Burmese Muslim Refugee Women: Stories of Civil War, Refugee Camps And New Americans

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BURMESE MUSLIM REFUGEE WOMEN:
STORIES OF CIVIL WAR, REFUGEE CAMPS
AND NEW AMERICANS

by

Karen Hunt Lambert

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
American Studies

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
2011
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ABSTRACT

Burmese Muslim Refugee Women:
Stories of Civil War, Refugee Camps
And New Americans

by

Karen Hunt Lambert, Master of Science
Utah State University, 2011

Major Professor: Dr. Lisa Gabbert
Department: English

This thesis includes the narratives of three Burmese Muslim refugee mothers who made their homes in Logan, Utah, within three years of locating in the United States. Each woman’s life is written about in a different style of writing – journalism, ethnography, and creative nonfiction – and is then followed by analysis looking at each piece in terms of representation.

(735 pages)
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Ma Htwe Hla, Ya He Ma and San Da whose lives I admire and whose stories I am grateful for the chance to begin to put in words. It’s also dedicated to my mother, Patricia Willis Hunt, and my father, Steven Charles Hunt, who have given me life and have encouraged me in my education and dreams, always desirous that I make the most out of that life they gave me, and my husband, Renn Sterling Lambert, who loves me for myself.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I’d like to thank the Graduate Student Senate at Utah State University for the $675 2010 GSS Research and Projects Grant, which allowed me to pay for interpretation and some transcription, making this thesis possible. In addition, I’m indebted to Ma Htwe Hla, Ya He Ma and San Da and their families for sharing their stories. Thanks to each of my interpreters, but especially to Hser Doh, whose generosity with his time enabled this thesis. Without the supportive environment created by Herald Journal editors Charlie McCollum and Emilie Wheeler I would have never started researching Logan’s population of Burmese refugees. Charlie also generously granted me use of my articles in this thesis. I also appreciate my co-workers who offered encouragement and made work enjoyable, particularly Kim Burgess who commented on an early draft of my analysis. Thanks to my chair, Dr. Lisa Gabbert, who agreed to work with me, helped shape my ideas, met with me via Skype over the summer so I could complete this project from out of state, and read numerous drafts, often at inconvenient times. She is a skilled editor and wise mentor. Also, thanks to my other committee members, Dr. Melody Graulich and Dr. Charles Waugh, for their assistance and feedback along the way. I also appreciate transcriptionist Angela Swaner. My thanks to my husband for his encouragement, support and assistance; my parents for plane tickets, reading drafts and babysitting; my sister, sister-in-law and mother-in-law who also watched Jackie; and each of my family members who believed in my talents. Thanks also to my Heavenly Father, who gave me my mind, talents and life along with opportunity to use each.

Karen H. Lambert
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION ...................................................................................................... iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..................................................................................... v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS ................................................................................ viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1. Overview ........................................................................................ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2. The Burmese Refugees: Historical Context ......................... 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3. Burmese Refugees in Logan ................................................... 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References ................................................................................................ 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 JOURNALISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1. Ma Htwe Hla ............................................................................... 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2. Journalism Analysis ............................................................... 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References ............................................................................................... 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ETHNOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1. Ya He Ma ..................................................................................... 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References ............................................................................................... 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2. Ethnography Analysis ............................................................. .91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References ............................................................................................... 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CREATIVE NONFICTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1. San Da ......................................................................................... 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography ......................................................................................... 161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2. Creative Nonfiction Analysis .............................................. 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References ............................................................................................... 186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................ 189

References ........................................................................................................ 194

APPENDICES ...................................................................................................... 195

Appendix A: Transcript of interview with Ma Htwe Hla ......................... 196
Appendix B: Transcript of interviews with Ya He Ma ......................... 217
Appendix C: Transcript of interviews with San Da ......................... 563
Appendix D: Transcript of interview with Hser Doh ......................... 683
Appendix E: Transcript of interview with Kyaw Eh ......................... 698
Appendix F: Transcript of interview with Alex Mortensen ............... 724
Appendix G: Herald Journal copyright permission letter ............... 734
# LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ma Htwe Hla sits on her couch</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ya He Ma stands outside her apartment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. San Da holds her daughter</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hser Doh “Chapter” with my daughter, Jackie, outside Riverwalk apartments in Logan, Utah</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ya He Ma poses</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The entire family</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Har Be Bar carries her brother</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ya He Ma (second from right) and her family</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ya He Ma and her daughter, Mae Yan Be, peel garlic</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mae Yan Be (left to right), Har Be Bar, Maung Maung</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Ka Me Din cracks a betel nut</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. This close up shows betel leaf, ground limestone and betel nuts</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Ya He Ma holds her son</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Ya He Ma said her family prefers a light breakfast</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ka Me Din tell Hser Doh about the posters</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ya He Ma left Burma because the family struggled</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Ka Me Din brings the smaller rice cooker to work</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Ya He Ma keeps her cupboards stocked full of Burmese staples</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ya He Ma set out this dessert</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Ya He Ma’s daughter, Fe Ra Da, eats dinner</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Ya He Ma smiles</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Ya He Ma paid friends in the Mae La Refugee Camp to mail her three pearl hair ornaments</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Makeup</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. On the last day of Ramadan Ya He Ma put her hair up</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Ya He Ma put posters on her wall of places she found beautiful</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
26. Ka Me Din holds his son ................................................................. 78
27. The family stands around their Volkswagen ................................. 79
28. Mae Yan Be wears circles of a powder called Shwe Pyi Nann ............ 80
29. Har Be Bar (left) and Mae Yan dress up ........................................... 81
30. Daughters Har Be Bar (above, left and below, right) and Mae Yan Be dress up for Ramadan ................................................................. 82
31. Ka Me Din shows me his calendar from the Islamic Society ............. 83
32. At Ramadan families exchanged desserts ....................................... 84
33. I thought it interesting to see the clips each of the daughters wore ...... 85
34. Ya He Ma (left) watches as a neighbor girl blows bubbles .............. 87
35. My daughter, Jacqueline, plays with San Da’s son ......................... 114
36. San Da (above) sits with her children ............................................. 115
37. Below, San Da used metallic Christmas wrapping paper ................. 115
38. San Da holds her daughter, Myo Myo Win ................................... 116
39. San Da’s daughter takes fresh fruit out of the family’s dishwasher ... 118
40. Zaw Min Tun looks at a movie cover .............................................. 122
41. I married when I was 27 ............................................................... 124
42. This is me (left) with my grandma Winona Willis ......................... 127
43. My husband snaps a shot as I hold Jackie by my desk ................... 128
44. Naing Lin removes his shoes before entering the apartment .......... 129
45. On the wall across from the couch, San Da displayed photographs ... 130
46. My mother holds my daughter, Jackie .......................................... 135
47. Myo Myo Win runs around the apartment .................................... 137
48. San Da crushes garlic, but pauses to laugh with her daughter ........... 138
49. My husband and I carry our first child .......................................... 139
50. San Da’s sister, who still lives in the Mae La Refugee Camp, talks .... 141
51. San Da balances eggs on the lid of her pan while cooking ............. 144
52. San Da cuts some vegetables while preparing dinner .................... 145
53. San Da’s niece and nephew pose in front of the Mosque .................. 147
54. San Da shares the Sobei ................................................................. 149
55. Myo Myo Win carries a ball ................................................................ 151
56. My daughter, Jackie, plays with San Da’s youngest two children .......... 152
57. San Da sells betel leaves and betel nuts to raise money ......................... 154
58. San Da gives a hug to my daughter, Jackie .......................................... 156
59. Before I defended my thesis in January 2011, I dropped by San Da’s ....... 157
60. San Da (left) and I (right) hold our daughters ..................................... 158
61. San Da keeps her cupboards stocked ............................................... 161
62. San Da cooks a traditional Burmese meal ....................................... 162
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PART 1. OVERVIEW

A primary project of contemporary American Studies is recuperating voices from women, minorities and others forgotten in traditional history books. Prior to the 1970s, the contributions of elite white men dominated written histories in the U.S. While white men offer an important perspective, and the grouping is in itself diverse, U.S. history was rather limited of other viewpoints and the advantages they bring (D. Wolf 1996: 15). In the past three to four decades, scholars have been working hard to recuperate voices not included in the past.

As an undergraduate I was familiar with work to rediscover the contributions of women and minorities and include their perspectives on history. When I entered my master’s program in American Studies at Utah State University, however, I began to realize the extent of the progress made to reclaim Western women and minority voices, particularly those of Western women writers, Mexican Americans and Asian Americans (Austin 1994; Foote 1886; Kingston 1980; Cantu’ 1995; Rivera 2006; Lee 2001). I came to have greater appreciation for some of the unique contributions those from a wide variety of perspectives can bring. Female photographers, for instance, offered a different perspective on the Native Americans than the photographs of men that had been more popularly studied (Bernardin et al. 2003). I also learned how diaries and examples of material culture, like recipe books and weavings, can be used to learn about women
from the past (Sinor 2002; Blew 2004; Ulrich 1991; Ulrich 2002; Cooke and MacDowell 2005). These projects impressed me because they were concerned not just with bringing to light the contributions and perspectives of women with talents in the arts, like writers Mary Hallock Foote and Mary Austin, but offered the perspective of so-called “ordinary” women who farmsteaded, sewed, cooked, raised children or otherwise went about the day-to-day acts of living, and in doing so built the foundations of our society.

While studying at Utah State University, I was also employed fulltime as a reporter for the *Logan Herald Journal* for two years of my graduate program. The Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics lists giving voice as one of the duties of a journalist, and I saw that as my role in my quest to be a top reporter for my newspaper (The Society of Professional Journalists 1996). I believed by including numerous voices, at times even those I found offensive, I was allowing the public to sort through the strongest voices on each issue and make informed decisions. I was thrilled when editor Tyler Riggs assigned me the “diversity beat” because it gave me reason to seek out voices and perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked in other sections of the newspaper. In late 2008, several people contacted the paper about a new population of Burmese refugees who had made their homes in the farming community of Cache Valley, Utah, and were the subject of a community wide relief effort. As I was the diversity reporter, my editor at that time, Emilie Wheeler, gave me the story. I made it into a series because I thought that looking at these refugees’ lives over time would be interesting to readers, especially as they were in a stage of adjusting to a new culture,
and I felt their stories and lives were inspiring. It occurred to me, in light of my coursework at the same time, that these Burmese refugees were also a new group of U.S. residents who would contribute to the fabric our community.

For my thesis, I decided to expand my work as a journalist and document the stories of these Burmese refugees. I focused on the lives of three Burmese Muslim refugee women, Ma Htwe Hla, Ya He Ma, and San Da. I chose to work with them in part because they were from the local community of new refugees; because they agreed to interviews with me and were recommended by either the English Language Center or my translator, Hser Doh; and because I felt they had a double challenge living in the United States, in being both refugees and followers of a minority religion outside the nation’s Judeo-Christian tradition. Each of these three women lives in Logan, Utah, and has lived here between one and four years. Each of them came here due to work available at JBS meat packing plant. Not only do these women have a unique perspective and interesting stories to share, but as I discovered during my research there is very little information available on the lives of Burmese Muslim refugees in the U.S. I hoped that through my project I could preserve their stories for the benefit of other researchers, as well as the community and their families.

At first I presumed that simply writing their stories would give them “voice,” but as I proceeded with this project I quickly became mired in issues of representation. For instance, during the time I was writing my thesis I was enrolled in a creative nonfiction course and under pressure to put more of myself into the writing, add more imagery and recreate scenes. Yet, as I wanted to create a historic document, I had concerns about
taking the focus away from the subject to myself. On the other hand, I also liked the idea of mastering this new style of writing that I found beautiful and thought could allow me to communicate to readers on new levels. At the same time, I was also struggling to determine if I’d rather write in a more academic style or in a more straight-forward journalistic style.

Eventually, I decided to write about these three women’s lives using a different style of writing for each and then analyze that writing using theories about representation borrowed from a variety of fields. By doing so, I hoped to obtain insight on the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each form, how it can best be used to give others voice, and otherwise explore more ethical ways of doing writing in the future. As I did so, the lines between styles began to merge into more of a continuum, rather than absolute boundaries and I began to see style as an evolving conversation. I glimpsed how I could frame similar information into community journalism, ethnography or creative nonfiction to reach different audiences and how, if done well, each form would shape how much and what types of information I could discuss. Ultimately, I believe each type of writing has strengths in providing voice. However, creative nonfiction and ethnography seem to provide those considered “ordinary” greater opportunity to speak, as these forms have more venues for portrayals of everyday living, whereas the news typically finds its emphasis in the extraordinary, and even series like mine that look at daily life are short and written to provide information quickly and efficiently. However, journalists do have great access to information and people, which puts them in an advantageous position for smaller projects, and they have the good fortune of an easier
path to publication, in newspapers with a larger readership than that of many scholarly and literary journals.

Over the last thirty years there have been dramatic shifts in the way academics have viewed representation (Clifford 1983: 118). In anthropology for example, ethnographers strove for objectivity as a way to boost their authority (Clifford 1983: 121). Ethnographers such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown visited “exotic” groups, like the Trobiand Islanders, Tikopia, Samoans and the Nuer, and they described what they learned in the form of a factual account (Clifford 1983: 120-121). Particularly after World War II, new voices rose up from amongst those who had been studied and protested the way they had been depicted academically, in journalism, and in literature (Clifford 1983: 119-120; Said 1978: 11 and 23). One of the most influential such works, *Orientalism* (1979) by Edward Said, is particularly pertinent for my project as Said looked at the representations of Muslim Arabs and suggested that they were “Othered” by Western culture, meaning that they were defined from within an artificial construct of colonial Western thought (Said 1978: 11). He writes: “… [F]or a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second …. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement with the Orient almost since the time of Homer” (Said 1978: 11). Said is saying that the work done on Asia by the French, English and Americans was tinged by their colonial history. As a result, they
often represented those from Asia in ways that made them appear submissive, rather than empowered. Said also stresses the need to look at “contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a liberating or nonrepressive and nonmanipulative perspectives” (Said 1978: 23-24). Drawing on his insights, in this thesis I hope to insert myself within a conversation of scholarship about how to write about people from other cultures in such a manner.

To do so, I’ve drawn on feminist scholarship, especially scholarship written since the 1980s. Post-war feminists were primarily interested in identifying and explaining a problem they defined as the “Othering” of women (Beauvoir 2010; Ortner 1972; Rosaldo 1974), while later scholarship began to explore the problem Said had recognized – in his words to “rethink the whole complex problem of knowledge and power” (Said 1978: 23-24). At first, these discussions had to do with the importance of “research by women, with women and for women” and “making women’s work visible” (D. Wolf 1996: vi-ix). As a woman, I was qualified to write about women according to this argument. But, as this discussion matured it became clear that even when women are doing fieldwork with other women, problems of power differences and representation persisted (D. Wolf 1996: 1). As an American, who was closely associated with the agencies that were helping the refugees, as well as someone who is well educated and middle class, these issues spoke to me.

As feminists developed new methods of representation, including involving women more in the research or using their stories to advocate for certain ideas to “liberate” women, new problems emerged that led some scholars to question whether
ethnography could ethically be done at all (M. Wolf 1996: 216) and particularly if it should be done by someone outside of the group being studied (D. Wolf 1996: 13). Ironically, this shift was a dramatic contrast to the beginnings of ethnography, when insiders were looked at with scrutiny and researchers were almost always foreigners studying the exotic (Clifford 1983: 120-121). Although these issues remain unresolved, many scholars today acknowledge that different people bring a different perspective to research, that many perspectives can be good and that issues of insiderness and outsiderness are never clearcut (D. Wolf 1996: 15-16; Lal 1996: 186, 199). This is important because while we strive to present the truth our ability to do so is filtered by our own experience and perspectives and so our representation is inherently flawed.

These newer shifts seemed to validate that I, a white American well-educated woman might have something worth saying about three Burmese Muslim refugee women whom I greatly admired. And yet, they also pointed out that personal background, in addition to race, class and gender, comes into play. As a result, it is important first to discuss my own background and the ways in which it intersects with this project and informs my ways of seeing. Just as Said wrote from his own experience, my individual background forms the context for my interest in documenting the lives of these three Burmese Muslim refugee mothers.

First and foremost, I identify with these women in some ways, not because I am Burmese, Muslim or a refugee, but rather because I’m a member of a U.S. minority religion, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-days, which historically was persecuted by the government and whose early members were driven out of their own country, the
U.S., into what was, when they first left, Mexico. Muslim women are at times misrepresented in the public sphere as oppressed, even when they personally choose and value their religion and its tenants. Latter-day Saint women are sometimes seen likewise, due to the fact that they place high esteem on traditional roles like motherhood, and also as a result of misinformation.

I also connect to these three women because, like them, I am a mother. I believe motherhood has been a vital contribution of women for thousands of years and by ignoring that role one demeans the historical contribution of many women. By saying this, I’m not saying something new in light of all the work that has been done over the last decades, but as Diane Wolf wrote, according to the critique of Chandra Mohanty First World women have often given priority to research about the “paid work and labor” of Third World Women, rather than “family, children and friendships” (qtd. in D. Wolf 1996: 33).

Finally, I sometimes felt that LDS women were voiceless in the larger society and this realization stimulated my interest in giving the voiceless a voice. For instance, I had never read the poetry of LDS poet Eliza R. Snow – although she’s among the most prominent women in early LDS history – until doing my own independent research as an undergraduate. And I used to ponder on the fact that the story of the LDS stay-at-home mother was often untold to the outside world because they were at home with their children rather than in the workforce, where they could tell their own tales. Perhaps that is what first piqued my interest in giving a voice to women who were engaged in some of the “ordinary” things that I believed made them extraordinary.
Ultimately, in telling the story of Ma Htwe Hla, Ya He Ma, and San Da, I hoped to give them a voice. Refugees literally are voiceless to many people in the U.S. due to significant linguistic and cultural differences. Having fled from violence and religious and political persecution, they are in a land with strangers with intense pressures to adopt their ways and cultural forces that often oppose their own beliefs and values. According to the U.S. Refugee Processing Center, “many refugees who resettle in the U.S. report that one of the most difficult adjustments is to changes in traditional family roles.” These adjustments include adapting to a culture where, in many families, both the husband and the wife work outside the home and where children may adapt to the local culture and learn English more quickly, according to the report (U.S. Refugee Processing Center 2010).

I think partly I felt drawn to these Muslim women because I wanted to validate the importance of their experiences and perspectives amidst pressures they must have felt to adapt to the Western world. My primary goal was to benefit the women I was writing about and represent them accurately and in a way accessible to the public. I believed that given all of the refugees’ time that I had taken, I owed it to them to not use their narratives for my indiscriminate purpose but to write them in a way helpful to them and their families and to others in the community who would like to read about their lives.

In order to do this and satisfy my academic aspirations at the same time, I have experimented with three styles of writing since problems of representation are also problems of writing. I chose the genres of journalism, ethnography and creative
nonfiction as different ways to tell stories and shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of each genre or style. Analyzing my writing in terms of representation allows me to contribute to an important conversation from the perspective of someone who has had experience in three different genres, while also growing personally as a writer and helping others also gain similar insights from my reflections. Specifically, I explore the following questions: “How do the conventions of journalism, oral history and creative nonfiction shape the information gathering and writing process, and so effect the representation of a vulnerable population of new refugees? In what ways does each style empower them and give them a voice? In what way might a style disempower them and take away their voice?”

PART 2. THE BURMESE REFUGEES: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Burma’s approximately 55 million residents are among the most ethnically diverse in the world (Barron et al. 2007: 2). Over the last 2,000 years, migrants have traveled on routes between China, India and Thailand (Barron et al. 2007: 2). As a result, the country just smaller than Texas is the home of eight major ethnic groups and 130 subgroups. The majority group, the Burmans, make up 68 percent of the estimated 55 million residents (Barron et al. 2007: 2; ten Veen 2005: 5). Not counted among any of the ethnic groups, and often not considered full citizens, are the Muslims who make up at least 4 percent of the population (Selth 2003: 3 and 5; ten Veen 2005: 9). The country is enmeshed in a civil war that has lasted for more than half a century, that some believe to be the longest running in the world (Barron et al. 2007: 6).
Burma’s history is long and so complex that an adequate summary is impossible within these pages. Early on Burma was ruled by a series of monarchs or dynasties until in 1885 England colonized the territory (Yegar 2002: 27-35; Barron et al. 2007: 6), sending the last king into exile (Thwe 2002: 13; Myint-U 2006: 26). By World War II, a pro-independence movement led by Aung San set Burma free from British rule in January 1948. A reported rival assassinated Aung San just months before the victory. At independence, civil war broke out, though the country’s first Prime Minister U Nu tried to work with disparate parties and established a democracy during his intermittent leadership from roughly 1984 to 1962. During that period, he voluntarily gave up power when he lost election in 1956, and regained power in the following election. Then in 1962, Ne Win took control by force and imposed military rule, razing villages to the ground, nationalizing private industry, expelling foreigners and closing the country off to the outside world (Silverstein 1990: 117; Barron et al. 2007: 6-7).

When a people’s uprising for democracy took place Aug. 8, 1988 (8/8/88), the military regime killed an estimated 3,000 people (Barron et al. 2007: 7; Silverstein 1990: 124 and 126). Ne Win stepped aside, although some still believed he wielded power behind the scenes, and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) took control, promising a general election (Barron et al. 2007: 7; Silverstein 1990: 124 and 126). During this time Aung San’s daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, formed a political party called the National League for Democracy. Although the SLORC arrested thousands of her supporters and put her under house arrest, her party won more than eighty percent of the parliamentary vote (Silverstein 1990: 129-130 and 132; Barron et
al. 2007: 7). Today the military regime, renamed the State Peace and Development Council, is still in power and until 2010 Aung San Suu Kyi remained confined in her family home in Rangoon, while other possible political opponents to the military regime have also been imprisoned or mysteriously disappeared (Silverstein 1990).

Burma’s first constitution, adopted in 1948, granted freedom of faith and worship to all, but that hasn’t been the practice since the Tatmadaw seized power in 1962 (Selth 2003: 3-4). Selth writes:

In 2001 and 2002 Burma was designated a ‘Country of Particular Concern’ by the U.S., for severe violations of religious freedom. In a 2003 report to Congress on the human rights situation in Burma, the State Department declared that ‘Religious minorities (particularly Christians and Muslims) are discriminated against and any form of proselytizing activity is actively discouraged.” (Selth 2003: 4)

Government leaders have raped, killed, forced into menial labor and chased Muslims out of the country, into refugee camps (Selth 2003: 8-9; ten Veen 2005: 7).

Many native Burmans believe that to be a true Burmese one must be Buddhist, and thus suspect that people who are Christian or Muslim owe their primary allegiance to another country, although most of those groups have long been isolated from wider religious movements. Also, many native Burmans equate Christians and Muslims with the ethnic minorities. In 2001, a racist pamphlet called “The Fear of Losing One’s Race” was widely circulated (Selth 2003: 9). Many minorities lack the same educational and employment opportunities. Some of those ethnic minorities are involved with armed insurgencies against the central government. Due to the false reports from the
government-controlled media, many native Burmans believe the ethnic minorities are
opium dealers and terrorists (Silverstein 1990).

Mostly followers of Sunni Islam, Burma’s Muslims can be divided into four
groups: descendents of seafarers and early traders of mostly Arab, Persian and Indian
ethnicity; Chinese Muslims; Muslims who immigrated during British colonial rule,
including many from India; and the Rohingyas of Arakhan, a large area in Burma
(Yegar 2002: 1-6 and 19-22; Selth 2003: 5-7). It’s difficult to get accurate figures about
the religious makeup of Burma. The census says there are fifty million people, with
nearly ninety percent Theravada Buddhists. However, author Andrew Selth believes the
census numbers to be inflated. Selth said more likely eighty percent of the country are
Theravada Buddhist, leaving ten million followers of other creeds (Selth 2003).

The numerous ethnic groups in Burma generally share some religious beliefs.
Ethnic Burmans are usually Buddhist, as are the Shans and Mons. The four percent of
the population who are Christian are generally the Kachin, Chin, Naga. The Karenni and
Karen also include many Christians, but some are also Buddhist. Ethnic Indian groups,
mainly Tamils and Bengalis, practice Hinduism. Also, many of the Buddhists and those
of other faiths also practice animist beliefs, with regard to pre-Buddhist deities called
Nats. Many in rural areas practice pure animism. In addition, there’s a group of less than
500 Jews (Selth 2003: 3).

Selth estimates at least four percent of Burma’s population are Muslim, most
who live in the Arakan State. However, some scholars and expatriate groups place this
figure much higher, even as high as sixteen percent or eight million Muslims (Selth
2003: 5). In part, these differences result from the fact that a large number of Burma’s Muslims are not considered full citizens, although their families have lived there for generations (Yegar 2002: 62; Selth 2003: 5).

While the current government of the Union of Burma asked that it be referred to as the Union of Myanmar, a name adopted by the United Nations and the international business community, the United States and some other nations do not recognize the name or government and continue to call the country Burma (ten Veen 2005: 5). I have chosen to use the words Burma, Burman and Burmese, because the refugees do the same.

Burma’s economic and political status has declined since it came under military rule in 1962. Today the U.S. government considers Burma one of the least developed and least free countries in the world. The ongoing warfare and government persecution of ethnic and religious minorities have led many to flee the country for refugee camps in Thailand, Bangladesh and surrounding countries. Between 1975 and April 30, 2011, the U.S. admitted nearly 3 million refugees, almost half who were from Asia. Since 2003, more than 80,000 of the refugees the U.S. admitted were from Burma, according to the Department of State’s Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (U.S. Refugee Processing Center 2011). As of 2011, the U.S. accepts approximately 80,000 refugees a year for third-country resettlement, three times the number of all the other countries in the world combined (Brown 2011). The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees determines whether to give refugee status, based on the definition established at the 1951 Refugee Convention, which stated that a refugee is a person who:
owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2011).

Refugees generally described the refugee camps in Thailand as prison-like in that you can go in, but refugees were supposed to obtain permission to leave. Considered illegal immigrants in Thailand, the refugees had little opportunity for work. They primarily relied on the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, the United Nations and other relief organizations for food, necessities and protection. Many people have lived for a decade or more in the camps. They’ve attempted to recreate a sense of community there, as volunteer teachers have organized schools for the children, and people do odd jobs like selling cookies or sewing for extra money. The U.S. and other countries like Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada offer a limited number of refugees a path to citizenship and as a result some of the refugees choose to go through an extensive process to see if they can qualify to leave for another country. Others choose to remain, hoping one day to return to Burma.

PART 3. BURMESE REFUGEES IN LOGAN

Between approximately 2007 and 2010, more than 130 Burmese refugees made their homes in Logan to escape civil war in their own country and the prison-like environment in Thailand refugee camps. After the U.S. government assigns refugees to a U.S. state, refugees have incentive to stay where they are assigned for at least eight months since the federal government will provide funding to a nonprofit there to help
the refugee with basic needs and health care for that period of time (U.S. Refugee Processing Center 2010).

Although refugees spread across the world, many keep in close contact and through this network friends and relatives passed along the word that JBS in Logan offered living wages to those with minimal English skills. As a result, both those who originally came to Utah and those who first arrived in other states have made their way to Cache Valley, Utah. The total number of refugees in Cache Valley, Utah, changes as people continuously come and go. In May 2010, my translator Hser Doh, who was intimately acquainted with the community, estimated there were 130 refugees in Logan, approximately 30 of who were Muslim. A larger number of the refugees are Karen, many who are Baptist, animist, Buddhist or some combination thereof (Barron et al. 2007: 31-32). The Muslim refugee experience is much less documented than that of the Karen.

Cache County residents, along with institutions such as churches, civic clubs, nonprofits and government agencies, grouped together to assist the refugees’ adjustment to a drastically different culture. Organizations that have provided assistance include the Cache Valley Refugee Organization, created to address the needs of the Burmese refugees; the English Language Center; the Department of Workforce Services; the Logan Police department; Wells Fargo Bank; members of several churches; Bear River Health Department; the Lion’s Club; the Ten Club; and many other civic groups, organizations and families.
The three women I focused on have similarities to their stories: They left Burma due to civil war; they lived for many years in the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand; and then they came to the U.S. where they’ve lived between two and five years. Each of them came to Logan due to work opportunities for their family at JBS meat packing plant in Hyrum, Utah, where ironically these Muslim refugees helped prepare beef that is not halal, or processed in an acceptable way that they could eat it. The three women I wrote about shared other similarities – each was learning English at the English Language Center to expand her opportunities in the U.S., each gave a sewing machine a prominent place in her living room, each cooked authentic Burmese foods in accord to Muslim dietary laws, and each hoped for a bright future for her children.

Ma Htwe Hla

Ma Htwe Hla’s birthday is Jan. 1, 1966, making her 42 when I first interviewed her in February 2009. Her family lived in Illinois before they came to Logan for better paying work at JBS. She lived just west of downtown Logan. She and her husband, Ba Hlaing, had six children, one daughter-in-law and one grandson. The family spoke Burmese at home and observed regular prayers. Ma Htwe Hla wore a beautifully made head covering, rather
like an elaborate hat, when going outside, but not a veil. She kept busy cleaning, cooking, sewing and teaching her children. For a while, her oldest son, Sai Pho Lar, and his wife and her grandson lived with her, but he and his family later found their own apartment nearby. As the only one in the family with a car, Sai Pho Lar provided transportation. Ma Htwe Hla’s family was one of the first families of refugees to move to Logan. I wrote about her in Chapter 2, using a journalistic style.

Ya He Ma

Ya He Ma used Jan. 1, 1972 as her birthday, making her 37 when I began interviewing her in October 2009. She left Burma in 2000 and stayed in the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand for seven years before coming to the U.S. She lived on the southwest side of Logan with her husband, Ka Me Din, and her four children, at Riverwalk apartments where many of the refugees lived. She worked for JBS meat packing plant in Hyrum, Utah, until her son was born in September 2009. Her husband continued to work there. Her two oldest girls attended Logan High School and her youngest daughter attended Hillcrest Elementary. Her
son, just more than a month old when I met her, was the first family member born in the U.S. Ya He Ma only finished school through the third grade in Burma and continued her formal education through English classes. I never saw her wear a head covering. She considered herself a devout Muslim and worked to teach that tradition to her children. I wrote about her in Chapter 3, using an ethnographic style.

San Da

San Da said she was born Jan. 1, 1979, as she also does not know her exact birthday. She married at age 16 and has four children. She and her husband lived in Riverwalk Apartments with their three boys, who were born in 1997, 2000 and 2007, and a daughter born March 12, 2009. The daughter, Myo Myo Win, was born in the U.S. San Da often wore a traditional head covering for pictures, but not for our conversations. She lived for about a year in Salt Lake City and moved to Logan in early fall of 2009. However, her husband had been working in Logan much longer. Like many of the other Burmese refugee men, he commuted between Logan and Salt Lake City so he could work at JBS in Hyrum and still live with his family in Salt Lake City. Previously, he lived with a roommate in Logan during the week and with his wife and children on
weekends. San Da said when she and her family arrived as refugees in Salt Lake City they obtained an apartment with a contract. After a year, the contract expired and she was able to move her family to Logan. She said she was glad to be with her husband, but missed her friends and extended family in Salt Lake City. I wrote about her in Chapter 4, using a creative nonfiction style.

***

While my thesis focused on three Burmese, Muslim, refugee women, I must introduce several other refugees in order to credit those whose words I am portraying. For while I am interested in the lives of Ma Htwe Hla, Ya He Ma and San Da, their words were first interpreted and relayed to me through an interpreter. For most of my project I worked with Hser Doh, who goes by the nickname “Chapter,” but I also worked some with Kyaw Eh who goes by the nickname “Joe,” as well as Lah She Wah and Nyunt Aye.

*Hser Doh ‘Chapter’*

Hser Doh, who was 23 when this project started, grew up in Tu Kaw Koh in the Kawkareik township in the state of Karen in Burma. He is Karen. His parents were farmers who he said didn’t know about the politics of the country. He attended school in another town and was in that town, eating lunch with his aunt and uncle, when he had to flee to the Mae La Refugee Camp. In an early interview, he said the military government drove him to the refugee camps because they only wanted those who spoke
Burmese to live in Burma and due to some of the Karen people’s desires for a democratic government.

Hser Doh and Kyaw Eh, my other translator, were roommates both in Salt Lake City and Logan until Kyaw Eh moved back to Salt Lake City and got married. Hser Doh worked at JBS meat packing company in Logan before obtaining work at Icon Health and Fitness where he worked for a short time. Chapter worked hard to improve his English skills and his talent for languages helped him obtain work at the English Language Center. He interpreted what the teachers said in the early English classes and also visited refugees in the community to help them understand bills and communicate with doctors, landlords, insurance agencies and others.

While visiting the Bear River Health Department to translate for the refugees, he became friends with Dr. Ed Redd, who invited him to speak to youth at his church about his experiences as a refugee. Later, Chapter called him back and asked to attend church with him and eventually Chapter decided to convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Chapter started serving a mission for his new faith Aug. 11, 2010, in Los Angeles, California. He had previously been pursing his GED so he could attend college and earn a nursing degree. He would also like to return to visit his family in Burma – although there’s a chance he could not return as this would negatively impact
his refugee status – and he hopes to find ways to help his family and the people in
Burma and the refugee camp, perhaps with medical care.

*Kyaw Eh ‘Joe’*

Kyaw Eh, born Aug. 15, 1979, was 29 when he first translated for me. He fled
the state of Karen in Burma when he was about 19. His father fought and died in the
Karen military. Kyaw Eh said his father wanted democracy rather than the military rule
currently in place in the country. Kyaw Eh spent eight years in a refugee camp in
Thailand. Eventually, the United Nations offered his family a chance to apply for
amnesty and while the other members of his family declined, hoping to return to Burma
someday, he asked to come to the United States. He speaks five languages, including
English, Burmese and Karen, which helped him obtain a part-time spot with the English
Language Center and helped him to advance in his job at JBS meat packing company.
Later, it also allowed him to obtain a full-time job as a refugee coordinator with the
Asian Association in Salt Lake City. While he lived in Salt Lake City he married to Lah
She Wah, and he later returned to Logan to work at JBS so he could be with his wife, as
she also works at JBS.

*Lah She Wah*

Lah She Wah, born Sept. 23, 1983, lived in the Mae La Refugee camp for nine
or ten years. She compares the camp to a prison, but though she liked Burma better, she
left to flee oppression, violence and civil war. In Burma her father fought in the military
group called the Karen National Union. However, he no longer fights because he
converted from Christianity to become a Buddhist monk. Her parents are no longer married, which she said makes her mom happy because her mother often had to flee the government for safety when married to her father and her father liked to drink alcohol a lot.

While living in Burma, she said that one day she was with two friends on the outskirts of her village when she heard gunshots, and people said, “Run, they’re burning the village.” She was sixteen or seventeen years old and scared and so she and her friends ran. That evening they were very hungry, but had brought no food. They kept breaking into tears. Mosquitoes kept biting them. They ate bamboo shoots growing in the jungle and banana trees. The banana trees were small and they couldn’t find any bananas on them, but they chewed them to get the liquid out. Two days after they left, they ran into people who were working and asked them for food because they were so hungry. The people asked them where they were from, and she and her friends told them the name of their village. The people said that the village had been burned and that they should go to the refugee camp. She said that the people went with them to the refugee camp, but since none of them knew where it was, they just wandered through the jungle until they eventually found it.

