

Thau Mountain

Location

Thau Tlang (The Mountain of Thau) is one of the most famous and beautiful peaks in Northern Chin State. It is a legendary mountain. It is a narrow shape mountain peak. The north side of the peak is very rocky and is pretty steep with white color rock. The mountain is beautiful and charming. It is situated in the western part of Thantlang Township, Chin State, Myanmar, near the Indian border. It is about two miles south of Ruakhua and about five miles north of Thau Village.

The peak is pretty high. Some cities such as Lunglei, Hnahthial and many other villages in Mizoram State, India can be seen from the peak. Many villages in Thantlang Township can be seen too. The top is a very quiet and joyful place.

The peak is in the territory of Ruakhua even though the name is called Thau Tlang (Mountain of Thau). It is connected with the famous forest the so-called Thautu in the south which is a virgin forest. The forest is very deep and even the summer sunlight cannot penetrate the ground in summer time because of thick branches and leaves.

Historical Background

The name "Thau Tlang" derived first from the name of the nearby village, "Thau," which was founded around before 1787 A.D by Pu Duh Kar. Thau was the largest and oldest village in the surrounding areas in that time. There was no *Ruakhua*, *Ruabuk* and *Bungtlang* yet when Thau Village was first established.

The territory of Thau covered a large area and it reached to Tio River and Tipi River in the west; Ruavung and then to Thau Tlang (Mountain of Thau) in the north. Thau Tlang was in the territory of Thau in that time. Therefore the name Thau Tlang derived from Thau Village. Thau Tlang literally means "Thau Mountain."

Thau Tlang was a sacred mountain for the heathen Thau villagers until the times of American missionary who came to the Chin Hills in 1899. Thau villagers worshiped and gave sacrifices to the natural spirits of the Thau Mountain each year. It was one of the most sacred and powerful mountains for the local people. Thau people used to pray to the spirits in that mountain when they encountered calamities in the village that "Please protect us from destruction of fire or storm etc. They used to cry and pray also to Ciriang Tlang. Thau Tlang is highly revered by the villagers of the surrounding villages. Many composers composed its name in the folksongs or love songs.

The British called Thau as "Tao" in the book of the Chin Hills. The second missionary to the Chin Hills, Dr. E.H. East, called Thau Tlang, "Tao Mountain" bases on the pronunciation of the surrounding villages. Dr. East arrived Rukhua on February 11, 1910. He described about Thau Tlang as follows:

The peculiar thing about this mountain (Tao mountain) is that it has a cap soft sandstone more than 1000 feet thick and all is horizontal. The view is superb and from here one can see Lushai (Mizoram State today) and Haka mountains at the same time. ¹

Dr. East left Ruakhua on Friday. He described his experience about riding his pony near Thau Tlang after leaving Ruakhua to go to Thau village. He mentioned Thau Tlang as "Yao Mountain" (It is probably his misspelling). He also mentioned the connection of "Thau Tlang" and "Thau" as follows:

Thau Village has 110 houses and about 600 inhabitants. It is a beautiful country and the woods on the south side of *Thau mountains* are full of Imperial Pigeons. They are very large and good to eat. ²

"Thau mountains" here means Thau Tlang today. The phrase "the woods on the south side of Thau mountains" means "Thautu" where many birds inhabited in the past (The jungle of Thautu and Thau Tlang is connected).

This historical facts show that Thau Tlang was named in reference to Thau Village since Thau Tlang was formally in Thau's territory long before the British era. Thau Tlang is officially known as "Thau Tlang" by all the local villages in Thantlang township. It has no other official name until today. Some people also called it "Vanga Tlang." It is a new name and is coined recently. But many people do not know or recognize that new name and it is not officially recognized. Thau Tlang is an official name.

Flora and Fauna

Thau Tlang is covered by deciduous forest. Villagers of Ruakhua declared it as a wildlife sanctuary. Both rhododendron arboretum (red) and rhododendron moulmeinense (white) grow around the peak of the mountain. Bamboos' family plants such as *pharh*, *ruangal* and *tekte* also are very plentiful. Wild banana are around the area. Popular trees such as *mual*, *hnahsau*, *mum*, *hriang*, *chengcher* are also in the area. Many different kinds of vine climbed on the trees that beatify the forest more. The popular wild fruits such as *thurthling*, *kethei*, *sarzuk* and *thanthei* also grown in Thau Tlang areas.

Many kinds reptile like snake and rat, insect and some kinds of butterfly can be found. Hundreds of unnamed plants and species can be found in this area. More researches need to be done that how many kinds of plants and species are in Thau Tlang areas. There are many indigenous medical plants such as *thinkawp*, *tawrel*, *thingsi* and *thingthupi* etc. Some people believe that there could be many indigenous medical plants more to be found in this forest. *Lungthi* (lit., stone-blood) are also found in the high rocks near the peak.

Sakhi, *sathar*, *saza*, *bear* and *wild boar* are around Thau Tlang areas. Carnivorous animal such as tigers and leopards are also in the jungle of Thau Tlang and Thautu. Many popular birds such as vapual

¹ Thang Za Tuan, *Burma Manuscript* (Yangon: Reprint, 1996), p. 213

² Burma Manuscript, p.216, 217

(horn bill), *vanvuk*, *vanga*, *varit*, *artau*, *vavu*, *vaking*, *valah*, *vangal*, *chimbu*, two kinds of hoopoe, three kinds of falcon and many other birds also inhabit in the area. *Lungpangkhuai* (rocky-bee) are also found.

