photo taken from the book cover of “Sir San C. Po, Kt, CBE, MD, A Karen Pioneer,” compiled by Dr. Thyra Po (granddaughter)



Photo 3. Karen Goodwill Mission in the United Kingdom (1946); Saw Tha Din (leader, in the checked coat) and his entourage (courtesy of Saw Tha Din's sons, Retired Karen National Liberation Army General Saw Oliver and Saw Orlando)

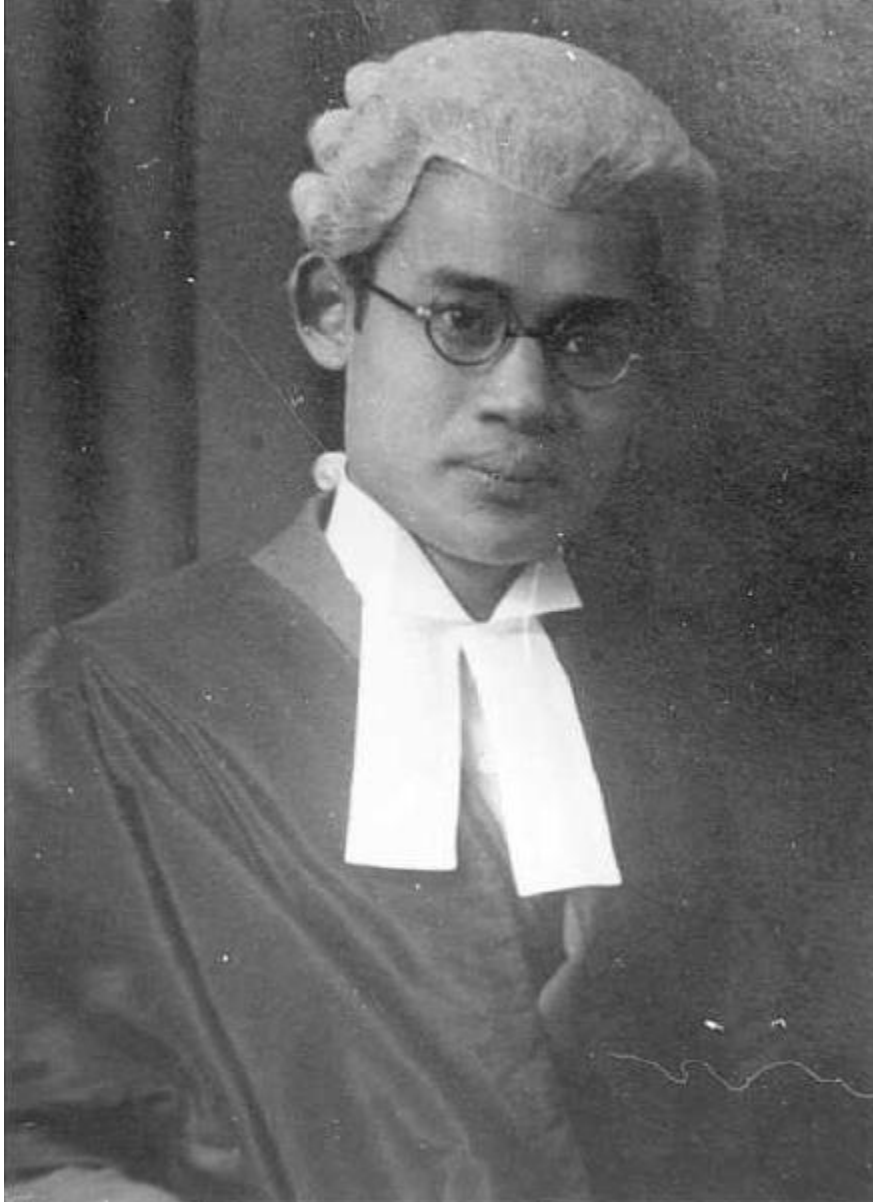


Photo 4. Saw Ba U Gyi, the founder of the Karen National Union

Taken from

<https://kicnews.org/2015/08/%E1%80%80%E1%80%9B%E1%80%84%E1%80%B9%E1%80%A1%E1%80%99%E1%80%BA%E1%80%B3%E1%80%AD%E1%80%B8%E1%80%9E%E1%80%AC%E1%80%B8%E1%80%A1%E1%80%AC%E1%80%87%E1%80%AC%E1%80%94%E1%80%8A%E1%80%B9%E1%80%B1%E1%80%94-2/>.

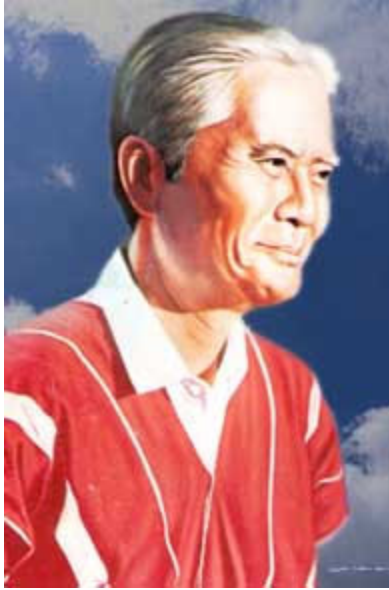


Photo 5. Mahn Ba Zan, first general of the Karen National Union

Taken from <https://soekamaw.wordpress.com/>.



Photo 6. General Bo Mya

Taken from <http://sawdan101.blogspot.com/2009/09/memorial-of-gen-saw-bo-mya-and-share-to.html>.

Text

Hta about the Foundation of Karendom

Hpu Htawt Meh Pa

*Hpu Htawt Meh Pa*⁷⁹

Verse 1:

Karen: လၢပျၢၤသးပျၢ်အိၣ်တၢၢ်, အမံၤဖျၢၣ်ဝဲထိးဝဲဟ်, အိၣ်ဝဲ ဒီး အမိအလံၤမၤအိၣ်ဝဲလၢစးလၢသံၣ်

Transliteration: Ler bler tha bywa O ta ghar, ah mee may weh htoke
meh pa, O weh dau ah po a lee, mar au weh ler kukh ler the

English: In ancient days, lived an old male, “Father Boar Tusk” was
his name

He had children, grandchildren, cultivating his farmland

Verse 2:

Karen: ဗုအဘုအသၣ်ဂျၢမး, ထိးဟဲမၤဟးဂီၤအတၢ်, ဗုဆဲးထိးတၢ်အံၤလၢဘီ, ထိးဝဲလီၤတဲာ်တၢ်တၢ်လီၤ

Transliteration: Hpu a bu a thar ghay ma, htoke heh mar ha ghau a tar,
hpu hset htoke de au ler baw, htoke meh lauh tae ta bay lau

English: Grandpa’s rice grains grew abound, Boar came and ruined
his farm ground

Grandpa stabbed Boar hard with spear, One Boar tusk out
dropping there

Verse 3:

Karen: ထီးတံခဲကစီဝါခံ့, ဖုထာထီၣ် ဦး ကုးဆူဟံၣ်,ဘီဝဲ ခၣ် သုသုတနဲၤ,ထီးမဲကဲထီၣ်လၢသံၣ်န့ၣ်

Transliteration: Htoke D meh kabaw wah hsree, hpu ter htaw dau gay
hsu he, bwa weh dar thay thay ta nee, htoke me keh htaw ler
thi kwee.