In Karen state Lah She Wah worked for the Karen Women’s Organization for women’s rights. The group helped women obtain education and become literate because, she said, many Karen people can only read and write their name. Her organization also helps women find jobs like weaving and teaching literacy so they can
earn pocket money. While traveling for the Karen Women’s Organization inside of the refugee camp, she met Joe, who is now her husband and is another of my interpreters.

Nyunt Aye

I wasn’t able to obtain much information about Nyunt Aye as our last two appointments fell through, one where I planned to hear him speak about his life and another where we planned to conduct an interview and also talk about his life. He was quite busy as he also worked as the interpreter for the English Language Center. Nyunt Aye is Karen. He is from the Umphium Mai Refugee Camp, a different camp than any of the other refugees I have interviewed. He said there were quite a few refugees in Logan from his camp also, but not as many as from the Mae La Camp because Mae La is the largest. In addition, he was the youngest of my translators, at age 21 when he worked for me, and lived with his parents in Riverwalk Apartments. He was single and told me my former interpreter, Hser Doh “Chapter,” was his best friend.

I hope that through my following pieces of writing, I indeed can provide voice to three Burmese, Muslim refugee mothers, and to some extent the new community of refugees in Cache Valley, Utah.

REFERENCES


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CHAPTER 2

JOURNALISM

PART 1. MA HTWE HLA

This section includes my articles for the Herald Journal, used with permission from my Managing Editor Charlie McCollum and Editor Emilie Wheeler.
Canyon crash victims identified

Witness pulled crying tot from burning vehicle

By Doris W. Hunter

Police identified the three siblings who died in a weekend crash in Sanpete County. The three children—2-year-old Remark Beck, 4-year-old Autumn Beck, and 8-year-old Nicholas Beck—died in the early Sunday crash on U.S. Highway 89 near Manila. All three were in a vehicle driven by their 20-year-old brother, Jesse Beck.

A 12-year-old boy who was riding in the vehicle survived the crash and was airlifted to a hospital in Logan. The boy's condition was not immediately available.

The family has been described as close-knit, and the community is mourning the loss of the three children.

Our new neighbors

More than 100 Burmese refugees now call valley home

By Patzer Lamer

Valley residents have welcomed more than 100 Burmese refugees who have arrived in the area in recent months. The refugees, who fled from Myanmar (Burma) due to political and religious discrimination, are now living in a camp set up by the U.S. government.

The refugees will be given assistance with housing, food, and medical care as they adjust to their new lives in the United States. The refugees are being housed in a former military base in the area.

Auto bailout bill chugs ahead

By Scott S. Hunter

The House of Representatives has passed the auto bailout bill, which provides $700 billion in federal aid to auto manufacturers and their suppliers. The bill will now move to the Senate for consideration.

India: Killer of a recruited street thug

The investigation into the murder of a recruited street thug in Mumbai has been ongoing for several weeks. The suspect, a 22-year-old man, was arrested after police found evidence linking him to the crime.

The suspect had been a member of a local gang, which was involved in a number of criminal activities. The murder was a result of a gang war, according to police.
Burmese refugees settle in Cache Valley

Children adjusting to American life

"It's a little different than I'd heard it would be like before I came here. I've been through many changes, I have to go to school to learn English and everything is free -

— Noi Za Mar
16 years old

Burmese refugee from Nal Sa Min and her family, left this country, set up with their family in the English Language Center on Thursday.

They say they were leaving for the United States on Thursday, but they had to leave early because of the rain. They are not sure when they will return to their home. However, they are happy that they have a new home in the United States.

Burmese refugees Kyo Ma and his family, left this country, set up with their family in the English Language Center on Thursday.

He says they were leaving for the United States on Thursday, but they had to leave early because of the rain. They are not sure when they will return to their home. However, they are happy that they have a new home in the United States.

Employee of the Week

Noi Za Mar

The employee of the week is a Burmese refugee who was born in Myanmar. He has been working at a local restaurant for two years and he enjoys learning about American culture.

National weather conditions

Today

Partly sunny with a 40 percent chance of showers. Highs are in the upper 70s.

Monday

Snow likely, a 60 percent chance of showers. Highs near 40.

Extended

Partly sunny through Thursday. Snow showers possible Friday night. Rain is possible Saturday night.

Air quality advisory

No air quality advisory.

Backcountry avalanche danger

No backcountry avalanche danger.

Cache Valley forecast provided by the National Weather Service — Up ahead! Forecast provided by Accu-Weather.

Sunday spotlight

"It's a little different than I'd heard it would be like before I came here. I've been through many changes, I have to go to school to learn English and everything is free.

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Adoption fraud sentence ‘just’

Federal prosecutor defends plea deal for valley agency

When Robert Wells, the chief executive officer, and Karen Banks, the chief financial officer, of Wells Adoption Agency, pleaded guilty to wire fraud and wire fraud in connection with a scheme to defraud the federal government, federal prosecutors took a “calculated risk” in seeking a plea agreement.

The Wells Adoption Agency scheme, which involved the submission of fraudulent adoption agency reports to obtain federal funding, was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Wells and Banks were sentenced to three years of probation and $400,000 in restitution.

Correction

Hancock feeds elk on DWR property

A story on Friday’s Oquirrh page contained incorrect information. Hancock’s elk feeding program does not feed elk at any of the DWR properties. The story was corrected.

Burmese refugees adapting to new life

Obama: U.S. not winning Afghan war

From bamboo hut to Logan apartment

The Herald Journal
Becoming a Joe: Language skills help refugee realize dream

By Karen Lambert

There is an emergency hotline for refugee and immigrant women who speak Arabic, Farsi, Spanish, or Burmese. They can call for help if they are in danger or need medical attention. The hotline is managed by the National Immigration and Integration Network.

A refugee woman named Maria, who recently arrived in the United States, was referred to the hotline by her sponsor. She had been living in a refugee camp in Afghanistan for 10 years, and her family was arrested by the Taliban. Maria's husband was killed, and she struggled to survive with her three children.

When Maria called the hotline, she was able to speak with a woman who understood her language. She told her about the support services available and how to apply for a U-visa to protect her family.

After she was granted the U-visa, Maria was able to reunite with her children and start a new life in the United States. She was able to find work and eventually opened her own business.

Case study:

A refugee named Sayed, who had been living in a refugee camp in Afghanistan for 15 years, was referred to the hotline by his sponsor. He had been struggling to find work and had difficulty integrating into the community.

When Sayed called the hotline, he was able to speak with a woman who spoke Dari, his native language. She helped him understand the process of applying for a U-visa and provided him with resources to help him find employment.

After he was granted the U-visa, Sayed was able to find work and eventually opened his own small business. He was able to support his family and contribute to the community.

Conclusion:

Language skills are crucial for refugees to integrate into society and succeed in their new lives. By providing language assistance and support services, refugees can overcome the challenges they face and achieve their goals.

Sayed and Maria are not alone. There are thousands of refugees who need help to integrate into society. By supporting the hotline and other services for refugees, we can help them achieve their dreams and contribute to the community.
Local bank buys Wasatch deposits

One of Cache Valley's local branches will soon be no more as a result of recentdeposit insurance failures. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) has announced that Cache Valley Bank in Logan, Utah, will be merged with Southwestern Bank in Salt Lake City, Utah. The FDIC will continue to manage the operations of Cache Valley Bank until the assets and liabilities are transferred to Southwestern Bank.

Weather

High: 80°F  Low: 50°F  Precipitation: 0.00"  Wind: 0 miles/hour

Update

Cares

The USO was among high-profile and popular organizations to which donors contributed.

Pop culture

Losing icon in Pontiac

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It took an act of vandalism to replace a beloved item. Pontiac's hearse was removed from the showroom. The hearse was vandalized and set on fire.

Standing firm in their faith

Refugees make time for Muslim observances in busy local lives

Editor's note: The Herald Journal is carrying the story of refugees making time for their Muslim observances in busy local lives.

Utah humor

DON'T MESS WITH ME, I'M NOT THAT SHY OR PART OF UTAH.

Index

FIREY CITY (AP) — Utah's Department of Health confirmed three cases of H1N1, which is also known as swine flu. The cases are in Cache, Coconino, and Salt Lake counties.

Utah's first H1N1 case confirmed

FIREY CITY (AP) — Utah's Department of Health confirmed the first case of H1N1, also known as swine flu. The patient is a 19-year-old man who recently returned from Mexico. The department has received reports of three cases in Utah.
Practicing faith a challenge for local Muslim newcomers

By Karen Lambert

Being a Muslim in a Catholic community can be a challenge for a family with roots in the Muslim faith, especially in a city where the Catholic faith is the norm. Parents must teach their children the proper way to pray, and the children must be willing to learn and practice. The family must also navigate social and cultural differences.

Many Muslims in the area have found it difficult to find community support and to feel comfortable in their worship environment. Some have chosen to convert to Catholicism, while others have stayed true to their faith. The family must also be careful to avoid any negative stereotypes that may arise from their faith.

Newspapers and religious organizations have been helpful in providing resources and support for Muslims in the area. The family has also found support from friends and family members who have converted to Islam.

Faith

Continued from page 3

A widely recognized
teaching of Muslims, many from other countries, is to serve others in need and to work towards social justice. This is important to be done in the context of American culture and the American Dream.

Many Americans have a strong sense of individualism, and this can be challenging for Muslims who come from collectivist cultures. Muslims must learn to balance their personal goals with the needs of the community.

In addition to serving others, Muslims must also be aware of the cultural differences between themselves and the majority culture. This can be difficult, but it is necessary to be a good citizen.

To help Burmese refugees

The Catholic Charities of Utah has been working with Burmese refugees for many years, providing them with resources and support. They have helped refugees find housing, employment, and medical care. The Catholic Charities of Utah also offers classes in English and American culture.

Volunteering

The Catholic Charities of Utah also offers volunteering opportunities for people who want to help Burmese refugees. Volunteers can help with everything from cooking to teaching English. They can also help with administrative tasks.

Donating items

Donations are always welcome, and the Catholic Charities of Utah has a list of items that are currently needed. They can be dropped off at the Catholic Charities of Utah office.

Burmese refugees are often new to the American culture and may need assistance with things like cooking and laundry. They may also need help with things like finding a job and learning English.

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The Catholic Charities of Utah also offers volunteering opportunities for people who want to help Burmese refugees. Volunteers can help with everything from cooking to teaching English. They can also help with administrative tasks.

Donating items

Donations are always welcome, and the Catholic Charities of Utah has a list of items that are currently needed. They can be dropped off at the Catholic Charities of Utah office.

Burmese refugees are often new to the American culture and may need assistance with things like cooking and laundry. They may also need help with things like finding a job and learning English.
Report: Health plan a deficit builder

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Obama administration is facing a battle to keep its signature health care law on track. The law is one of the pillars of the president's domestic agenda, but it has faced scrutiny from Republicans and some Democrats who say it is too expensive and will not provide the universal coverage promised.

The law, which includes a requirement that most Americans have health insurance starting in 2014, is expected to cost about $1 trillion over 10 years. The Congressional Budget Office has projected that the law will reduce the deficit by about $120 billion by 2020.

But the law has faced opposition from both sides of the aisle. Republicans, who control the House, have vowed to repeal the law. Democrats, who control the Senate, are pushing back. The law includes provisions to help people with pre-existing conditions, expand access to health care for children, and provide subsidies to help lower-income Americans buy insurance.

Despite the challenges, the law has gained support from some businesses and labor unions, who believe it will help them control health care costs. The law also includes provisions to prevent insurers from dropping people from their plans if they get sick or to stop insurers from placing a limit on the amount of coverage they will provide.

The law's budget impact has been a major sticking point. The CBO has revised its projections several times, and the law's cost has increased. The law's supporters argue that it will help reduce the deficit in the long term, but its opponents say it will add to the deficit and lead to higher taxes.
Refugees

Continued from A1

the adoptive family, it is important to find a family who will provide a loving home in which the child can feel safe and supported. In the case of the family described in the article, the adoptive family was a close-knit group who were able to provide a stable and nurturing environment for the child. The family was also able to provide the child with the necessary support and resources to help her adjust to her new home and culture.

The article also highlights the importance of finding a family who is willing to put in the effort to learn about the child's culture and background. By doing so, the family can provide the child with a more authentic and personalized experience of their new home. Additionally, the family can also help the child feel more connected to their new community and culture.

Overall, the article provides valuable insights into the process of finding a family for a child in need of a home. The importance of finding a family who is willing to put in the effort to learn about the child's culture and background is emphasized, and the article serves as a testament to the power of love and compassion in helping children find a forever home.
Work

Continued from A3

"If you have talking, stick to talking," Salonick Friend and Yaelit, who were not identified, in a board of English at a local community center.

The local community centers are one of the few places where people from different countries can come together and share their experiences. It's a way for them to learn about each other and build a sense of community.

Burmese refugee facts

There are nine major ethnic groups in Burma, and each has its own language and culture. The Burmese government has been known to suppress these groups, leading to a lack of education and opportunities. The refugees face many challenges in their daily lives, such as finding work and integration into the host society.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has helped many Burmese refugees find safe haven and support in their new home. They provide assistance with housing, education, and job training to help refugees integrate into their new communities.

Iraqi Arabs rail against U.S. plan for Kurdish patrols

Baghdad, Iraq - Hundreds of Iraqi Arabs in the southern part of the country, where Kurds have been authorized by the United Nations to patrol, are protesting the decision.

The plan, which was approved by the UN Security Council, is set to take effect on June 10. Arab leaders say they will not accept the move.

The protesters claim that the Kurds are not qualified to carry out security duties in their area. They say Arab security forces are needed to maintain stability in the region.

Protests have been held in many Arab cities, with clashes between Arabs and Kurds. The tension is growing, and there are fears of a wider conflict.

The U.S. military has also been involved in the region, with troops stationed in Iraq working to stabilize the country.

The U.S. has been trying to balance the interests of different groups in Iraq, including Kurds, Arabs, and other minorities. The Arab protest is a reminder that this is not an easy task.

The Arab leaders say they will continue to oppose the plan, and they plan to take their case to the UN Security Council.

The Arab leaders say they will continue to press the UN for a solution that respects the rights of all communities in Iraq.
Karen

Continued from A3

There’s a whole other world that feels like it’s coming through, she said. “There are so many things that are happening around us that we don’t notice.”

“They have to be part of the group. You know, that’s how life works. You can’t just be a spectator.”

“That’s very true,” her mother said. “You have to be part of the group to be part of the world.”

Karen’s eyes lit up. “That’s exactly what I want to do.”

Karen’s mother smiled. “I’m so proud of you.”

Karen nodded. “Thank you.”

Karen’s mother hugged her. “I love you.”

Karen hugged her back. “I love you too.”
PART 2. JOURNALISM ANALYSIS

While the ’60s and ’70s onward marked a crisis in ethnographic authority, they also marked the beginning of changes in journalism, including the emergence of literary journalism or New Journalism where the journalist puts herself more fully into the story and uses techniques borrowed from fiction to report facts (Moore 2007). And yet, despite the emergence of new styles, to a large degree community journalism has held to traditional values of objectivity. Due to the intense pressures of the newsroom there is often little time to reflect on journalistic practices. Therefore, I want to look closely here at how the values of traditional journalism influenced how I represented Ma Htwe Hla and her family.

The Society of Professional Journalist’s Code of Ethics reveals that journalists retain a lofty vision in striving to discover and report the truth. The industry ethics code states that journalists work for public enlightenment and to create the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The code adds that a related purpose of the profession is to give voice to the voiceless, with an emphasis on the idea that both official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid (Society of Professional Journalists 1996). A journalist is to “tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so; examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others; avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status; support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant; and distinguish between advocacy and news reporting” (Society of
Professional Journalists 1996). The code also lays out several other ethical principles, including a mandate to give private citizens a greater opportunity to control information about themselves than public figures; refusing gifts, favors, fees or other special treatment; and remaining free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility (Society of Professional Journalists 1996). In these goals and ideals, journalists share many tenants with the ideals of many anthropologists, who in the words of Margery Wolf “remain more interested in why Chinese peasants do what they do, and, as Graham Watson puts it, in ‘getting the news out’” (M. Wolf 1992) and with creative nonfiction writers who retain “foremost a fidelity to accuracy, to truthfulness” (Forche´ and Gerard 2001: 1).

While the Code of Ethics exists because the journalist’s goals are to be objective, fair and truthful, the fact remains that reality and the ideal intersect to create circumstances that shape what “truth” is ultimately reported. Among many factors that influence what is ultimately published in the news as “truth,” I chose here to focus on the writer’s perception of the code of ethics, newsroom politics, and the need for “art” to run with the story, and how these issues impacted my series on a new population of Burmese refugees in Logan, Utah.

Code of ethics

My understanding of the values communicated in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics and the Herald Journal’s unwritten, but felt code of ethics steered my reporting. Like most community journalists, I understood I should maintain a
degree of professional distance, keep biases in check and include many different voices in my writing, standards designed to prevent the reporter from biases, which could lead some to question the accuracy of their reporting on controversial issues (Society of Professional Journalists 1996). Journalism’s adoption of a more positivist approach fits the definition presented by Diane Wolf as the idea that science “entails and encourages distance and noninvolvement between the researcher and researched and assumes that the researcher can objectively see, judge, and interpret the life and meanings of his/her subjects” (D. Wolf 1996: 4). For instance, in traditional community journalism one should not date someone they report on, or campaign for them, or donate money to support them, etc. The more controversial the situation they’re reporting on, the more important it is to avoid any appearance of bias.

There were occasions when completing this series on the Burmese refugees that made me struggle to find the proper balance between not becoming part of a compromising situation and also building relationships (not to mention acting like a decent human being). For instance, early on Ma Htwe Hla asked me to drive her two girls to the library to return a book and check out a video as the family didn’t own a car. I felt hesitant, but agreed because I felt I should due to their kindness in helping me with my articles. If it had been the mayor who had asked, I’d have been more likely to say no, in order to avoid being overly chummy with someone whose power it’s my role to monitor. However, I felt the soft-news nature of the articles and the fact the refugees were private citizens allowed more flexibility in our relationship.

On another occasion, I found out the children were going to walk across town to
attend an Arabic class and I offered them a ride as I didn’t want to spend an hour walking with them, especially as I was pregnant, on the time clock, and thought having them walk alone across town wasn’t the safest option. Also, the photographer was supposed to meet us at the home in just a few moments. Based on my understanding of the code of ethics and my newsroom ethics, I determined that this was a place where I could defend interfering with the story, and so I again blurred the lines between my role as professional and being a friend. It turned out to be helpful on both occasions because the girls told me stories about their families and helped interpret events and gave me new insights. Since the purpose of the articles was fairly noncontroversial, more time and interaction along with a sense of friendship led to an increased ability to profile the family members’ lives and I’d argue involved little risk as far as skewing judgment. In addition, journalism values participation as a means to obtaining knowledge so long as our role is clear and participation is enlightening rather than a compromise of standards. Still, some academics, like Daphne Patai, suggest that a degree of “objectification,” or separation or distance, is not only inevitable but, indeed, desirable in most research situations (Gluck and Patai 1991: 147). If I had participated more fully in the refugees’ lives I likely would have understood more deeply, but I also might have been in a difficult situation as the lines increasingly blurred between journalist “outsider” and friend “insider.” In some ways, adopting a more positivist stance was a very honest position to attempt. As a result, my role as a journalist and why I was involved was clear, perhaps making it easier for the family to give me the information they wanted while keeping back personal information. By staying in the professional role I was
limited as to what I learned, but what I did know was to a degree what they wanted me to know.

*Newsroom politics*

Journalists must write for their editors or their story may not be published and their job security might suffer. The ideal is that journalists have a right to access information only because they do so on behalf of the public, and that they therefore write for their readers. However, their editors are gatekeepers who determine whether to publish articles.

The politics of my newsroom enabled the direction this series took. My managing editor, Charlie McCollum, was under pressure to have his reporters produce more long form reporting, as many of the other newspapers that were owned by the same newspaper chain apparently were doing so. Such reporting tends to represent the best of journalism and is among the types prone to winning prizes. However, a major challenge for such reporting at community newspapers is the intense daily deadline pressure that can hinder the major planning needed to produce more in-depth, investigative work.

Other factors also influenced the creation of this series. My news editor wanted better coverage of minority groups in the area. My previous news editor had given me the diversity beat because he also wanted to reduce mileage reimbursement costs. In accord to the mission of giving voice, increased coverage of diverse groups was looked

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1 True to this, my series won second place in the General Reporting series or package category of the Society of Professional Journalists Top of the Rockies contest, competing with medium-sized publications in Utah, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. First place went to a much larger paper.
upon highly by co-workers, editors and the news industry in general. The photo editor, Alan Murray, had worked with me on several projects covering diverse populations and supported such efforts.

So the project started with great support. In fact, the local radio station called me up to ask for more details about both the first and third installment of the series and aired those interviews on their program. Charlie told me after I turned my first article in that he thought my idea to make it a series was excellent. Charlie even pushed the Sunday Spotlight, supposedly the most important in-depth story of the week, to the top of page one and placed my story with large photos in the center spot right above the fold. In addition, he gave that prime spot in the Sunday paper to each following piece, with the exception of the last, which I wrote as a freelancer. For the second piece of the series, he even allowed my input on how to lay it out and on what pictures to use, something that often leads to better results because the reporter knows the subject matter more deeply, but is rarely done due to time limitations. Although I wasn’t involved in the layout of the third article, I could see his enthusiasm continued as I wrote about a nonmainstream religion and the interesting juxtaposition caused by attempting to live the Muslim faith in a predominantly Latter-day Saint community.

However, after my next article came out, Charlie said he saw it as somewhat redundant, although I saw my focus on day-to-day family life as very different from their efforts navigating government bureaucracy I described in the first article on Ma Htwe Hla’s family, or the challenges of living their religion. However, I had brought up some bits of background information that did repeat themes from the past and perhaps
that was unwise. I was disappointed in the headlines he wrote for both the main story –
“Turning American: Burmese refugees continue acclimation” – and the sidebar –
“Found in translation: Language skills open doors for war refugee” – as I felt like they
were so vague they made the articles look boring, indeed redundant, and missed the
points I’d wanted to emphasize. I had envisioned a more specific title for the first,
perhaps something like “Refugee mother sews, cooks, imagines her place in America,”
and a sidebar with a headline like “After fleeing war, camps, refugee still longs to return
to Burma.” Of course, headline writing is an art of its own, and it requires skill to get
complex ideas into a small space on deadline. I express disappointment as one who has
struggled to write headlines myself and certainly disappointed others at times with my
attempts.

Still, the situation raises the issue of what is considered “news.” The difficult
government bureaucracy and difficulties of being a minority religion both rubbed
against the status quo, whether that was government red tape or the way of life of the
predominant religion. The third article about Ma Htwe Hla’s family dealt with
something that as a new mother and a student in a program focused on recognizing
unheralded contributions of women I saw as fascinating, but that actually showed that
life for the refugees was in some ways very similar to everyday life for others. It also
had to do with a feminine role that until recently has been left out of history and not
been considered newsworthy. After all, news generally favors the negative, the odd, and
the unfamiliar.
Yet, I would still argue my article was newsworthy as I looked at the subtle variations between Burmese and U.S. culture in the home. In addition, the series was “soft” news and therefore supposed to give an accurate look at this family’s experience. For that article, I describe Ma Htwe Hla at home expertly sewing without need of a pattern, and the kids watching a famous Asian movie and playing with water balloons or scraps of material from their mom. To me observing the day-to-day happenings of the family showed their ability to thrive in a new culture.

Regardless, as a result of Charlie’s lack of enthusiasm for that story, I worked hard to make the next article as different from the previous articles as possible. As a result, I slanted it toward the larger trends of the time – the struggling U.S. economy – to look at how that affected the refugees. I also extended the focus beyond Ma Htwe Hla’s family, looking at the experiences of other Logan refugees and quoting leaders in the refugee community in Salt Lake City. I thought between that story and the sidebar about the fascinating Karen Wrist Tying Festival I did a good job, but without notifying me beforehand Charlie included a note with that story saying it would be ending the series on the Burmese refugees. So it goes in journalism; despite that fact, Charles McCollum has been very helpful and kind to me in talks since, including allowing me to use those articles for my thesis when the Herald Journals retains copyright.

For the purpose of this discussion, however, it’s clear that the interests of my editors highly influenced my reporting. Charlie’s influence took place both in the initial encouragement and in the later demise of the series. What that meant to the refugees was that I had to frame their story in such a way that I thought would best sell my ideas
to my editors. If I veered too much toward personal interests – like a look at the home life of Ma Htwe Hla and her children – it might not be deemed newsworthy.

Photography

In-depth journalism and photography go hand-in-hand. One famous example is the classic book Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (Agee and Evans 1966). Appropriately that in-depth account of three sharecropper families has a double byline, crediting both journalist James Agee and photographer Walker Evans. Likewise, my writing was influenced by the photography of Meegan Reid. The first story featuring Ma Htwe Hla’s family was based on multiple visits to Ma Htwe Hla’s home during which I would look for photo opportunities, while taking my own notes, and attempt to schedule shoots for Meegan. A good photo opportunity is not posed and often captures the subject in a moment of action that tells a larger story. The first story with Ma Htwe Hla’s family includes photographs of her daughter Kur Ra Ban Bi at an English class at the English Center site and Ma Htwe Hla at the Health department with Kur Ra Ban Bi comforting her after she received an immunization. Another picture shows the English Language Center’s Refugee Specialist Alex Mortensen, with them at the Health department, where he was helping translate so Kur Ra Ban Bi could pay for her shot. Each of the photo opportunities I worked out for Meegan, and I attended both of those events as well.

The major impact of the photography was that I focused the story on Kur Ra Ban Bi rather than her mother, Ma Htwe Hla, as I had previously planned. I had hoped Ma Htwe Hla would have been in the picture of the English class, but she ended up being
sick that night. In addition, the lead – or the opening – of my story was written to go along with what I’d believed would be the lead picture of the story. Meegan had favored the picture at the health department where Ma Htwe Hla comforted her daughter after she got immunized. However, at the last minute Charlie, with my input, decided to put that photo inside as we felt the picture at the English Language Center worked better across the front page of the newspaper. I loved the color and the repetition of faces. It’s also nice how all the faces except Kur Ra Ban Bi’s are turned away from the camera, and the whisper phones are interesting.

For the second article that focused on Ma Htwe Hla’s family, the photography situation again controlled the story. I knew I wanted to focus on the family’s religious traditions and challenges in a Christian community, but even though I got permission to watch the family pray it never worked out because Ma Htwe Hla developed a medical condition. As a result, she suggested I attend the children’s Arabic class, something I hadn’t known about previously. Instead of focusing on the family’s prayers, and specifically Ma Htwe Hla’s feelings, I focused on the children’s class. Although Ma Htwe Hla was not at the class with me, she still is mentioned in the story as I refer to her history of their family to give context to their acclimation in the U.S. While children wearing veils and caps made for interesting pictures, overall I felt the representation rather accurate as the pictures and article represented an important aspect of the family members’ lives. What may have been more important was what was not represented as a result of the photographs. For instance, I had intended to explore ideas surrounding
Muslim women praying and family praying together. When the emphasis turned to the children’s Arabic class, which was also interesting, I took on a different angle.

For the next article on the family, I decided to focus on home life. I spent several afternoons with the family and then I talked to Ma Htwe Hla to find out when she would be sewing and scheduled a time for the photographer to come. I told Meegan I also wanted pictures of the kids playing. For that article I wrote more independently of the photography. I felt Meegan complied fairly closely with my general requests regarding photos, although as usual she used her own judgment as a photographer in deciding what to shoot. The photographs are pictures of Burmese American childhood, particularly the picture of the youngest boy in a Spiderman suit. That picture, especially, tells the story of whole-hearted acclimation to a new culture. However, I wonder whether my interpretation of the “facts” was the same as theirs. Did the fieldwork exchange create a tendency to downplay differences (Gluck and Patai 1991: 72)?

For the final article, I focused on the economic situation and how it may impact the refugees. I’d wanted to write about working conditions at JBS, but the Brazilian-based meat packing plant would not allow cameras on their property, not even in the parking lot, and also denied my access without a camera. I knew pictures of the refugees away from work would not tell the story to my photographer’s satisfaction, and without access myself I decided against pursuing the story based on off-site interviews. Instead, I focused on challenges posed by U.S. economy for refugees in Logan. I worked to arrange pictures of Ma Htwe Hla’s son, who struggled to get a job, but could not find an interesting story-telling opportunity for Meegan. Perhaps at the direction of my
managing editor or more likely due to lack of strong opportunities, Meegan shot no art for that story. Sai Pho Lar wasn’t working and pictures of him sitting at home weren’t very engaging. Also, like reporters, photographers often work long hours, under intense deadlines, and sometimes with truly terrible shifts.

Meegan Reid did attend the Karen Wrist Tying Ceremony in Salt Lake City and pictures from that ceremony ran with the economy story and the sidebar about the wrist-tying ceremony, although the ceremony was not for the Muslims and no Muslims I was aware of attended. It seemed to me that the more dramatic and sensational photograph won out (Dilworth 1997). This likely represents a weakness in newspapers’ ability to represent a balanced truth, although focusing on the most interesting aspects can still be done within an honest context.

When I started on the series on the Burmese refugees as a journalist for the Herald Journal in Logan, Utah, I thought I was giving those I was writing about a voice. Likely my perspective was not too different from a description of the attitude of early feminists who thought that making women’s work visible was implicitly liberating to those studied (D. Wolf 1996: vi). However, later those feminists realized that their well-intentioned efforts sometimes resulted in problems for those they represented.

Despite my aim to report objective truth and to give voice to the refugee experience, that “truth” is shaped through a complicated process. On one hand, I did tell a version of their story and make the larger community more aware of the refugee’s background and experiences. I believe I overall portrayed an accurate portrait of their lives. But I also acknowledge it was incomplete in part because there were certain
subjects that may not have interested my editors or readers, because of limitations of space and also because of my concerns for respecting the privacy of the refugees on more sensitive matters. The depth, detail and extent of my portrayal was influenced by my perception of the code of ethics; newsroom politics; time limitations; the need for art to run with the story; my life, values and relationships; and the conventions and struggles of writing. Yet I still believe that trying to be objective is worthwhile and that journalism serves a great purpose. Indeed, by stressing the importance of including many voices and perspectives, the journalism code of ethic acknowledges that each voice and person has a different perspective on truth that can add to a more complete understanding of the depth of the human experience. While journalists may sometimes err by reporting on that which is sensational, negative or entertaining rather than what is important or most “true” to experience, it still provides a medium for getting the facts out there to a general reading public and preserving culture.

The idea behind journalism is that journalists have power and are obligated to use it well, which is similar to some feminist arguments (M. Wolf 1996: 220). In journalism, we are gatekeepers of information that the public has a right to know, information one of my professors put at times will “afflict the comforted and comfort the afflicted.” Ma Htwe Hla obtained copies of my articles and showed them to me when I visited. She seemed pleased to be in the news. Still, only she, her family and her community know, if anyone does, how close I came to representing their “truth.”
REFERENCES


PART 1. YA HE MA

Ya He Ma: The Narrative of What Prompted
One Woman’s Journey from Burma to a Thailand
Refugee Camp and Eventually the U.S.

Ya He Ma
Address: 747 Riverwalk Parkway apt. 221
Logan, Utah
Birthday: Jan. 1, 1972
Spouse: Ka Me Din
Daughters: Mae Yen Be, Har Be Bar, and Fe Re Da
Son: Maung Maung

Since the turn of the century, the United States has been rampant with discussions about immigration and the Islamic faith. News reports have documented the ongoing discussion about federal immigration reform and the debate over the role of the states and the private sector in addressing related problems, particularly those surrounding illegal immigration. For instance, between 2007 and 2009, 200 immigration-related bills passed in 40 states (Wood 2010). In 2010, the Arizona governor made headlines for SB 1070, which as written would require noncitizens to carry their federal immigration card and make it a state
crime for an illegal immigrant to work in Arizona (Richey 2010). Such controversy has much to say about the conflicted way we see foreigners in a nation made up of immigrants.

However, despite controversies, the U.S. still allows hundreds of thousands of immigrants to legally enter the country each year and accepts approximately 80,000 refugees a year for third world resettlement, three times as many as the rest of the world combined (Brown 2011). In the 2010 fiscal year, the U.S. allowed more than 73,311 refugees to relocate into the country (U.S. Refugee Processing Center. 2011).

In his Pulitzer Prize winning history, Oscar Handlin traces the journey of some of the nation’s early immigrants from Europe, arguing that individual groups maintained a sense of identity that changed through the generations, and added to the flavor of society (Handlin 1973). Many writers and scholars have continued to document the stories of people who immigrated to the U.S. such as the Chinese immigrants who built railroads across the West and ran small businesses (Kingston 1980; Lee 2001) or immigrants from Central America separated from family members by the hope of something better (Nazario 2006). Work has also been done to document the stories of newer immigrants including many groups from Southeast Asia (Jones 1999; Truitt 1999; Tomingas-Hatch 1999; Westbrook 1999). Between 2008 and 2010, many Burmese refugees made their homes in Cache Valley, Utah. Here I look closely at the narrative of one of those refugees, a Muslim mother named Ya He Ma.

Concerns about immigration intensified after the World Trade Center attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, a tragedy that led to efforts to increase border security where the U.S.
meets both Canada and Mexico (Martin 2005; Macleod 2009). The attacks by Muslim extremists also led to a war with Afghanistan where more than 99 percent of the population practices Islam. In addition, the war in Iraq, the Fort Hood shooting (Solis 2009) and a proposal to build an Islamic Center (Grynbaum 2010) near the site of the fallen World Trade Towers also increased tension.

Amidst all this swirl of political unrest, voices from the Muslim world protested that their perspectives and values were not fairly represented by the Western world (El Matrah 2005; Malik 2006; Andrews 2006; Stuhldreher 2006). There have also been instances of prejudice against Muslims within the U.S. Following September 11, 2001, news reports documented poor treatment of Muslims in the workplace; detention when traveling; harassment, including threats and vandalism of places of worship and businesses owned by Muslims; and even some violence (Armour 2002; Sorokin 2001; Rosin 2001).

Due to the current political climate, the story of why one Burmese Muslim refugee mother and her family left her country for a Thai refugee camp and eventually immigrated to the U.S. is particularly pertinent. It personalizes the national debate on immigration, offering concrete facts based on one refugee’s experience. Her story also illustrates the ongoing emergence of the New West. For while mythological ideals of the lone cowboy, domesticating young teacher, and noble savage once dominated stories of the West, today’s West is marked by tourism, technology and ethnic diversity (Wister 2002; Deloria 2006; Schrand 2008; Wrobel 2001). My interviews show the American Dream remains alive in the heart and experience of one of the nation’s newest refugees.
Between October 2009 and September 2010, I conducted at least 10 interviews with Ya He Ma and I concluded that while for many people the motivation to leave Burma was to flee violence, in the case of Ya He Ma the motivation was largely economic. Her family could not obtain adequate food and work. They fled first to the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand, stayed seven years, and arrived in the U.S. in September 2007.