Medical missionary, Dr. East mentioned how the birds are abundant in this area in his time that "the woods on the south of Thau mountains (Thau Tlang) are full of Imperial Pigeons."³ It is not clear what he meant by saying "Imperial Pigeons." It could be "*vaking or valah or thuro or vangal*" or something else. There are over 100 kinds of birds in Thau Tlang areas. Some of them have no name yet.

The singing birds such as *tlertlung*, *tuklo*, *fiakfairok*, *koktut* and *satututut* sing sweetly in the summer time and their sweet voices make Thau Tlang more charming. Thau Tlang can charm anybody because of its beauty and the sweet voices of the singing birds around it. If you are planning to have a honey moon or vacation on the peak of Thau Tlang, you are surely going to have one of the best times in your life and that would be an unforgettable memory.

The Height of Thau Tlang

The peak of Thau Mountain is about 7,200 (EST) above sea level (Some estimate it as 7,400 ft above sea level). The modern Burmese government has no official record of its height. Burma is lack of doing research and survey about the land, river, mountain peak etc., in her own country under Gen. Ne Win. There is no official record about its height until today.

The height of Thau Tlang and Phawngpui (Blue Mountain) in Mizoram State, India is said to be equal. According to the official website of the Mizoram Tourism Department, the height of Phawngpui is 2157 meters. It is 7076.78 ft.⁴ Therefore the height of Thau Tlang might be less or more than the height of Phawngpui's peak. A joint survey needs to be done by the Mizoram State Government and the Chin State Government as soon as possible to measure the height of Phawngpui and Thau Tlang together.

How to get there

Thau Tlang is about 65 miles west of Hakha, capital of the Chin State. Cars and motor cycles are available in Thantlang for rent. It can be reached via Hakha to Thantlang, then to Thangzang and then to Ruakhua village, which is in the foot of Thau Tlang. That is the shortest road. It is expensive for renting motor cycles and cars since the roads are rough, small and dangerous and are very tough to drive cars and motor cycles. If you plan to visit Thau Tlang you will need to carry extra gasoline for reserve. There is no shop to buy gasoline on the way. Villagers of Ruakhua are building the jeep road from Thangzang to Ruakhua voluntarily. It will soon be opened in the near future and getting to Thau Tlang would be easier.

Another road is via Thau Village. Thau Tlang is about 5 miles north of Thau. People can walk on foot or ride a horse from Thau to Thau Tlang. The road between Thau and Thau Tlang is so beautiful. It is mostly grassland. The views are spectacular. It is like California in the USA. The author called it "Chinland California" since the landscape is so beautiful and charming like California State.

³ *Burma Manuscript*, pg 217.

⁴ www.mizotourism.nic.in/phawngpui.htm

Where to Stay

It is best to stay in Ruakhua Village, which is a hill station. It is situated near the foot of Thau Tlang at a high altitude. From Ruakhua you will be looking down all other villages. The local people are very kind and all guests enjoy staying there. Good foods such as deer meats or *sakhi* meat or other wild meats are available most of the times. The fish in the streams around Ruakhua is one of the best fish in the country. It is so delicious. Ruakhua has a lot of "sia" (Mithun) and the dried meat of sia is available most of the time. The climate of Ruakhua is perfect. It is just in the foot of Thau Mountain. It is a small and quiet village but it is a popular and a charming place to stay.

Best time to visit

The best time to visit Thau Tlang is from November to May. February would be the best month to visit because the sky is very clear and the weather is not cold in that time. Visitors can see a very far place in the west, north and east but the south side because Ciriang Mountain covers the view in the south side. The peak is mostly wet and dark during monsoon season. Fogs and clouds cover the mountain top mostly in the monsoon because of high altitude. It is pretty scary when thick and black clouds pass the mountain top during monsoon season. There are a lot of land leech (*cangvat*) in the mountain areas during monsoon. Monsoon is the worst time to visit there.

Activities

It is a perfect place for hiking, rock climbing, rock rappelling and sight-seeing the birds, flowers, forests and surrounding areas. There is a famous place the so-called "Leitla" (a big lime stone cave) one and half mile away from Thau Tlang. Many people did not dare to enter the cave in the past before Christianity in the Chin Hills because they believed the evil spirits dwelled inside the cave.

Thau Tlang (Thau Mountain) is in fact one of the best places in the Chin State to visit for adventurers. No westerners visit the mountain top since the time of the British colony. No article has been written about it yet. No research has been done for the plants and species around the mountain. There are so much to learn about the plants and many species there. It is a perfect place for the researcher to do a research regarding plants, species and their environment.

One day this Thau Mountain would be one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Myanmar especially for eco-tourists because of her beauty, charm, good climates, having many plants and species, and a lot of sight-seeing. It would be a perfect place for rock climbing and rock rappelling for rock climbers. The hope is that this mountain will be a must visit place for eco-tourist in the near future.

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