English: Boar tusk curvy, crystal white clean, Grandpa seized and
homeward lean
Working day whole creating own, from boar tusk turned a
lovely comb

Verse 4:

Karen: သံၣ်န့ၣ်မိမိကစီ ခီၣ်, ဖုးသးပုၣ်မုၢ်န့ၣ်အခိၣ်, အသးစၢ်လီၤဝဲ ခၣ် လီၤ,သးဖဲဝဲတဘိယုၢ်ယီ

Transliteration: thi kwee po so kamaw doh, bwa tha bwa may kwee
ah kho,
ah tha sar lau weh dar lau, tha pwee ta boh yu kghaw.

English: Comb tiny power mighty, once old man combed his hair
string
Youthful look of younger age, happy ever joyful bliss

Verse 5:

Karen: ဖုအမိအလဲၤအါထီၣ်,တၢ်လီၢ်တအိၣ်လၢအကီၢ်,ထံၣ်န့ၣ်တၢ်လီၢ်တကစီ,မုၢ်ထဲဆဲးမဲးယုၢ်န့ၣ်လီၤ

Transliteration: hpu ah po ah lee ah taw, tar lau ta O ler ah kaw,
T nay tar lau ta k'war, may htee hset met ywa nay lau.

English: Grandpa's offspring much increased, fewer space in country
petite,
Found a site for dwelling land: "River of water flowing with
sand"

Verse 6:

Karen: ဖုတုၤလၢထဲဆဲးမဲးယုၢ်,ကွၢ်လၢ်မိကိးနဲၤကိးနဲၤ, မိတတုၤဖုသ့ၣ်ညါလဲ, ဖုသးပုၣ်ကဟဲကုၤ ဦး

Transliteration: Hpu tu ler htee hset met ywa, kwa lar po koh nee koh
nar, po ta du hpu thay nyar lee, hpu tha Bwa ka heh gay dee.

English: Grandpa reached river of water running with sand, waiting
children each day end.
Children couldn't reach once he found; grandpa surely would
turn around

Source: Aung Hla, *The Karen History* (Rangoon: self-published, 1939), 62 (English translations by
Angelene Naw)

Origins of the Karens

ပုဂံကညီအထွေထွေ; Origins of the Karens⁸⁸

Karen transliteration: Bwa K'Nyaw A'Htoo A'Hteet

Verse 1:

Karen: နူလိခိၣ်ခိၣ်မာ်ယွာတုလီၤတုလီၤဝဲ နီး ပုဂံကညီၣ်,ကလုၣ်ကတိၣ်သီၣ်ကညီၣ်,ယုၣ်အမံၤလၢပုဂံကညီၣ်

Transliteration: Du lau koh ywa tay lau, tay weh dau bwa k'nyor,
k'lu k'toh thor k'nyor, yu ah mee ler bwa k'nyor,

English: Ancient great world, was God made, with people of might
and grace

Voice powerful humming roared, was named people mighty
force

Verse 2:

Karen: ဟိၣ်ခိၣ်ကဲသီသဘဲတဲး,မုၢ်လၢယွာတု နီး ယွာမၤ,ဟိၣ်ခိၣ်ကဲသီသဘဲတဲး,မုၢ်လၢယွာတု နီး ယွာဘိၣ်

Transliteration: Hor-ko keh thaw tha bweh pa, may ywa tay dau ywa
mar,

hor ko keh thaw tha bweh paw, may ywa tay dau ywa bwar.

English: The World beginning, burst bubbling, God's creating, God's
making,

The World beginning, bloom blossoming, God's creating,
God's mending

Verse 3:

Karen: ဟိၣ်ခိၣ်လၢပုဂံယွာဟ်လီၤ,ဟ်လီၤဝဲ နီး အိၣ် နီး အီၤ,တၢ်အိၣ်ပုၤအံၤမုၢ်ယွာတု,အိၣ်ဟ်ဝဲကိးမံၤကိးစု

Transliteration: Hor-ko ler blur ywa par lau, par lor weh dau or dau
ore, ta or e, may ywa tay, O par weh koke me koke say

English: The World in ancient days, was God made, with food and
drink all in it.

Abundant food God supplied, prepared and placed for a
while.

Verse 4:

Karen: မိၢ်ပၢ်လၢပုဂံမုၢ်ယွာတု, ယွာမၤလိၣ်ကိးမံၤကိးစု, မိၢ်ပၢ်လၢပုဂံမုၢ်ယွာဘိၣ်, ယွာဘိၣ်အီၤအကုၢ်အဂီၤ
လီၤကဟု နီး လီၤကညီၣ်, ယုၣ်အမံၤလၢပုဂံကညီၣ်

Transliteration: Mo par ler blur may ywa tay, ywa mar loke koh me
koh say,

Mo par ler blur may ywa bwar, ywa bwar ywa ah gay ah
ghaw,

Lau K'hu dau Lau K'nyor, Yu ah mee ler bwar k'nyor

English: Mother Father, ancient days, God made and gave rules to
play

Mother Father ancient days, God fixed and formed His own
way

Strong and powerful appeared in sight, named them people
powerful might

Source: Aung Hla, *The Karen History* (Rangoon: self-published, 1939), 00 (English translations by Angelene Naw)

Hta about the Division of the Karen Family

Karen:

၁. မိဘွားလားယူလီနွံခီ၊ ပါကီးလားယူလီနွံခီ၊ လီလားနီဘီကျိတခီ၊ လီလားစီပကူတခီ၊
လီဖးယုတ်ဝဲဝဲကလီ၊ ကီတမုင်ယွာထီၣ်ယွာလီ။
၂. လားယူမိမိတ ခုၣ် ယီ၊ လားယူပါမိတ ခုၣ် ယီ၊ လီလားနီပ ဝဲး တ ခုၣ်၊ လီလားမိခွါပုတ ခုၣ်၊
လားယူဖွဲး ဦး ပုၣ်စိးဖး၊ ခီၣ်ဂုၤကီလားနီလားဘး
၃. မိစားလားယူတထာယီ၊ ပါစားလားယူတထာယီ၊ လီလားနီၣ်
ဆၣ်တထာ၊ လီလားခွဲၣ်၊ ဝုးစီခံထာ၊
ဝဲကလီယုတ်လီဖးဖး၊ ကီပားကီလီဖးလီဖး
၄. မိမိလားယူခီၣ်နွံဂါ၊ ပါမိလားယူခီၣ်နွံဂါ၊ ထံတမုင်လီဖးလီဖးဖး၊ ကီတမုင်လီဖးလီဖးဖး၊
ထီၣ်ကုၤတဲာ်ကုၤထံဘာ်ခီ၊ နွံခီပ ခွဲး တခီခီ
၅. မိဘွားလားယူခီၣ်နွံခီ၊ ပါကီးလားယူခီၣ်နွံခီ၊ လီလားပျီလားစီတခီ၊ လီလားစီလားပျီတခီ၊
ထီၣ်ကုၤတဲာ်ကုၤပာ်ကုၤပာ်ခီ၊ နွံခီ ခွဲး တခီခီ။
၆. လားယူပနွံ ခုၣ် နွံခီ၊ နွံ ခုၣ် နွံခီတခီၣ်ယီ၊ ထီၣ်ကုၤတဲာ်ကုၤထံဘာ်ခီ၊ ထီၣ်ကုၤဆာ်မုၢ်ဘၣ်လဲ၊
ပနွံခီ နီ ချာ်ထီၣ်ဘံ