6. The entire family, Maung Maung (left to right); Ka Me Din; Ya He Ma; Mae Yan Be; Fe Re Da; and Har Be Bar, sits on the living room couch in 2010.
In Burma, Ya He Ma lived in the countryside nearby the Nabu Village in the Kawkareik township, in the state of Karen (also written as Kayin) for twenty-eight years, which meant she lived there from approximately 1972 to 2000. Specific timely information on that area of the world was difficult to find in English, although some information was available on the Web both through government reports and advocacy sites put together by some of the refugees themselves. This lack of information makes Ya He Ma’s narrative particularly important.

Ya He Ma’s home was located in the state of Karen, which borders Thailand and where many of the Karen people live. Her father was a farmer. Her mother became sick and passed away before Ya He Ma left Burma for the refugee camps. In Burma she “stay with her parents, uh, before she get married,” translator La She Wah said. Ya He Ma said after her marriage she lived in a bamboo hut her husband made with the plentiful bamboo and other materials in the area. Based on what Ya He Ma told translator La She Wah, she had ties and affection to her country of birth. “She born as
Burma,” La She Wah translated, “[S]he like it. Also her parents and her brother and her sister are there. So she like.”

Ya He Ma lived in a primarily Muslim community, although there were some Karen people and there was a Buddhist monastery along with the Muslim mosque. At the time she said this, I still understood she lived in Nabu, and so she likely was describing Nabu rather than the outer countryside where she actually lived. She described this village with the mosque and monastery as smaller than Logan, where she now lives, and perhaps closer in size to Smithfield, a town neighboring Logan. Smithfield is about 5.20
square miles and has a population of 9,843 (Smithfieldcity.org). There she played games, rode a bicycle, went to concerts with her children and gardened.

She grew rice, “bean[s], more like a fruit, vegetable,” translator La She Wah said. She thought it was fun and also wanted the food. She raised chickens and one cow. Ya He Ma said her cow produced 1-2 bottles of milk per day. She said it was both a milk and a beef cow because it produced milk, but when it had a baby and got older they would use it for meat. In Burma she said there was a well with clean water on her property and so she didn’t have to go far for water. There was also a river, but it was very far away and the water wasn’t as clean.

She said through La She Wah: “[You had to get] leaves … for [the] roof and cut up firewood for the rainy season and after the rainy season had to grow rice.” She later clarified to me that she had to replace the roof on their hut every year before the rainy season so it didn’t leak. She also stored firewood for the rainy season. As I understood it, during the first month of the rainy season they dug up the land and planted rice. Then, the land flooded because of all the rain, prompting people to stay inside. Ya He Ma said some people traveled with boats. The houses were built on stilts so they wouldn’t flood during the rainy season. The refugee camps were rainy, but not like Burma and there the houses were not built on stilts.

In Burma, Ya He Ma had some opportunities for education. She took Arabic classes and also attended school through the third grade. She said she felt very bad she couldn’t attend more school, but after the military destroyed the schoolhouse it became too difficult for her to attend another. Because of the war, the location of the school often
changed and many didn’t have enough money to move. Because the Burmese government took over the place she attended school, she quit around age 10. While Ya He Ma said more education can lead to a better job, one of my translators, Lah She Wah, said that many high school and college graduates cannot find jobs in Burma.

She said the villages had an elementary school through middle school. Then after children graduated from middle school some parents had the money to send their children to the capital city to attend high school and college. Most likely she meant Rangoon (now Yangon), the former capital city of Burma and home to the oldest and most well known university, Yangon University, along with newer universities including Dagon University, University of East Yangon, and University of West Yangon. Ya He Ma said her parents, like many of the Karen and Muslims, didn’t make enough to pay for more education. The schools required the students to pay for their supplies, a school uniform, and, if they didn’t live nearby, a place to stay.
“Mostly they don’t go to school after they graduate [from] elementary school because most of the parent[s], they are like a normal working – in the farming they don’t make enough money to send their children to the university or high school,” Hser Doh explained after listening to Ya He Ma. “I think more of the student in Karen state are … just go to school like to elementary.”

When Ya He Ma had a family of her own, she said they struggled to find adequate work and to earn the money for basic necessities of life. She said her husband worked odd jobs, like building houses and harvesting crops. They didn’t have enough land of their own to farm. It was very difficult to get enough regular work to have the money
they needed for food. She said that if they had money they could buy anything they needed, but if they didn’t they struggled. In Burma and Thailand, Ya He Ma said they didn’t shop like people do in the United States. She said they had a store where they could buy material and they sewed clothes for themselves. Sometimes they also sold clothes to others to earn a little money. She said she sewed many clothes, plus curtains and other items for herself and sometimes for a neighbor. She said her siblings and father didn’t have enough food either.

From what I understand, the SLORC troops came into Nabu and forced the people to work on public improvement projects, probably without pay, and also persecuted those
Ya He Ma, who lived in the countryside nearby, alluded to this and shared some of the stories she had heard about how the military treated the people, although she said she had never seen anyone killed.

“They fight with some of the people,” she said, later clarifying that they’re “trying to scare them.” She said the soldiers had killed many people with guns, knives or by beating them to death. She said they only kill the men, and they’re trying to catch the men because they want to force them to join the military as porters.

While Ya He Ma heard about the people who were forced to leave Nabu, she said no one forced the people to leave the area where she was living, just outside the village in

12. This close up shows betel leaf, ground limestone and betel nuts, which Ka Me Din explained should be wrapped together. He said some people also combine the limestone with ground tobacco. Ka Me Din stressed that it is important to eat all three together as you can develop kidney stones if you eat only the betel nut and limestone powder.
the country, a place that sounds like “De Yet O.” Neither she nor my translator could tell me how to spell it and I could not find information about that village online or on a map, which is not surprising as detailed information on Burma was consistently hard to find. Ya He Ma said she was afraid after the people were forced to leave Nabu, but she didn’t want to leave her home and stayed since no one forced her out.

Apparently Nabu was destroyed three or four years before Ya He Ma left her nearby home in 2000. An online report from the International Labour Organization mentions that Nabu included 300 to 400 households that were relocated in December of 1996, after the men, women and children of the village were required to perform a wide variety of forced labor, including building roads. A man’s testimony in the report indicates many died while performing the labor from insufficient food, lack of rest and poor treatment. The man quoted described one woman being beaten to death because she could not perform the work (International Labour Organization Commission of Inquiry 1998).
A Web site called “Burma Alert” put out in March 1997 indicates SLORC troops destroyed Nabu in January 1997, after they forced about 1,000 Muslims from the village to leave their homes at gun-point in early January of 1997 (Burma Alert). The site indicates that after they left, the village mosque was torn down by SLORC troops. The report by the International Labour Organization indicates the troops tore down the mosque on or before September of 2007. The troops specified a place without water for those who had lived in Nabu, but few made their homes there. Instead, they tended to live near their former home (ILO). Burma Alert added that “about 200 of the Muslims from Nabu have sought refuge in the Mae La refugee camp in northwestern Thailand.”

When Ya He Ma did eventually leave Burma, for reasons not directly related to the violence, she left her father and siblings behind. I would have liked a chance to ask what
she has heard from family members. She had told me earlier that her brother and parents have cell phones and live close by Nabu, but I’m not sure if that means in her village.

To earn money, she said they work in a store, like a little market, to sell things like clothes, onions and chilies. She said it’s much smaller than a grocery store. She said her brother lives in vacant homes – there are 30 to 40 vacant homes because a lot of people have left.

_Tales from the Mae La Refugee camp_

Ya He Ma’s mother-in-law lived in the Mae La Refugee camp and told Ya He Ma to come there because there was not enough food in Burma. Ya He Ma’s mother-in-law traveled from the refugee camp through the jungle to meet Ya He Ma, her husband and their three children and lead them back to the refugee camp in 2000. This mother-in-law now lives close by Ya He Ma in Riverwalk apartments in Utah.

Ya He Ma lived in the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand for seven years. She said she was not really sad when she first got there because she got rice and things from the United Nations. La She Wah interpreted:

> In Burma [s]he said she had to buy everything. [She] said Thailand better. In the refugee [camp] is better. She says in Burma [there] is a not a lot of work for working, not a lot of job of working. So, if they don’t had a job in Burma, so they had to worry about the food. Everything in the refugee camp – if they can’t work even they can – they have food for eat.

When Ya He Ma arrived at the refugee camp she was interviewed about why she had come. She told camp officials that she didn’t have enough food. She was not considered a refugee initially, and only planning to stay for a little while, then return to Burma
15. Ka Me Din tells Hser Doh about the posters on his wall, particularly about one showing a gathering of Muslims at a Mosque in Pakistan.

when it became a democracy. She explained that she didn’t understand politics but that other people thought Burma would become a democracy. She listened to them. She wasn’t hoping for resettlement. La She Wah interpreted:

No, [s]he just stay in a refugee camp. Just a, a [seven years] year go. They come, call refugee for resettlement so … she say in Burma she has a problem with food and …. for job and need to worry. So that’s why [s]he came to stay and the refugee [s]he don’t worry about the things that [s]he worry in Burma.

There were few opportunities in the refugee camp to earn money, but her husband built bamboo huts occasionally, and Ya He Ma sewed clothes. They lived in a small bamboo hut with a roof of big tree leaves and a floor of closely laid pieces of
bamboo. Every day she cleaned it with a broom. The family slept on mats that they rolled up during the day. They owned a piece of furniture – a pedal sewing machine that folded into its own table. Ya He Ma said they bought it when they moved to the camp from a friend who was like an uncle who gave them a good deal and allowed them to pay for it bit by bit when they had the money. Ya He Ma thought it would be a good investment because they wouldn’t have to pay someone else to sew their clothes and she also occasionally could earn extra money sewing clothes for others. She sewed quite a bit in both Burma and Thailand.

16. Ya He Ma left Burma because the family struggled to earn enough to obtain adequate food. In the refugee camp she struggled similarly as the United Nations did not provide much meat, curry or vegetables and her food often ran out before the end of the month. In the U.S., she has a simple breakfast and rice for dinner, but enjoys a wide variety of Burmese and Thai foods.
The refugee camp had a mosque that was bigger than the huts, with cement floors, wood and a roof of ridged metal. There were also other churches in the camp, including a monastery and several different Christian churches. She said the Mae La Refugee camp was densely populated, but refugees weren’t supposed to live anywhere else in Thailand. She spent most of her time cooking rice and curry, cleaning, caring for the children and sewing. Mostly the women in the camp knew and visited each other, and she developed strong friendships.
Obtaining the money needed for necessities was really difficult because neither Ya He Ma nor her husband earned money every day. Ya He Ma said often the food ran out before the end of the month. They relied on the United Nations for basic foods like rice, oil, chili peppers, yellow beans, fish paste, salt and pepper. They did not provide curry.

“The U.N. gave the food,” Joe interpreted, “rice and oil and other kind[s] … because she said that there is no money to spend so the [U.N. also gave] other kind[s] of like the clothes or for the baby, for the children, something like that …. to send her children to go to school, kind of like that sort of thing, better school.”

Sometimes she said the United Nations gave them other items like coal, a mat and a blanket. She said she needed her own money if she wanted to buy cake or other desserts for the children or her family. She also needed money to cook curry spice, plus the vegetables and meats like chicken, beef or fish to make the traditional foods they liked. She said she had no space to grow vegetables, although another refugee told me about growing a garden by a stream. Ya He Ma said the halal beef was more expensive than the regular and the prices of the chicken varied depending on whether it was fed at home or on a farm. The farm fed chicken was cheaper. She said they mostly bought live chickens, which were more expensive, but tasted better. Also, they could kill them in such a way that they were halal, or prepared according to Islamic law (Fareed 2004: 180-181). People who didn’t have enough money struggled, but if you had enough money you could buy everything you needed.
In addition, Ya He Ma wanted to send her children to a better school. However, she said the better school was a mission school and not only did it cost more money, but she thought one had to be a member of the Christian religion that ran it to attend, which was a problem. Her husband liked the school because her children would leave fluent in Thai and English when they graduated, so they would not need a translator. Through Joe, Ya He Ma told me that her three daughters did attend school in the refugee camps, but she wasn’t sure how good the school was because she hadn’t heard. They went because it was close to her house. It cost $30 to register each person, with no additional expenses. She said there were no schools for adults.

“In the refugee camps they don’t have much school for adult[s],” Hser Doh translated, “just for the kids.”

Although Ya He Ma’s husband worked when he could, few jobs were available. He built an average of two houses a month. In addition, Ya He Ma sewed for money, but there wasn’t much work available inside the camp. In order to earn more money and
get building supplies, her husband left around ten times while they were in the camp, for about a month each time. Ya He Ma said she left the camp with her husband about five times during the seven years they lived there and they worked together as illegal immigrants in Thailand. They left the children behind in the refugee camp.

“She said [they sometimes left for] about 10 or 15 day[s], …. they went out of the camps and went in work at a corn farms and cabbage farm something like that,” Joe translated. Ya He Ma acknowledged that it was risky, adding that she worried about the Thai police and soldiers. “[When they found people] they put in jail – in for about one month or something like that, two months, and then they took them back to Burma.”

In fact, Ya He Ma said she, a friend and her husband were caught one time.
“[In the] early morning the police came into their house [a shack where they lived while working outside the camp]. They did not wake up from their nap,” Joe said, translating her words.

Ya He Ma’s husband had built a hut at the corn farm where they worked as illegal immigrants at that time in Thailand. The police put them in a truck that had space in the back for many people – it was full of people. Fortunately, they only had to spend one day in jail and then they were deported to Burma. They snuck back into Thailand and into the refugee camp the same day, returning to their children. They later left about two more times for work.

Emigrating to the U.S.

“She’s very sad because they [now] are split [from] their family or their friends where they [had] live[d] close together in the refugee camps,” Joe translated, “but right
now they spread all over the world – kind like a Norway countries, Australia countries, Canada countries.”

They learned about different countries and developed interests in different ones, he explained, after talking to each other.

Her friends they interested to go to Canada that’s why they apply to go to Canada,” Joe translated. “The other kind like, the other people, interested to go to Australia. They apply to Australia, but that’s their choice. She like U.S. … When she live[d] in [the] refugee camp she heard about [the U.S.] from her friends because the United States is, uh, is a better than the, the best countries in the world.”

Ya He Ma expected the U.S. to be a place where available employment provided adequate money for their needs and some of their wants, her children had educational opportunities, her family had freedom to worship and where they would be safe from violence. When I asked if she still believed what her friends had told her, based on her experience living in the U.S., she said through Joe: “Yeah, that’s true. Yeah, she is very
gad because when she live in refugee camps
there is a no jobs to work every day. To get
money, is a really hard.”

Several countries – including Great Britain, Canada and
Australia — grant asylum every year to a limited number of
refugees. The refugees have been told, correctly, that the U.S.
allows the most to come, something those I have interviewed
said they considered when choosing where they want to go. In
2010 alone, the U.S. resettled nearly 16,693 refugees from
Burma (U.S. Refugee Processing Center), however, this is a very small percentage of
the 15 million refugees identified worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees).
The journey to the U.S.

Ya He Ma came to the U.S. without her parents, siblings or extended family members. She, her husband and three daughters arrived in the U.S. in September of 2007. She said the refugees traveled to Bangkok, Thailand, where they got on an airplane. Ya He Ma, her husband and her three children then flew to Japan where they got on another plane to Los Angeles, California. From L.A. they flew into Salt Lake City, Utah. That was Ya He Ma’s first experience flying.

“Yeah, she like it, she really like it,” said translator Nyunt Aye. “Some people say, before she, um, arrive there on plane you would get dizzy ... When the plane gonna come down, yeah, [it was] a little bit, was too scary for her.”

Ya He Ma said though she never got dizzy, what was scary to think about coming so far and to anticipate the three required layovers, but it helped that people had
told her what to expect. She said she never looked out the window because it was closed and covered. She brought on the airplane only what she could carry – her jacket and important papers, and the rest that they brought – only three large bags for the entire family – arrived separately in Utah. Ya He Ma said they had no money and mainly brought clothes. The longyi — when referring to such sarongs for women she specifically called it a Ta Mey or Ta May — she was wearing during that interview was one she had brought from the refugee camp.

The opportunity to work

After arriving in the U.S., Ya He Ma and her husband both obtained work at the JBS meat packing plant, although Ya He Ma quit when her youngest son was born in order to take care of him. Ya He Ma’s husband was earning about $12 an hour by mid-2010, working a regular schedule, bringing in a steady salary. Ya He Ma said she earned $11.20 an hour when she worked there because she hadn’t worked there as long.

After earning some money, Ya He Ma sent some to people she knew in the refugee camps and had them mail her some items she could not obtain here, including some shoes and makeup. They sent a foundation called Arche Buritine Pure Pearl Cream and what seems to be a face moisturizer called World’s No. 1 Fair and Lovely multivitamin cream. She also obtained three long hair sticks to put her hair in a bun, each with one pink, blue or ivory pearl at the top and a long strand of gracefully moving silver with sparkly diamonds coming down. She said it costs $6,000 Thai bahts or about $200 in U.S. dollars to have a 25 kilogram box shipped.
Ya He Ma also paid people she knew in the refugee camps to buy and send her some large wall posters. She said the pictures of Thailand on her wall are beautiful and make her feel more at home. One of them was of a beautiful, large house, which was her dream home. It appeared to be in Thailand. It had a large deck surrounding the second floor, bright flowers on the deck, and tons of palm trees in the surrounding yard.

With a steady income, Ya He Ma was able to send some pictures back home as well. “She send [one picture] with you [in it] too,” Nyunt Aye told me. “They take a lot of picture[s] here with the snow when the winter … because people in the refugee camp they never, they haven’t seen snow.”

She also bought and obtained some Burmese products here in the U.S. The first time I interviewed Ya He Ma, on Oct. 15, 2009, I noticed she and her daughters wore circles of a tan powder on their cheeks, similar to those I’d seen on another refugee I had interviewed. I asked Ya He Ma about it and she said it’s to look pretty. It’s put on in
different designs. A common one is a swirl. “You can do anything,” one of her daughters told me one time when I was not recording. “Sometimes you put it on the whole face.” Ya He Ma said something in Burmese to her daughter who ran into the other room and returned with a small container full of the powdery paste. It read: Export – Shwe Pyi Nann. They told me that it is a ground up wood. Translator La She Wah said in Burma many people wear the powder, including men and women. Some put it all over their skin like a sunscreen. But Ya He Ma said her husband never wears it, just the girls and babies because it looks cute.

We talked sitting on the mat that she laid on the floor of her home. She said she liked Logan, especially that it’s very quiet and they have work. In addition, she said that it’s very good that the bus is free. She took the bus to Deseret Industries – a Latter-day
Saint church-run second hand store with clothes, furniture, toys, books and a wide array of other donations – along with Wal-Mart and Smith’s Food and Drug. At Deseret Industries she bought clothes, a table and chairs, and a sewing machine. She said while she can get clothes for $5 at DI, Wal-Mart is expensive and she can only buy two or three shirts. “When we go to the DI we get a lot,” she said. She likes shopping, even if just for clothes that she needs. She said she sewed some of her clothes and preferred those, but that in the United States she doesn’t sew as much because it’s so easy to buy clothes. She said sometimes she bought really large clothes at DI and then cut them apart and sewed them how she liked them. Here she owned her own electric sewing machine, which she preferred to the pedal sewing machines she owned earlier because it was easier to use.

In addition, Ya He Ma dreamed of buying her own house. The family already owned a car, a silver Volkswagon that cost $7,000, which her husband bought for his 28. Mae Yan Be wears circles of a powder called Shwe Pyi Nann on her cheeks. She and her sister told me the powder is used to look pretty and can be put on in many designs or all over the body. It is also used as a sunscreen in Burma.
brother to use when they carpooled to JBS. Later, her husband traveled to Nevada to obtain a driver’s license, since the test is easier there, and could drive the car himself.

*Education*

Ya He Ma told me it was very hard when she first came to the U.S. due to the difficulties of learning English. Once she spoke English fluently, she believed she would be able to accomplish some of her other goals, like obtaining a driver’s license and going places without a translator. Ya He Ma said she would have to speak good English in order to get a driver’s license. In 2009 she understood it was a picture test, but in 2010 she believed that had changed. She never drove a car before she came to the U.S. If she could drive, she said, she’d be able to take her kids to the school and the store.

Ya He Ma had been taking classes twice a week at the English Language Center to expand her skills. Hser Doh, who assisted with her class, said it’s harder for those like

29. Har Be Bar (left) and Mae Yan dress up for the last day of Ramadan. They had just returned from eating at their grandmother’s house nearby.
Ya He Ma who don’t have much education as children in their home country to learn a new language. It’s “a little bit easy,” she said. Hser Doh or my other translators still generally remained the go-between for our interviews, but as time progressed Ya He Ma could understand more of what I said without a translator and sometimes answered a question in English before it was translated.

One important goal for Ya He Ma was that her kids be educated, speak fluent English and have a better life. “If they have a good education they can have a good job and then they can take care of their family for the future,” she said through Hser Doh. She believed she can help her children get good
educations so they won’t have to work as hard as she did. Ya He Ma’s two oldest girls attended Logan High School and her youngest daughter attended Hillcrest Elementary. They told me when we first met that there are more than 10 Burmese and Karen students at the high school. Ya He Ma’s son, who was just more than a month old when I first met Ya He Ma, was the first family member born in the U.S. and would likely grow up to speak both English and Burmese.
Religious freedom

Ya He Ma’s family continued many religious traditions connected to their Muslim faith. They ate halal meat, which they traveled to Salt Lake City to obtain, along with items from the Asian market there and items from Smiths and sometimes from Lee’s grocery stores in Logan. Once I interviewed them on the last day of Ramadan and the entire family was dressed up, as they had just returned from a feast at someone’s house. Ya He Ma had made some of the fancy clothes they wore. On that day they were exchanging traditional Burmese desserts with others. I tried one made of glutinous rice with coconut milk, sugar and a grain smaller than sesame seeds on top of the firm squares. Ya He Ma’s mother had sent over another dessert that looked like it was made of coconut milk too, but had no rice in it. Burmese neighborhood children, also formally dressed, were coming in and out of the apartment. They told me this was all traditional for Ramadan.
Ya He Ma never wore a head covering when I interviewed her. When I asked her about this, she said that she only wore it once in a while when going to important events because she didn’t like it. She said with a smile, but apparently with sincerity, that the other women who wear it all the time will get blessings from God and that God likes them more. She said Muslims wear it because they’re religious and that they should also wear a shirt that has sleeves that cover their arms – something none of the Burmese women I’d talked to had done as they always had short sleeves. When I asked if she was religious, she laughed. When I asked again why she didn’t like to wear a head covering she said she has sins, but I felt she was still saying she believed her faith, just that she didn’t think the head covering was that important. She said when she wore it or long
sleeves it felt cluttered, like she’s wearing a lot of stuff, and depending on the weather
she may also feel hot, although other times it’s not uncomfortable, she told me.

Ya He Ma did not speak Arabic, the sacred language of Islam, although earlier
she had said she’d taken some classes in Burma, but said when praying there’s a
religious leader who prays in Arabic and she repeats what he says. She said they have a
teacher – not a professional – who knows how to read and pray. It was the same man I
met when I shadowed Ma Htwe Hla’s kids at Arabic lessons, she told me.

Her husband pointed out an Islamic prayer calendar that the family had
displayed on the wall, which they obtained from the Salt Lake Islamic Center. He said
he often attended on Fridays, the sacred day for Muslims. He also watched part of a
movie about visiting Mecca while I was there. They’d prefer to travel to Mecca, he and
Ya He Ma told me, but since they cannot, watching the movie is almost the same thing.
They’d like to watch it every day, but they cannot because they are too busy. The
calendar also lists businesses in Utah owned by Muslims.

While Ya He Ma said she greatly missed her father who still lived in Burma, she
said overall she preferred the U.S. In Burma, she said she had a lot of problems every
day because the soldiers came to the village and forced people to do things. Ya He Ma
was on a path to becoming a U.S. citizen so long as she continued meeting the
requirements, which include obtaining immunizations, a green card, and staying in the
country for a designated amount of time. From her account, her journey here had been a
success, for her husband had a regular job at JBS meat packing plant in Hyrum. She can
choose if she wants to work solely inside the home or get a job outside also to earn
money. She has modern conveniences to help with her traditional work. She and her daughters are getting an education. Ya He Ma can worship Allah according to her conscience and choose how she wants to live her day-to-day life.

Notes:

1-In Burmese there are no first or last names, and spouses do not share a common name with each other or their children. Therefore the Burmese names listed above are complete names, and although some refugees make changes to accommodate customs in
the U.S., from what I understand the names are not generally broken in pieces. Hser Doh “Chapter” gave himself a nickname to help those from the U.S. The nickname actually sounds a little like his actual name when spoken. Kyaw Eh “Joe” did the same.

2- Language in direct quotations has been cleaned up slightly for ease of reading using ellipses where some text has been removed or using partial quotes to more clearly communicate the main idea.

3- Several refugees have told me that Burmese Muslims do not celebrate birthdays and often the refugees do not know their birthdays and so state they were born on Jan. 1.

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PART 2. ETHNOGRAPHY ANALYSIS

The most important part of the formation and breakup of ethnographic authority in twentieth century social anthropology (Clifford 1983: 118), at least for my purposes, was that it spurred efforts to find more sensitive, democratic ways to write about other groups of people. Before the formal rise of ethnography, missionaries and politicians like French Jesuit missionary Father Lafitau wrote about other groups of people, conducting ethnography due to their long time immersion into the culture and resulting proficiency with the language. In contrast, Bronislaw Malinowski in his work with the Trobrianders built up a new degree of ethnographic authority, partly through castigating competitors like missionaries as unscientific and biased. Malinowski’s style persisted and gave a scientific credence to what became a new field (Clifford 1983).

However, starting around the 1970s, historians, ethnographers, academics from cultures outside the Western World, and feminist scholars questioned their own and others’ ability to successfully represent another culture given limited knowledge and experience in the field and significant power differences between interviewer and interviewee. For instance, Vincent Crapanzano critiqued writers including George Catlin, Johann von Goethe and Clifford Geertz, who while claiming they’re figuring out what a cultural practice “means,” failed to see and understand the entire picture and communicate their inability to write all they do see (Crapanzano 1992). As old methods of writing about other cultures were critiqued, new ways were explored including fieldwork accounts, mutually constructed realities, and ethnography written as dialogue. Some writers tried to equalize relationships with those they wrote about through self-
disclosure, while others did reciprocal ethnography like Elaine Lawless, who made the
one studied an active participant in interpreting the information and the methods through
which it was obtained, using open dialogue (Lawless 2000). In the process, some
authors became interested in polyvocality or the idea that an ethnographer is in fact
compiling together many different voices, in fact making their work more, not less,
authentic.

By definition, the ethnography tends to be a longer, more detailed, written account
used to represent a culture or person within that culture. John Van Maanen defines
ethnography as occupying “a literary borderland somewhere between writers who reach
for very general audiences and those who reach for a specialized few.” He states: “To
the generalists, ethnography often seems pinched and inelegant, its standards stiff and
restrictive. To the specialists, the same writing may seem imprecise and unfocused, its
standards loose and unfathomable” (Van Maanen 1988: ix). In comparison to
journalism, ethnography often takes a more methodical approach to obtaining data,
looking as Clifford Geertz put it, for the subtle differentiations even between a blink and
wink. While community journalism tends to take place within shorter deadlines, some
ethnographies rely on years of fieldwork and careful participant observation, which may
require learning another language and culture through immersion, along with “a
derangement of personal and cultural expectations” (Clifford 1983: 119).

In Tales of the Field, John Van Maanen describes three styles of ethnographic
writing: realist tales, confessional tales and impressionist tales. While a realist tale tends
to be told in an objective manner, a confessional tale involves much more of the
author’s voice and in fact provides a better outlet for the author to reveal the process by which the information was obtained, along with their results. As he states: “By far the most prominent, familiar, popular, and recognized form of ethnographic writing is the realistic account” (Van Maanen 1988: 45). My writing about Ya He Ma tended to fall within this category, although it did diverge in some instances.

While exploring experimental forms, I seriously considered writing in one of the newer forms of ethnographic writing. In the end I decided not to largely because I felt that my analysis here includes many of the aspects of the confessional tale. For instance, I describe my information gathering process, while analyzing both its strengths and weaknesses. It is fitting that my more confessional analysis follow my more traditional realist tale, in keeping with a tradition in which confessional tales tend to stand beside realist tales (Van Maanen 1988: 75). Another factor in my decision to write my ethnography as a realist tale, was the fact that my writing about San Da in the piece of creative nonfiction includes many aspects of the impressionist tale, as this style of writing tends to take a more literary approach, with some concern for tension, characterization and timing. So, in a piece in which I’m analyzing representation of different types of writing, it made sense to take a close look at a classical ethnographic approach when I have employed many of the variations in other places. It worked best for sake of comparison. In addition, some would argue that the realist tale still is the most acceptable type of ethnography, upon which careers and reputations are built (M. Wolf 1992).
The realist form has advantages and disadvantages. Van Maanen defines at least four characteristics that differentiate the realist tale from the travel account, fiction, journalism and other forms of ethnographic writing: experiential authority, typical forms, the native’s point of view and interpretative omnipotence. When discussing experiential authority, he stressed that the most striking aspect of realist accounts is that the author is almost completely absent from the text (Van Maanen 1988: 46). In fact, such an account has been typically written in an objective, third party voice, although I took a bit more modern approach in writing in the first person (Van Maanen 1988: 45). For the most part I did stay out of the writing, but I at times did include information that depicted the evolution of my understanding.

An advantage of the realist tale is that it draws from a long legacy of established credibility, due to the work of Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, Raymond Firth, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Margaret Mead and many others (Van Maanen 1988: 46-47). In addition, this form emphasizes “minute, sometimes precious, but thoroughly mundane details of life” (Van Maanen 1988: 48), which means it provides a forum for looking closely at facts that have historical importance, but may lack the sensational thrill that would make something worthy of the news. In contrast, the impressionist tale emphasizes the unusual or extraordinary. While the realist tale does include some reference to what is dramatic, it is shown as an exception, which means that the context may be more accurate (Van Maanen 1988: 48). Realist tales also emphasize the native’s point of view, as opposed to confessional tales, which focus primarily on the experiences of the fieldworker. In order to communicate the views of those written
about, realist tales frequently use extensive quotations, as I attempted to do (Van Maanen 1988: 49). As a result, they provide some degree of perspective on the culture as well as information on the practices of the culture by giving those studied a certain amount of voice.

The major disadvantage of the realist form is that it is not transparent because “realist tales are also written in such as way that there is little room to question aloud (or in print) whether they got it right, or whether there might be yet another, equally useful way to study, characterize, display, read, or otherwise understand the accumulated field material” (Van Maanen 1988: 51). In addition, the form often uses the observations of the fieldworker to generalize the experiences of the entire culture (Van Maanen 1988: 49).

My writing fits in some, but not all, cases. While I did not outright suggest Ya He Ma’s experiences were indicative of the entire culture, one could generalize that in some ways her experiences had similar elements to other such refugee narratives. By attaching this analysis to the realist tale, I made my work much more transparent as I showed my methodology, doubts and biases. I also expanded the possible interpretations of my work by including my transcriptions. Still, in ways I would have liked a finished ethnographic piece that includes more confessional elements, making clear my concerns about some of the information that I presented, but still had nagging doubts about. I don’t know what parts, exactly, but I would love to have additional opportunities to ask the same questions I’ve asked in different ways and see if time allows even deeper understandings and truths to unfold.
My account on Ya He Ma’s migration from Burma to a refugee camp in the U.S. was based on a year of oral history interviews with one Burmese Muslim refugee mother. In my work to understand the experiences of Ya He Ma, I did not actually live with Ya He Ma, and I did not learn Burmese. Instead I relied on periodic visits and a translator. Altogether I completed ten oral history interviews with Ya He Ma and participated in a limited way in her family members’ lives. For example, I ate dinner and dessert with the family; invited them to my yard sale when I moved and gave them some items they said they’d like; and observed how the family interacted as they came and went or gathered around to join in interviews. In addition, I met with other members of the Burmese refugee community and friends of that community for separate interviews and attended some of the same events they attended, including celebrations and day-to-day tasks.

The overall idea of ethnography is to arrive at an accurate representation of those one is studying – or, in other words, to present the truth of those depicted (Clifford 1983). Academics have begun to question the process from which observations and recordings about a culture evolve into a written document. Some have argued that in fact an ethnography is not such a transparent document as once thought (Tyler 1986: 125-126) and may not have the capacity to truly represent the entire “truth.” Unlike community journalism, where many reporters still work to maintain a sense of distance in order to objectively report on the truth, ethnography has moved more closely to the understanding that together field worker and interviewee create the story as they
interact, both influencing each other and the direction of the conversation (Lal 1996: 204; Lawless 2000).

As ethnographers have worked to find more ethical ways to do research on others (D. Wolf 1996), they have as a result explored the idea of authorship. For instance, Renato Rosaldo’s *Ilongot Headhunters* is the result of listening to long stories that diverged from his own interests and that he didn’t come to appreciate until after leaving and looking back through notepads filled with the stories (Clifford 1983: 135). His informants took control of his research and steered him toward the information he eventually wrote about.

Regardless of what one reads, there are many voices in a text, extending beyond interviewer and the interviewee. James Clifford wrote: “Indeed, any continuous ethnographic exposition routinely folds into itself a diversity of descriptions, transcriptions, and interpretations by a variety of indigenous authors. How should these authorial presences be made manifest?” (Clifford 1983: 136). Although my work was a shorter ethnographic process than some, there were still many levels of mediation – or multiple “authors” – that affected how I ultimately represented Ya He Ma’s voice in my writing. These include: the role of my translators; Ya He Ma’s role as interviewee; my role as interviewer, writer and photographer; and the role of my transcriptionist.

My translators played an important role. Initially, it was Hser Doh (Chapter), who made it possible to continue work on my thesis after I quit my work as a reporter. He led me to make Ya He Ma the subject of my ethnography as opposed to any other Burmese Muslim refugee women I could have chosen. When I was determining what woman to
write my ethnography about, Hser Doh took me to knock on doors of those he thought might be a good pick. It was a gray winter day. I was nervous that no one would want to talk to me, that now that I was no longer a journalist I would lose access to the community. First off, we walked up the stone steps to a second floor apartment and knocked on the door. Ya He Ma answered. She and Chapter knew each other because they’re both Burmese refugees, were neighbors in the Riverwalk apartments and also because the English Language Center employed Chapter as an interpreter for the English class Ya He Ma took two times a week. I felt that he must have chosen her partly because he felt comfortable with her. I also felt that the relationship of trust he had built with Ya He Ma may have made her feel more comfortable talking to me. Chapter belongs to the ethnic group called the Karen, and is not Muslim like Ya He Ma. He helped me with the bulk of my interviews, but eventually left to serve a mission in Los Angeles, California, for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which he joined after arriving in Utah and leaving behind his Baptist faith.

In addition to facilitating the survival of my project, the four interpreters I used for this project determined how my questions would be phrased to Ya He Ma and how her answers were communicated to me. Some answers were more detailed than others, some translators had a better understanding of language and some had more background knowledge from which to draw during the process. Each of my translators was from the ethnic group called the Karen and as such spoke both their regional Karen language and Burmese, the language of their country. I assume they had varying proficiency in Burmese as a result. Some and perhaps all spoke very little English when arriving in the
U.S., but they became my translators because they were among the most proficient of the refugees at learning the new language within the few years they had lived here. In addition, some were more prone to adding their own interpretation and some had more apparent political convictions that I believe colored the way they saw and interpreted the dialogue, as my own beliefs influenced how I approached the information.

Because most of the project I worked with Hser Doh, I grew used to working with him. After he moved to California, I had three other translators: Kyaw Eh (Joe), Lah She Wah, and Nyunt Aye and began to notice differences in what kind of information I received. For instance, Kyaw Eh had a father who died fighting with the Karen National Union and it seemed to me that he was better able to get detailed information on war. Also, he may have been the most fluent in English and overall did a very good job interpreting.

Lah She Wah filled in as translator once for Kyaw Eh, who is her husband. Like him, she came from a family in Burma very involved in the civil war and she played an active role in the community herself. She would stop and add context and her own opinions regarding Ya He Ma’s answers, which may not be the traditional role of a translator, but which I found helpful for understanding how others in the Burmese community would see an issue. For instance, she explained more about the uses of a powder the girls put on their faces and what she thought about the refugee camps. Perhaps because she had previously been very involved in advocating for women’s rights in Burma and Thailand I was able to get better information on women’s issues when I interviewed Ya He Ma with her there. Considering the “politics and
epistemology of location,” which indicates that one’s unique biases and background can be an advantage in obtaining some kinds of information, I would also argue that because she is a woman Lah She Wah connected with Ya He Ma in different ways than the three men who translated for me, and helped me obtain different types of information (D. Wolf 1996: 14).

I also wondered if her strong opinions and beliefs may have kept Ya He Ma from saying some things and motivated her to say some things she would not have said with others. Some research has indicated that different interviewers received different information, though not necessarily better or worse, and that could be the same for interpreters (D. Wolf 1996: 15). For instance, Lah She Wah told me that she thinks it’s bad for women to be at home with their children all the time. She’s concerned that they become shy and hesitant to participate in the community and don’t get an education. Whereas before Ya He Ma had told me that she felt that being home with her children was a very important role, at that interview with Lah She Wah she said she wanted to go to work outside the home in five years. At the least, I think the questions I asked and the way Lah She Wah reinterpreted them to her got her thinking hard about the issue and questioning or at least adding to her earlier comments.

Another person who determined what kind and how much information to share with me was Ya He Ma. When we first arrived at her home, on Oct. 15, 2009, I explained what I was doing, and Hser Doh translated my explanation. Ya He Ma seemed readily willing to talk to me further and seemed to enjoy our initial short discussion about her life. When I asked afterward if I could come back and talk to her more, she smiled and
quickly said yes. Obviously, without her willingness to share her life story with me, I would not have documented it (M. Wolf 1996: 219). I hoped that by listening to her talk, I validated her importance as an individual and the beauty of her life.

The situation I described above where different translators elicited different answers from Ya He Ma also reflects on her and her ability to frame her answer for a particular audience. There were many instances where it was clear she was doing so. The first time I interviewed her with my fourth translator, Nyunt Aye, I asked her again about the Karen Women’s Organization. She restated that she liked it, but added a new reason, saying it helped people to stand up against domestic violence, an issue that had not come up in previous interviews. But then, when I asked if domestic violence was a problem in Burma, Ya He Ma said no. I wondered if she had simply said that was something good about the organization because that is what she had heard, and in fact didn’t know of any domestic violence, or if perhaps she wasn’t comfortable talking to me in more detail about a sensitive issue. In either case, she seems to be shaping the interview to some degree, whether that’s by presenting herself as more knowledgeable about the importance of the women’s group than she was or by avoiding discussion about domestic violence in Burma.

Within the framework of my questions, Ya He Ma steered the conversation by showing more enthusiasm and providing more information on certain topics. She enjoyed telling me about her life in the U.S. and her goals. She also enjoyed telling me about her sewing and cooking. As a result, I was able to get more information on these topics. At first, I had a harder time getting much detail from her about the refugee camps
or Burma and even later, as I bit by bit obtained more information, she tended to mention that she did not remember much. The story I received is the story she remembered and wanted to share. However, someone else likely would have remembered something else, and with a different questioner she may have been prompted to recall different details.

Ya He Ma demonstrated her own evolving understanding of her life, due to the introspection an oral history encourages, when I asked her about why she felt like she had to leave the refugee camp to obtain more food. At first she had explained there wasn’t curry and other such foods she liked to eat, but I kept asking questions about why this was so important to her. At that time, it seemed that there was adequate food still. However, the next time she expanded her thought, saying the food ran out part way through the month. I felt that my repeated questions and interests led her to think more carefully about the question and to expand her answer the next time. Bruce Jackson argues that each of us change our stories over time and in response to the questions asked and the questioner.

We all, each and every one of us, continually recreate ourselves. Accidents of fate or whims of the moment in the distant past become, with the fulfillment of the present, meaningful, and we see those accidents and whims in structures that, if they ever existed at all, were totally transparent to us at the time. We understand human affairs in terms of narrative and the narrative of our lives is protean, forever subject to new depths or breadths of understanding, new configurations and alignments of parts that previously seemed carved in stone. I think that is the real reason our personal experience stories, the stories we tell about ourselves over and over again, change over time: as our sense of contexts changes so changes our sense of what mattered, what was big and what was little, which words were essential and which words were air. (Jackson 1996: 225)
In addition to the translators and Ya He Ma, I also had power to set the agenda (Lal 1996: 204-205). I tried to listen effectively in order to empower Ya He Ma to direct her story. At times, however, I had to ask questions repeatedly on a certain topic, like her life in the Mae La Refugee Camp, in order to get the details I wanted. Having about a year to begin to synthesize information and the ability to periodically return and ask more questions before publishing anything increased my ability to effectively listen to aspects of Ya He Ma’s story that “differ from conventional expectations” and may lie “outside the boundaries of acceptability” (Gluck and Patai 1991: 11). For instance, at first I had assumed and our line of conversation had led me to believe that Ya He Ma, as a refugee, had left Burma for the camps fleeing violence. It wasn’t until nearly a year after my first interview that I asked her more questions that allowed me to understand that she left Burma because she was hungry and because her mother-in-law said there was food available to those in the refugee camps.

In addition, this extended period of time allowed me to do more outside research, which improved the accuracy of my information. For instance, earlier on Ya He Ma had told me through Hser Doh or Chapter that she was from Nabu. However, later I found information indicating Nabu had been destroyed during the time Ya He Ma said she lived there. When I asked her about this, she clarified that she actually had lived in the countryside just outside of Nabu. In the U.S., people often also name a larger city to identify where they are from to those not from the area, but without the additional information my writing would have been less accurate. Of course, considering what I’ve learned I shudder as I imagine what may still be inaccurate that I have not yet
discovered. Rather than an omniscient narrator, describing a culture in general, I did find it helpful to look closely at the life of one individual whose story I discovered is quite different from the tale of some of the refugees. Although I cannot effectively generalize the story of all refugees, a close look at the life of one complicates the picture of the entire group.

My role as photographer also influenced my depiction of Ya He Ma. This was true in what I chose to focus on and how little time I gave to this aspect of the project, along with new opportunities the photography opened to me. As I was primarily interested in shots that showed the refugees doing something, rather than posing, I asked to come when they would be engaging in the activities they normally did within their home environment, thus limiting the types of photographs I obtained. I only spent a few hours total taking pictures and since I took pictures during or after an interview, due to time restrictions, all the pictures were taken in and just outside of Ya He Ma’s home. I put much greater emphasis on the interview process and my own observations, perhaps in part because I am not trained as a photographer, but rather as a interviewer, researcher and writer.

In addition to the photography shaping what images were included in my ethnography, I found the act of photographing shaped the fieldwork experience. While I worried that the fieldwork process at times had the tendency to downplay differences (Gluck and Patai 1991: 72), the photography alerted me to areas of difference that I otherwise might have overlooked and led me to ask better questions and obtain different kinds of information. For instance, Ya He Ma was the only one of the three women I
photographed who did not at first ask to wear her head covering, something that prompted me to ask more questions about her beliefs and which allowed me to better understand her perspective. In addition, the family brought out objects we were discussing so I could photograph them and as they held the items would sometimes add additional stories and information. Plus, perhaps due to my change of roles, when I was photographing Ya He Ma preparing the family’s main meal, and later the family eating it, they asked me to join in. I found it helpful to observe their activities with a camera, rather than distracting them from their duties by asking for their time for an interview. As I watched Ya He Ma cook with her daughters; her husband combine betal nut, betal leaf and some ground limestone; and her little boy play on the floor, I had a better idea of what their day-to-day life might have been like.

This interaction with the family allowed me to observe, rather than just talk about, their lives. By joining in with the family’s meal, I noticed differences in their table manners. For instance, Ya He Ma ate with her fingers and explained that that is what most people in Burma do, and it is considered polite. She said sometimes they use a fork or spoon when eating soup and certain dishes. After eating, Ya He Ma poured water over her hands as she held them above a bowl on the table, so that she could clean them. These are questions I would not have thought to ask – that could have been lost through the interview process – but that were captured through the photographic process.

In addition, there are some truths that a photograph can communicate better in my final writing than words alone. Although the photography wasn’t my highest priority and I spent only a few hours spread out over three different occasions taking pictures of
Ya He Ma and her family, the photographs do show some details more quickly and accurately than I could with words alone. I photographed the family as they dressed, in their home as they had decorated it, as they showed me their car, posed for a family photo, went about household duties and showed me their possessions. For instance, the photograph of the makeup and creams quickly captured details that it would have taken me quite a long time to put into my notes and allowed me to go back later and look again to fill in missing facts. I began to notice this after first photographing and thereafter tried to bring my camera along. However, I continuously worried about being too obtrusive and tried to be respectful and not take pictures when it felt uncomfortable or when asked not to. For instance, on Ramadan Ya He Ma indicated she had no desire to be photographed and so I didn’t take a posed picture of her, although I did with her permission take one of her hair style when she demonstrated how to wear some of the items she brought from Burma. So, she too shaped the photographs I took.

While the photographs cannot tell the story on their own, I believe they do expand the story I could put in words. For instance, often when I asked for names of the foods Ya He Ma cooked neither she nor the translator could find a way to name them or describe them in much detail in English. As many were foods I was unfamiliar with, even sampling them I would have difficulty labeling them. Through photographing them I was able to capture some of what I could not communicate – or that which would require pages of tedious explanation. When I went outside to photograph the car, I was able to see the family gather around it and the pride in their faces. I think some of that was caught in the photographs.
While some still see photographs as “less filtered” and “more true” than writing, it’s apparent they are shaped by me as photographer, Ya He Me and the others photographed, and the technology itself. For instance, while in some ways I may have better understood the family’s interactions, if someone were to show up at my house with a camera I would want to put on my best behavior. My house would be clean, dinner would be planned and I’d have a smile on my face. I imagine to some degree the same is true for most others and that behind that clear composure are many more layers of complex thought and action. As a result, in some ways our verbal discussions were more true than the smiling pictures. For instance, Ya He Ma indicated she has had discussions with her husband about her role as a fulltime mother and when or if she wants to return to the workforce. Such facts cannot be captured in images. On the other hand, the photographs do show Ya He Ma’s appearance, dress, home, food and so forth. My photography was alone limited to the site of my interviews by time constraints and as a result of this alone represents a very incomplete picture of Ya He Ma and her life in Logan if they were to be taken as such. Instead they should be valued for what they add to the detail and description of her story that I put into words.

Finally, my transcriptionist, Angela Swaner, the secretary in the Department of History at Weber State University, also played a role in this endeavor. After she transcribed my tapes with Ya He Ma, I went back to add notes and punctuation and additional information based on the notes I took during the interviews and the additional understanding I gained from my research. As a result, both Angela and I influenced the transcription process. This is important to note because just as the interpreters, Ya He
Ma and I influenced what information was discussed and how it was presented, the process of transcription also “takes sides, enabling certain interpretations, advancing particular interests, favoring specific speakers, and so on. The choices made in transcription link the transcript to the context in which it is intended to be read” (Bucholtz 2000: 1440). Mary Bucholtz suggests that one must look at both what does the transcriber hear on the recording and include in the manuscript and how does the transcriber write down what he or she hears (Bucholtz 2000: 1441).

Admittedly it’s hard to look honestly at my own transcription, yet a few things are obvious. For one, I made no attempt to find someone to transcribe the Burmese and so those portions have been greatly shortened to something like:

Chapter: asks question in Burmese
Ya He Ma: answers in Burmese.

I made this decision because I didn’t have anyone readily available, or the money available, to pay such a person to listen to the Burmese and then write it in Burmese. I also instructed Angela to write such parts as I have stated above in an effort to make her job easier. If I could have done so, it would have been very interesting to also have someone translate those words into English, which would have further complicated the matter of representation by adding yet another layer of interpretation, and yet would have also added some interesting insights.

In the transcription, as I’ve gone back over the basic record from Angela, I’ve tried to add more punctuation, correct spellings of Burmese names and more context for what was going on. I’ve found myself reverting to following what Angela did as much as
possible, because it saves time. I’ve been most concerned about the long pieces of information that I could possibly quote in my ethnography and so have been less attentive to the places where they are speaking in Burmese or outside sounds from children, other family members or guests. I struggled to determine how many filler words to leave in and whether to leave awkward constructs from the interpreters or myself as they were stated. In the end, I tried to arrive at a balance between complete accuracy and getting the larger ideas correct. In addition, as I reviewed Angela’s transcription, I added some information I’d learned from outside research that she didn’t understand. If I’d had more time to really delve into the transcription I might have done more of this and made more fine corrections. I’m sure there’s still much more I don’t understand and so the document is a representation of my own shortcomings as well as my knowledge.

Forever fearing my own limitations, I find myself falling back on the comfort of Clifford’s idea of reinterpretation, which means that others, like Ya He Ma’s family members or those fluent in Burmese, can later go back and reevaluate my original interviews and writing to provide additional insights and a more complete picture of Ya He Ma’s experiences (Clifford 1983: 134). In addition to my own text, based on the transcription, I will provide Utah State University’s folklore archives at the Merrill-Cazier library with my transcriptions and with a CD containing the recordings. By doing so, more information than I could understand is available to those, including Ya He Ma’s children and family members, who have language skills I do not. The recordings also become available for me to reexamine at a later date (Gluck and Patai 1991: 11).
Still, by providing those materials to the library, I was risking personal embarrassment because in the recordings I sometimes sound very stupid. I mispronounce basic Burmese names often, including Ya He Ma’s in the beginning. My daughter is sometimes in the background, at moments crying, as is Ya He Ma’s son. I make weird comments. I often use filler words. I repeat myself. At times I ask dumb and repetitive questions to double and triple check that I understood something I had learned earlier and because in my journalistic training I was taught that it’s often through being willing to ask stupid questions that the best answers come. At times, I didn’t prepare well enough – like in practicing and writing down in my notes how to say Ya He Ma’s name. At times, my own biases become clear, which still makes me feel vulnerable, although I’ve worked to make them very clear in my writing.

All this discussion of the many voices that were involved in the making of my text, brings us to a definition of culture raised by Bakhtin: “A ‘culture’ is, concretely, an open-ended, creative dialogue of subcultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions” (qtd. in Clifford 1983: 136-137). In my attempt to write about Ya He Ma, together she and her family members and friends, my various translators, my transcriptionist, and I created a new sense of Ya He Ma’s culture that resulted in a mutually created text. Its creation was brought about through various understandings of both the English language and the Burmese language and of specific aspects of both Burmese and U.S. history that influenced our ability to question, inform and understand each other. All of this was also influenced by other factors like gender and age that determined what we were able to see, understand and communicate. In the end, it’s a
very messy process that produced a richer, more complex, authentic document closer to obtaining the ideal of “truth.” It is still evolving. But, I don’t think the many authors involved in making this piece or its inability to portray a complete picture means the process was flawed. Instead this analysis gives an idea of how this piece was authored and under what constraints, which understanding strengthens the validity of the piece because it allows a reader to evaluate it within a context.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 4
CREATIVE NONFICTION

PART 1. SAN DA

Motherhood: A Burmese Muslim & an American Mormon Converse

“I'm nobody! Who are you?/Are you nobody, too?/
Then there's a pair of us — don't tell!/They'd banish us, you know.”
— Emily Dickinson

“For the things which some [wo]men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul,
others set at naught and trample under their feet.”
—1 Nephi 19:7, The Book of Mormon

Cheery metallic red, green and silver Christmas wrapping paper taped on the wall over the couch and the posters of Southeast Asia – maybe Burma and Thailand – catch my eye, along with documents covered in Arabic on the nearby wall. Now I glance at San Da’s white carpet and couches unfettered by toys and papers, admiring her neatness, something I continually struggle to achieve myself. Outside a frozen crystal-covered lawn, a swing set, and cars line the road, fronting this block of white look-alike apartments. My translator, Hser Doh, carries my seven-month-old daughter, Jackie, as we walk inside San Da’s house and with a long breath he gratefully released the handle, setting her car seat down on the soft, clean carpet. The slight young man with spiked black hair firmly insisted he carry her and I agreed, interpreting his insistence as regard not only for my role as

1 Emily Dickinson, Poems by Emily Dickinson, Three Series, Complete (Qontro Classic Books, 2010), 472.
2 I changed the original text from men to [wo]men.
graduate student, but also for my title mother, a respect I don’t always feel among my peers at the university where I study.

Here I am accepted with my daughter, Jackie, who tries to catch a glimpse of her surroundings with her wide blue eyes, her cheeks the size and color of white-fleshed peaches brushed by the pink flannel blanket her Grandma Lenna made. I pull out a notebook and audio recorder ready to resume my interviews with San Da on this, our third meeting. My curiosity peaks as San Da tells me how differently people and buildings seemed to her when she first came to the U.S. She was surprised when she first encountered electric lights, running water, cement multiple storied buildings, and soft beds. She
36-37. San Da (above) sits with her children (left to right), including her three boys, Maung Min Tun, Naing Lin and Zaw Min Tun, and her girl, Myo Myo Win. Her husband is at work. Below, San Da used metallic Christmas wrapping paper and decorations to adorn her apartment.
38. San Da holds her daughter, Myo Myo Win, the first member of the family born in the U.S.
tells me in Burma and Thailand she bathed far from her home, likely in a spring, and also traveled far to obtain water.

“So, living in America is a lot of fun,” San Da says,² making me smile, but she soon adds, “I was so depressed when I first came to the U.S. because everything looked so different. Everything is, like, so weird. I’d never seen a house or apartment like this before because in the camp we lived in a hut, not something made of cement with two, three stories. I slept on mats on the ground with blankets.”

“Is it more work to take care of the house here or in the refugee camp?” I ask, trying to let her fill in the answers that I think I know.

“It’s more work in America,” she says, surprising me, “because you have to clean and take care of the house so much. Because it’s not our house and we rent it, we have to keep the house clean all the time.”

America demands more of her, adding new duties to those of Burmese motherhood, even as it relieves her of other chores like fetching water, it occurs to me. With carpets and couches come more objects to clean. With freedom from camps, come new worries about how she is perceived by others whose outlook is as foreign as cement two-story apartments and the crystallized snow on the lawn. And, I’m soon to be reminded, with U.S. economic opportunity, sometimes comes isolation since she is removed from family and friends, perhaps more confined to the home by the kitchen faucet than she would be when she took part in a community exodus to fetch water or take baths at a spring.⁴

² San Da, interviews by author, Logan, UT, 2009-2010.
My translator Hser Doh – nicknamed Chapter – patiently translates our words. As mothers trying to find our places in the world – a refugee and a graduate student – San Da and I proceed in hope that somehow meanings can be exchanged, but more questions remain than I’ll have time to ask or her to answer.

While I try to ignore the television in the background, which the children turned on during the interview, Chapter uses the sound to help me gain another insight into Southeast Asian culture. He explains the film, Ong-Bak, stars Tony Jaa – a famous Thai actor, martial artist and former monk whom Chapter seems to greatly admire – and describes the search to retrieve a stolen artifact, which I later learn is the head from a precious statue of Buddha. Only by finding the thieves and restoring the statue, can the hero of the film, of course played by Jaa, end drought that devastates the humble villagers in his community.

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Devastation is not a myth in Burma, a country dominated by Buddhist leaders and philosophies, especially not for minority groups like the Muslims, Karen, Chin, and Karenni. The dominant ethnic group, the Burmans, which is primarily Buddhist, has far
more opportunity under the military dictatorship than the other Burmese citizens. Many
of the country’s people are confused by government misinformation regarding those
who live in the rural areas.5 One Burman wrote a racist pamphlet entitled, “The Fear of
Losing One’s Race,”6 that stirred up the already rampant hatred regarding the growing
ethnic minorities. The government-controlled press portrays some of those minorities as
opium traders and terrorists,7 particularly those involved in democratic movements. The
minority groups often follow minority religions: Christianity, animism, Hinduism, and
Islam, which elicits national distrust.

Burma’s history includes generations of proud princes, princesses and royal dy-
nasties, until in 18858 the British overthrew the last monarch Thibaw, colonizing the
country. While many native Burmans shed tears as King Thibaw and the pregnant
Queen Supayalat walked away to exile9 in India, some minority groups allied with the
British and saw the period as a golden age free from the oppressive rule of their ene-
mies.10

Eventually, one of Burma’s most beloved heroes Aung San led the country to
independence again, and demonstrated his desire to work with and respect the rights of
the ethnic minorities when he met with Shan, Kachin and Chin minority leaders in 1947

6 Andrew Selth, Burma’s Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorised? (Australia: The Australian National University, 2003), 9.
signing the Panglong Agreement,\textsuperscript{11} which promised the minority groups full equality and participation in the interim government. It also granted the Shan and Karenni the option to secede after ten years. Some minority groups still use that agreement as the basis for their fight for independence against the military rule that has kidnapped minorities for use as military porters and human shields, killed men and raped women, destroyed mosques, and burnt villages to the ground.\textsuperscript{12} San Da told me her village no longer exists. Some consider the fighting to be the world’s longest civil war, wounding for more than six decades.

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While a junior at the University of Utah, I scrutinized a comic strip that struck me as ironic for the Family and Consumer Science Department where it was posted to a wall in the main office. I mostly remember two squares. In one a woman received her diploma in a grand ceremony, face elated, lifted high on the shoulders of a great institution of higher learning. In a later square she was in a home, changing a diaper, and in another image, in that second square, she was busy with a broom in her hand. From her changed expression and the way the comic was written, it was clear that she had prepared for great things and failed to obtain them, that this comic was mocking the irony of a woman sacrificing to learn and develop her talents to prepare for what? Mindless everydayness. Of course women can and do serve in many different ways outside the


home according to their opportunities and seasons, but the comic seemed to me to dis-
credit the vital contributions mothers make within the home, the enlightenment taking
place in the mind and soul of mother and child even as diapers must be changed and
crumbs cleaned.

And, yet, perhaps part of me believed its message, that motherhood, especially
full time motherhood, would crush my soul, my opportunities to do great things, my
chance to make a difference in the world. Certainly such ideas were subtly embedded at
the university I attended, the culture I lived in, but they usually were indicated in a
changing of the tone, an embarrassed quieting of the voice, when someone talked about
a stay-at-home mom, in contrast to the great celebration for those women who achieved
noteworthy internships and obtained prestigious careers. Mostly the idea of women stay-
ing at home to raise their children fulltime was ignored, except when I was talking to
members of my religious group or stay-at-home moms, although at times I’d hear a stu-
dent talk about the issue more directly. For instance I remember the comment of one
education student:

“Stay-at-home moms are like the elite gentry of the past,” he said, indicating that
they were spoiled members of the upper class, failing to work to contribute to society.
As my mother did consider her work as a homemaker her fulltime job, and I had consid-
ered the possibility myself, I listened to every word he said, cringing silently, but most
of all convinced that in the world of the ambitious, such women were very much consid-
ered nobodies, those who had shut doors on their potential.

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When San Da opens the door, I am struck by her large brown eyes, her creamy skin, and her soft voice. She looks sensitive, so young, idealistic, and rather philosophical.

“This woman is interviewing different refugees about their lives and their experiences in Burma and the U.S. Would you be willing to talk to her?” I guess Chapter is telling her as he speaks quickly in Burmese, while gesturing to me.

She smiles and says yes, Chapter tells me, but quickly tidies up the living room, including brushing up some potato chips, before welcoming us. We sit down on the couch in the living room of her Logan apartment, me with my little black audio recorder and San Da with her three boys moving around. It was a Saturday and my daughter was at home in our cinder block student apartment with my husband, since at least at first I want to appear professional – no daughter with me today. As I watch the red light on my audio recorder, intent on making certain it is still working, I explain my project to San Da. She has only lived in Logan, Utah, for one month and in the U.S. a little more than a year.
In the background, an American movie creates noise, a whiff of curry runs through the air, which I later learn is from shrimp and potatoes, cooking on the stove. I notice her sewing machine has a place of honor in the living room. She later tells me she learned to sew in the Mae La Refugee camp, but it’s already clear this traditional feminine task from both our cultures is one she still puts center stage.

San Da tells me after her lease expired on her Salt Lake City apartment she had moved to Logan to join her husband who worked at the JBS meat packing company in Hyrum. Previously, he had lived with her and their four kids on weekends and with a roommate in Logan during the week so he could earn a living and support them. While divided from her husband, in Salt Lake San Da was nearby her mom, dad, siblings, and friends, whom she misses living in Logan.

San Da tells me she was born in Burma and fled to the Mae La Refugee Camp, the largest of the refugee camps on the Burmese-Thai border, at around age ten. There she lived until she moved to the U.S. in her late twenties. In the camp, she attended school, married, and bore three children.

“I got married too early, when I was sixteen,” she says, explaining why she already has a 12, 9 and 2-year-old, along with a baby daughter. I wonder if she really thinks that was too early or if she suspects I think so. I feel admiration, however, at the family she’s devoted so much energy to, her courage in taking them from the life they knew to an unknown one in the U.S.

“You can tell her I married late,” I tell Chapter, with a laugh, perhaps trying to break down ideas of people getting married at a uniform “right” time. “I got married
when I was 27. That’s why I only have one (child). But, I’ll probably have another one sometime.” Ironically, compared to some in the U.S. I got married early too and many in my faith, which stresses the importance of marriage and motherhood, get married even younger, like my sister who was only 19, shocking my parents who felt she was still their little girl. In the U.S., early marriage is sometimes the subject of scorn, equated with low ambition, childish haste, although not too long ago late marriage was equally or even more derided for women.

I change the subject and get the spelling for San Da’s husband and children’s names – a long, laborious process as each letter goes from her to Chapter to me, and I often misunderstand. The youngest child is the only girl, Myo Myo Win.

“Seven months – She’s an American,” Chapter tells me.

“OK, my daughter is four months, almost five months,” I tell San Da.

“Does San Da miss Burma?” I ask Chapter.

“Yes, but she cannot go back to Burma right now,” Chapter translates, “because they don’t have money for a flight.”
From there, San Da mentions one of her greatest sorrows: her sister left behind. She’ll return to this topic during every interview we record together.

“I have one sister left in the Mae La Camp,” San Da volunteers. She has three kids.”

San Da tells me they applied at the same time, but while she and her other family members were allowed to come to the U.S., her younger sister is still waiting for approval from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the U.S. government.

“I miss her,” San Da says. “Sometimes when I call my sister she says she misses her family here.”

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San Da and her sister are not the first members of their family ripped apart by distance or pushed away from a comfortable life with family by hatred and politics. Growing up, San Da heard the story of a grandfather many generations earlier who would have been among her homeland’s early Muslims. A Muslim trader, he came by boat from Bangladesh bringing goods – probably silks and spices – between the Middle East and the Far East. San Da’s oral tradition follows the pattern in the history I read by Moshe Yegar, an expert on that region of the world. The grandfather stopped along Burma’s coastline and married a Buddhist woman. San Da’s family’s history states that the government later required him, along with the other men who had done likewise, to leave, although their wives and children who were among the area’s first Muslims had

to stay since they had no citizenship elsewhere. Her tradition indicates the grandfather still had a passport to return to Bangladesh, but how he was accepted and rebuilt his life alone, away from his Burmese family is unknown.

Those men were not the only foreigners to touch upon and eventually make their homes in the land of poppies, jade and teak forests. For the last 2,000 years migrants have wandered through the country the size of Texas, on routes between China, India, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, and other surrounding countries, crisscrossing repeatedly, making it likely that San Da’s grandmothers’ ancestors generations back, like that grandfather and like her today, were once strangers in a strange land. Along the way some stopped to make new homes for themselves as she is doing now, making the country among the world’s most diverse, with eight major ethnic groups, 130 subgroups, and a multitude of different languages.

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I sit at my brown desk covered with piles of papers and books and use Skype to call my grandmother who lives in another state, about three hours away. I hear her voice, soft, opinionated with a hint of a country twang coming through my computer.

“I’ve been wondering why education is so important to our family,” I say, with a smile, partly interested and partly trying to spur on conversation with this lovable lady I don’t talk with enough.

“It’s because of grandpa and me,” my grandma boasts, raising her tone on the final “e.”

My grandmother had seven children in middle-of-nowhere Idaho, also known as Lost River, and worked as a fulltime mother.

“My dad really wanted his kids to get an education,” she says, explaining that all three of his girls went to college. She went to Utah State University where she met her husband in a chemistry class.

“Your grandpa was the only one from his family to go to college,” she later adds. She didn’t finish her degree as she moved when her husband finished. I don’t really feel saddened by this as I think she lived a rich life, a life in which she continually learned by reading and serving. And yet, here I am wearing myself out to finish a Master’s degree in American Studies, wondering if doors will ever open for me to write as I wish, since while my daughter is young my desire to be a fulltime mother takes precedence over my desire to seek tenure or a fulltime job in the writing world. Sometimes the words of my prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, come into my mind: “Go forward with faith, work with optimism and things will work out,” and so I keep on working.

All my Grandma Willis’ seven children – including three girls – attended college and several went on for advanced degrees. Each of her daughters and daughters-in-law...
worked outside of the home during certain seasons of their lives, teaching at secondary schools and universities, counseling students, stocking books, selling real estate, and archiving historical documents, but each worked as a stay-at-home mother for a time. It’s similar with my Grandma Hunt’s only daughter.

My father, the only son, is a geneticist at the University of Utah, and earned his PhD in epidemiology. His sister qualified as an English teacher, with a minor in French, but then went on to mother her children fulltime, while lecturing on literature at book clubs, making quilts that are art, and doing genealogy.

I’ve spent long hours at this desk, studying into the night, pushing myself to keep working on winter breaks, Thanksgiving breaks, spring breaks, when some graduate students relax and vacation, because I want to be able to have skills to do work that interests me outside the home and likewise I want the ability to stay at home and still use my talents, writing from my desk, in stolen hours, chasing an idealistic dream to make something beautiful.

My family’s faith, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – teaches heaven is being with one’s family forever and next to the temples where we go to draw closer to God and are sealed eternally as a family, the home is the holiest place on Earth.
Pondering my family legacy makes me a bit ashamed of the mess of children’s toys scattered across the floor, the dirty dishes in our sink and my shoes kicked beneath the desk where I work and yet I also feel my mess is testimony of the priority my God gives to the eternal value of knowledge, as well as family, and to the ideal that in the ordinary things of life is heaven. Once I finish up this degree then I’ll get my life in better order, I tell myself.

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Inside the doorway, Chapter and I remove our shoes like we do every time we enter the home of someone from Burma. My scuffed black Mary Janes join a pile of sandals, slippers and other footwear. There is a certain comfort in kicking off my shoes and walking with white and pink toed socks on the refugees’ light carpet, honoring our hosts as we walked into the room. Every day since the first, I’ve brought my daughter, Jackie, to my interviews with San Da as I don’t have a babysitter easily available and if I did I lack much money to pay one. Anyway, I’m glad my daughter’s getting a cultural experience.
As San Da and I sit down on the couch, I look at the pictures on the opposite living room wall. They tell of a merging of cultures taking place here, as San Daadjuststohernewhome. San Da’s two boys are pictured wearing their traditional Burmese Muslimcostumes. San Da tells me they wore them to the school they attended in Salt Lake City for Halloween. There is also a picture nearby of San Da’s husband who successfully completed a training program at JBS. I find it ironic that a faithful Muslim—one who earned a little money inside the Mae La Camp teaching Arabic—now earns a living producing beef that is not halal, or prepared in accord with his religion’s dietary laws.

“How are you?” I ask.

“Good,” San Da replies. She knows this English word. After a few more exchanges, and agreement, I start my audio recorder and set it near San Da.
After we talk for some time, San Da interrupts the interview to ask me a question, through Chapter: “Is it possible to get a passport for a child born in the U.S. or does being a U.S. citizen mean my daughter can never go back?” It’s a break in our roles and makes me think she trusts me a little, can turn to me for help.

“I think she should be able to get a passport,” I say. “I can check for you, if you like.”

It’s interesting to me – that tension she too seems to feel between wanting to be where she is and wanting to be somewhere else. Perhaps true freedom is having options to be in either place if you wish, without outside forces stopping you, that your only limitations are the consequences of individual choice, and yet choice is always constrained by culture, how others perceive our choices, and how that influences their willingness to help or reject us.

San Da tells me her immediate and extended family came to the U.S. to be with another sister who had already immigrated. Someone had told them the U.S. offered them the best hope of obtaining refugee status – which is true as the U.S. accepts approximately 80,000 refugees a year for third world resettlement, three times as many as the rest of the world combined. So, San Da’s entire extended family applied, hoping to stay together. San Da says it’s very good to live in the U.S., not only because her husband has work, but also because they don’t live in fear of the police and don’t have to ask people for permission to move about. One limitation to their freedom is their inabil-

ity to see her sister, left behind in the Mae La Refugee camp. Another is their lack of knowledge as to why she stays behind.