English:

1. Mother's offspring, in ancient time, seven parts belong the line
Father's ground, in ancient time, seven parts belong the line
Falling on side, Naw BawKlor, falling on side, Saw Pa Ku
Torn apart then, came the rats, falling of the bamboo shafts
Nation in strife, up to flow and down to slide
2. In ancient time, mother-children one family line,
In ancient time, father-children one family line
Making Naw Pa Det a kind, making MawNayBwar a kind
In ancient time, in-laws split, wandering here there made to live
3. In ancient time, mother children one family line,
In ancient time, father children one family line
Making Naw PaAar a kind, making Saw Way War two kinds
Bamboo falling, rats coming, nation torn and parts in time
4. In ancient time, Mother had seven children, in ancient time,
Father had seven children,
Nation torn and drifting apart, guessing pieces and counting
the seven to start.
5. Mother's children, in ancient time, seven parts belong the line
Father's ground, in ancient time, seven parts belong the line
Making Pwo's children one kind, making Saw children one kind
Measure made by steaming pot, seven parts found would
bring one source

Source: Aung Hla, *The Karen History* (Rangoon: self-published, 1939), 75 (English translations by Angelene Naw).

Karen National Anthem

ထံကီၢ်ဒီးကလုၢ်တၢ်သးဝံၣ်

ယပုၤကလုၢ်ယဲၤဇၢ
The Karen National Anthem
 KAREN NATIONAL ANTHEM
 6.6.4.6.6.6.4.

Saw San Ba Saw Tha Aye Gyi
 Vigoroso

ဝ. ယ ပုၤ က လုၢ် ယဲၤ ဇၢ, ပုၤ လၢ အ ဂုၤ က
 ဂ. က စၢ် အ ပုၤ က လုၢ်, ပုၤ ကွၢ် လၢ် ယွၢ် တ
 ဃ. ဝ ပၢ် အ ယွၢ် စၢ် ဇၢ, ဝ တၢ် မ့ၢ် လၢ် လၢ

တၢ်, ယ အဲၣ် ဒိၣ် နၢ, န အဲၣ် တၢ် တီ တၢ်
 ပု, န ဘၣ် ဆိၣ် ဂု, တၢ် န: တၢ် ဖိၣ် ဘၣ်
 ပျၢ, ဝ ဘၢ ထီၣ် နၢ, နံ သိ: က က ပျၢ

လိ, တ မ့ၢ် န အဲၣ် တုၢ် လိၣ်, န
 နၢ, န က ကုၢ် ပုၤ ဘၣ် ဆိၣ်, ဒ
 ဘိၣ်, စိၣ် တၢ် သး ခ က စိၣ်, တုၢ်

တီ တၢ် လိ တ မ့ၢ် န အဲၣ် တုၢ် လိၣ်

တၢ် အ ဂုၤ ကိ: မ့ၢ်, ယ အဲၣ် ဒိၣ် မ:
 ဝါ ပုၤ အုၣ် စိၣ် တၢ်, စၢ် ယွၢ် ဆုၢ် ကုၢ်.
 လၢ ကိ: ထံ ကိ: ကိၢ်, ဆိၣ် ဂုၤ ကုၢ် ပုၤ.

Permission granted from the Karen Baptist Convention for use of anthem that was taken from the *Sgaw Karen Hymn and Tune Book* by Raleigh Dee, published by The Baptist Board of Publications of the Burma Baptist Convention, Hong Kong, 1963.

Karen New Year Day Recognition Bill, 1937

ပုဂံကညီတင်ဆဲးတင်လၢအလံာ်တံးယၢ်

JJR

Bill No. 26 of 1937.

THE KARENS' NEW YEAR DAY RECOGNITION BILL 1937.

Preamble - Where it is expedient to produce this Bill for the recognition of the Karens' New Year Day; It is hereby enacted as follows:-

Short Title 1. (1) This act may be called "The Karens' New Year Day Recognitions Act of 1937"

extent and commencement - (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Governor may by notification, specify in this behalf.

(3) It shall be extend to the whole of British Burma.

Definition 2. (1) "Karens" means all races, clans or tribes forming part and parcel of The Karen people of Burma inspite of their cortés creeds and religions.

(2) "The Karens' New Year Days" means exactly the same as the New Year Days of other races, people or nations, which being the first day of another prosperous year. The Karen New Year Day falls on the first and second day of the month of THALAY, according to Karen calendar year, corresponding to the first waxing moon of the month of Pyatho of the Burmese calendar month. It is in this month of THALAY (beginning from the first waxing moon of Pyatho) that the Karen begin to build new bamboo houses, renew or replace old things, etc, (noticeable in the hilly districts) for the New Year. These days are recognized by all the Karens every where. Many religious festivities, such as offerings to Nats, etc. , by the heathen Karens; offerings to Phongyis and going to Kyaungs or Pagodas for worship by the Buddhist Karens, and thanksgiving prayer service, etc., by the Christian Karens are organised on a big scale by all classes of Karens' according to their religious beliefs. In facts, the Days being greatest gala days in the annals of Karens' history.

Statement of objects and reasons.

It has always been the policy of the British Government to preserve the ancient customs of their subject-race and also recognize their Holy and Sacred Days. We, therefore, also see that in Burma the British Government recognize the Holy and Sacred Days of the races of Burma. The Non- indigenous races such as the Indians, the Chinese, the Europeans, etc., have brought with them to this Land of ours their Holy and Sacred Days which the British Government have accorded public recognition by giving public holidays. The Karens, though being the second most important indigenous race of Burma, have not been accorded any Holy and Sacred Days.

It is indeed a matter of great regret that though attempts have been made by Karens Leaders and elders representing the matter in question to the Government, it does not seem to carry conviction or successfully attract the attention of the Government. It is also deplorable to mention that the characteristic traits of the Karens as a quiet, peaceful law-abiding and very loyal subject race, once a great asset to them and highly acclaimed by the British Government are now but matter of the past.

And at this stage of their National awakening, the Karens find themselves unpopular and unknown everywhere. Their aspirations, Legitimate rights and claims have, from time to time, either being ignored or turned down. Now to preserve their traditional custom, the Karens of their present generation, in New Burma under the New Constitution claim for an equal status with others as being also a very important race, by placing before the Government the recognition of their rights and privileges.

The recognition, therefore, of the Karen New Year Days, being the first and second THALAY month, corresponding with the first and second day of Burmese Pyatho will be but the recognition of the Karens as the second important Burmese race and also the recognition of their past and present services to the Government. By preserving the ancient customs and ceremonies of a race, it does not necessarily mean to distinguish or set apart one race for the another.

No question of racial discrimination, therefore arises. The Karens in Burma is also a Burmese by race and is also known the same outside.

The Karens only want their ancient customs, etc., to be respected in as much as they have respected other! For this sole purpose this Bill is introduced and sincerely hope and enthusiastic support from their Burmese members and sons of the soil and brothers of the same land.