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Talking to San Da, I’d consider Burma too dangerous to visit, although the journalist in me longs to sneak into the refugee camp and capture the story. Flipping through a tourist guide\(^\text{17}\) to the country, however, I’m drawn to the streets of her homeland, one that appears tranquil, peaceful. I see pictures of young Buddhist monks, one boy with dark hair shorn close to his head, sandals and red robes, jumping across ancient architecture, made up of massive curves of gorgeous splendor, often caked in gold leaf, the remnants of a once rich kingdom, while other groups of young monks also in red robes huddle in mass, faces serious or grinning in front of a famed Buddhist temple. Photos show that important statues of Buddha dot the Burmese countryside, including a massive statue in the grand ancient city, Mrauk U, in which a wise Buddha looks on, with white wearing off his cheek and streaks of black running from his hair down his broad, white nose. Another smiling Buddha wears spectacles and waits for the day’s pilgrims in Shwemyetum Paya, the most sacred of all Buddhist sites in the country,\(^\text{18}\) where a nearby mural shows Buddha teaching his first sermon. Indeed Burma is largely Theravada Buddhist. The government claims 90 percent of the people there are Buddhist. However, scholars estimate more like 80 percent of Burma’s residents are Buddhist,\(^\text{19}\) or even less and suggest the government has inflated the numbers as part of its efforts to

\(^{17}\) Robert Reid and Michael Grosberg, *Myanmar (Burma)* (Oakland: Loney Planet, 2005), 1-404.
\(^{18}\) Robert Reid and Michael Grosberg, *Myanmar (Burma)* (Oakland: Loney Planet, 2005), 163.
\(^{19}\) Andrew Selth, *Burma’s Muslims: Terrorists or Terrorised?* (Australia: The Australian National University, 2003), 3.
marginalize minority groups. Amidst the Buddhist-temple, statue and tenant dominated country, animists, Hindus, Jews, Christians, and Muslims also quietly worship Nats; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; Jehovah; Jesus; and Allah.

Burma has been designated a ‘Country of Particular Concern’ by the U.S., for severe violations of religious freedom. In a 2003 report to Congress on the human rights situation in Burma, the State Department declared that “Religious minorities (particularly Christians and Muslims) are discriminated against and any form of proselytizing activity is actively discouraged.”

Scholars estimate Muslims make up about 4 percent of the population, many residing in the state of Arakan, also known as Rakhaing, or in the larger cities. That means Muslims actually make up a larger percentage of the population of Burma than Latter-day Saints (also known as Mormons) do in the U.S. where we are about 1.7 percent of the population.

It was in the state of Karen, on the opposite side of the country from the larger groups of Muslims, in a thin strip near Thailand, that San Da lived in a tiny Muslim village she calls Tar Kwa Po with around 1,000 homes, located in a larger area called Lam Boi, although neither she nor Chapter know how to spell the names. Though Chapter is also from Karen state he has never heard of either area. Muslims alongside animist, Christian and Buddhist Karen people fled military violence for the Mae La Refugee

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camp where both Chapter and San Da made temporary homes before they came to Utah. San Da made her home in the camp when she was ten and says that’s why she recalls so little about Burma, the place where her village of birth no longer exists.

“We had to walk across the jungle about two weeks, a week, a week,” she says.

“Eight people came with me – my brother, sister, one uncle.”

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I remember once driving with my father, possibly commuting home with him from the University of Utah where I majored in communication, with emphases in journalism and teaching speech and communication skills, and where he worked at Research Park. An angry question weighed on my mind. I felt like God had jilted women. My father was navigating the road, probably in our maroon Rav 4, his calm blue eyes surrounded by small wrinkles, a hint of gray starting in his dark hair. I enjoyed the time I spent with this kind, humble, quiet man, who had a gift for saying wise things in just a few words, who loved his research job in the department of cardiovascular genetics.

“Why don’t you encourage mom to get a job outside the home?” I asked. “She’s really smart. She could be successful in lots of fields. She could be a really good psychologist or professor.” I felt like such titles would make her seem much more important in the eyes of the world, in my eyes.

“Maybe she doesn’t want to work outside the home,” he replied.

“Well I do,” I said, angrily.

“Suit yourself,” he told me, but added, “maybe you’ll find when you have kids that you don’t want to anymore.”
I also remember a discussion with my mother, years before that. I either was in junior high or high school. I was walking through the playground at Cottonwood Elementary, in the capital of Utah, looking down at the gravel, the pavement, the grass, talking with my deep-thinking mother who enjoyed expressing extreme ideas to make me think, and yet made me feel safe to share my concerns. My younger brothers probably played as we talked.

“I’d rather have you live in a trailer park and be home and raise your kids, than have a nice house and have someone else raise them,” she told me. Even from her, those words sound somewhat extreme to me, especially as she’s been one of the strongest supporters of my goals to get an education, obtain work as a journalist, and strive for excellence in my chosen career: writing. And yet, I think she believed what she said, somewhat, although I also doubt my mother would be pleased if I gave up my dream to write.

Memory of what I said to my mother that day escapes me like a murky phantom. I am Latter-day Saint and our prophet, whom we believe is a man inspired by God, teaches mothers to put their children a higher priority than careers or salaries. “As long as they are in the your home, let them be your primary interest,” he suggested, adding “That baby you hold in your arms will grow quickly as the sunrise and the sunset of the
rushing days.\textsuperscript{24} For many women in my church that meant working as fulltime mothers, and either not working outside the home or pursuing a career part time until their children were older. But, he also stressed women should educate themselves, “be qualified to serve society and make a significant contribution to the world of which she will be a part.\textsuperscript{25}” He told young women: “The whole gamut of human endeavor is now open to women. There is not anything you cannot do if you will set your mind to it …. The sky is the limit. You can be excellent in every way. You can be first class.” His words gave freedom to my desires to write, allowed me to dream, but also helped me keep my priorities as they are: 1) God; 2) Family; 3) Writing.

My mother taught me motherhood requires skill, and education helps prepare one to strengthen the family, whether through helping children navigate a challenging world with wisdom, being involved in political causes, while also having more options to work part time, or full time if need be, in such a way that one’s talents can be a blessing to others. I agreed. Yet at times all the emphasis on mothers spending time with their children, raising them fulltime in the home, made me wonder what opportunities there were for such women to use and develop their talents. I wanted to be published, to achieve a high level of accomplishment as a writer, change the world. I had dreams. Didn’t God care? Did he hate women?

As we Latter-day Saints also believe that God speaks through each of us and that inspiration comes through study with the mind and deep reflection of the heart, I have spent years pondering on the different ways women build society and use their talents. At times I’ve dreaded the sacrifices of Mormon motherhood, the possibility of working much of my life in my family and community, cut off from the institutions and connections that provide opportunity for publication, career advancement and refining my writing skills. I went to school to broaden my options and feared the cost of leaving the career track for a season.

I remember saying at times that I didn’t like children – I wasn’t that kind of person – and that the thought of spending all day with them filled me with dread. Deep inside perhaps that wasn’t true, but it made me feel smart. More truthfully, I remember thinking, I was afraid of losing my voice, discovering that in society I was a nobody.

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San Da observes my daughter. I, too, have been watching her children moving around the apartment, full of energy. We sit on the flowery beige couches, which San Da prefers to the floor, although she never had a couch in Burma or Thailand and so they’re a new luxury to her. San Da and I are nearly the same age. She tells me she was born Jan. 1, 1979, because she does not know her actual birthday – She tells me Muslims in Burma don’t celebrate birthdays and that she doesn’t plan to start celebrating them here either. The date she gives me would make her six months older than me, but she says she’s 29, while I am 30. I don’t notice this until later and never ask her about it.
“Is it different being a mom and taking care of your kids here as opposed to in Burma or is it the same?” I ask.

“It’s different,” she says. “When I lived in the camp sometimes I left my kids with my parents when I wanted to go out with friends or siblings, but in America I cannot. So, I have to take care of the children all the time…. When I came to America sometimes I was afraid to go out.”

For a time, when she lived in Salt Lake City, San Da tells me she was required to leave her children in daycare. The government program that supported the refugees re-
quired both her and her husband to work in the community, cleaning and doing other
tasks to gain skills, and spending time going to school and studying, in exchange for the
cost of their rent.

“I would leave my kids in daycare,” San Da says. “They’d call me because the kids cried all day long— they didn’t know the people watching them and they couldn’t speak to them because the people spoke English. I was so worried.”

Wow, that’s a traumatic experience with daycare, I think, considering it cruel to leave children with strangers who don’t speak their language, and yet understanding the push to help the refugees develop marketable skills and knowledge of English.

“Sometimes,” San Da said, “I don’t think putting my children in daycare is reliable, but other times I want other people to watch my children so I can take a break.”

“Yeah, me too sometimes,” I said, laughing, thinking of the sacrifices I make to stay at home with my daughter much of the time, and yet my gratitude when my husband, sister-in-law or a neighbor watches her so I can attend classes or teach composition at Utah State University.

“In the U.S. lots of people have different attitudes,” I say. “It’s very important for me to try and be with my daughter a lot of the time – not all the time necessarily, but a lot of the time – because I want to teach her myself instead of have someone else teach her.”

“Yeah, mostly people in Burma, they do like that,” she responds, and I wonder how being in a society where many people don’t do that will change her, change her children, or if they will resist the culture and carry on as they lived before.
“Is it hard in the winter?” I ask her, as I watch her youngest son running around the small apartment and I think of the tropical climate she left.

“No. Winter is better,” she says, to my surprise. “He’ll stay inside.”

Then she tells me about the time this son walked out her front door, while her back was turned, and disappeared. She didn’t speak English and couldn’t talk to the neighbors. She went looking for him everywhere, terrified, until she finally found him at a friend’s house. Not only was she scared for her son and anxious about her inability to ask a stranger for help, but she also worried that she’d get in trouble with the government for being a bad parent, she tells me.

In the refugee camps everyone watched the kids together. She could leave her children with her mom or sisters and go do something else.

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There are so many questions I wish I could still ask, including the name of San Da’s sister who remains in the Mae La Refugee camp. From interviews with San Da and other refugees, my research and pictures I have seen, here is what I surmise about the camp. It is crowded. Refugees fear attacks from Burmese insurgents, though government and nonprofit groups help facilitate safety and provide resources. The climate is tropical and so it never snows. People live in skillfully made huts with bamboo floors and thatched roofs made of leaves that need to be replaced every two years. Many who have lived among those of similar religions and ethnicities are now surrounded by diversity. There are schools there for the children, games, friends, chores, and romance. Children grow up, marry, may become teachers or house builders, but then there’s a certain stifling of opportunity, for they cannot leave, legally at least, without permission of the Thai police, and opportunity is so very, very limited in the camp. There, adults continue to live somewhat like children, depending on government and nonprofit organizations to deliver food, blankets and coal, sitting long hours without responsibilities, sometimes losing their minds, and yet many also find the freedom that continues within every human soul and make the choice to continue living, building a Mosque from contributions from relatives in the U.S., applying for asylum in another country, for the chance to leave and begin a new life, or holding tight to their love of the land, of Burma, and choosing to remain in hope that someday they may return home.

Amidst that setting, lives San Da’s little sister, who is married, has three children and owns a cell phone. I’ve seen her picture, in which this Muslim girl stands before a

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Christmas tree posed in a long dress, and just as the photographer is about to click the shot, the cell phone rings and she answers. Was the technology so impressive she wanted to show it off forever, be captured using it in a still frame? Who did she think was calling? Could she have thought it was her family, her sister San Da, whom she cries to, worried, wondering why she of all the family is left in the Mae La Refugee Camp when the rest have been allowed to come to the U.S.? Or could she have wondered if someone was calling to let her know the time had come for her to leave, follow her family to the other side of the world, along with her husband and three children? Who was it?

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It’s 6:30 a.m. and I’m on a magenta cruiser– the kind that has no gears. I push back on the pedals to stop. My husband and I found the bike at a yard sale for $10 and purchased it, along with satin and plastic baby hangers for $3 and a blue and red umbrella stroller for $5, from the sellers who were moving to Washington. That day we’d driven to yard sales all around Cache Valley, joyfully looking for deals on baby girl clothing and necessary items. Then I saw the bike and loved it, although it was old, had flat tires and strained my arms to lift.

“How much?” I asked.

“Ten dollars,” she said, after talking to another woman.

My husband and I talked in hushed voices. Finally, we decided, “Why not?” They ended up giving it to us for $8, along with everything else we bought.
For my birthday, my husband spent $40 more and added new tires and tubes. Then we went on a bike ride from Aggie Village, the student housing across from the trailer park, to the English building so I would know the best route to the class where I would teach. I take that route now as I ride through the cemetery, just me, my bike, and silent shadows. The sky is filled with some soft pinks as the darkness starts to drift away. Black crows talk loudly to each other across the graves. I wouldn’t have minded living in the trailer park nearby, as the lots include gardens, but though the rent was less we suspected the heating bill would be much higher, making the trailers the more expensive option.
I asked to teach the 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. English 1010 classes so I could get home by the time my husband had to leave to take class. I wanted to be able to be with my daughter more, but I have shadows under my eyes and my mind is filled with thoughts of what I will teach today and many mornings. I’m still re-evaluating my lesson plan. I find beauty in the sky’s contrast of dark and color, the magic I would not see if I’d made different choices.

I’d worried Mormon motherhood would isolate me and here I am flying across the pavement, but alone. Still, I’m racing forward while some people still sleep, grasping a few moments of life that could have been lost while delighting in beauty on this outdated, 1980s magenta bicycle, with old fenders and new tires.

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San Da is a practicing Muslim, which I respect. I haven’t told her I’m a practicing Latter-day Saint because we’re not meeting to talk about me.

“How important is your religion to you?” I ask her.

“Very important,” she said, though adding she loves people from other religions besides her own.
As a result of her faith she does not drink alcohol or eat pork or meat that isn’t halal, or killed according to Muslim dietary laws. She wears a head covering when she goes out in public and prays at regular times throughout the day. Friday is her holy day and she celebrates Muslim holidays like Ramadan. Also in her faith, it is often important for the father to provide for his family while the mother primarily takes care of the home and children.

In Burma, if I understand, she lived in a Muslim village of maybe 1,000 homes and the government made it difficult for Muslims to obtain permission to leave, to travel outside their small communities.

Here she must travel two hours to Salt Lake City to purchase halal meat – meat prepared according to Islamic law – or purchase live animals in Cache Valley from farmers to slaughter. She does so in an effort to live with integrity to her beliefs, although such things often run against the grain of U.S. culture.

“Have you ever killed an animal yourself?” I ask.

“Yes, she says. “Two weeks ago. I killed a chicken by the sink. It’s better to kill it yourself.”

I imagine the sink just around the corner, in her kitchen, silver and modern. I picture her firmly cradling a chicken in one hand and with a sharp knife in the other, praying in gratitude to Allah and then cutting the trachea and cartoroid artery in the neck to minimize suffering, letting the blood drain out in the Islamic tradition, she explains, shows respect for all life.

The Mae La Refugee Camp preserves life, providing limited freedom to those persecuted by Burma’s military government, but it does not honor life or respect the potential of each individual. San Da grew up from approximately age 10 to 28 surrounded by a barbed wire fence, encircling this, the largest of the refugee camps along the Burma-Thai border. As a child she lived with her parents and six siblings in a thatched bamboo hut, played volleyball, had a close friend, attended school, helped her mother with cooking and managing the household. Her mother was at home to care for her, but also

53. San Da’s niece and nephew pose in front of the Mosque inside the Mae La Refugee camp in this photograph I took of the two photographs San Da has on her wall. The two children are her younger sister’s.

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earned extra money making cookies, including some shaped like donuts, that didn’t taste like donuts at all. An aunt lived nearby. People helped each other and the sense of community provided the freedom of shared responsibility.

Relief workers supplied food, coal, blankets and some other basics. For the most part Burmese soldiers stayed outside. After San Da married she moved out of her parents home into a home she shared with her husband in the crowded camp, but they weren’t allowed the freedom to go outside the camp’s barbed wire fence.

Now, more than wire keeps San Da from her sister, but she doesn’t understand the bureaucracy that separates them.

“My sister is sad because our parents and all her siblings came to America and she wants to come to America too,” San Da says, again, as we meet today. Later she tells me this sibling cries to her on the phone. I can understand how this sister whose name I never asked is so tired of waiting, scared because she doesn’t understand why she can’t come when her family has and how much longer she’ll have to wait. I don’t understand either, but imagine there may be a quota on how many refugees can enter the U.S.

On San Da’s wall in Logan, pictures of that sister’s older son and daughter – two of three of her sisters’ children – show what San Da’s own childhood might have looked like. The girl wearing the cotton sundress and big smile is eight and the boy in baggy jean shorts with a yellow collared shirt, opened to show a T-shirt underneath is five in the pictures. The two children stand in front of the Mosque the people in the camp built with materials purchased from Thai people using donations from friends and relatives in
the U.S. San Da tells me it is the only structure made of cinder blocks in the Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand.

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When the early Latter-day Saints fled religious persecution in the U.S. for Utah, then part of Mexico, among the first ambitions they had was to build a sacred edifice they called a temple. They too used the best materials they could find, cutting granite from the nearby mountains. Likewise, I reflect, many men and women give much of their best to their family, building up a home, and a family that can withstand the storms of life.

That provides some comfort to me on days like today, when I have peddled quickly, racing across the graves in the cemetery, which have lost the mysterious shadows and mists of morning, just having finished my office hour as a graduate assistant. A student stayed too long and so I’m hurrying to make it home as my husband is already late for his class. Before I left, a group of graduate students were walking off to lunch together, but didn’t invite me to join them, although they did a few times at the beginning of the semester. They know I can’t go. I have responsibilities at home, but I long to photography / Karen Lambert

54. San Da shares the Sobe I gave her with her son Zaw Min Tun.
be able to exchange teaching tales with them and bounce ideas around for my paper soon due. I think I need such exchanges so I can do the kind of work I know I can.

But, now I’m at home, with my daughter, Jackie, as my husband hurries out the door and onto his bike. I hold my daughter close to me, lonely, feeling left out of the fun and only allowed to participate in the work. Oh well, this relationship with my daughter will last longer I think, as part of me cries inside, crying that I can’t do more: excel, be the best, absorb myself in school. And yet, there’s something so peaceful, gently moving here, as I connect to my daughter, feeding her as she nestles to me.

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When Chapter, Jackie and I show up, San Da’s daughter and youngest son are both asleep on the two couches along the wall and so she pulls out a yellow and blue woven mat and lays it on the floor where we sit. Today I brought her a Sobe, a token of U.S. culture. She takes a look at the long glass bottle filled with light pink liquid and her eyes pinch together as they focus on the picture of the lizard on the bottle.

“What is this?” she asks through Chapter.

“That’s just a picture,” I say.

“Is this animal in the drink?” Chapter asks.

“No,” I say, surprised.

“We don’t normally eat this animal,” he explains.

I laugh, now aware of the predicament, and then explain: “No, that’s just a picture they put on it. It doesn’t have any lizard in it.” At our first interview she had given me an energy drink, M-150, which she said she had purchased at an Asian store in Salt Lake
City. I also had been concerned about what it contained, but after ensuring it was free of alcohol, tea or coffee, drinks forbidden by my faith, I accepted and promised to bring her an American drink in return.

Before we get much into an interview, San Da’s cell phone – a sleek grey color – rings and she puts it to her ear and talks while Chapter and I discuss the upcoming Karen Wrist Tying Festival and I wait.

When she gets off the phone San Da tells us she has been in Salt Lake City quite a bit visiting family. She said she was there just the day before and the previous weekend.

After our conversation continues for some time, and I watch her little family moving around, I ask San Da if she wants more children. San Da sat just a few feet from me and wore a long red sarong, called a longyi in Burma. After a moment of thought, she said she’d be happy either way, as she’s happy to have four children, but more are good too. After a moment she said, not right now, though.

When people ask me if I want more children, I often say, “I’m taking it one at a time,” trying to avoid being defined by a label or being a subject of scorn. It is true, also, I haven’t decided how many children I want. Interestingly, in the U.S., Latter-day Saints
and Muslims are the two religious groups with the most children, something Latter-day Saints are sometimes derided for by those who talk of overpopulation or who see children as a burden, binding a woman to the home.

“It’s really good to have children,” San Da said, echoing the feelings of many women I know in my church and then adding: “When the parents get older, the kids take care of their parents.”

56. My daughter, Jackie, plays with San Da’s youngest two children, Myo Myo Win and Zaw Min Tun.
San Da tells me that often in the Muslim culture after women marry they live with their husband’s parents and family. Both of her husband’s parents have passed away, however.

“When your boys get married do you think that their wives will live with you?” I ask, now skeptical.

“Yes,” she says.

“In the U.S. that’s not very common,” I say. “Do you know this?”

“Yeah, I understand,” San Da says.

“Do you think that your sons will be like most people in the U.S. or will they be different and be like Burmese Muslims?” I ask, gently.

“I don’t know. It’s up to the kid,” she says.

“What do you want them to do?” I ask.

“I don’t know. It’s hard,” she says.

As I watch San Da’s quiet, watchful face, I don’t think she looks upset, just pensive. Then I turn to look at my own daughter, Jackie, who is sharing her bow with San Da’s youngest son, Zaw Min Tun, who had shared his Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle and Batman figures with her, which she is holding and playing with with her feet. I’m touched by the children’s kindness.

“Are you playing with his toys, Jackie?” I ask my daughter.

In the U.S., people have not always been kind, I tell San Da, mentioning problems like racism.
“Have people been pretty nice overall or sometimes not so nice here?” I ask San Da. She thought a second after Chapter translated the question, as he’s been doing throughout our interviews.

“Sometime when I’m trying to talk to people they don’t say anything back to me,” she said. “Like I say, “Hi,” and they don’t want to say anything. At the store or shops some people talk to me first, but sometimes when I try to talk they don’t say anything.”

“Do you think maybe they don’t understand or do you think that they’re being rude?” I asked.
“I don’t know. Maybe they don’t understand and maybe they do.”

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Neither San Da nor Chapter understand why San Da’s sister has not yet come to the U.S. They tell me that they’ve heard no one at the Mae La Refugee Camp has received asylum since 2007 and that her sister there fears they’ll never be allowed to come. The family wants to understand what is going on, San Da tells me again, and has told me in every interview we’ve had together.

“Sometime we hear America is going to close to refugees,” she says. Later, I call agency after agency, looking for answers, until finally I speak to a friendly young woman at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. She tells me the U.S. is still admitting refugees every year, but as Darrell Brown, director of the Utah Department of Workforce Services, Refugee Services Office, reminds me the U.S. only admits 80,000 refugees a year and there are approximately 15 million refugees and 29 million internally displaced persons in the world. It’s very unlikely a person will get accepted to come to the U.S. The girl at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services tells me that perhaps San Da’s sister wrote something on a form that’s keeping her out, or maybe there’s something about her husband, who knows? It also depends on when she arrived in the camp. She said case specific information can only be given directly to San Da’s sister, or to an English-speaking translator standing by her and for whom she grants permission to speak. But, I didn’t know this when recording my interviews with San Da, who is do-

31 Gerald Brown, interview with author, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 28, 2011. (Phone interview from Michigan to the Utah Department of Workforce Services, Refugee Services Office).
ing what she can to help her sister, selling betel nuts to other refugees in Utah in order to earn money to send to her sister in Thailand.

San Da tells me that her sister, the fourth oldest of San Da’s siblings, is only 19 and suddenly it shocks me to consider that she has three children. If the oldest girl is seven, then she was born when she was about 12? I can’t comprehend it and wonder if there could have been a misunderstanding in the question or translation.

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This afternoon, my husband and I meet in our Honda Civic, outside the English building, after my office hour. I get into the drivers side, right after he gets out. Then,
with a kiss he walks away to his office hour in the engineering building while I drive my daughter to meet with Chapter at Riverwalk apartments, with barely enough time to make our appointment. San Da is in Colorado and so we visit two other women, who had been visiting together. We chat and smile until Jackie cries and the women look at her. Do Burmese babies throw fits? I leave, drive home, going at least 25 miles an hour, often 35 or 45 miles per hour, not racing, but making progress.

Some moments I long for: that familiar chair before a bright Mac screen and my co-workers at the newspaper or the ability to go to lunch with other graduate students. But, I’m still developing my talents. I hope I can help Jackie live a good life, be happy, use
her talents to make the world better. I hope she wants to be a mother too and values that role above those that pay more and win more acclaim. I think telling the story of San Da and two other refugee women is important, despite my weaknesses in my ability to tell it, that we must value their contribution as a first generation of American mothers, learning to navigate new freedoms. I’m grateful for the chance to write about their lives.

I find in San Da’s simple, clean apartment a hybrid of Burmese American culture, but more importantly a culture of womanhood, with its unique strengths. That doesn’t mean I consider San Da some static ideal, for she has much to learn as she rises to take advantage of new opportunities. But, I have much to learn too, and her grace and courage have taught me. I thank San Da for giving me community, a united front of womanhood, a place to talk about cooking, cleaning and childcare and not be ashamed, the freedom to be with my daughter and use my mind too. A place to learn from her
majesty. I think sometimes the challenge of America is having so many excellent choices, and learning to discern between good, better and best.

Whether mother, writer, human being,

I hope I can find ways to make the ordinary extraordinary,

like San Da with her tinsel-covered walls,

a refugee making shrimp in a landlocked state,

killing a chicken by a modern kitchen sink

to show respect for life.

I’ll trust in God, but as I look at my daughter with her curly brown hair, big blue eyes and easy smile I don’t regret my choices. Other times I afflict myself with doubts, but for this moment I’m proud to write, “I am a mother.” There I wrote it. It sounds a little strange in my throat, although only my fingers moved.

Now my daughter rests her warm head on my shoulder, her innocence pushing me to be more so I can take that little hand and lead.
End Notes

1-In Burmese there are no first or last names, and spouses do not share a common name with each other or their children. Therefore the Burmese names listed above are complete names, and although some refugees make changes to accommodate customs in the U.S., from what I understand the names are not generally broken in pieces. Both Hser Doh (Chapter) and Kyaw Eh (Joe) have chosen to give themselves nicknames to help those from the U.S. The nicknames actually sound a little like their actual names when spoken. It’s certainly worth emphasizing that I’m no expert in Burmese culture and this marks my own effort to understand after just a few years of research. Please take it as such.

2- I have cleaned up the language in direct quotations for ease of reading and to add immediacy to the piece. For instance, I took quotes in which Hser Doh (Chapter) was telling me what San Da said and made them into quotes of her saying the information directly. In addition, assuming she spoke her ideas clearly in Burmese, without awkwardness, I generally avoided including any awkwardness in her quotations. I also took my questions, sometimes addressed to Hser Doh (Chapter), and often made them more clearly directed to San Da.

3-Scenes with Hser Doh (Chapter) and San Da before and after interviews were unfortunately not recorded and have been recreated to the best of my knowledge based on memory and notes I jotted down. Likewise, memories of my life were also so reconstructed.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


62. San Da cooks a traditional Burmese meal for her family.


PART 2. CREATIVE NONFICTION ANALYSIS

The field of creative nonfiction has grown considerably and gained new recognition since the 1980s “when the hull of traditional autobiography began to leak” (Larson 2007: 15). Even before then, Michel de Montaigne wrote essays in the 1500s, and a wide variety of other writers, including Virginia Wolf in the early 1900s, built up the foundation of what is now considered creative nonfiction. So did those who wrote on the walls of Egyptian tombs; Japanese court women who kept diaries and notebooks and wrote personal poems and letters; Augustine and Rousseau who wrote Confessions; and many others who slowly led to the creation of the word autobiography, which is itself a relatively modern term (Hobbs 2005: 28-30). More recently, Leigh Gilmore’s rough analysis of one global database showed that the number of English-language volumes classified as autobiography or memoir roughly tripled from the 1940s to the 1970s (Hobbs 2005: 23).

It’s possible that the most recent growth in the creative nonfiction genre is partly a response to technological advances. Sven Birkerts suggests that due to technology: “We are experiencing a crisis of representation in the arts, literature included. Artists and writers are having an ever harder time giving memorable interpretive expressions to the life of the present, which is not their only task, of course, but certainly one of the main ones” (Birkerts 2008: 21). Birkerts suggests that this is partly because our lives are moving away from tangible actions and experiences to virtual ones. As a result, he philosophizes that more inward writing like creative nonfiction provides an ideal form for portraying a self-conception that is “more fragmented and diluted” as our dealings
with others are filtered by technology that at the same time creates an environment of “easy, constant interaction” (Birkerts 2008: 21). Likely, such a move from authoritative, historical biographies and autobiographies to more individualistic takes on truth as memoir and the personal essay is also influenced by postmodern ideas that question authority and objective truth.

Generally speaking, traditional community journalism is about investigating and reporting the facts, while ethnography is about taking a longer, more in-depth look at a culture or an individual within that culture. In contrast, while creative nonfiction is also about telling the facts, it’s committed to doing so in an artful way. For at its essence, creative nonfiction is about creating art. As a result, creative nonfiction has been called a “fourth genre,” in addition to poetry, drama and fiction, and many Masters of Fine Arts programs and recent textbooks have added a creative nonfiction emphasis (Root and Steinberg, 2010: xxiii).

Within this framework, both journalists and ethnographers have at times written in forms that could be considered creative nonfiction. New Journalists like Truman Capote and Joan Didion used fictional forms for journalistic reporting with growing popularity in the ‘60s and ‘70s (Moore 2007: 8). Likewise, since James Clifford and George E. Marcus’ publication of Writing Culture, ethnographers have strived to find better ways to write about fieldwork resulting in “novel” forms that led some to indicate that “the distinction between literature and science in ethnography is shrinking” (M. Wolf 1992: 10; Van Maanen 1988: x). For instance, the ethnography Wisdom Sits in Places combines both scholarly data and anthropologist Keith H. Basso’s own
reflections on the fieldwork experience (Basso 1996). Still, while it won the Western States Book Award for creative nonfiction, I suspect some creative nonfiction writers might critique Basso for not making himself more vulnerable and creating more conflict through further exploration of his internal struggles.

While creative nonfiction stresses a commitment to communicating the facts, similarly to community journalism and ethnography, it ultimately is about creating art. This important distinction creates the tension that I will explore when considering how this genre impacted my ability to represent San Da’s narrative of her journey from Burma to the U.S. While writers in this genre often delight in their use of extensive forms and in eluding hard and fast rules, it does tend to have some commonalities (Root and Steinberg 2010: xxiv). For my analysis, I will look closely at the key characteristics of creative nonfiction as defined by Fourth Genre, a definitive text on this writing style: personal presence; self-discovery and self-exploration; flexibility of form; veracity; and literary approaches to language (Root and Steinberg 2010: xxiv –xxx).

**Personal Presence**

The editors of Fourth Genre write that personal presence, whether the author is a narrative voice or a carefully described character, tends to be a common element in creative nonfiction. They add that this attribute can also pull journalism and academic writing into the realm of creative nonfiction, at the same time requiring the author to surrender authority or pretense of authority for candor and personal honesty (Root and Steinberg 2010: xxv). Other writers of and about creative nonfiction often emphasize
that the form relies on the author taking risks, willingly creating vulnerability by sharing personal memories and feelings. As Carolyn Forche’ puts it in her introduction to *Writing Creative Nonfiction*: “One of the indispensable ingredients of the best creative nonfiction is courage – the courage of one’s convictions, the courage to tell the truth, and sometimes even the courage to go into harm’s way to discover the truth” (Forche’ and Gerard 2001: 3).

At the same time, Vivian Gornick stresses that “above all it is the narrator who must complicate in order that the subject be given life” (Gornick 2002: 35). This idea that authors must reveal their own internal struggles as they relate to the subject provides literary tension for the piece. As a result, in the world of creative nonfiction, the fact that I was Mormon, a mother and a graduate student became all-important, I discovered as I wrote about San Da, because those titles affected why I was interested in writing about her, where my life intersected with hers. Whereas with journalism or in my academic writing I had traditionally shied away from including much personal information, now I was not only encouraged to include personal facts, but the entire success of my piece relied on my doing so. As this was a photographic as well as written account, my personal presence is seen not only in my writing, but also in my inclusion of photographs of my own family along with San Da’s. In addition, I include several photographs where our worlds are merging, including pictures in which my daughter is sitting with San Da’s children, San Da is giving my daughter a hug and I pose with San Da and two of her children. This adds to the interconnectivity of the piece.
Part of writing creative nonfiction is discovering the correct persona from which to write. This takes the concerns of feminist theories to a new level. For while some assert that no one can write from an objective position (D. Wolf 1996: 4; Gluck and Patai 1991: 64; Clifford 1983: 118), creative nonfiction says not only is no one truly objective, but within each individual are many different “selves” from which he or she can write (Hobbs 2005: 6). Unlike in fiction where the protagonist is an imagined character, the reliable narrator in creative nonfiction is one facet of oneself, or one vantage point from which one writes, the vantage point that can tell *this* story in a way that will ring true to others.

Vivian Gornick refers to her experience listening to a young medical student speaking at the funeral of her mentor. The story the young doctor told was powerful because:

> the better the speaker imagined herself, the more vividly she brought the dead doctor to life …. The speaker never lost sight of why she was speaking – or perhaps more important, of who was speaking. Of the various selves at her disposal (she was, after all, many people – a daughter, a lover, a bird-watcher, a New Yorker), she knew and didn’t forget that the only proper self to invoke was the one that had been apprenticed. That was the self in whom this story resided. (Gornick 2002: 5-6)

To be a reliable narrator, the self must be perceived by the reader as telling the truth so far as it is able, and it must be the right self for the piece, meaning the self that intersects with the topic written about.

In my piece on San Da, I attempted to write from a self reflecting on my last year of graduate school in Logan. I reflected on my fears, new perspectives and achievements as a new mother, connecting those to my experiences learning about the
life of San Da. From that “present” I look back on the more distant past, but it’s always from a “now” as a new mother. I don’t include some parts of myself or my perspective, and I try to only include information relative to what is the deeper subject of my piece – ideas of freedom, oppression and living as a minority in a dominant culture. The photographs of myself that I include relate to themes of motherhood, education and family as those represent a centering element in the piece. Yet, since I wanted to give San Da voice I worked hard to weave in most of the main points she made, while leaving out some information that seemed overly personal like the fact that she was on birth control, even though this does pertain to the issues of motherhood we discuss. I also include far more images of her and her family, than myself, giving more emphasis to her image.

Looking back, there is a certain fairness to including oneself in the piece, and risking one’s own thoughts and experiences (D. Wolf 1996: 4-5). Jennifer Sinor, who taught two creative nonfiction courses I took, emphasizes that since we are portraying the lives of others, who have not asked us to write about them, we owe it to them to make ourselves at least equally if not more vulnerable (Dr. Jennifer Sinor, Spring semester 2010, class discussion). Another advantage that can come from this form is that it addresses issues of positionality (D. Wolf 1996: 13-16), as it reveals context not just on the person one interviews, but of the interviewer. For instance, in my writing about San Da I have three narrative threads: the history of Burma, my struggles to understand my role as a new mother, and San Da’s story. These three threads weave together, eventually merging to create a unified tale that not only describes the political
turmoil in Burma and San Da’s personal journey, but also my own connections with the material, giving the reader more context for my interpretations.

This sense of positionality is also apparent in my use of photographs in the piece. Through seeing my daughter playing with San Da’s children and at the end San Da spontaneously embracing my daughter with a hug, the reader gets some idea of what went on during the information gathering process and what our relationship was like. To a degree this is well represented in the writing, but including the photographs adds another layer of transparency to the process. Although I and San Da shape the photographs similarly to in the interview process, those images capture mannerisms, spontaneous actions, clothing styles and the environment, adding to the strength of my words and communicating a greater amount of information about myself, San Da and our relationship with each other.

However by focusing on myself and giving tension and thrust to the story through scenes and photographs reflecting our interaction with another, one problem could be that my story could overshadow San Da’s story and my voice overpower hers. This was a major concern as I wrote about San Da, though less in the photographs, something I will explore further as I discuss another facet of creative nonfiction, “self-discovery and self-exploration.”

*Self-discovery and self-exploration*

In my writing about San Da, it was most important to me that I adequately tell her story and I started with an account that included much more of her voice than mine.
Yet my peers in class didn’t see the story of her experiences with war, in refugee camps, and coming to a new country, coupled with my own experiences interviewing her, as creating enough conflict for this style of writing. My classmates and professor urged me to explore my own inner demons. Through journaling and talking to others, I began to have the courage to admit some of my connections to the material to myself and others. In doing so, I pushed myself to find dramatic moments that I felt would catch the interest of my classmates and drive home points in a single scene. I also found myself looking for photographs that helped illustrate the aspects of myself I discuss and was disappointed at the lack of options available. For some reason, no one photographs me cooking or cleaning.

As I journaled in an attempt to understood where I connected with San Da, I began to explore the tension I feel in strongly desiring a career and yet also valuing my family and time with my children. I explored these tensions partly by looking at outside forces like a comic strip on the wall at the University of Utah that seemed to me to discredit the contribution of mothers and memories like my mother sharing her belief that staying home with one’s children is so important she’d rather have me live in a trailer home than work outside the home and live in a fancy house. I still feel uncomfortable having shared many of the thoughts and emotions I did in this piece, especially as it’s an issue that I have not entirely resolved within myself. I still care greatly about my career, but my value for family and the role of fulltime mothers has grown considerably since my conversations with my mother and my father when the subject angered and upset me.
For instance, I felt some concern about the ethics of using the scene about my mother telling me she wanted me to be at home with my children because I was worried it would make people who see such views as old fashioned think my mother doesn’t value my talents or hers, or value my ability to be financially successful. Yet she has encouraged me to attend more school, develop my abilities in many areas and find meaningful work as a single woman and as a married woman, and most relevantly prepare myself to have options so I can be with my children while also pursuing my passion to write. And yet, in doing so, she’s encouraged me in fields like journalism and teaching composition that don’t pay well, as she thinks the arts are important. To her money is of somewhat lesser importance. After some thought, I decided to include the scene as I felt it gave my mother, someone who has sacrificed much to live up to her ideals of motherhood, a voice, and also illustrated one of the important voices in my own head as I was trying to make decisions for myself.

As I did such self-exploration, I at times felt that those in my creative nonfiction class at the time who wrote about the most dramatic, terrible experiences received the most praise. I think this pushed me to want to write about the dramatic and in some ways may have distorted my judgment initially on what scenes to include. However, later I read the words of Birkerts who wrote: “The searching for patterns and connections is the real point – and glory – of the genre. And if I hurry to specify this aspiration, I do so to draw a sharp marking line between the kind of literary memoir I’m talking about and the sensation-driven (and all too chronologically told) kind that has been getting so much airplay these last few years. …. The fact of rampant
sensationalism must not be allowed to obscure the other fact, which is that recent
decades have seen the flourishing of a sophisticated and quietly vital mode of literary
expressions …” (Birkerts 2008: 6-7).

I like Birkerts’ emphasis on the search for “patterns and connections” and the
creation of a “sophisticated and quietly vital mode of literary expression.” His
comments released me from the feeling that I needed to write about the horrors of my
life, and instead made me think that I could simply explore what E.B. White called the
impetus for his work, despite having a happy childhood – the state of being “uneasy
about practically everything” (qtd. in Lott 2007: 281-282). In some ways this form
seems perfect for me, according to Root’s description. He wrote: “Writers who seem
most at home with this genre are those who like to delve and to inquire, to question, to
explore, probe, meditate, analyze, turn things over, brood, worry – all of which creative
nonfiction allows, even encourages” (Root and Steinberg 2010: xxv). The challenge for
me was learning to be comfortable doing all this that I naturally do, on paper, especially
when it meant risking personal information about my family and myself.

My struggle to determine the deeper subject, or why I was writing about San Da
was important, and greatly helped me not just in my nonfiction writing but also in
writing this thesis as a whole. Through journaling I began to reflect on the extent of my
interest in the contributions of women and the way women from conservative minority
groups are represented in society. It’s something I’ve worried about for years, because
I’ve worried how the world would perceive me when I became a mother, especially if I
worked part time or became a full-time stay-at-home mom during some seasons.
Through writing about Burmese Muslim refugee mothers in a piece of creative nonfiction, I was required to also explore my own identities: American, Mormon, student, and mother, and try to understand what those roles meant to me. As one can tell from my writing, even one of those four labels is full of complications and so it must be with San Da, a Burmese Muslim refugee mother whose life is much more complex than I am capable of writing about. Yet I also include many quotes from San Da, showing that while she might not have all the same struggles I do, her world is also filled with complexity. For instance, she has the expectation that when her sons marry their wives may live with her, something that is in accord with the tradition of her culture, but not of mainstream U.S. culture.

When I first started writing this piece, I was still struggling with ideas of subject and deeper subject. It was through looking more carefully at the complexities of the decisions San Da was making, along with my own inner struggles, that I began to more fully realize I was discussing the struggles of living according to one's beliefs in a mainstream culture that doesn't always validate those beliefs. I feel my piece also had to do with ideas of oppression, as I have heard some accuse Mormon women of being oppressed, just as some in Western culture tend to generalize that Muslim women are oppressed (Andrews 2006; El Matrah 2005; Malik 2006; Stuhldreher 2006). Although, I believe I greatly improved at developing a deeper subject, learning to write on multiple layers was a struggle for me after working for years as a journalist. Likely, one limitation of this form is the training required to understand the rules of the genre.
Perhaps this is partly because we grow up studying and talking about poetry, fiction and drama, but less so about creative nonfiction.

Veracity

Creative nonfiction has the name “nonfiction” for a reason. It requires honesty. One is not supposed to lie or “make things up.” However, the attempt to write accurately from memory and recreate extensive detail, dialogue and scene can create problems for writers wanting to document history. In addition, techniques of scene generally make up a large part of creative nonfiction, but this can sometimes be problematic for those interested in sticking with only verifiable truth if they have never visited the places they write about and have only limited access to information as I had about San Da’s village in Burma.

Similar to journalism and many types of ethnography, creative nonfiction makes use of quoting of informants. In my piece on San Da I tried to stick closely to my fieldnotes and later looked over the transcriptions of my recordings before including quotes in my piece. As is common in creative nonfiction, I made myself and San Da into characters and used the quotes in recreated conversations. Since I am concerned with accuracy, I did stick to the ideas communicated to me, but I also cleaned up the quotations to make them more readable and beautiful, keeping the awkwardness of actual speech from interfering with the story. I also made it so that San Da and I usually were talking directly to each other in order to create more immediacy, although Hser Doh almost always translated everything we said. In a sense, this inclusion of quotations literally
gave San Da her voice, but as the writer of the story I also guided her in my attempt to make the writing beautiful.

Creative nonfiction requires significant details in order to recreate scenes. I often found while writing that I could not remember such things as the color of the couch or the carpet, let alone exact expressions on faces. I did what I could, made up the rest in my first draft, and then on later interviews checked my facts and memories based on new experiences and photographs. As a journalist by training, I intended to be as accurate as possible, but even through careful observation and many questions there were times when I had to make decisions about how to most accurately portray a scene. While generally I tried to write chronologically, this did not always advance the story as I would like, and so I moved scenes around, trying to provide markers for when something was taking place.

In a genre of writing that fails or succeeds based on the quality of its images and scenes, I was also somewhat limited on the available scenes I could describe from these women’s lives without making things up – or rather through imagining scenes based on my limited research and knowledge of Burma. This was partly because I was recording oral histories rather than living with San Da and her family in Burma, Thailand or the U.S. Ideally for writing nonfiction, I would have travelled to Burma and Thailand to retrace the refugee’s steps in order to better describe the environment in recreated scenes. Of course, the Burmese government forbids entry to writers and journalists.

My decision to include pictures from my interviews with San Da and my personal life adds a feeling that I am in fact talking about objective truth, but even this is
met with complications. A major impediment is the limited amount of time I spent on the pictures. Early on I snapped a few pictures of San Da with her kids, spending a few minutes at most in the midst of a much longer interview. Later, I arranged to come back when she was cooking one afternoon and spent around two hours taking her picture, along with pictures of the two youngest children playing with my daughter in the other room. This was much less time than I spent on interviews and led to a much more superficial visual representation. Ideally the photographs should have represented a wider range of her activities. While interviews can transcend time and space, by sharing narratives of life in other countries and cities, photographs are much more limited to where they were taken. Since they were all taken in her Logan home they don’t communicate her experiences travelling to visit those she knew in other states or family in Salt Lake City, living in Burma or the refugee camps or doing other activities outside the cooking and related domestic duties she was doing during those two hours. In addition, outward appearances, as conveyed in photographs, can often mask much more complex situations and feelings.

Creative nonfiction’s commitment to showing rather than simply telling can be strengthened, however, by adding photographs to already descriptive language. The combination of both can lead to a more accurate representation and communicate San Da’s experiences more quickly and on a deeper level. The scenes I did build with San Da – of her sitting with me in her apartment talking about her life – give an honesty to the writing, providing context on our experience together. Since I wanted to avoid “making things up,” I chose to not venture into recreating scenes of the refugees
struggling for survival, although I attempted to make my descriptions vivid as possible. The photographs add details on the camps as I was able to photograph San Da’s photographs taken in the Mae La Refugee Camp of her sister in front of a Christmas tree and her niece and nephew standing in front of the Mosque. These pictures offered concrete details about a place I was unable to go and so add information I couldn’t from my own experience.

In general, creative nonfiction writers have a wide range of views on obligations of absolute accuracy versus their obligation to getting the mood and larger truths correct. One creative nonfiction student who won a prestigious national award for his work, and was looked upon as among the most talented in my program, told me he intentionally never brought a recorder to interviews so he wouldn’t be limited by what people actually said, something that would be shocking to many journalists or folklorists. And yet, I believe my carefully researched scenes and dialogue with San Da did capture some of the beauty of my experiences interviewing her, in ways I wouldn’t have been able to capture so easily in community journalism and more traditional ethnography. In addition, this writing style seemed to allow me to get at the heart of my emotional experience, not just communicate the facts I learned.

*Flexibility of form*

Creative nonfiction puts great emphasis on finding the right form, while also allowing the writer to draw from a great number of writing styles, including those of journalism, academia, poetry, fiction, drama, diaries, letters, etc. When used in creative
nonfiction, such forms can be cut up, recombined and altered in a countless number of ways. The bottom line, however, is that the writing must be beautiful, lyrical. But, when it comes to creative nonfiction there is much more at stake in form that simply how to organize information in order to make it most informative and entertaining to the reader.

Laura Wexler makes the work involved in creative nonfiction more clear when she writes: “The important thing is to create a structure for your article or book that translates content into form, that allows the structure of a story to serve as a metaphor for the story itself. This struggle to find the literary tools – structure, language, character – is what distinguishes creative nonfiction from purely documentary endeavors, such as oral history or cultural anthropology” (qtd. in Forche´ and Gerard 2001: 32).

Within creative nonfiction’s major forms, which include memoir, personal essay and literary journalism, there are multiple subgenres, notably one that is sometimes called the braided essay. It was this form I chose for my personal essay/memoir about San Da, one of the three Burmese Muslim refugee women I interviewed for this project. Brenda Miller, writing generally about lyric writing and particularly about the braided essay, ruminates that such writing must be beautiful and unlike ordinary writing, that the author must weave together what may at first appear to be disparate ideas only to discover in the end that each of those strands was in fact telling the same story and the ideas have become one (Forche´ and Gerard 2001).

There are both advantages and disadvantages to the nonlinear form I chose to use for my nonfiction piece. Advantages include the fact that rather than the linear essay, which is a more chronological telling of a story, the braided essay tells a story by
weaving together two or more seemingly unrelated stories enabling the author to make connections and find patterns between them and tell a more complex story. This form reflects the way we remember life – in fleeting memories. I hoped that through choosing this form that I could best portray the messy nature of knowledge acquired through interviews and observation, processes that involve “episodes of embarrassment, affection, misfortune, partial or vague revelation, deceit, confusion, isolation, warmth, adventure, fear, concealment, pleasure, surprise, insult, and always possible deportation” (Van Maanen 1988: 2). In other words, fieldwork and life are not neat and so perhaps the writing should reflect that ambiguity.

I did this with photographs through mixing of a variety of types of photographs including San Da cooking, hugging her children, and posing with her family, along with photographs of myself with family members and at my desk where I did much of my schoolwork. These photographs, which communicate more quickly than written words, added to the sense of immediacy I was trying to achieve throughout the piece, along with the sense of continuity between my story and San Da’s story. Still, while fieldwork is a messy process the challenge of using photographs is that they can make everything look too neat, or easily be taken at face value as “truth.” I also worried that I would seem to be relying too much on the photographs to tell the story, as I tried to balance how much description to include in the writing.

One challenge is that creative nonfiction’s focus on including only the scenes important to the writer – and the photographs the author thinks best relates – can create problems with whose voice is really being heard. For instance, many experimental
ethnographers including those who use creative nonfiction adopt a point of view – in creative nonfiction’s case a deeper subject or “the story” (Clifford 1983; Gornick 2002) – and only use that information which supports that theme. While Malinowski had a clear interpretive stance there is much information included that does not support the stance and that Malinowski apparently didn’t understand (Clifford 1983: 136). As a result his text was in a sense part-authored by Trobrianders and becomes an open text for reinterpretation (Clifford 1983: 136). However, in creative nonfiction the purpose of achieving beauty over communicating facts requires the shaping of knowledge in ways in which the primary goal is not the communication of objective fact. Therefore in my account with San Da one sees that I have to some degree “taken over” the text, despite my best efforts to choose only events that will compliment her story. Yet, I did make a great effort to focus on the major themes San Da brought up and kept those in mind when determining what information to include on myself. I hoped to make her voice more important than my own, and truthfully in any writing the author shapes the piece and determines what information to include. Still, it might be more difficult to “reinterpret” the information in this form.

Patai asserts that using interview opportunities for “consciousness raising” is arrogant manipulation (Gluck and Patai 1991: 148). Could the same be said of doing fieldwork, collecting the stories of other’s lives, and then using those to create literature, in which we whittle away at their stories to find parts that advance a deeper subject, or theme, that we in all our limited wisdom believe is the bigger truth? Patai wrote: “To turn interviews with other women into opportunities for imposing our own politically
correct analyses requires an arrogance incompatible with genuine respect for others. And respect is a minimum condition if we are not to treat others as mere means to our own ends – if we are not, in other words, to reproduce the very practices of domination we seek to challenge” (Gluck and Patai 1991: 148).

Is creative nonfiction a sort of written consciousness raising? One solution is to make sure that the one you’re researching agrees with you on the issues, but in the case of San Da or the other refugees I don’t even know that they understand issues as I do, having come from an entirely different culture. For instance, I’m concerned about portrayals of Mormon women in a relatively free society where I have many opportunities. Does San Da relate to such ideas, having come from a society with very different gender norms, religious attitudes and more limited government granted freedoms? I attempted to discuss such topics, but interviews with a translator are slow work and only by repeating questions over and over do I begin to feel more certitude that communication is really occurring. I never reached the point where I felt entirely certain that I really understand San Da’s perspective, although I did attempt to stay true to the attitudes and stories she told me through including much summary of her words. In some ways I believe that I did this as effectively, or more so, than I could have in journalism or ethnography.

I also have some smaller concerns, one being that the “artfulness” of creative nonfiction influences another convention of the writing. To preserve the beauty of the work, Sinor encouraged our class to not include any in-text citations, not even in the form of numbers relating to notes at the bottom of the page or end of the piece. If it was
important to me to include citations (not necessary in this art form), I was to include page numbers and related sources at the end of the text and include no citations in the middle. This is done in order that unsightly citations not interrupt the flow of beautiful words. However, creative nonfiction writer Dr. Charles Waugh, a member of my thesis committee, reminded me there are many kinds of creative nonfiction and for the sake of creating a historical account and keeping the graduate school satisfied he and my other committee members suggested I use footnotes. A second concern, if my end is a factual representation, is that I was to avoid sounding too academic in my writing, and rather than presenting information in an all-encompassing manner mine the information to draw out connections to my subject and deeper subject. Again, this has the potential of limiting the information included, although the argument could be made that one never includes all the information in a piece of writing.

Literary Approaches to Language

Next, I wanted to explore in more detail literariness. This includes the importance of creating scenes, developing conflict, using figurative language and successfully getting at a deeper subject. Already I have discussed my thought process in determining to put the interviews with San Da into scenes, while avoiding doing so with her experiences in Burma and Thailand to some extend, in order to achieve a higher level of accuracy. I’ve also discussed some of my concerns over shaping the material and drawing out connections in order to get to a subject and deeper subject, along with my decisions regarding form. One area I have not discussed is my use of figurative language as I took
facts from my interviews and research and used them both literally and to communicate
bigger issues related to San Da’s story. For instance, I talk about the shrimp in the food
she’s cooking early on and later return to that as a symbol of her cultural adjustment in
Utah, where she buys and cooks shrimp in a landlocked state. I also use such facts as the
crystallized snow to indicate how foreign her experience is here and I drew out from her
stories of fetching water and travelling to take a shower the idea of a community she had
lost. I don’t think this necessarily causes problems in representation, but if done
responsibly I think it actually helps readers think in new ways about what they are
reading and better understand her story.

In some ways, I feel that my analysis of creative nonfiction is rather
contradictory. Perhaps that is because while I find creative nonfiction beautiful,
mastering it has been a great struggle for me. In 1960s/70s radical cultural theories
reacted to criticisms of ethnography (Clifford 1983: 118-119). Some of those criticisms
included the idea that ethnographers were “othering” those they talked about, exploiting
them for their own purposes. In response, emphasis on new forms arose. However, I
wonder if using forms like creative nonfiction to tell the story of one whose life I have
worked painstakingly to understand has similar potential for distortion. Perhaps when
used responsibly, though, creative nonfiction can provide a more complete perspective,
or at least a powerful and different perspective, than that provided by community
journalism or ethnography.

Today some still see the fieldwork account as “soft” and even more so creative
nonfiction, which to some is an mix of truth and possible truth (Clifford 1983: 132).
Margery Wolf observes that the accounts given most credibility in her field are written in traditional form (M. Wolf 1992). I would say Malinowski’s efforts to establish credibility through “objectivity” still persist in the minds of many, perhaps positively at times as long as we acknowledge that the facts we see are only part of the facts, and are skewed by perspective. In some cases I would feel more comfortable quoting from a historical quarterly than a creative nonfiction journal when trying to establish facts.

However, the creative nonfiction journal would help me understand people’s perspectives on the world and likely increase my own awareness. In some cases I would actually give greater credibility to such an account, in the areas in which the author’s own expertise and experience add to their authority. For instance, in my research I highly valued the works *from the land of green ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey*, a memoir by Pascal Khoo Thwe, and *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*, by Thant Myint-U because not only did they include historical research, but they also included the authors’ first hand accounts and insights from their time in Burma (Thwe 2002; Myint-U 2006). Pascal Khoo Thwe was a university student from the Kayan Padaung tribe driven out of the country by the government following the protests of 1988 and Thant Myint-U is the maternal grandson of famed Burman U Thant, who served 10 years as UN secretary general and was a key member of U Nu’s democratic leadership in Burma, and like his grandfather Thant Myint-U has actively worked to help improve conditions in his country. While my lack of experience in Burma does not add to my credibility in that regard, perhaps the fact that I am a mother from a faith that assigns great importance to the family allows me to talk with greater insight on certain
aspects of San Da’s life and religion, and therefore an aspect of Burmese American culture that may not be included in other accounts (D. Wolf 1996: 15-16). If nothing else, my credibility rests on portraying my impressions of one woman from the refugee camps during our interactions in her early years in Logan, Utah.

I like that creative nonfiction in some ways is very honest. The story of San Da might be more accessible and interesting to an average reader due to the depth of thought and fiction-like characterization this form allows. While I worried about my story taking over her story, at the same time it’s possible that I succeeded in using my own perspectives to focus her experiences. In addition, my own biases become clearer regarding the information I have provided about San Da. In a sense through the exploration of a deeper subject, creative nonfiction may actually be truer than purer “factual” accounts like journalism or ethnography because it includes more context and gets at deeper truths. Maybe all writing really is partly about the author, at the core, and it’s simply being honest to make that apparent. Perhaps it’s also more honest to acknowledge clearly my inadequacy to accurately recreate San Da’s history, although I still believe the feat worth attempting.

REFERENCES


CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

It’s always interesting when you start a project that on some level strikes a chord in your gut, only later to discover that your deepest levels of interest are coming together. Writing this thesis was a fascinating journey to me, as it took me from my interest in the Burmese refugees in Logan and in covering diverse groups in general as a reporter, to an exploration of the representation of women, and then to the deepest reason I went to graduate school in the first place – my desire to better understand various forms of writing and use them as tools in order to assist me in my goal to write professionally and personally. Through this experience I came to better appreciate form as a tool that allows the writer to better make choices as she contemplates her purpose of writing and the audience she is trying to reach.

Looking closely at traditional community journalism, ethnography and creative nonfiction, I was fascinated to reflect on how the fields draw together in ways and then draw apart. Each field seems to have moved from notions of purely objective truth, whether that’s old-styled journalism and ethnographies or biographies and autobiographies, to a greater understanding of how truth is shaped by the author. For instance, journalism today is more concerned with notions of fairness along with objectivity and there seems to be more emphasis on having a diverse news staff. In addition, some journalists practice New Journalism, particularly in magazine-style pieces, which in some cases is a type of creative nonfiction. Ethnography today includes
a wide range of writing styles, including fieldwork accounts, jointly authored documents that include the subject as creator, and forms that use literary devices to convey factual accounts. Fieldworkers from across the world now engage in work that creates a more holistic picture of various cultures and admits the difficulty of representation.

These styles of writing share similar values. Most obviously of course each is committed on some level to factual representation. Both journalism and ethnography give great attention to accurate recording of both what the person says and observations of the person’s mannerisms, surroundings, appearance and other aspects that reveal the character of the individual. While creative nonfiction often gives priority to getting the right idea of what someone said, rather than the exact words said, it also favors site visits, background research and in-person interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. In fact, many purveyors of creative nonfiction boast that it pulls from utilized forms and values from most every other style of writing. In each form the writer’s desire to represent her vision of truth is often focused by the need to write for an audience, and obtain acceptance from gatekeepers like editors, peers and employers.

Yet, as I’ve shown through my exploration of my writing about Ma Htwe Hla, Ya He Ma and San Da, different styles of writing do have different strengths and weaknesses in how they allow voice. Community journalism communicates information quickly, with a fairly short turnaround time, which allows Ma Htwe Hla’s story be read by a broader group of people, but could limit the depth and context. Since journalists are also generalists without a great deal of time to delve into the subject matter my portrayal
of her family lacked the added understanding about the history of Burma I enjoyed in writing my other two pieces and prevented me from asking some questions I might have with more understanding. Not asking a question to some degree limits voice. In addition, news articles tend to be short and so can massage over nuances of meaning.

In contrast, the longer, more academic ethnography provided a place for a close look at Ya He Ma’s traditional ways of life and culture that wouldn’t receive such extensive exploration in a news publication. “Ethnographies are portraits of diversity in an increasingly homogeneous world. They display the intricate ways individuals and groups understand, accommodate, and resist a presumably shared order” (Van Maanen 1988: xiv). Journalism has little place to differentiate between a blink and a wink and that same distance that aims to help journalists navigate controversial subjects fairly, can also keep the journalist from deep submersion into a culture. For instance, the time I spent eating with Ya He Ma and her family gave me new perspectives on their customs and personalities. In addition, most journalists are reluctant to allow the participant to be involved in the creation of the text in some way, while many ethnographers allow co-authorship and feedback, which gives greater voice to those described. To me ethnography stands supreme as a place to explore in detailed accuracy, though still imperfectly, the impressions and knowledge obtained through learning about an individual or culture over a long period of time. The benefits are seen in my late revelation that the actual reason Ya He Ma went to the refugee camp was to obtain food, rather than to flee violence.
Creative nonfiction does not present information quickly or necessarily give primary importance to the absolute accuracy of every quote, description or memory. While it should be an accurate representation of the way things are, there is much more latitude in recreating scenes and conversations to reflect the general manner in which a person behaved. For instance, in my work on San Da I not only relayed the stories she shared, but described the scenes in which we talked. In some ways this gave her voice as it helped her come alive. As a result, it’s possible my attempt at creative nonfiction pieces might connect to a reader at a deeper, more personal level, in addition to on an intellectual level as a result of extensive research.

And yet, throughout this project I have kept returning to the question, “Who cares?” Isn’t it self-evident that journalism is limited by tight time constraints, that ethnographies are more in-depth, and that creative nonfiction is art? Probably. At the same time, as a practicing journalist I had not in any structured way reflected on the ethics of the profession designed to not provide overt favoritism to a specific person or organization, which encourage distance rather than participation. At times, I may have been so committed to an ideal of objectivity that I, in fact, punished those like me, who I agreed with, in my fear of showing favoritism. I also feared quoting those I knew, although through knowing them I had access to better understanding of their interesting hobbies and points of view. At other times, I used that relationship, but also feared by doing so I was capitulating my values. There are still no easy answers, but in looking more closely at the process of representation and how knowledge is created, I feel better equipped to make ethical decisions on the go. While I would still attempt to maintain a
stance of objectivity in many cases, I may be less “old school” than I was before. I still want to include strong arguments on each side, encouraging the conversation that I believe in the end allows people to make more educated decisions, but I also see in more clarity how my involvement influences the process as my own life experiences, values and education also filter how I’m able to understand.

Ironically, writing in three different styles while also looking critically at each piece in terms of representation has convinced me that each ultimately falls short. Each has potential for misrepresentation just as each has potential to do a quality, though still imperfect job representing others. Still, as Daphne Patai writes, “too much ignorance exists in the world to allow us to await perfect research methods before proceeding. Ultimately we have to make up our minds whether our research is worth doing or not, and then determine how to go about it in ways that let it best serve our stated goals” (Gluck and Patai 1991: 150). I’ve increased my awareness of the conventions of form and the conversation about representation. In the end, it doesn’t yield black and white answers for me or a reader, but rather more insight to navigate the paths ahead.

At the same time, and most importantly, I have in three different forms documented the narratives of three Burmese, Muslim, refugee mothers in Logan, Utah. While the conversation I participated in had to do with representation and forms of writing, ultimately those questions are only important in that they give me tools for sharing these women’s narratives with others, in giving them voice. I still remain profoundly grateful to these women and my translators for allowing me a part in
documenting their history, written in three forms, the story of a new group of Americans based on their earliest stories. I hope in some measure to have given them voice.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX A. TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MA HTWE HLA

Interviewer: Karen Hunt Lambert
Transcriptionist: Karen Hunt Lambert
Informant: Ma Htwe Hla and Ba Hlaing, with some of their family members adding additional information and Alex Mortensen and Kyaw Eh helping with translations:
Address: 182 W. Willow Creek Cove, apt. b (about 650 North); Logan, Utah, 84321
Place of interview: the home of the Ma Htwe Hla and Ba Hlaing family
Date of Interview: Feb. 18, 2009
Other people present: In addition to Ma Htwe Hla and Ba Hlaing, many of their children were present or leaving and coming. In addition, Refugee Specialist Alex Mortensen and interpreter Kyaw Eh were there.
Brief description of contents: Ma Htwe Hla, Ba Hlaing and other family members tell the story of how they came to Logan. This is a preliminary interview and some later interviews served to correct small misunderstandings below. However, as those interviews were conducted as a journalist they are no longer available.

Family: names – Mother: Ma Htwe Hla, age 42; Father: Ba Hlaing, 45; Kids: Sai Pho Lar, 22; Kur Ra Ban Bi, 19; Swa Hay Dar Bi, 16; Sha Kya Har, 13; June Mar Bi, 12; O Ba Du La, 4.

While I talked mostly to the mother and father, along with translators ‘Joe’ and Alex, members of the family came and went and sometimes interjected comments, particularly the oldest son and two of the daughters. I’ve tried to include their comments as I could, but sometimes it was confusing who was talking. As I do not speak Burmese, I was unable to transcribe some parts of the conversation, which is indicated below. The conversation took place in the living room of the family’s condominium, furnished with two large couches, clean, simple.

Recording: 021809 ‘Joe’ with Burmese family 1

0.0 Karen: The red light’s on. We’re doing good. Hopefully. OK. My name is Karen Lambert. I’m here with Joe who is translating with a family I am just meeting, um, from Karen, Karen?
Joe: Karen
0.14 Karen: Karen. OK. And, let me move a little bit closer so we hopefully can catch my questions on film [I meant to say on my digital recorder] also. So, first of all I want to get their names. So, I’m -- my name is Karen Lambert.
Joe: [translates into Burmese]
0.37 Karen: And, and I live here in Logan also. So.
Karen: And what are your names?

Mom: My name Ma Htwe Hla

Karen: Ma Tina?

Joe: Ma Htwe Hla

Alex: Do you want me to write those for you?

Karen: Sure. Or they can write them — either way. So, how do you say it again? Ma Htwe Hla.

Mom: Ma Htwe Hla

Karen: Ma Htwe Hla. I’ll try. And then. Uh, what is, what is your name?

Dad: Ba Hlaing.


Karen: Ba Hlaing.

Joe: Yeah.

Karen: Ma Htwe Hla is M-A- and then a space and then capital H-T-W-E -space -capital H-L-A. Then Ba Hlaing is capital B-A and then a space H-L-A-I-N-G?

Joe: Yeah, that’s right.

Karen: OK. All right and how old are you? Can I ask?

Joe: [responds in Burmese]

Karen: Thank you.

Mom: [responds in Burmese]

Joe: [talks to her in Burmese]

2.00 Joe: Uh, she is 42 years old.

Karen: 42?

Joe: Yeah

Karen: I’m 29, so it’s all fair [laughs]

Joe: [speaks in Burmese to the mom]

Karen: [gestures at father] And you?

Father: [responds in Burmese]

Joe: 45. He is 45
Karen: 45? And maybe I’ll start with you and get the names of your children a little bit later since it will keep it from getting too complicated. So, how many children do you have?

Mom: [speaks in Burmese]

Joe: six children.

Karen: Did she say six altogether or six alive or?

Joe: All of them.

Karen: And what are the ages of the children?

Joe: The oldest is 22.

Karen: 22 Is that him? [laughs]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: And another one 19

Mom: [speaks in Burmese]

Karen: 19, OK

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: and 16

Karen: 16

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: 13

Karen: 13

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: 12

Karen: 12, OK

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: and 4

Karen: and 4. OK. And how many years did you live in Karen?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]


Karen: Did you live in the refugee camps at one point? Never?

Joe: No, at the first they lived inside Burma, in Karen state. Then they moved. They escaped. No, they escaped to the refugee camp.

Karen: Oh, so they were in the refugee camps. For how long?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]

4.03 Joe: Eight years long.
Karen: Eight years for both of them?
Joe: [talks in Burmese] Yeah.
Karen: Together? The whole family?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Then, that was in Thailand?
Joe: Yeah, in Thailand.
Karen: And why did you leave? Why did you leave Karen?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Because of the military, the Burmese military came in, uh, and destroys, burns their house, like destroyed their things, killed like animals. They do everything.

5.06 Karen: OK, and – are you considered, are you part of the ethnic group, the Karen people, the Karen group. Or, are they Karen?
Joe: No, they are Islam, Muslim, Muslim, but they live in Karen state, but they like they speak Burmese.
Karen: They speak Burmese. But, there the different, aside from religion I thought there were the Burmese people, the Karen people, a lot of other small ethnic groups, not just religious groups, but ethnic groups.
Joe: Yes, because they a long time ago they were from like Bangladesh. They move into Burma and then they live, but right now most of the Muslim people in Burma they’re not an ethnic group.

6.05 Karen: Oh, they’re not an ethnic group.
Joe: No, they just only like an immigrant
Alex: Immigrants.
Joe: immigrants.
Alex: The Burmese government –.
Joe: Yeah, the Burmese government -- they didn’t give them citizen, something like that, but they live with the Karen people.
Karen: So, would the military government in Burma consider them Burmese or Karen or something else?
Joe: No.
Karen: Because from what I understood the government is trying to get rid of the Karen people and some of the other ethnic groups.
Joe: Yes, so they live, spread like a state, like a lot of states, like a Karen state, and Mon [I think he said Mon] state, and the whole of Burma because the government, like how can I do, how can I say?
Alex: Ethnic cleansing.
Joe: No, yeah, they are not ethnic groups, the Burmese in Burma; So, they have seven ethnic groups, but in the seven ethnic groups they are not and.
Karen: They are none of the seven.
Joe: Yes, something like that.
Karen: OK
Alex: But they speak Burmese.
Joe: Yes.
Alex: They don’t speak Karen.
Joe: Yes. Some they speak Burmese. Some they speak Karen. Something like that.
Karen: So, why did the Burmese government want to hurt them?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
7.54 Joe: Because, so, like the main is religion. They are Muslim, Islam because the Burmese is Buddhist, something like that, is not the same is different religions. The Buddhist government they not want the Christian or Islam religions to live with them, something like that.
Karen: OK. [Pause] And how long have you been here?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Over a year.
Karen: And did they come directly from Thailand to Salt Lake City or where have they been?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Illinois
Karen: So, Illinois is actually the one who granted you a place to stay and then you moved here?

9.06 Alex: They were, They were originally resettled to Illinois and then they moved to Logan back in October, November?

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: October

Karen: And you moved directly from Illinois to Logan, huh?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Karen: And why Logan?

Joe: Why?

Karen: Yeah, why did they come to Logan from Illinois? That’s a long way.

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

9.53 Joe: Because they leave in Illinois because of the houses for rent expensive and then they don’t have a job to do over there. They got just only $8 an hour work over there. That was not enough to pay for rent.

Karen: OK, and how did they hear about the job in Logan?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: Oh, they heard about from their relative or friend here, who were here and they called them and they explained them about the job or and the rental here. And then they interested to come to work here.

Karen: So, was it a relative or a friend?

11.00 Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: No Just a friend. Just a friend.

Karen: And was the friend from Burma?


Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Karen: Did the friend also work at JBS?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: So the friend worked at JBS and said there would be a good job here.

Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Yeah, OK. So, immediately he and his daughter both got jobs at JBS?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yes.
Karen: And how does he like working at JBS? Does he enjoy it?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]

12.07 Joe: Yeah, it’s good. Yeah. He like.
Karen: What does he like about it?
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: He likes here, like the people here friendly. They help each other and he has not to carry like a heavy load,
Alex: He doesn’t have to carry heavy loads.
Joe: No, stand and just cut meat.
Karen: OK, so what does he do at JBS? Cuts meat?
Joe: [talks in Burmese] Yes, trims fat
Karen: Trims fat?