Johnson D. Po Min
Member of the House of
Representatives Toungoo(Karen)

Toungoon, 2nd August, 1937.

The Humble Memorial of the Karens of Burma to His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for Burma

286 *The Humble Memorial of the Karens of Burma to His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for Burma*

IOR: M/4/3023

RANGOON, 26 September 1945

May it please Your Honour that your Memorialists, the Karens of Burma, at this momentous time, have great cause to be very much concerned about the future of the Karens in this transitional stage of the much promised Constitutional Progress pledged to the Burmese people to full Self-Government as soon as may prove possible. Our National Identity, jealously preserved as the Karens of Burma, and our National Virtue and National Morals, anxiously nurtured during the long trying centuries, appear at last to be recognised, though formerly we felt that only the baby who cried the most got the most attention. The Karens have faithfully and loyally followed the flag they vowed to fight for, to distant lands, and not merely as evacuees. We realise that many of our interests have in the past been overlooked, because we failed to make adequate representation of our needs; but now, if the Majority could possibly merit Constitutional Progress to full Self-Government, we the Karens of Burma do deserve "a double claim to British consideration".

The Karens are known to have lived in Burma long before the advent of the Tibeto-Burmans into Burma. The Tibeto-Burmans in their advent pressed out the Karens southward to the Delta Areas, and eastward to the mountainous fringes bordering on Thailand, yes, even into Thailand and Indo-China. However much they were pressed during these long centuries, they, unlike the Pyus, the Thet, the Kanyans and the Mons, did never succumb as a race to the evil influence of their neighbours. They kept aloof as a race, jealously preserved their National Identity, and anxiously nurtured their National Virtue and National Morals, untarnished and unsoiled by contamination with their neighbours. There is a story current among the Burmese themselves that when a Buddhist monk was preaching to a crowd of Shans about the abode of Spiritual Beings called in Burmese "Nat-Pye", an old Shan among the crowd asked the monk whether there was any Burmese in "Nat-Pye". The Spiritual Divine replied, "Certainly, the Burmese would be there also." Then the old Shan murmured, "Alack! Nat-Pye also will eventually be ruined by the Burmese." Likewise, the Karen attitude towards Burmese, for similar reason, is such that a whole village community would rather move away than live side by side with Burmese who have immigrated into their area. In this way they keep up their National Identity, which may be taken for Clannishness. Even in the field of education, they successfully establish and smoothly maintain their own system of co-education.

Geographically and socially, there should be no reason why the Karens and the Burmese living on the same soil for so many centuries could not live harmoniously, and be united and treated as one race. Naturally, the by-stander cannot realise or appreciate the situation as those who have to suffer, and live under circumstances of great strain both mental and physical. Over a hundred years ago, before the British ever set foot in Burma, the Burmese Kings and the Burmese people literally made slaves of the Karens, and persecuted them generally. Ko Tha Byu, who later earned the

epithet of "The Apostle of Burma", was a Karen slave redeemed both body and soul by Dr A. Judson just a century ago. The Karens, the Hill tribes, therefore, had to flee or evade the Burmese whenever possible. Under such circumstances, the Karens underwent both mental and physical torture. Then came the British, not only as a Liberator, but also as a Guardian Angel, maintaining Law and Order, and preserving Peace and giving Protection. Under such a benign Government, the Karens began to thrive, but still with great difficulty. There was no more physical torture; but the mental tortures still had to be endured. The Burmese still treated the Karens with contempt socially. They still imposed on the Karens in business. They crowded out the minority races in official posts. In every sphere of life the Burmese took the best. Such was the situation. But in 1942, no sooner was the back of the British turned, no sooner was the Liberator and Guardian Angel taken away, than reoccurred both the mental and the physical torture in a manner unequalled in the whole history of Burma. This unfortunate, uncalled-for and unprovoked series of bloodshed and persecution has turned the clock back a century in our relationships. The Karens, therefore, have come to feel very strongly that they must strike out on a course of their own to preserve their National Ideals and develop into a progressive and useful State of Burma in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

The Karens have unreservedly rendered military aid to the British Crown and the Empire in all the crises ever since the British annexation of Lower Burma. In the early stage of the British occupation, crime, plunder and risings were very rampant in the country; and the Karens under the leadership of pioneer Missionaries helped considerably in suppressing crime and petty revolutions. Later on when the Karens were given opportunities to serve in the Burma Military Police, the Burma Sappers and Miners and the Burma Rifles, they readily responded; and from time to time helped considerably in maintaining Law and Order, and suppressing risings such as the Chin Hills rising, the Shwebo rising, the San Pe rising, the crime waves of 1925-27, and the Burma Rebellion of 1930-32, in which not only Karens of the Regular Services, but also Leaders, Elders and the Karen Irregulars played prominent parts. Again in the Great World War I, the Burma Sappers and Miners, the Burma Mechanical Transport, and the Burma Rifles, and in the Moplah rising the Burma Rifles acquitted themselves with credit. Here again in this Great World War II, the Karens occupy no second place in Burma both in numbers, integrity and daring achievement. There are no less than one Lieut. Colonel, seven Majors, over twelve Captains, fifteen Lieutenants, and more than sixty VCOs of the Burma Rifles in addition to hundreds of Karens in the ranks. There are also over one hundred young Karens holding the status of British Other Ranks in the BAF, and the BIC, add to this the young Karens of the Burma Army Signals and the GPT, the Burma Navy and the Burma Hospital Company. These are the young men who neither hesitated nor looked back in a struggle for Freedom and Justice. Then again the world-renowned Wingate Expeditions, which paved the way for the successful re-occupation of Burma, and which consisted mainly of picked young Karens who gladly sacrificed their noble lives in the Valley of Death for their King and Country. Last but not least our Karen Levies, numbering well over ten thousand who are no fair weather friends to the Allies.

Every crisis in our history of the past century convinces us more and more strongly that the time has now come for definite and determined effort to secure due recognition

of our merit and an adequate consideration of our just cause by the British, whom we have faithfully and conscientiously served and suffered for especially in this present war. May we, therefore, quote a few instances how the Karens left behind in Burma suffered at the hands of opportunists? While Burma was under the Military Administration of the Burma Independent Army (the Burmese Army under the Japanese General Minami, known in Burmese as Boh Mogyo, during the transitional stage) they branded the Karens as rebels, and persecuted and tortured them in all possible ways and in certain Districts resorted to wholesale massacre, not even leaving babies, and set the Karen villages on fire. In Myaungmya District alone, the Official Report reveals that about 400 villages were set on fire in this way, and more than 1800 Karens were slaughtered, including a Karen Judicial Minister of the British Burma Government and his whole family. Karens of the Salween Hill District, Papun, fared worse. All the leading men were slaughtered, and their wives and daughters before being massacred, were subjected to immoral degradation in the presence of their husbands and fathers. Others of our fair womanhood were forced to live in shameful submission to the BIA soldiers. Their Mission Stations were looted and set on fire. Two of their missionaries, Father Calmon and Father Loizot, were arrested, and their fate up to now is unknown. Taking advantage of the Military Administration, the Burmese did all in their craftiness to brand the Karens with a bad name, and caused them thus to be put to death. Many died the death of Christian martyrs under horrible conditions. At that time no influential Burmese Leader raised his hands and called a halt to such a senseless massacre. Were it not for the timely intervention of the Nippon Imperial Armies, we could not imagine how far the matter would have gone.