13.0 Joe: Trims fat.
Karen: from cows?
Joe: Yes, from meat, yeah, from a cow.
Karen: And what does his daughter do there?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad??: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: The same.
Karen: Do they work together?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad??: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: What hours do you work?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: the whole separation area.
Alex: What hours of the day?
Joe: I’m sorry.
Dad? [talks in Burmese]
Mom? [talks in Burmese]
Boy? [talks in Burmese]

13.52 Joe: Yeah, there’s some, they’re different, sometimes 10 hours, sometimes 9 hours, or sometimes 8.9, 8.7. Something like that.
Karen: OK. How early in the morning does he need to be there and his daughter?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: six in the morning
Karen: And do he and his daughter arrive at the same time?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yes.
Karen: And when does he get home? I guess, it depends on the day I guess?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Depend on the job. Yeah.
Karen: OK, let’s check and see how this is recording here. It looks like it’s working well.

Second recording:
Recording: 021809 ‘Joe’ with Burmese family 2
0.00 Still working – all right this is Karen and I’m still talking to Joe and a family from Burma and this is the second track. It’s working
Karen: OK, and what did they do in, what did you guys do when you lived in Burma?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Like a daily wage job.
Karen: A daily wage job?
Joe: A daily wage like a havez, uh, rice?
Karen: Did they farm rice?
Joe: Farm rice, yes
Karen: For themselves or someone else?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom and Dad: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: So for another
Karen: For another landowner?
Joe: Yes.

0.54 Karen: And who, who worked doing that? The whole family or just the father?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: OK, there are four [unsure on number] people working in Burma, but sometimes the son and the daughter would help them.
Karen: So, sometimes the dad would work, but sometimes the son or daughter would help them also?
Alex: They were only like ?? 14??
Karen: OK, so they were very young. Um, were you a full-time mom or did you help with the farm work or what did you do in Burma?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]

2.02 Joe: Yes, sometimes she would take care of her children, sometimes went out to work.
Karen: And how many children did she have when she lived in Burma?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: five
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Karen: OK and did they like Burma?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: No
Karen: Never?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: They like Burma. They don’t like Burmese government.
Karen: Were they constantly in fear living in Burma?
Joe: Huh?

Karen: Was there a lot of fear the government would hurt them?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yes their whole lives.
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Like they came and they destroyed their Muslim village and like they used forced labor, forced labor something like that.
Karen: So, all of the Muslim people lived together?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yes, they lived together.
???: [talks in Burmese]
Karen: So, there weren’t the Buddhists or the Christians living with the Muslims at all?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Dad???: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: No, there’s a separate, like a private village.
Karen: Is it because the people don’t get along with each other?
Joe: Get along? Oh. [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Oh, no, because the, you know the people, the normal people, they can like join each other. So, the Burmese government they don’t want Karen people to go to the Muslim Village. Something like that.
Karen: So the government separates them.
Joe: Yeah separate.
Karen: Do they like that?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
???: [talks in Burmese]
5.00 Joe: No!
Oldest brother???: [talks in Burmese]
Karen: What did, what did he say?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Oldest brother: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: So, if they like, something like that, like the Burmese, the Burmese government for the future it’s no good for the baby [I think?] and for the future.
Karen: I was told one of the reasons the government doesn’t like some of the people who live there is because they like, they want democracy. Is that just the Karen people though, or is that the Muslim community? Did they want democracy there?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
6.0 Joe: Yeah, they like democracy.
Karen: You’d like that, yes?
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: They like, like in the United States – people help each other, they love each other.
Karen: OK. Now’s a good time to get the name of the oldest son, I think, since he’s talked. [laugh]
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese] Sai Pho Lar
Joe: Sai Pho Lar
Karen: Do you spell that?
Joe: S-A-I
Karen: S-E-I
Joe: P-H-O
Karen: P-H-O
?? [Lots of voices]: [speak in Burmese] LAR, LAR
Joe: L-A-R
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK. And how do you say it one more time?
Joe: [speaks Burmese]
Other family members: [speaks Burmese]
7.00 Karen: Sai Pho Lar?
Joe: Uh, hm.
Karen: Sai Pho Lar?
Family members: [speaks Burmese]
Karen: OK, and does Sai Pho Lar remember Burma very well?
Joe: [speaks Burmese]
Family: [speaks Burmese]
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: And what does he remember?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
S: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
S: [talks in Burmese]
7.56 Joe: When he live in his village the Burmese military came in his village; like the Burmese people they don’t want the Muslim people religion, to pray like a family, to pray like the Islam religion and they don’t want the Muslim religion to join with the other ethnic group, other people. Something like that.
Karen: Do they have lots of family who still lives there?
Joe: Yes, a lot.
Karen: Do they miss their family?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
??: [talks in Burmese]
9.02 Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK and has it been strange living in the U.S.? Have they had to learn many new things?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Yes, strange for them.
Karen: What are some things that are strange for them?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Like social; like the weather.
Mom/daughter?: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Like the social.
Karen: Can you tell me which one’s talking?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: The same
[father gets up, blurry-eyed.]
10.0 Karen: You can tell him thank you, but if he wants to leave he can.
Joe: [speaks in Burmese]
Father: [nods while walking toward stairs; then walks upstairs]
Karen: Thanks. He has to get up early, so. [laughs]
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
[I smile at father and he smiles back as he walks up stairs.]
Karen: So, what else has been strange besides the weather? I guess it’s been much colder here.
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Like the food. The food and like the system.
Karen: The system?
Joe: The system from Burma to here. Like there it’s communism and here it’s democracy.
11.02 Karen: Do they call it communism or dictatorship or what?
Karen: Did they have carpet there? Did they have a house with carpet and couches like this is?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Older brother?: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: No, nothing.
Karen: What did their house look like? Can they describe it? Did it have wood floors or stone or dirt?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Like the roof with a leaf. You know leaf?
Karen: leaves on the roof?
Joe: Like leaves on the roof and with uh bamboo. They use bamboo. With wood and
Karen: With wood?
Joe: So, when the house in Burma where they live. When you’re working, when you’re working the sound like
Karen: the sound is like
Joe: When you walk in the sound is creaking, when you walk on the house.
Karen: The sound is creaking?
Joe: Yeah
Karen: Is the floor bamboo?
Older brother: [talks in Burmese]
Karen: Is it warm all year round?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Older brother: [talks in Burmese]
12.02 Joe: So, in Burma they have three seasons. The summer, winter and raining season.
Karen: Summer, winter and raining season?
Joe: Yeah
Karen: And winter, is it snow.
Joe: No snow.
Karen: Is it warm?
Joe: Winter is cold. It is cold, like foggy, you know. It’s fog, but there is no more snow. It’s cold
Alex: In Thailand the cold season. It was only cold like 2 or 3 days and it got down to 70 degrees, but that’s very cold for them because it’s normally around 100.
Joe: But, ? gets cold, and Bangkok it’s hot.
Karen: How long did they live in Illinois?
Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Karen: And how long have they lived in Logan?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: Since October? So, how?

Alex: About five months.

Joe: About five months.

Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Older brother: [talks in Burmese]

Karen: How do they like Logan?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: The rent is cheaper than over there. They like the people to come and help them, come to help them.

Karen: Were there this many people who helped in Illinois?

Joe: Excuse me?

Karen: Were there many people in Illinois who helped also?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Older brother: [talks in Burmese]

14.58 Joe: Uh. So, when they live in Illinois they lived in Illinois they had a caseworker. A man or two man come two times to come see them.

Karen: And that’s all, the whole time?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

Older brother/Mom: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: And then their houseowner help them, like abill, pay the bill. Something like that.

Karen: How did they read the bill?

Joe: [talks in Burmese]

???: [talks in Burmese]

Joe: The house owner, the renter, [pause] how does you call it?

Alex: The landlord

Joe: The landlord, yeah.
Alex: would read the bills and help them pay them.
Joe: Yeah, help them, yeah.

Karen: So did the landlord speak Burmese?
Joe: [speaks in Burmese]
Mom: [speaks in Burmese]
Little girl: says something I can’t understand in English.
Karen: Oh, she’s –
Joe: She’s a translator
Karen: Very good. How old are you?
Girl: 13
Karen: How did you learn English?
Girl: At school. The teacher help … something
Karen: Here or at the refugee camp? Or both.
Girl: I don’t know.
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Mom: [talks in Burmese]
Joe: Just only here. She learn it in Illinois.
Karen: Wow you learn fast.
Girl: Thanks
Joe: [talks in Burmese]
Karen: OK, so you translated for your mom and dad. That’s great. OK. So time to add your name to the list. I’m trying to get just a couple at a time, so I don’t get confused with all these new names. So you are 13 and what’s your name?
Girl: Sha Kya Har.
Karen: Will you spell it for me?
Girl: S-H-A
Karen: S-H-A

Girl: K-Y-A
Karen: K
Girl: Y
Karen: Y
Girl: A
Karen: A
Girl: Space
Karen: K
Girl: H-A-R
Girl: Yeah.
Karen: OK. And so, you, do you speak Burmese also?
Girl: Yeah.
Karen: Do you speak any other languages?
Girl: No. [Later it seemed she knew a bit of Arabic]
Karen: OK, so you came here with your family and you learned English really fast. At school?
Girl: Yeah.
Karen: Wow. Was that hard at first?
Girl: Like sometimes. My teacher told me, he told me like what is that is called. He told me it’s a lot of work. He told me everyday.
Karen: He told you what everyday?
18.0 Joe: She was late, yeah.
Karen: He told her she was late to school?
Joe: She was late yeah. He told her she was late for school, yeah.
Girl: He stayed late.
Karen: Oh, he stayed late after school to help you. Oh, that’s great. Was he a nice teacher? Do you remember his name?
Girl: Yeah, Miss Medalla [check spelling in notes.]
Karen: Mr. Medalla??
Girl: Mrs. Medalla.
Karen: Mrs. Medalla? Do you know how to spell her name?
Girl: Um, M-E-L-E – I know it, I wrote it in there in my book.
Girl: laughs and runs upstairs.
Karen: Is she the only one that can speak or can all of the kids speak?
Joe: No, just only her. She’s smart.
Alex: She can speak a little bit. [gestures to another sister]
Karen: OK, how old are you?
Girl 2: 12
Karen: And how do you spell your name?

**19.00** Girl 2: J
Karen: J
Girl: U-N
Karen: U-N
Girl 2: E
Karen: OK, is there a space or no space yet?
Girl 2: No space
Karen: No space. OK. J-U-N-E
Girl 2: M
Karen: M
Girl 2: E. Oh! [laughs]
Karen: Is there a space? [laughs]
Girl 2: M-A-R B-I
Girl 2: M-A-R
Karen: M-E-R
Girl 2: B-I
Other Girl?: No, A not E. A
Karen: M-A-R? Bi
Girl ?: Yeah.
Girl ?: B-I
Karen: B-I
Karen: Are there spaces in it?
Joe: There are spaces hold. The child hold them there. [??]
Karen: Are the spaces between the E and the M?
Girl 2: Yeah
Karen: And then the R and the B?
Girl 2: Yeah.
Karen: OK. All right. And how did you learn English?
Girl 2: [says something in Burmese that sounds like “in Arabic” to me]
Karen: What?
Joe: [says something in Burmese, I think]
Karen: Do you speak Arabic?
Girl 2:
Karen: No? OK, How did you learn English? You speak English and Burmese, right? OK.
Joe: [speaks in Burmese]
Girl 2: [speaks in Burmese] [laughs]
Karen: Did you learn at school too?
Karen: A different teacher?
Girl 2: Yeah.
Karen: Did that teacher stay after school too?
Girl 2: Yeah.
Mom: [speaks in Burmese?]
Girl 1: ??
Karen: OK, do you have your teacher’s name?
Girl 1: [shows book with teacher’s name written at front]
Karen: OK, Mrs. Is that a B or an O. A B? OK. Mebels was your teacher. And she, how long did you stay after school?
Girl 1: 5 o-clock, 4-o-clock around.
Karen: Did you get out of school at 3 or 2:30? Or?
Girl 1: Uh. 3 ?? 4:30 I go home. Some time I wait ‘til 5:30.
Karen: So, you stayed after school sometimes ‘til 4:30, sometimes ‘til 5:30?
Girl 1: Yeah.
Karen: So, you sometimes stayed a long time.
Girl 1: Yes
Karen: And just with that one teacher every time?
Girl 1: three teachers.
Karen: So, three different teachers helped you? Was Mrs. Mebels the one?
Girl 1: Medelas
Karen: Medela?
Girl 1: Yeah
Karen: Is that M-E-D then?
Girl 1: Yeah
Karen: M-E-D. Is that right?
Girl 1: Yeah.
Karen: Uh
Girl 1: That’s a D
Karen: That’s a D. Medala. OK. M-E Mrs. Medala was she one of three who stayed after?
Girl 1: No, two. My teacher was two. Her teacher was three.
Karen: Oh, OK. So you had one teacher who stayed after school and she had a different teacher that stayed after school with her?
Girl 1: Yeah
???
22.01 Karen: Ah, OK. Well, that was very nice of them. Did you like staying at school that long?
Girl 1: Yeah. [with enthusiasm]
Karen: Yeah? OK. And, how did you like school?
Girl 1: U, like, I wish like I read like something, book. Like, he help me. Like I do homework and he help like with something, everything. [I’ve noticed many of the Burmese struggle with identifying gender in English]
Karen: And this is the same woman, Mrs. Medela?
Girl 1: Medela and Mrs. Old. I call him Mrs. Old.
Karen: Mr. Old?
Girl 1: I call him Mrs. Old. His name is Mrs. Hutchinson. I call him Mrs. Old.
Karen: Mr. or Mrs.?
Girl 1: Mrs.
Karen: Another woman? OK.
Girl 1: Yes
Karen: And you called her old like O-L-D? Like she was old?
Girl 1: Yes.
Karen: Did she know that?
Girl 1: Yeah.
Karen: Did she like it?
Girl 1: Yeah.
Karen: [laugh] I don’t know if I would like that.
Girl: The monkey?? Muggie? Muggie?
Joe: Muggie??
Karen: OK, so you read books too. Yeah?
Girl: [pause]
Karen: Did. Are you forgetting your Burmese at all or do you still know your Burmese too?
Girl: Yeah
Karen: Because you talk to your mom in Burmese, your parents? [laugh]
Girl 1: Yeah.
Karen: OK. And how do you like school here?
Girl 1: Um, like, everything I like to school.
Karen: Yeah, Everything you like?
Girl 1: Yeah.
Karen: Did you go to school, um, in the refugee camp?
Girl 1: Uh, yeah.
Karen: And how was that school like?
Girl 1: Oh, like I don’t know.
Karen: Yeah. OK. Well, how are we doing? I think that might be enough for today. Maybe I could come back another time and interview you a little bit more? Would that be OK?
Girl 1: Yeah, sure.
APPENDIX B. TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEWS WITH YA HE MA

Interviewer: Karen Hunt Lambert
Transcriptionist: Angela Swaner, with later editing by Karen Hunt Lambert
Informant: Ya He Ma (YM)
Address: 747 Riverwalk Apartments, apt. 221, Logan, Utah, 84321
Place of interviews: Ya He Ma’s home
Date of interviews: Oct. 16, 2009 – Sept. 10, 2010
Other people present: Ya He Ma’s husband, Ka Me Din; daughters Mae Yan Be, Har Be Bar, and Fe Re Da; and son, Maung Maung, came and went, along with visitors on occasion. I was present, sometimes with my daughter, Jacqueline Trish Lambert, and with various translators as stated below.
Brief description of contents: Ya He Ma tells the narrative of her life in Burma, a Thailand refugee camp and the U.S.

Oct. 16, 2009
This is Karen Lambert. I’m here with -- Let me try and pronounce your name correctly - -Ya He Ma?

YM: Ya He Ma

KL: Ya He Ma?

YM: Ya He Ma

KL: Ya He Ma, Ya He Ma. Okay. And her two oldest daughters and her son are all here too, with Chapter translating. So. And, it’s Saturday, October 17th? Or 16th?

HD: 16th

KL: October 16, 2009, and we’re going to talk a little bit about life in America. So you’ve been here for 2 years?

YM: Yes, two years (softly)

KL: What did you, what did you think when you first came?

HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughs)

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s very hard the first time in America
KL: Yeah. Is it very different?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah. Very different

KL: In what ways?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Because when you are in America you have to speak English.

KL: Umhuh yeah (laughs).

HD: Sometimes it’s easy for the people who speak English. The people who cannot speak English, it’s really hard to communicate with people sometime.

KL: Is that one of the hardest things is just

HD: Yeah

KL: the language?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

KL: So, do you think you’ve gotten better at English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah. She got better in English got better.

KL: Did she? Did you know any English before you came?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: No

KL: So at the refugee camp you didn’t learn any?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In the refugee camps they don’t have much school for adult, just for the kids.

KL: Okay. So did your daughters learn some English in the refugee camps?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, in the refugee camp the kids learn from the school but it is just a little bit (?)

KL: They went to the school but they studied English just a little bit.

HD: Yeah English, Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, and Karen

KL: Oh really Karen too?

HD: Yeah

KL: You guys learned some Karen?

HD: Yeah
KL: Oh that’s funny why Karen? ‘Cause you guys are not Karen are you?

HD: (laughing) I don’t know in school they learn all (?) Karen Burmese (laughing)

KL: So in Burma you didn’t learn any Karen though, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just Burmese

KL: Just Burmese okay. Well that’s fun (laughing). Okay, do you also speak some Arabic since you’re Muslim?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No

KL: No Arabic. Okay. So for your prayers you don’t pray in Arabic?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: For their prayer they have a, they have a pastor, and then after the pastor pray they follow the pastor. I don’t know how to say—

KL: Okay, so they just repeat what they hear

HD: Yeah

KL: in Arabic they don’t know what

HD: just repeat

KL: I mean do they know what it means but they can’t do it on their own?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes

KL: Okay

HD: But, they know how to read in Arabic. They can pray (?)

KL: Oh, so you can read some in Arabic?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she can read a little.

KL: Okay. Where does the pastor live? Does the – Is there a pastor in Logan? [I'm guessing pastor is the wrong word for this, but that Hser Doh used it because it was the English word he’d learned for religious leader.]

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Is it in Riverwalk?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, they have they have a teacher, like a teacher teach them about ?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: they know like how to pray it’s not like a big teacher, like a, just teaches different teacher

KL: Not a big teacher meaning like not a professional?

HD: Not professional yeah

KL: But it’s just a person that knows that teaches
HD: Yeah just they know a little bit but not professional

KL: Okay. And do they live in Riverwalk?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah in Riverwalk

KL: Is it the same one that one time I went with Ma Htwe Hla and her children, her girls and her boys. They all came here and, um, I went to a class and there were some men and they like cut

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: It’s the same one

HD: Yeah, same one

KL: Oh, okay they like cut up a table while I was there and they like made it into a

HD: Yeah they just reuse

KL: into like little tables for the prayer, um, books and stuff

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay that’s fun. The new man who just moved in who speaks Arabic or teaches Arabic? Is that someone different? [This is San Da’s husband who had formerly taught Arabic].

HD: Who?

KL: I don’t know the one Ma Htwe Hla was telling was telling me about.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, the man who came one month ago he speak some Arabic. I don’t know if he’s professional or not.

KL: She doesn’t know if he’s professional?

HD: Um

KL: or doesn’t know what?

HD: I think she doesn’t know how to speak Arabic fluently, yeah.

KL: Oh, she doesn’t. But the new teacher who just moved in?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Will he teach classes also for the kids or no?

HD: Yeah, they work together I think.

KL: He’ll work together with the other one.

HD: Yeah, just teach Arabic

KL: Oh, okay. Okay, so it was hard to learn English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: English is easy

KL: English is easy?

YM: answers in English: Little easy.

KL: Well, good. [laughing]

YM: answers in English: Little, little. Little easy.

KL: It is easy?

YM: answers in English: Little
KL: A little easy?

HD: It is a little bit easy

KL: and a lot hard? (laughing)

HD: (?) Yes, some of the pronunciation is hard for the people to say

KL: Some of the pronunciations are, okay. And, how often does she work on learning English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Uh, they learn English twice a week

KL: Two times a week?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: On which days?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Monday and Tuesday

KL: Monday and

HD: Tuesday

KL: Tuesday?

HD: Wednesday, sorry. Wednesday.

KL: Yeah, I was thinking that the classes were either Tuesday, Thursday or Monday Wednesday and I thought, wow she goes to both classes (laughing)

HD: (laughing)

KL: Monday and Wednesday is that the one that you help with?
HD: yeah
KL: Okay. Is that the one at Riverwalk or is it?
HD: Yeah Riverwalk. She works with the Riverwalk class.
KL: So it’s mainly the Karen people?
HD: They – No, I have both class
KL: You have both in your class?
HD: Yeah
KL: Muslims and Karen?
HD: Yeah
KL: Okay. How do you like the English class?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, he learned English because she needs to speak English for her future.
KL: Oh there’s a kid crying. Huh, my daughter is with my sister in law today.
HD: Yeah, translates my question into Burmese.
KL: So, she won’t cry when I’m talking (laughing). So, um, what does she want to do in the – What do you want to do in the future?
HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughing)
KL: Does she know?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: For the future, she want to buy a house, to own a personal house and for the future for the kids to educate their self and then they will speak English fluent.
HD: asks something else in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: For herself she want to speak English fluent too.

KL: Good. What else?

HD: Yeah, (phone rings loudly interrupting the interview) for the future just to speak English, she want to drive and to get a driver’s license.

KL: Is that your oldest daughter’s phone that she just answered?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yea it’s the older

KL: Do you all have your own phones or do you share one phone?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: One phone

KL: One phone, okay. Okay so speak English and you want to get a driver’s license

HD: Umhuh get a driver’s license

KL: Wow, that sounds fun. Did you ever? Have you ever driven a car before?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No

KL: Does it look fun?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: If she can drive someday she can take the kids to the store to the school so she doesn’t need anybody help

KL: Does she think it would be fun, too?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s fun

KL: (laughing)

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She says she would like to drive a car because she never drive the car before.

KL: (laughing) But, mainly just because it’s practical so you can take your kids places and do errands. Is that the main reason?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: So, she said yes. That’s the main reason?

HD: Yes

KL: Okay so currently does anyone? Does, can your husband drive a car? Has he ever driven a car before?

HD: Not yet.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: No?

HD: The husband has a car, but he never drive a car

KL: They have no car?

HD: They have a car
KL: Oh, they do have a car, but nobody can drive it?

HD: No (laughing)

KL: (laughing) That’s funny. Why do they have a car then?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just, uh, he bought for, for his brother because his brother have a driver license. Sometime when they go to work, they say, they go like a carpool

KL: Oh

HD: and they go together.

KL: So he has the car and his brother has the driver’s license?

HD: Yeah and (?)

KL: Okay. And they both work at JBS?

HD: Yeah

KL: Right now does everybody work at JBS, Chapter? Is there anyone that works anywhere else, besides you?

HD: Um, yeah, they all – most people they work in the JBS, but two or three people, one people, they work in the hotel and another guy he work at Icon.

KL: At where?

HD: Icon

KL: Icon, there’s still some at Icon?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Are there’s still someone at Icon, or there is now again.

HD: Yeah
KL: Which hotel, the Marriott?

HD: I don’t know. Express Hotel.

KL: Express Hotel?

HD: Yeah.

KL: Okay. Did your old roommate get, who’s married, did he get a job?

HD: Who?

KL: the one, your roommate who is married and is getting a, is having a child?

HD: Oh, yeah he get a job

KL: Where?

HD: He get a job in Miller

KL: Oh JBS?

HD: Yes

KL: That’s good

HD: and also Sai Pho Lar [Ma Htwe Hla’s son]

KL: Oh, Sai Pho La also got a job

HD: Yeah the same day

KL: Oh, Ma Htwe Hla told me that. Oh, the same day. They both got a job.

HD: Yeah

KL: That’s good. Do they carpool?

HD: Um I don’t know

KL: Don’t know

HD: If this guy have a car or not
KL: Oh okay, that’s good. Sorry, I just was – hadn’t heard if he’d gotten a job so. Um, so, what kind of car do you have?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: I don’t know if this car is a like a Germany make I don’t know how to say

KL: It’s from Germany?

HD: Yeah foreign

KL: Is it like a Volkswagen or?

HD: Germany car

KL: Or a Jetta

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: I think Germany

KL: Which kind, they make lots of cars

HD: Yeah (?) car

KL: Is it like a Volkswagen

HD: This kind of a picture like sort of

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Is it the one that looks like this?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, yeah this one

KL: The Volkswagen, I can’t
HD: Umhuh.

KL: Or is it the BMW I think

HD: No, no BMW

KL: Or Jetta I think those are all German, I’m not

HD: Yeah

KL: a big car person. So do you think it’s a Volkswagen maybe?

HD: I don’t know really (laughing)

KL: Okay what color?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Kind of silver

KL: Silver?

HD: like almost like my shirt

KL: Okay. What year?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t know. She doesn’t know the years of the car.

KL: Okay. Does she know how much it cost?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Seven thousand
KL: Seven thousand?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Okay, that’s probably a pretty good car then. That’s a lot of money. Okay and so you want to be able to drive the car?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yeah

KL: Do you have to know English to be able to get a driver’s license?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah I think. She have to speak English fluent

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: I think like right now for the driver’s license is easy for the people who speak English fluent because they have a test in the computer in the in the test. They don’t have a picture test anymore

KL: They don’t have a picture test anymore?

HD: Yeah I think if they have opportunity for picture test a lot of people (laughing) would pass the test.

KL: Did they used to have a picture test?

HD: Um they used to for last year but for this year

KL: They did?

HD: but for this year no more.

KL: Oh that’s interesting. When you took it was it a picture test or was it

HD: Me, I take a computer test.
KL: So, the written one?

HD: Yeah

KL: What’s her favorite thing about Logan or life in Logan?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she like Logan because the Logan is very quiet and because they have work in Logan too

KL: Right

HD: and for the Logan she said is very good because the bus is free to take it anywhere you want and you don’t have to pay any money.

KL: Does she take the bus a lot?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Where does she? Where do you take the bus to?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, where she take the bus where to the DI, Smith, and Wal-Mart.

KL: Okay. Is that where you buy most of your groceries is at Smiths and Wal-Mart and DI

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah
KL: And what do you buy at DI?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah for the DI sometimes we buy the clothes and table, chair and she got a sewing machine

KL: Oh

HD: in the DI too.

KL: Well good. [Long pause] Okay I’m going to start a new track so it’s not too long. End of recording
Hi this is Karen Lambert it’s still Oct. 16, 2009, and I am still here with and I still don’t know if I can say it right Ya

YM: Ya He Ma

KL: Ya He Ma and we’re talking about how she takes the bus to go shopping at different places. Do you like to go shopping?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Did she say she likes to shop?

HD: Yeah

KL: Yes

HD: She likes shop.

KL: What does she like to shop for?

HD: Where?

KL: What does she like to shop for?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She likes shopping sometime just to (?) Today? Today she will go to the DI

KL: Oh okay

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah today she we go to the DI to buy some clothes for the kids.

KL: For the kids?

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay. There’s also a sale until noon today at the Fairgrounds that has really cheap clothes. Just today.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

HD: Is it by the Willowpark?

KL: It’s I think so it’s like 500 West

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and 400

HD: South

KL: South. Is that Willowpark?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: It started at 8 and I think it goes till 12.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Or maybe 1.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: It’s the last day of the sale and all the clothes are half price. So, some of them are really cheap.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Okay. Um did you go shopping in Burma and in Thailand or was it different?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s different.

KL: So how do you get clothes there? Do you make them all?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, in the, in the Thailand in the refugee camp sometime they just sew the clothes from themselves

KL: From what?

HD: They just sew by themselves

KL: Where did they get the material?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, they have a store in the refugee camp they can buy.

KL: They do have a store then too.

HD: Yeah

KL: So they can buy material?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Where did they get money?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, sometimes they just sew the clothes and sell to other people and they receive some little money.

KL: Oh, to other refugees?

HD: Yeah.

KL: Did some refugees have more money than others?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, sometimes they have some yeah some money to

KL: So, some people brought money with them? And some people didn’t?

HD: Yeah, some people didn’t have anything.

KL: Because they had to run?

HD: yeah

KL: Do you miss Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, because she have left her Daddy.

KL: Oh, sad.

HD: She miss her Dad

KL: Can you talk to your Dad on the phone or is there any way to see if he’s okay?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, sometimes he call.
KL: So he has a phone?
YM: yeah

KL: How old is your Dad?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: 75

KL: Is he all alone or does he have family there?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, he live with family. He does have some sibling live with her Dad.

KL: Some of your siblings?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes

KL: And in Burma or in Thailand
YM: Burma

KL: In Burma
HD: in Burma

KL: So he is safe still. Is he okay?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes it’s not safe but sometimes they can live with, they to stay safely by yourself (?) You cannot tell anything you want.

KL: You cannot go anywhere or say anything?

HD: Oh, say anything just because of farms. They just do the farm and like, maybe make their own food

KL: Okay. You cannot say anything or go anywhere you want. You have to be careful.

HD: Yeah, careful farming (?)
KL: What do they farm?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Right now he doesn’t work anymore, just stay home

KL: Oh, he’s retired

HD: Yeah, he’s too old (laughing)

KL: Too old

HD: Yeah

KL: Yeah, does he have health problems or is he healthy?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: He’s, he’s good (?) with his health, but sometime he is sick too

KL: Is he sad that his daughter is so far away?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, he’s sad.
KL: Is she the only one who lives in the U.S. or are there other family members here?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, just her.

KL: You’re the only one? Why did she? Why did she leave Burma?

HD: What?

KL: Why did she leave Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She did not have good opportunity. Some people left some people just left (?) They thought someday the Burmese would change the policy and they would have peace.

KL: So, she did. Was it violence that made her leave or just she left on her own because she wanted opportunity?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: because in her village they don’t have a good condition and all a lot of people they left

KL: They don’t have a good what?

HD: condition, situation

KL: Oh, why?
HD: Oh, like a sometime they have a battle (sounded like banter) like the Burmese fighting around the village
KL: They have a what?
HD: a fighting
KL: phantom?
HD: fight
KL: Front?
HD: no they just have
KL: famine
HD: No, is a banter
KL: banter?
HD: Yeah
KL: What’s a banter?
HD: It is a – the Burmese so yeah they attack the village
KL: Oh
HD: and they fight with some of the people.
KL: So, they attack the village?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Do they kill everyone or just kind of scare them?
HD: Yeah, some of the people they kill because some of them are trying to scare them.
KL: So, they’re not trying to kill everyone they’re just trying to make everyone scared
HD: Umhuh.
KL: so they do. And they do this a lot?

HD: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: That would be scary. I wouldn’t want to have a chance of being killed. I wouldn’t like that at all.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she had seen a lot of people die in the village, yeah. [phone rang]

KL: She saw a lot of people die?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Or, she just knew a lot of people who died? [Ya He Ma answers the phone and talks for a while]

HD: No, just saw like this. She doesn’t know the people.

KL: Oh, so she actually saw them get killed, then?

HD: Umhuh yeah.

KL: Oh.

HD: Yeah, I have seen a lot too. Because we’re – I’m too small when I see the people. The Burmese soldiers they just fall over.

KL: Do they get are they killed with guns?

HD: Yeah

KL: or with bombs
HD: Sometime knives
KL: or knives
HD: Yeah
KL: Bombs or no bombs, mainly guns and knives
HD: Gun and knife sometime they beat.
KL: Are they meaner to the women or the men?
HD: Just only for the men
KL: They only kill the men? Oh. Why is that?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah because they just they just try to catch the man because they want men to join the army. Sometime the man doesn’t want to join the army and they force and they kill. Sometime the man have to carry – the porter, you know the porter?
KL: Like, they carry everybody else’s stuff?
HD: Yeah, just carry ammunitions and the gun for the cal, for the soldier, until the people cannot carry any more and then they beat and they say they saw something.
KL: So, did you have any relatives forced to join the army?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: No.
KL: That’s good. So the people that they kill are the ones who won’t join the army?
HD: Yes
KL: Or just anybody?
HD: No, just anybody because they have a – they have a— Yeah, that’s a long story (laughing) if I explain it. Because they have a Karen soldier and the Burmese soldier and Karen soldier because they have a, I don’t know how to say –

KL: Are the Karen soldiers fighting against the Burmese soldiers? They want democracy?

HD: Yeah, when the Burmese soldier came to the village and the Karen soldier fight them and then after the Karen soldiers fight them they trying to catch all the men to join the Karen soldiers army. Yeah it’s a long story.

KL: Yeah, okay, maybe I’ll ask you another time for the rest of the story.

HD: Yeah, it’s a long story.

KL: Um, okay so how much family still lives in Burma, how many of your family members?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Two brother, two older brother and two younger brother and one sister.

KL: Is the sister older or younger?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Older, older sister.

KL: He’s so little. Is he is wearing a Winnie the Pooh outfit? Yep, it has Winnie the Pooh on it (laughing).

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: You put makeup on his cheeks?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: The wood stuff? Does he eat formula?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Or do you feed him?

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Do you get the formula?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: Yes

KL: Yes. Do you also breast feed him or just formula?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: Both, both

KL: What?

YM: Both.

KL: Both? Oh, okay that’s good. Is this a usual design for the makeup to have two circles on the cheeks and then to have a circle on the forehead and then it comes down on the nose? [Chapter talks on the phone in the background]

KL: In a stripe like that? Is that common?

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Yeah? It looks cute. So boys and girls both wear it?

YM: Yeah.

KL: Yes?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (?)[gets off the phone]

KL: What?
HD: This is crazy Tar Po

KL: What? Oh that’s Tar Po? [laughs] Is Tar Po crazy?

HD: No, just kidding

KL: He’s just funny [laughing). That’s good. Is he your really good friend?

HD: Yeah, Tar Po is my cousin.

KL: Oh, he’s your cousin?

HD: Yeah

KL: Oh, I didn’t know that

HD: You don’t know that?

KL: Umhuh.

HD: Yeah. He is my cousin.

KL: Oh, do you know Tar Po?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Yeah, okay.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, Tar Po is translator in JBS

YM: JBS

KL: Oh, he translates at JBS?

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay
HD: Translates, yes. He is a trainer too.

KL: He’s a trainer too, wow. He’s doing very well.

HD: Yeah

KL: So when you worked there did he work with you? Did he help you?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, when she work in the Miller Tar Po starting to look for a job(?)

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Oh, so that was before Tar Po

HD: Just Joe

KL: Just Joe

HD: Do you remember Joe?

KL: I know Joe, yeah. How is Joe? Is Joe good?

HD: Joe (laughing) Joe is busy because he have to work a lot for the refugees

KL: Uhm.

HD: and he have another responsibility

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: because he got a wife.

KL: He has a wife?

HD: Yeah

KL: He’s married now?

HD: Yeah
KL: Oh (laughing) When did he get married?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Uh, actually right now she is not married, he is not married yet.

KL: Or is engaged?

HD: Yeah, engaged, just, they living together

KL: Oh, okay.

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay, so is he going to marry her or are they just going to live together?

HD: Yeah

KL: for a while

HD: Yeah, she’s go, he’s going to marry her.

KL: Oh, okay. Well that sounds like he’s keeping busy.