The National Policies of the Karens are all broadly based on holding high British Honour and Prestige, and to imbibe all that is finest in British Ideals. The events of this war, both at home and abroad, have made us stronger in these beliefs, and the Karens are, therefore, more determined to achieve their National Ideals; for these again affect our future security as a Nation. The pressing problem before us is to secure for ourselves a future security and safeguards in order that we may peacefully develop as a separate Individual people in our Home Land, Burma. We were given to understand that the new Bulgarian Government has liberated the Macedonians to do what they like with themselves, to form an Independent State by uniting the Macedonians in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece, and join up with Federated Yugoslavia. Likewise, the Benes Government has declared that the new Czechoslovak State will consist of the three Autonomous States: Czech, Slovak and Ruthenia with freedom for the Carpatho-Ukrainians of Ruthenia to vote themselves out if they like, and join up with their blood-brother Ukrainians in USSR. If such a magnanimous spirit could possibly be expressed in the Balkan States, we believe and trust that the British Government could do as much and more still for the Loyal Minorities in Her Dominions, so that they could live secure and grow up unhindered as Progressive Nations under the Guardianship of the British Government.

With the hope of realising our just and national aspiration at this momentous juncture, when Constitutional Progress is being pledged to the Burmese by His Britannic Majesty's Government, a Mass Meeting of the Liberated Karens of Burma was convened from 30th June to 5th July 1945, in Rangoon, where leading Karens from all the Karen Liberated Areas were fully represented. The past history of the Karens,

since they came in contact with the British, was reviewed from one historical crisis to another, where the Karen interests were invariably ignored, when each crisis had been over. Though we were second to none in Burma in loyalty, integrity and daring achievement in this World War, yet the Karens were not invited to express their views on Burma Reconstruction activities formed in India. In our Home Land too, we Karens were almost obliterated from existence through deliberate wholesale persecution, torture and massacre, as could be clearly seen by the proof of documentary evidence in our possession, and by the systematic propaganda that was circulated against us in 1942. Taking all these facts into serious consideration and having in view our future security, and facility to develop freely and quickly in our own way, under the guiding hands of the British Government, the following well considered and well balanced Resolution was unanimously passed:

"That this Mass Meeting of the Liberated Karens of Burma considered and unanimously resolved to ask the British Government and the Conference of the United Nations of the world to

- (a) Extend the Excluded Area in Schedule II of the 1935 Act in Tenasserim Division mentioned in the last paragraph of the White Paper, to include the remainder of the Tenasserim Division and Nyaunglebin Sub-Division of Pegu District in Pegu Division, and to add to it later adjacent Karen Areas in Thailand, and designate the whole as the United Frontier Karen States to be administered by the Karens directly under a Governor."

We beg to submit that the Resolution fully supported the Act of 1935 in providing the Administration of the "Scheduled Areas" enumerated in Part I of the Second Schedule to the Act. These Excluded Areas are in fact in the mountainous tracts of the East, North and West of Burma proper, which are inhabited by the Karens, the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins, differing in language, social customs and degrees of political development from the Burmese inhabiting the Central Areas. The Karens of the Excluded Areas in the East, together with their blood-brothers in the small protected Karenni States, fully agree to remain subject to a special Régime under the direct Authority of the Governor and a specially selected Administrative Staff of Karens (and when Karens are not available, only those selected by a Karen Advisory Board on the advice of the Governor) until our people are willing to accept some form of incorporation. The reason for a selected staff is that experience has proved that only those who understand the people can be sympathetic and could help to develop the country. We are firmly determined to avoid association with undesirable influences.

The Scheduled Areas in question are Karen Areas inhabited mainly by the Karens; and there is no reason why they should not, therefore, be given a name and christened "The United Frontier Karen States", while there already existed the protected Karenni States. This terminology shall be applicable to Excluded Karen Areas, and not to the Shan, the Kachin and the Chin Areas. The Area of the present-day Thailand between the Salween River and Chieng-Mai, the northern capital of Thailand, is inhabited mainly by the Karens; and likewise, the Mesod Area between the Thoungyin River and Raheng Hills, and the old Prathuwun State called Kyaukkhoung. Our humble suggestion is that the Karen Areas in Thailand bordering on Burma, and the Karen Areas in Burma, i.e., Tenasserim Division and Nyaunglebin Sub-Division in Pegu

Division be amalgamated under one Special Régime for uniform development socially, economically and politically.

In 1927, that is seventeen years ago, our accredited Leader Sir San Crombie Po, Kt, CBE, MD, in his book *Burma and the Karens* advocated the self-same Tenasserim Division for the Karen Country to be administered by the Karens directly under British Supervision. Mr Donald Mackenzie Smeaton of the Bengal Civil Service, of middle 19th Century, in his book *The Loyal Karens of Burma* pleaded the same thing for the Karens even in those trying days; and in support of our humble claim, your Memorialists beg to quote Mr Smeaton's words in giving his reason for such a Karen State:

"Why should we not try—if only as a political experiment—to give to the Karens a chance of growing as a nation in their own way? Why should we not try and bring their wild growth under cultivation, grafting on the ancient roots as time and experience improve our perception and increase our skill? We have here a people—probably under a million in all—who aspire to keep their own nationality intact. Why should we not allow them and encourage them to do so. The result may be of the highest interest in the future, and cannot fail to be fraught with great benefit to the people themselves; and it will strengthen British Rule and safeguard it in the times of trouble which may yet be in store for us in Burma."

Surely, those British Officials who have given the subject a thought, and have carefully looked into the matter, could not but be convinced of the reasonableness and potential significance of Mr Smeaton's comment.

We believe the British Government realise the necessity of developing the Hill tribes and the soil they live in; but under the present conditions, the Scheduled Areas are wholly comprised of Mountainous fringes with no out-let to the sea and the world outside. It would, therefore, be a great disadvantage, amounting to an impossibility, to develop a cramped-in little state without any modern means of inter-communication with the outside world. We, therefore, plead that the Excluded Karen Areas be extended so as to include the remaining Tenasserim Division and Nyaunglebin Sub-Division in Pegu Division with a good prospect of having a considerable import and export by sea.

Our blood-brothers, the Karens in Thailand, are more backward than we are in many ways. They are either severely left alone, or made to adopt the Thai culture, which is foreign to them. They are not encouraged to study, and do not receive the education that we have received in Burma. We therefore submit that they and the Areas they inhabit be put under the Special Régime so that we may together live secure and grow up as one united people.

The Mass Meeting referred to above unanimously resolved to send a deputation to England headed by Saw Ba U Gyi, Bar-at-Law and two others (under the Supervision of their Guardian Angel Sir San Crombie Po, Kt, CBE, MD) to support this humble Memorial in all fair and possible means, with implicit trust in "British consideration" to which we are given to understand we have "a double claim."

Wherefore your Memorialists pray with all confidence, faith and hope that we cherish within us, that His Majesty's Government may be pleased to grant the above mentioned Resolution, after due deliberation, patient and sympathetic consideration,

and facilitate the meeting of our elected delegates with His Majesty's Secretary of State for Burma.

(Signed) Saw Tha Din, President of the Karen National Association
Mahn Ba Kin, General Secretary of the Karen National Association
Saw Mya Thein, Ex-Member of the House of Representatives
Saw Johnson Kan Gyi, Lecturer, Judson College
Saw Ba U Gyi, Vice President, Karen Social and Service Club
(The Executive Members of the Karen Central Organisation)

Copy to: HE the Governor

Major General H.E. Rance, Chief Civil Affairs Officer

Chart of Refugee Resettlement

Figure 2.1 Refugee Departures in 2009: Totals from 2006

| Location | Australia | Canada | Denmark | Finland | Netherlands | Ireland | Norway | NZ | Sweden | UK | USA | Other | Total |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| Former urban | 44 | | 11 | | 4 | | 21 | | | | 14 | 4 | 98 |
| Site 1 | 117 | | | 181 | | | 2 | 38 | | | 6,475 | | 6,813 |
| Site 2 | 500 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | 16 | | 518 |
| Mae La Oon | 192 | 400 | | | 3 | | 10 | | | | | | 605 |
| Mae Ra Ma Luang | 221 | 394 | | | | | 60 | | 4 | | | | 679 |
| Mae la | 511 | 12 | | | | | 24 | 12 | 12 | | 2,816 | | 3,387 |
| Umpiem Mai | 349 | 21 | | | | | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 1,455 | | 1,842 |
| Nu Po | 240 | | | 1 | 2 | | 75 | 1 | 13 | | 1,104 | | 1,436 |
| Ban Don Yang | 132 | | | 1 | | | | 21 | 32 | | 468 | | 654 |
| Tham Hin | 17 | | | 18 | | | 87 | | 53 | | 478 | | 653 |
| Total 2009 | 2,323 | 828 | 11 | 202 | 5 | 0 | 280 | 79 | 118 | 5 | 12,825 | 4 | 16,685 |
| 2008 | 1,562 | 637 | 1 | 283 | 144 | 97 | 70 | 24 | 141 | 29 | 14,280 | 1 | 17,172 |
| 2007 | 1,516 | 1,574 | 5 | 350 | 62 | 0 | 414 | 148 | 178 | 111 | 10,181 | 0 | 14,636 |
| 2006 | 734 | 756 | 5 | 208 | 115 | 0 | 324 | 176 | 348 | 81 | 2,164 | 2 | 4,913 |
| Grand Total | 6,135 | 3,795 | 22 | 1,043 | 330 | 97 | 1,088 | 427 | 785 | 226 | 39,451 | 7 | 53,406 |

Source: International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Figures include family reunion and national migration.

The Karen Diasporas in the Twenty-First Century

Karens in Australia

The Migration Refugee Special Humanitarian Program of the Australian government allowed many Anglo-Burmese to migrate to Australia, and by 1991 the census recorded 8,223 Myanmar-born people in Australia.¹ Among these were children of “Anglo-Karen parents” and their relatives who joined them during these years. As their number grew, they organized a committee in 1996 to work in the sociopolitical perspective for the Karen people who had resettled in Australia. The committee started writing its basic constitution on February 17, 1997, and Karens in different states started organizing committees through teleconferences. The Australian government accepted the constitution of the Australian Karen Organization (AKO) on February 14, 1998. The AKO committees from all over Australia held their first national conference in Sydney in April 1998. Consequently, on July 16, 1998, the Australian government officially recognized the AKO.²

In 2005, another Karen organization, Australian Karen Foundation (AKF), was formed with the aim to improve the lives of Karen refugee people and communities on the Thai-Burma border and in Australia through education and training. AKF is a member of the Refugee Council of Australia, a nonprofit organization, and provides information on and advocacy for refugees. AKF highly values having close community-to-community contact and support from Australia to “the border” and with the Karen community in Melbourne. AKF helped twenty refugee families by providing airfare assistance to relocate from refugee camps to Australia. A micro-credit project of *Men’s Weaving Training* was established in one of the border camps. An eighteen-month *Telling the Karen Story* program was held in Melbourne, where six young Karens were

trained to present their refugee stories in schools and churches. Through its programs, the AKF informs and educates Australians about the plight and struggle of the Karen people and assists the internally displaced persons of the Karen state with educational opportunities. One of its educational and training projects, Young Adult Leadership Program (YALP), was conducted in the Karen state on the Burma border and allowed Karen youths to learn and share their experiences and knowledge. The AKF has annual gatherings, and on November 20, 2015, the tenth anniversary of the AKF was celebrated with Karen traditional songs and dances at Williamstown Uniting Church in Melbourne.³

From 2004 to 2016, Australia accepted nearly 13,000 refugees from Thailand, almost all of them from camps on the Thai-Myanmar border.⁴ The 2016 census showed that the major religious affiliations amongst Myanmar-born Karens were Baptist (10,133), Buddhist (8,163), and Catholic (4,627).⁵ Mr. Daniel Bullock of Victoria Baptist Churches in Australia sent his greetings to the hundredth anniversary of KBC of Myanmar in 2013, remarking that “more than 4,000 Baptists from Myanmar had migrated to Australia over recent years, and we now have 23 congregations in Victoria with a heritage from Myanmar, 10 of those being Karen Baptist Churches.” The newly arrived Karen refugees from the camps enhanced the Baptist Christian community in Australia.

The Karens who settled in Victoria built their identity through their hard work and honesty. On April 24, 2015, a report described how more than 160 Karen refugees from Myanmar have resettled in Nhill and worked at local poultry producer Luv-a-Duck. The article suggested that Nhill’s Karen refugee community should be a model for other rural towns.⁶

In 2018, the Karen community in Bendigo made headline news with an article that reported a new study from Deloitte Access Economics and Adult Multicultural Education

Services (AMES) Australia estimating the Karen community had contributed \$67.1 million to the Bendigo economy. The report found companies like Hazeldene's were the beneficiary of the Karen refugees' resettlement in Bendigo. The first Karen refugee family arrived in Bendigo in 2007, and their community has grown to about one thousand by 2018. A local Baptist church offers regular services in the Karen language, and there is also a Karen Buddhist monastery in Bendigo. The census in 2016 found Karen was the second most commonly spoken language in Bendigo.⁷

AMES Australia chief executive Cath Scarth said the study's results were an endorsement of regional refugee resettlement and encouraged the Australian government to accept more Karen refugees from Thailand. On April 27, 2017, Australian assistant minister for social services and multicultural affairs, Zed Seselja, visited Mae La refugee camp on the Thai-Myanmar border, which hosted more than forty-two thousand mainly Karen refugees from Myanmar. He took part in an Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) class with eighteen Karen refugees at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Refugee Processing Center in the neighboring town of Maesot. The five-day AUSCO program provides refugees with practical knowledge of Australian culture and society preparing them for life in their new country. He told the refugees, "As a multicultural society with a long history of immigration, Australia is proud to be a global leader in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees. The course you just completed will help you settle into new lives in Australia."⁸

Although the Karen community is the largest in Victoria, there are thousands of Karens in western and northeastern Australia. Since 2005 many Karens from Thai refugee camps have settled in other parts of Australia, and Karen churches were established in the areas where these Karens lived. In December 2005, the Melbourne Karen Baptist Church (Victoria) and Padoh

Ywa Karen Baptist Church in Sydney joined for the first-time celebrating Christmas together. During that gathering in Sydney, December 23–26, the Karen pastors, Rev. Dr. Ner Dah, Rev. Eh Htaw Ni Htaw, and Rev. Eh Tee Gaw and church leaders Saw Eh Taw, Saw Reginald, Saw Hsey Wah, Thramu Say Htoo Eh, Saw Aung Gyaw Htun, and Saw Billy Hser discussed fellowshipping together at least once a year. They also began communicating with other Karen churches to develop an organization with all Karen Baptist churches in Australia.⁹

When the second meeting of the Karen Baptist churches was held in Melbourne on April 14, 2006, there were forty-seven Karen pastors and church leaders attending from New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia. In support of the formation of the organization, Rev. Dr. Gler Taw of the Karen Baptist Convention in Myanmar joined the meeting and gave advice to the leaders. During the discussion on a name of the organization, some proposed Australia Karen Baptist Alliance, but the delegates ultimately agreed to name it Karen Baptist Churches of Australia (KBCA). On December 31, 2006, another meeting was held in Melbourne, where Rev. Eh Htee Gaw of Perth Karen Baptist Church from Western Australia was nominated as the president of the KBCA, Rev. Anthony Taw of New South Wales as general secretary, and Saw Hsay Wah of Victoria as treasurer.¹⁰ The KBCA was formed five years earlier than KBC-USA in the United States.

Even before the formation of the KBCA, Karen Baptists from around Australia have gathered after Christmas for an annual camp. Each year a campsite was rented and Karens from all over the continent gathered for Bible studies, worship, workshops, training, and concerts. After the KBCA was incorporated and with growing participation, it became difficult and expensive to find campsites large enough to welcome the group. The 2019 annual gathering was held at Werribee Baptist Church, in Melbourne, where more than eight hundred Karens

participated. Several thousand Karen live in Werribee, and visitors from outside Melbourne were billeted with local Karen families. Holding the gathering at Werribee Baptist Church and placing visitors with local families dramatically reduced the cost and removed the almost impossible challenge of finding a campsite. The gathering started on Boxing Day with music and performances by congregations in Melbourne and a video presentation by Werribee Karen Baptist Church pastor Rev. Gail Moe.¹¹ Perth Karen Church elder Saw Paul Kyaw proposed the KBCA invite the Karen Baptist church in New Zealand to join the annual gathering. Since then, the Karen Baptist church in New Zealand has participated in the activities of the KBCA. Currently, there are twenty-one Karen churches affiliated with the KBCA, ten other non-affiliated Karen churches, and six Karenni churches.¹²

The Australian Karen Organization Inc. (AKO) was founded in 1998 as a secular Karen organization. In 2006, the same year that the Karen Baptist Churches Australia was incorporated, the AKO expanded into Queensland because some Karen families had resettled in Brisbane and opened its Queensland Branch (AKO-Qld Branch). The AKO (Qld Branch) is committed to work as the representative of the Karen community in the community relations commission and other cultural and social organizations.¹³ The mission statement of the AKO is “to act as an umbrella organization for the Karen people in Australia and to represent them and voice their concerns in all political, social, cultural, and economic matters and to facilitate their affiliation to the AKO.” There are seven chapters of AKO operating in seven state branches. It is estimated that the number of Karens in Australia is about twenty thousand, with a majority living in Victoria.¹⁴

The objectives of the Australian Karen Organization are

- to encourage and foster the development and perpetuation of the Karen culture and language.
- to act as the representative of the Karen community at all levels of government and other authorities, be they state, federal, or local.
- to act as the representative of the Karen community in the Ethnic Affairs Commission and other cultural, social, or political organizations.
- to promote public awareness for the problems and hardships suffered by the Karen ethnic group, who have been forced to emigrate from their homeland and take refuge in foreign lands.
- to represent the Karen ethnic group and participate in forums and conferences at national and international level in order to achieve Equality, Peace, Freedom, Justice, and Human Rights for the Karen in Burma and abroad.
- to initiate and participate in welfare projects for the Karen communities in Australia and in areas where they have been forced to take refuge from the onslaught of the illegitimate Burmese government.
- to prepare and maintain a census of the Karen people in Australia.¹⁵

In its attempt to maintain and promote Karen culture within the Australian multicultural community, the Australian Karen Organization has a cultural department in each state, encouraging young people to learn their traditional music and dances, such as the Don dance and Bamboo dance. They also train young people in the Karen harp. Every year the Wyndham city council invites the AKO in Victoria to perform the Karen dances, thus presenting Karen culture to all the different cultures in Victoria.¹⁶ The AKO arranges Karen-language classes during the

summer holidays using volunteer teachers. In November 2016, the Karen-language program was established in Queensland. The AKO claims, “Our ultimate goal of creating a Karen Language program in our community is to pass down our identity, cultural value, and ancestral knowledge to our young generation.”¹⁷

With the purpose of upholding and maintaining Karen values and traditions while adapting to Australian culture, values, rules, and regulations, AKO leaders organized the National Karen Youth Seminar as a biennial event beginning in 2000.¹⁸ Additionally, the AKO organized soccer tournaments twice a year during the New Year celebration and the Wrist Tying ceremony. Not only Karen community teams but also teams from other local ethnic groups participated in these sports events to win the AKO Cup. Indoor volleyball, cane ball matches, plus mini track and field events are also organized for the community in celebrating major events.¹⁹

In Australia, social, religious, and political groups worked together in organizing the Karen New Year and Martyr’s Day commemoration ceremonies. The 2756 Karen New Year celebration in Werribee, Victoria, was held at Werribee Baptist Church on December 29, 2016, with more than five hundred attendees. The celebration included the Don dance performances by AKO and AKP (Australian Karen Preserving) Youth, and a Bamboo dance by Geelong Youth. In addition, there were other programs including a Karen culture show displaying traditional clothing and basket weaving and an award ceremony for students who attended the Karen school. These students had participated in a Karen poem (Karen hta) competition about Karen New Year.²⁰ Similarly, the Karen community in Perth, in Western Australia, celebrated the 2756 Karen New Year on December 29 with one thousand participants. During the event, the Minister

of Parliament of Western Australia delivered his greetings speech followed by group songs from the Karen churches and Karen traditional Don dance performance by AKO.²¹

Every year, the AKO organizes the Karen Martyrs commemoration in Australia. When the sixty-seventh Karen Martyr's service was held in Melbourne, Victoria, on August 12, 2017, the guest speaker was the chairman of the International Karen Organization.²² The Karens in Australia may be smaller in numbers compared with the Karens in the US, but their efforts for the preservation of the Karen cultural identity are more effective. The involvement of Australian government officials and parliamentary members indicate affirmation of the Karen national identity in Australia. As in the US and elsewhere, the leaders who organize these events are mostly Karen Christians. Generally, the venue of the Karen national celebrations is the local churches or near the Karen Christian communities. AKO board members, including the president, Saw Lwin Oo; two vice presidents, Mahn Orlando and Naw Esther Kyaw; general secretary, Sanlwin Y Shwe; and two joint secretaries, Thamay Paw Naysay and Grace Elwinu, are all Christians.²³ In Australia also, the Karen Christians play a major role in the perpetuation of Karen culture and the preservation of the Christian-oriented Karen national identity.

Karens in Canada

The Canadian government started to receive Karen refugees in 2006, as a part of a government-assisted refugee (GAR) resettlement program, though a coup in Thailand in 2008 disrupted the process. Those selected for resettlement in 2007 and 2008 finally arrived in 2009. Between 2006 and 2009, the government of Canada selected and resettled close to 800 Karen GARs to British Columbia or 20 percent of all GARs for that period. GARs from Myanmar settled mainly in the cities of Surrey (387), Langley (257), and Vancouver (127). They tend to live in a few

concentrated areas to support each other and depend heavily on the extended family structures developed previously in the camps. Gaining employment and access to healthcare are two of the many challenges they face due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the Canadian system. Because of their limited income and the high cost of housing in metro Vancouver, many of the Karens live in crowded apartment suites.²⁴

A study on Karen resettlement in Langley, British Columbia, reported that St. Joseph's Roman Catholic parish was the first to organize a Karen initiative in 2006. They were soon followed by the Langley Evangelical Free Church (LEFC), which formed a refugee advisory committee in 2007 to help Karen refugees. This LEFC congregation became the Karen church and offers religious services in Karen languages.²⁵ Currently, Karens can be found living in more than fourteen communities across Canada. Each has become the home to about four hundred families. Most Karens in Alberta are Christians with a few Buddhists and animists. Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Edmonton have Karen ministers and offer a blend of Karen and western worship traditions.²⁶

In 2005, the First Baptist Church (FBC) in Regina, Saskatchewan, was invited to assist two hundred people from refugee camps in Thailand to resettle in Canada. In 2006, one hundred Karen refugees arrived in Regina, and the FBC of Regina invited them to start their Sunday worship in the building. This resulted in a daughter congregation, the First Karen Baptist Church, with its own pastoral staff. This Karen church has grown and is now located in their own building in Regina. The FKBC is establishing affiliation with similar Karen congregations across Canada.²⁷ In Hamilton, Ontario, James North Baptist Church supported the Karen refugees in developing the Karen church and nurturing Thra Klo Say Wilson for pastoral training. While

-serving as the Karen pastoral intern for the congregation, Thra Klo Say took courses at Heritage College and Seminary in 2021.²⁸

In 2014, eight Karen Baptist churches across Canada joined together to help support each other and formed the Karen Baptist Churches of Canada (KBCC). It was incorporated on July 1, 2014, with eight directors who are the leaders of the eight Karen churches.²⁹ Like other Karens around the world, the Karens in Canada annually celebrate Karen New Year and Martyr's commemoration services at their churches.

The most significant Karen organization in Canada, the Karen Canadian Community (KCC), was formed in 1999 at Thunderbay, Ontario.³⁰ Its mission statement declares that "Karen community development and advocacy works are our goals and it will be our shared commitment throughout Canada since over 3000 Karen refugees from Thai-Border came to Canada in 2006."³¹ The third conference of the Karen Canadian Community (KCC) was held at Vancouver, British Columbia, July 31 to August 1, 2004 with about thirty representatives from eight different locations. The conference agreed that the Karen Canadian Community would serve as an umbrella organization for the Karen people in Canada and would represent the voices and the concerns of the Karen ethnic nationals in Canada in social and cultural matters, democracy and human rights, peace and justice, national reconciliation and economic developments in Kawthoolei, the homeland of Karen people inside Burma.³² Following its objectives, the KCC organizes workshops and training conferences while inviting Karen political leaders, distinguished Karen activists, and popular cultural troupes from all over the world. True to its purpose, the KCC pays more attention to political issues with less interest in Christian Karen affairs.

Karens in Norway

Similar to the KCC in Canada, the Karen organization in Norway views the Karen national issue as being unrelated to Christianity. In Norway, there are three Karen organizations, Karen Baptist Norway (KBN), Karen Community Norway (KCN), and Karen Youth Norway (KYN). KBN focused more on Christian celebrations such as Easter, Christmas, Father's Day, Mother's Day, Judson Day, and Ko Tha Byu Day. The celebrations of Karen New Year, Karen National Day, and Martyr's Day are organized by the KCN and the KYN. Although the majority of the leaders are Christians, they are very careful that religious issues do not challenge the unity of the Buddhist and animist Karens in the Norwegian community.

The first Karen who immigrated to Norway was Saw Nelson Ku in 1992. About ten years later, Karen refugees from Thai refugee camps arrived. Currently, the Karen population in Norway is slightly more than one thousand with 10 percent being Buddhists. They are spread over several areas, but most of the Karen people reside around the Oslo city area. In their attempt to preserve Karen culture, Karen-language teaching programs are arranged during summer camps and in Karen Baptist churches. Some parents teach their children at home. During the Karen national events, such as Karen National Day and Martyr's Day, the Karen culture takes center stage through such activities as the Don dance, cultural shows, Karen food competitions, Karen traditional dresses, and Karen traditional drums and other musical instruments.³³

Karens in Singapore

One of the countries where Karen people sojourned, not as refugees but through job permits, is Singapore. After 1962, due to socialism in Burma, many educated people tried to find jobs outside of Burma and some were able to settle in Singapore. In the early 1990s, Judson Baptist Church of Singapore (JBCS) was established by people from Burma with the first pastor, Rev. Saw Augustus, a Karen from Burma. Since there was no Karen church at that time, the Karen Christians in Singapore attended the JBCS together with Kachin, Mon, Chin, and Burmese Christians.

Before they could form a Karen church, the Karens in Singapore first had fellowship on Sunday at home and formed the Karen Baptist Christian Fellowship (KBCS) on November 30, 1997. Saw Michael Thaw Tha, who had worked as a radiologic technologist in Singapore since 1992, with his friends Saw Paul, Saw Takalor, Saw Htoo Tha, and a group of Karen people started a weekly worship service at their home in an area called Pasir Panjang. After Myanmar became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997, more people from Myanmar obtained work permits, and the congregation grew. Since there was not enough room at home, in 1998 the KBCF moved to the YMCA building at Orchard Road. When the weekly attendance reached between 350 to 400 in 2006, the Singapore Baptist Convention advised the leaders of the KBCF to be registered with the Registrar of Societies and to become a fully recognized organization in Singapore. As advised, they obtained the registration on January 25, 2006, and the KBCF became the Karen Baptist Church of Singapore (KBCS). Rev. Dr. Doh Say, former president of the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary, volunteers his services teaching Bible and guiding the church pastors and leaders as the emeritus pastor. The church has one senior pastor, Rev. Naw Lydia Po, one pastor, Saw Eh Htoo Nyo, and one assistant pastor,

Thramu Winsome Paul.³⁴ Like all the Karen churches around the world, the KBCS organizes Karen cultural activities, preserving Christian-oriented Karen identity.

The Karen diasporas around the world are different in their approaches to nationalist movements with some advocating armed struggle and others calling for dialogue on social justice and political reform. In conclusion, the singing of the Karen national anthem composed by a Christian pastor and the flags created by Christian leaders and used at all the Karen national celebrations signify the Christian-orientated Karen national identity.

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