HD: Yeah he’s busy (laughing) sometime I try to call him he said oh I’m not available (laughing) talk like blub, blub, blub like

KL: Okay well I she’s probably you’re probably kind of busy since you have to go shopping and do a lot of things. Would it better if I come back a different time and talk to you a little more or?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: If you want to to come to meet with her and then you call me if you let me know and then I’ll call her

YM: answers in Burmese
KL: Okay

HD: sometimes is worry that she is not home like this

KL: She is not home? Okay could I get her phone number too just in case?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: I probably won’t call you but

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: It’s 435

YM: 713

KL: 713

YM: 5963

KL: 5963?

YM: yeah

KL: Your English is pretty good. Have you been practicing for how long? For 2 years or for a year and a half?

YM: Two year

KL: Two years? Did you take English classes right when you moved here?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, they already start about 8 month ago

KL: 8 months ago is when she started taking classes through the English language center?

HD: Yeah

KL: Before that did she take any classes?
KL: So will it be okay if I keep coming back and asking you some more questions so I can get more about your story?

HD: No.

KL: No. Okay well that’s good (laughing)

HD: Yes

KL: Yeah, okay. Thank you.

YM: You’re welcome.

KL: Okay. All right.

End of recording
Hello this is Karen it is December 22\textsuperscript{nd} and this is just a test. Okay so this is Karen Lambert and I’m here with Ya He Ma, Ya He Ma

HD: Ya He Ma

KL: Ya He Ma which is spelled YE HE ME right? And we it’s about

YM: M E

KL: M E, did I say M A?

HD: M E

YM: Y E

HD: M A Y E

KL: M A

HD: and this Y

KL: Y

HD: too

KL: So it’s Y

HD: A

YM: E

KL: So it’s Ya He Ma

HD: He Ma. That’s correct
KL: Y A H E M A

HD: Yes

KL: Okay and you are 37, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Is that still true?

YM: Yeah

KL: 37 years old? Okay. Okay, so this is Karen Lambert and I’m here with Ya He Ma who’s 37 and lives in Riverwalk Apartments with her husband and her – is – 3 daughters right and one son

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Huh?

YM: 3 daughter

KL: 3 daughters and one son

YM: yeah I have a son

KL: Yes. Okay and we have talked a little bit before in the past, but she’s agreed to talk to me some more about, um, being a mom and living in Logan so.

YM: speaking in Burmese

KL: (laughing) So you don’t like the cold so well, huh?

YM: I don’t like it.

KL: You told me that you’ve been here for about 2 years. So, is this your third winter?

YM: 2 year

KL: 2 years?

YM: Yeah
KL: And so is this your second winter or your third winter?

YM: 2 year and 3 month
KL: 2 years and 3 months. So, that would mean that you came in let’s see it’s December now so you would have come in 3 months before December so like November, October, September?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Um, she came to America in 2007, September 2007
KL: So, this is her third winter?
HD: Yeah, third winter
HD: translates my question into Burmese
HD: Yeah, third time.
KL: Okay. Are you getting used to it yet?
HD: asks question in Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah
HD: asks question in Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: Hum okay. And how in I wanted to ask some more questions about what Burma was like and where you lived in Burma.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: Okay. And, so how long did you —? You were in Burma—? How old were you when you left Burma?
HD: How long?
KL: Well how long did she live there, yeah?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah she leave she live in Thailand for several year. The other time just only live in Burma.

KL: She lived in Thailand several years?

HD: Several years

KL: Umhuh.

HD: and the other years lived in Burma.

KL: How many years in Burma does she know?

HD: She doesn’t know (laughing)

KL: Okay. Before she

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 30 year

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 28 year in Burma

KL: Okay and she guessed that she was in the refugee camps about 7 years last time I talked to her?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes 7 year in refugee camp

KL: Okay and where what was the name of the city and the state that you lived in in Burma? Are they called cities?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: or village or?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Um Karen state in Kocara city

KL: Karen state in
HD: Kocara city

KL: How do you spell that?

HD: Cocara I don’t know. I think they would have in internet.

KL: Do you have any guess?

HD: Just like in Kocara K A R A

KL: K A R A and I’ll check it

HD: Yeah

KL: but you can give me a start

HD: K A Kararick

KL: Kararick, kind of like that?

HD: yeah Kararick [I later learn it is Kawkareik township].

KL: and check spelling. Is that a village or is that a city or

HD: It is a city in the (?) in Nabu village

KL: How do you spell Nabu village?

HD: N A B U Nabu village

KL: So Nabu village is in the city of Kawkareik?
HD: Yeah Kawkareik city in Nabu village.

KL: Okay so this is smaller, and this is bigger, then this is bigger?

HD: Yeah

KL: then this is even bigger (laughing)

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: Okay so check spelling on Internet. Okay and did only Muslims live in that city or was it lots of different religions?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah a

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Nabu they have a (?)she in Karen they have a Mosque and Karen monastery too. They live together in this place.

KL: So there are a lot of Buddhist Karen people there?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, Buddhist

KL: Okay, do they? Are they friends and do they get along?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, just only they have a different religion. They can get along with each other.

KL: Okay are there more Muslims or more Karen Buddhists?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Nabu a lot are Muslim, but in other sect on the Nabu there’s a lot of Buddhist people

KL: But in Nabu there’s a lot of Muslims [Looking back I may have misunderstood this. I’m not sure of my conclusion here that Nabu is mainly Muslim, especially as I later learn Ya He Ma actually lived outside of Nabu in the country].

HD: Yeah

KL: Mainly Muslims

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Okay but in the rest of Burma she said there’s a of course. Okay. So mainly Muslim. How big was Nabu?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: It is very big, but not bigger than Logan (laughing)

KL: Very big but not bigger than Logan.

HD: A little like Smithfield

KL: Okay

HD: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Okay

HD: I just live close to the Nabu, but I never been to there. I think it is like from here to Salt Lake. No, no really from here to Ogden

KL: Okay
HD: but I never been to there
KL: Right
HD: Yeah
KL: What city were you from or village?
HD: I’m from Kokarik in (?)
KL: Kokarik the same city
HD: Yeah the same city but a different village
KL: In Tampoco?
HD: Tokoko
KL: T O
HD: T O H
KL: T O H
HD: Yeah K A W K O O T O H
KL: What?
HD: K O O
KL: K O O like that?
HD: Yeah Tokaw another word another word K O O
KL: K O O
HD: Yeah
KL: Like that?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: So T O H

HD: Tokaw

KL: and then K O O

HD: No To Kaw

KL: Oh

HD: Yeah. Ko yeah that’s correct.

KL: So To Kaw Koo and it’s spelled T O H K A W?

HD: Umhuh.
KL: space K O O

HD: I think K O H

KL: K O H

HD: (?)

KL: To Kaw Koh

HD: yeah that’s correct (laughing)

KL: Okay (laughing) Okay and you lived in Nabu village your entire life for 30 years?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: In Burma

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: or 28 years

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah 20 years live in Nabu
KL: Okay and did all of your family live there?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Do you still have family that lives there?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, brother and parents

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Oh, right now in Nabu no more people live in Nabu because the Burmese soldier they just leave there and with a lot of the like a military army

KL: Oh okay

HD: there right now. All of the village is destroyed

KL: So they took it over

HD: (?) stay to other places

KL: Where do your brother and parents live then?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: They just live in (?) is close to Nabu

KL: So your brother and parents still live in Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, just live close to Nabu.
KL: Do they have cell phones or can you talk to them?
HD: Cell phones
KL: They have cell phones?
HD: Yeah
KL: Does everyone in Burma have cell phones
HD: Almost
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: No just some
KL: Okay are they very expensive?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, it’s too expensive.
KL: How do your, um, parents and brother earn money?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: They just work like a
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: How do they earn money? They work by doing what?
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Um, they just like a work in a store and sell something in the store.
KL: What kind of store?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: I think they have like a sell a lot of like a clothing and food like honey or tea leaves, everything in the store they sell

KL: So they sell everything there

HD: Umhuh.

KL: It’s like a little market?

HD: Yeah

YM: Little market

KL: How does it compare to the grocery stores here, much smaller?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: A little smaller there is a little bit

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: her parents fill in when her brother leave They have like fourty houses process like

KL: They have what?

HD: 40 houses

KL: 40 houses

HD: Yeah

KL: 40 little stores?

HD: Yeah 40 house like a people live like a home they have 30 homes
KL: 30 homes?

HD: Yeah

KL: Who does

HD: Like uh, her mother live they don’t have a lot of people just a few people live there.

KL: So her brother has 30 homes?

HD: Um, just the friend, yeah

KL: Oh he lives with (?)

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: live with a neighbors

KL: and he goes between different, different homes?

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay

HD: live with a neighbor but in this (?) it have like a 40 houses

KL: And well so what other people left because of the war?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: So there’s places to just go. So does he stay at people, friends, with friends or does he just go stay in empty houses?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, her brother live just close to neighbors who live there?

KL: But does he live in the same house or different house?
HD: Different house

KL: Oh. And there – Are the people who are gone people who went to the refugee camp? People who are gone?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, some people when the Burmese take over in Nabu they just move to the refugee camps some of the people they just split off after that, different other places

KL: So some left to the refugee camps and some them just went and hid in different places

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay so your brother and your parents went and hid.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah they just live in Burma

KL: Okay

HD: (?) side of

KL: How is your cute little boy? How old is he now?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Three and a half month

KL: Wow, cute. Is your husband at JBS right now?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes

KL: Okay. Okay. How? What are some of the things you remember about Burma that are different from the U.S.?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, she have a different thing in Burma in America. In Burma she have a hard time, like a have a lot of problem from everything

KL: she had a lot of what?

HD: She have a lot of problem every day because Burmese soldier came to the village forcing the people like a to do something for them and also they don’t have like a work to do, like every day like they do in America. They have to be worried all the time because they have to worry about how can they have a food

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: for their life and she said when she came to America she have a lot of good thing like a she can stay in peacefully all the time. She isn’t afraid. She doesn’t have afraid she doesn’t need to afraid for the Burmese soldier any more and the family can have jobs like a to work every day and that is really good.

[Baby crying, speaking in background]

KL: I’m sorry, we can wait. How are the families? Are the family, um, structures or roles different here than they are in Burma? Like in Burma, um, do people have big families or little families?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, in Burma they have different kind of like a family. Like the family they live together all the time when they get older or they get married sometime because they live with their parents. Like, uh, for American, uh, or all the kids when they grown up they just left a lot and live with a friend. That is very different from me.

KL: So in Burma you don’t go live with your friends after you grow up?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, in Burma when they get over 18 years old they still live with their parent.

KL: Okay

HD: Yeah

KL: Do many of the children go on to school more school as they get older? How much school do they usually go to in the village?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Burma like in her village like uh, after the kids in the village, like a is not really a city

KL: Umhuh.

HD: they have a middle school and elementary school

KL: They have a what kind of school?

HD: like a they have

KL: High school

HD: school to elementary school

KL: Elementary school

HD: to middle school. And after the student they graduate in the middle school some of the parent they have enough money to, to send the children to the city in Burma. Some of the parent they don’t have enough money just give to let the kids stay with them and do something with

KL: So if they have enough money they’ll send their kid to go to high school

HD: Yeah

KL: in the city?
HD: Yeah if they don’t

KL: In Karen state?

HD: No, in Burma

KL: Oh the main city

HD: Yeah in

KL: so it’s a lot of money cause it’s far away

HD: Yeah, just in the like the capital city in Burma

KL: It’s the only place to go

HD: Yeah

KL: And is that for like a university or is that for like high school?

HD: High school and university and

KL: And can everybody go to the high school and university if they have enough money:

HD: yeah

KL: So Karen, Muslim

HD: Mostly they don’t go

KL: but Burmese, what?

HD: I think Karen, mostly, mostly, they don’t go to school after they graduate elementary school because most of the parent they are like a normal working – in the farming they don’t make enough money to send their children to the university or high school. I think more of the student in Karen state are mostly just go to school like to elementary like and then they just (?)

KL: Or maybe they won’t go

HD: just wait
KL: And then they help their families?

HD: Umhuh and (?)

KL: Okay. So um did were you able to how much school were you able to go to?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Burma just only depend on the money? If they have enough money to go every time if they want.

KL: Right, did she go to school at all did she go to elementary or?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She used to go to school in the elementary – third grade.

KL: What did she learn in third grade?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She just learned a little English and Burmese in the school.

KL: So you speak a little English. Do you speak Burmese some or a lot of Burmese?

HD: Just a lot of Burmese

KL: Lot of Burmese and then do you speak any Arabic?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No

KL: No
HD: Just only Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Can she say the prayers in Arabic?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She can say a little bit prayer in Arabic

KL: Little bit? Okay.

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay, did you like school?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She liked the school in Burma, but it has a lot of different thing because in the Burma school sometime the school is not like in America like the school is all the year, stay all the year or every year the same school, the school is change all the time.

KL: There

HD: No in Burma

KL: The school changes all the time?

HD: Oh how?

HD: Because the war.

KL: Oh. So in what ways does it change?

HD: Hum?
KL: What ways does it change?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Sometime, sometime the family they don’t have enough money to make over there. They just go to a different place sometime they have a military government take over the places and they cannot have school any more just they have to go to different class rooms every time.

KL: What happened when she was in school? Was it changing while she was in school?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes. It happened for her one time when she was in school.

KL: What happened specifically?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Uh, because the Burmese take over the places, the place.

KL: And so they moved to a new place

HD: Yeah

KL: How old was she?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: over 10 years

KL: She was about 10

HD: Yeah, over 10 years
KL: More than 10 years

HD: Yeah

KL: And she was about third grade?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: And is that when she stopped going or did she keep going somewhere else?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: After that she just quit

KL: Was she sad or happy

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Sad

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Why was she sad?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: And this time because her parent doesn’t have anything to keep her to continue stay in school just they have to bring to help their parents.

KL: So after third grade it might have cost her money or does it cost money to go to any of the schools?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, I think every school require they have to buy everything for school.

KL: Oh

HD: Sometime the school isn’t close to her village, like where is just going to stay with a person and so have to pay everything for school for home and for a place to live.

KL: So it doesn’t cost money to go to the school itself, but it costs money for all the supplies and

HD: Yeah all the

KL: and to live and to buy the food and everything.

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay.

HD: speaking in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: A lot of people in Burma they cannot take their children to the school because they don’t have enough money but the kids go to different place all in there to go to study like in Burma they have a school uniform

KL: Oh, yeah.

HD: is too expensive to buy. They have to wear the school uniform every day once they go to school.

KL: Oh right

HD: Yeah it’s just like American, America the people can wear everything to go to school.

KL: Right. Okay and does education in Burma help you have more opportunities and more jobs like here?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, in Burma when they have a lot of education the people can have a good job like America I think. Nice

KL: It’s harder to get education.

HD: Yeah, it’s harder to get education.

HD: talks in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay

HD: It’s very (?)

KL: Are you glad that your daughters get to go to school in the U.S.?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she is so glad kids go to American school.

KL: Do your daughters like it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

Daughter (HM): Yes I like

HD: Good job

KL: What was your name? Let me make sure I have the right name

HM: H A R
KL: H A R
HM: B E
KL: B E
HM: B A R
KL: B A R. And how are old are you again?
HM: 14
KL: 14? And you said you like school?
HM: Yeah
KL: Yeah
HD: Which school are you going in?
HM: Logan High
HD: Logan High
KL: And what grade again?
HM: Um, ninth grade.
HD: speaking in Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: What about your sister. Do you like school?
HD: No she is not going to school
KL: Oh she’s not?
HD: Anymore
KL: Is she already graduated?
HD: No
KL: Oh, she’s just done?

HD: She never go to school in American

KL: Oh okay

HD: Because she already marry

KL: Oh you’re married?

Visitor: Yes [I was mistaken. It was not a daughter, but her sister-in-law who was visiting.]

KL: Oh how old are you?

Visitor: 20

KL: 20?

HD: 20

KL: Okay so you’re too old to go to high school anyway (laughing) I guess you could go to alternative high school.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Is she her daughter?

Someone in background: No

KL: No a friend

HD: No just a cousin.

KL: A friend

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Oh, her sister in law

KL: Oh, her sister in law
HD: Yeah
KL: What is your sister in law’s name?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Twa Bi
KL: How do you spell that?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: T W A
Someone in background: T W A B I (TW)
HD: V I
KL: T W A B I
HD: Yeah Twa Bi
KL: Okay umhuh. Twa Bi do you have any kids yet?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
TB: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, she
KL: one?
HD: have one kid. It’s a girl
KL: Is your kid here or somewhere else?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
TB: answers in Burmese

HD: Just in her home

KL: Oh, at your home okay. You’re just visiting for fun.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

TB: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay I have one girl too

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: But my girl’s with my sister in laws. I have 2 sister in laws and she’s with both of them

HM: How old are you?

KL: How old am I, I’m 30. So, I’m older.

HM: Not really

HD: I’m 19 (laughing)

KL: I don’t believe you (laughing). That’s funny. Okay, so, um, are the like the families, um, live together and they’re closer in Burma. Do women – Are the women at home raising their children a lot of the times in Burma or are a lot of them out working in the fields or farming or both or? What do, what do they do?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Burma more of the men they are working for the uh, for the family. Only the wife just always take care of the kids and prepare the food for, for the family.

KL: Is that the Muslin and the Karen or just the Muslim?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, Karen are the same.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Only a few women do work, not like America

KL: Okay some women in America do that too, like my mom was at home and (?)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: my mom did that she like would cook our food and teach us at home and things.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Burma mostly the the woman is taking on the family and raise the children at home all the time.

KL: Okay, what do you think about how America, how a lot of people in America do it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In America a lot of the women working and men is working together

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Some of the people only they want to make money. Some of the people just only they work. Some of the people they work and go to school. They have a different kind of people in America.

KL: So why, why does she think they work? She said that some of them only working for money? And some of them work and go to school? Does she think this is good or bad?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, she say it is good because all the people they can do what they want. They have a choice.

Kids speaking Burmese in background

KL: Are these the forms she’s asking you about?

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay

HD: She just have some question for me.

KL: Okay, um do you enjoy being a mom and taking care of your daughters and your son?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, is very happy to be a mom and take of kids because there is a responsibility for her to take care of kid after they get older

KL: And she likes having the responsibility or does it make her feel important or does she love her kids or like why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s very important to take care of the kids because she doesn’t want for her kid to be hurt. Going to a bad place, like this (laughing)

KL: So she wants to help her kids to grow up to be good?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, just wanted to do good things.

HD: Speaks in Burmese.
KL: What do you, what do you hope for your children?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She just, um, she has a goal for the kids for their future to be educated and to, to have a better life.

KL: A better life in what way? Like what would a better life be?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Um, they would have a better life because if they have a good education they can have a good job and then they can take care of their family for the future.

More conversation in Burmese between Chapter and family members.

KL: What did she say?

HD: When I sometimes I play snow with her. We just call her a big snow.

KL: A big snow?

HD: Yeah, we make her a snowman

KL: Oh you went and made snowmen somewhere?

HD: Yeah

KL: Oh, fun, where?

HD: Yeah its around here.

KL: Is it up Logan Canyon?

HD: No it just in

KL: Oh, in Riverwalk Apartments?
HD: Yeah

KL: Oh that’s fun. You probably never had snow in Burma right or was there snow there?

HM: Rain

HD: Just rain

KL: Rain, lots of rain yeah. Do you like the snow?

HM: Yeah


HD: Snow fun, huh?

KL: But, cold, huh. Okay. What, um, what types of things do you try to teach to your daughters and your son? Like cooking or sewing or what do you teach?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, sometime she just teaching the children about how to sew the clothing and sometime how to make the food.

KL: Is it important to her to teach her, them, to speak Burmese?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, sometimes it’s important to teach them in Burmese in at home, but is not really important, but the important thing is the kids have to speak English for their future. So they can communicate with all, with American friends.

KL: Right. Does she teach them about Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes, she teach children about, a little bit about the Burma, what the Burma look and what the Burma is was and because all of the kids they don’t know anything about the life in Burma, what people are in Burma. All of them just know a little bit everything from Thailand.

KL: They were all born in Thailand or they were just babies in Thailand?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: They just born in Burma, but they just lived in Thailand.

KL: They were born in

HD: They just they just lived in Thailand when they are so little.

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: So, when did she, um, leave to – from Thailand to – Well, maybe we’ll save that for another day. That’s too long of a question. But and a better question might be what are some other things that she hopes for her sons or her son and her three daughters. Does she want them to know about their traditions in Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Sometime she just teach the kids about the culture in the Burma, like as sometime teach uh, like a to speak the Burmese and sometime how to wear the clothing like the clothing styles.

KL: So, they still wear Burmese styles or not so much?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just sometime they just

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just sometimes they wear Karen or no Burmese cultural clothes.
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, she want to show you the older daughter wearing a Burmese clothing

KL: Okay

HD: [referring to the second oldest daughter in jeans] Is American style

KL: Okay the sarong?

HD: Umhuh sarong

KL: Is it a sarong or a skirt?

HD: A sarong

KL: A sarong.

Conversation in Burmese

KL: Longyi?

HD: Ta Mey

KL: Ta Mey

HD: Ta Mey

KL: How do you spell it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

HM: T

HD: T E

KL: T E?

HD: T E

KL: E as in elephant or A
HD: A
KL: T A as in apple?
HD: Yeah
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: M E as in elephant
HD: M EY as in (?)
KL: T A space M EY
HD: Yeah
KL: And that’s it’s how you Ta Mey?
HD: Yeah
KL: And that’s like a sarong?
HD: Yeah, sarong
KL: And that’s what the oldest daughter is wearing?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: I can I take a picture of what her skirt looks like?
HD: Okay – translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: Is that okay or no?
HD: Yeah, they are saying yeah.
YM: answers in Burmese
Conversation in Burmese
KL: Is it okay?
HD: No is okay.

KL: Oh she’s gone (laughing)

HD: She’s coming back

KL: Okay. Can I get a picture of you with your son too?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

HM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Oh, I’ll get your daughter first. Are you ready? Okay

Much conversation in Burmese

KL: Did you make it? Or did your mom make it? Your mom made it? Do you want to see? So is it okay if I get a picture of you with your son?

HD: Okay translates my question into Burmese

KL: Can I get your picture too? I’ll just get everyone’s picture. Can I get your picture with your daughter maybe? This one

HD: on phone conversation in background

KL: Okay one more. It’s really slow okay. Okay can I get your picture too? Do you want to be with your sister or your mom or just by yourself?

Someone in background: brother

Daughter: brother

KL: Okay your brother? Oh, cute. Okay so I just took some pictures of them and Chapter is on the phone. So, I think that maybe we’ll just end for today.

End of recording
HD: speaking in Burmese

KL: Yeah I don’t remember if I had you sign one last time but what it means is that

HD: translates into Burmese

KL: Okay

HD: I guess she doesn’t sign it yet

KL: Okay what it means is that the information you gave me from the recordings and the interview can be used in an archive in the library at the university

HD: Umhuh

KL: and it will it can be kept there for people to learn about your stories and um as part of the history of Logan and also if people want to use the information like I’ll probably use parts of it for a thesis I’m writing which is a paper for school and other people could use it for other research, um, to learn more about your culture and papers and things that they’re writing.

HD: translates into Burmese

KL: So is that okay?

HD: translates into Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay and since your daughters talked too I’ll have to have them sign one too, also, if that’s okay.

HD: translates into Burmese

KL: Is that okay with the daughters and the mom? Okay. Okay well do you want to help her with it.

HD: This for her

KL: One for everyone so
HD: Okay

KL: But it’s important that she understands it.

HD: translates into Burmese

End of recording
Interview 4  
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  
Translator: Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)  
Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)  
Date: March 5, 2010  
Place: Ya He Ma’s home

KL: …get this started. This is Karen Lambert and it is Friday, March 5th and I am here doing some more interviews with Chapter and my daughter, Jackie, and oh no I always say it wrong. Just say it say it for me.

YM: Ya He Ma

KL: Ya He Ma, right

HD: (laughing)

KL: Ya He Ma, Ya He Ma (laughing) did I say it right this time? Kind of? (laughing) Okay and yeah let’s start recording. There’s that. So, I wanted to ask you a little bit about, um, violence when you were living in Burma and in Thailand. Did you see any violence or did you leave before there was any violence?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, she have seen a lot

KL: Okay like what when was the first time you remember seeing violence?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah first time she had seen in Burma

KL: When she was how old or does she remember?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Was she little or big?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she had seen when she was younger or older she had seen a lot.

KL: Okay what was the first violence that she remembered seeing?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Did she

HD: No, she doesn’t – she doesn’t remember it.

KL: Oh so what are some examples of different types of violence that she has seen?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just only she had seen fighting between the Karen people and Burmese people

KL: Fighting between the Karen and

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Burmese? Do the Muslims participate in the fighting or is it just the Karen and the Burmans?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yes, some Muslim people and between the Karen people

KL: The Muslim people join the Karen people?

HD: Yeah

KL: And are they joining because they’re trying to get independence or are they joining just because they’re trying to get their rights or just to protect their lives, why?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah they just try for the independence

KL: So they want to be independent?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: An independent nation?

HD: Yeah, independent

KL: And so is that partly why the government’s upset is because they want to break off?

HD: (laughing) I don’t know

KL: Because in the U.S. like when the south tried to succeed that caused people were not happy about that either

HD: Yeah

KL: if Utah decided to be its own state it probably would cause a war here too?

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: Like it’s is it just because they want to be a non-state or is it because they’re persecuted or they feel persecuted and that’s why they want to be their own state? What’s her perspective?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: They just want

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: they want their independence and (baby coughing) with the Burmese people
KL: Equal opportunity

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Why do they want independence?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: It’s for the public and for the social people social social

KL: I don’t understand

HD: Well the people right and for the social like a social like a (?) community people

KL: But like independence why why does that mean she wants independence? I don’t understand

HD: Um because they don’t have any rights for anything and they fought the independence

KL: Oh, so they don’t have any rights and so that’s why they’re fighting for independence.

HD: Yeah.

HD: asking more questions

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah it’s like all the ethnic minority in Burma just kind of fighting for their independence to, like all the ethnics minority ethnic people (?) and the same time fight for their independence

KL: And that’s because they don’t have rights?

HD: Umhuh most people doesn’t have rights

KL: And what kind of rights?

HD: Like a like a equal like equal education like equal for for the same speak, speech oppressed, like a ballot I mean they don’t have anything.
KL: Is there freedom of religion? What are her thoughts on freedom of religion?

HD: Hum?

KL: Is there freedom of religion?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s free a little bit.

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: So, they’re not entirely free then? Is there a preference given to Buddhists? Is it best to be Buddhist?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah Buddhist is the bigger one, the larger one in Burma.

KL: But is the does the government prefer Buddhists? Like are they more likely to be more successful or be hired for jobs in government or do they – like I was reading some books and I don’t know if this is true for her experience, but in some places they said that, um, the government had torn down Mosques and built Buddhist temples and things like that in their place. Is that true?

HD: Yeah, that is true.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, that’s true.

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Okay. Has she ever not seen the government do this or specifically do anything to persecute the Muslims?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she have seen one building in her village before she came to Thailand, like a, the, Muslim Mosque was destroyed by the Burmese soldier and then they built a military station

KL: So hold on. One day in her village before she went to the Thailand refugee camps

HD: she have seen the military in her village (?)

KL: the military was in her village

HD: Yes

KL: and they destroyed a Mosque?

HD: yes the Mosque and

KL: Did they just have one only one Mosque in her village?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just one Mosque in Nabu, Nabu village

KL: Okay and so they destroyed the Mosque and did they destroy the whole village or just the Mosque?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, they destroyed the village and the Mosque and all the people had to flee to different house, house.

KL: Has she ever seen the military kill anyone?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, she heard it a lot, but she never see it by herself.

KL: But, she saw them attacking the village and then she ran or what happened?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she have seen Burmese people attack her village

KL: What was that?

HD: She had seen when the Burma came attacks her village

KL: What did she do?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just flee.

KL: With who?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: each family flee with (?)

KL: Okay, um, when they attacked her village how many soldiers were there?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: About 200, 300

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Right now in her village one day like they build the military station in her village. A lot of soldiers live in there.
KL: So there’s about 200-300 there now she thinks?

HD: yeah, the first 200-300 since then.

KL: Had she ever seen the soldiers before they destroyed her village or was that the first time?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes she had seen a lot.

KL: When?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t know. [laughing] She doesn’t remember.

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: [watching my daughter] She likes to kick blankets. How is she doing? How is her life right now? What has she been up to?

HD: Right now?

KL: Yeah.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Um, her life in America is better because she doesn’t need to afraid anything.

Yeah, she said sometime when she live in the camp, she need to afraid the police. They came into the village and arrested the people.

KL: They did what to the people?

HD: they arrest
KL: Arrest

HD: the people who get out of the camp, like get out, leave. But in America is better than

KL: Did she ever leave the camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, sometime.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: When she leave the camp she needed to afraid the police

KL: Why did she leave?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Sometimes she want to go out to like a

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: to work outside the camp.

KL: Where did she work?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: sometime they go to like a Thai village like a they do like a do the pea, like a the corn, like a do the corn

KL: Sometimes they go to a Thai village and what?

HD: to do the llke, uh, pick out the corn

KL: To the harvest?
HD: Yeah, harvest

KL: And they harvested corn? Okay. How like what does she do most of the time, what does she do during the day?

HD: Do here?

KL: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She be here all her day, she sometimes sewing, sometimes cooking, cook, take care of the baby and like, uh, at night sometimes she go to the English class.

KL: Where are your girls? Are they at school?

YM: Yeah.
HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: How is the English class going?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (laughing) It’s good.

KL: Is Chapter your teacher?

YM: Yeah

KL: (laughing) So, you have to say that right? (laughing) I’m sure it is good though.

HD: No, I’m not teacher (laughing).

KL: No, you’re the helper?

HD: Yeah, helper.

KL: Right, you help translate?
YM: Translate

HD: Sometime, yeah. I don’t need to translate any more, just I go, she teach them and when they need I just translate. Like because the teacher make a rule most all the student have to speak English. (laughing)

KL: All right so you speak English in the class? How is your English coming then?

YM: Little bit

KL: A little bit?

HD: (?)

KL: Oh, you understood me before he translated that’s good.

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing) Is it hard?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: Yeah I have little (?)

KL: You can try and answer before he translates if you want now that I know your English is getting so good, (laughing) but Chapter can help too. So you said it’s getting better. Is it really hard?

YM: Yeah.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: It’s really hard for the people who doesn’t know anything (laughing).

KL: Why is she learning English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: She learn English because she is going to live in America for a long time and it’s very important to understand English and to go everywhere by herself. If she speak English she doesn’t need anyone to go with her. She can do it by herself.

KL: Yeah. [turning to watch my daughter, Jackie] She’s like I like pulling this. This is fun. She’s in a grabbing stage. She likes to grab.

YM: speaking

HD: Um, she have a question like a kid who born in America like a parent can go. If for example if a Burma have independence

KL: Umhuh.

HD: like can the parent go to stay there?

KL: If the child’s born in America?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: That seems to be a common question, didn’t? I think one of the others asked the same question. You know it’s a really good question because, because if he’s born in America then he’s an American citizen, but I can see how you’d want to go back to your country if there was independence to see your family. So, I don’t know. I would think

HD: (?)

KL: I would think that they would

HD: speaks in Burmese

KL: I would think if there if the problems are solved in Burma that as long as there was a good government in Burma that they would let you come back.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: But it probably depends on the Burmese government

HD: translates my question into Burmese

The phone rings in the background and Hser Doh answers it.
KL: Are you learning a lot of English?

YM: A little

KL: little? Do you study? Do you study?

YM: Yeah

KL: Yes, at home?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, sometimes she learn with her daughter, her kids.

KL: Are your daughters getting very good at English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yeah

KL: What time do you need to leave today, do you have to be done at noon? Is that right?

HD: Um, I can leave here at 1:00

KL: At 1:00. Okay cause I also wanted to go talk to San Da. Do you think she’s here?

HD: San Da is not here

KL: Oh, she’s not here today.

HD: she went to Colorado.

KL: Oh, to Colorado?

HD: Yeah, she went there for the weekend, this weekend ‘til tomorrow?

KL: Maybe tomorrow? Okay. Hmm.
HD: Tomorrow sometime.

KL: Are you going out of town this weekend or are you busy ‘cause I wanted to try and talk to her

HD: I’m going to stay in Logan

KL: Would you want to try to go tomorrow to see if I could talk to her tomorrow?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: That’s okay with you?

HD: Yeah, I’ll call. If they’re home I we let you know

KL: Okay that would be good do you have her number? That’s good

HD: Yeah (?)

KL: Okay

HD: It would be (?)Saturday or Sunday I’m not sure

KL: Okay, okay.

HD: Yeah

KL: Um, alright and what, um If things got better in Burma would you want to go back?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yeah, why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Because we have (?) and relative brother and sister who live in Burma. Hser Doh talks to baby: Hey it’s happy. It’s happy. K, stand up, stand up. He talk to me. He talk to me. He talk to me.

KL: Oh, so cute. How old is he now?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 6 months

KL: 6 months now, yeah. She’s 9 months now.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: She is getting so big (laughing). How old is your daughter now?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Um, in June 6 she will turn 5 years

KL: Five years in June.

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Okay, my birthday is in June too. That’s a good month.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Did you celebrate birthdays in Burma? San Da said she did not

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Mostly the Muslim people they don’t celebrate their birthdays.

KL: Ever, anywhere?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No they never celebrate

KL: Why?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: just only give the day, but they don’t celebrate it.

HD: speaking to MY in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Because they don’t have a tradition to celebrate it.

KL: Is that only in Burma or is that everywhere in the world?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, all of the Muslim people

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Ah, they have a celebration where the kids first time when they born before they name them they have a big party and then after the sometime name for them. After that they don’t have any celebration any more for their birthday.

KL: Is that true for, um, the Karen people? Do they celebrate birthdays?

HD: Um, I don’t know like, uh, some Buddhish people they celebrate their birthday too.

KL: Some what?

HD: um Buddhist

KL: Buddhist

HD: Buddhish they celebrate their birthday too, like Christian people and (?) the animists they don’t celebrate (?)
KL: Animists don’t? Do or don’t?

HD: Don’t

KL: Do not. What about the Christian?

HD: Christian, yeah, some do some people don’t.

HD: speaking to MY

YM: answers in Burmese (laughing)

KL: Okay, I was reading, um

YM: speaking in Burmese

KL: that many of the first Muslims came to Burma, who came to Burma, were um in ships that were trading silks and other things like that with the East from the Middle East. And so I was wondering if you had heard any stories about how your ancestors came to Burma? Did they come by ship or did they walk there or how did they get there?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She never heard it.

KL: She never heard it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She have a movie, she said, about a Muslim people, ancestor came from

KL: Interesting. What does it say?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
Someone else in background speaking

HD: She doesn’t know.

KL: She doesn’t know? Has she ever watched it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: But she doesn’t remember?

HD: She doesn’t remember

KL: Okay

YM: speaking in Burmese for some time

HD: speaking in Burmese for some time

HD: yeah, remember a little bit (?), like at first there was some people that came from India or Bangladesh that man marries the, like a, woman who live in Burma. After a while they have a kids, like uh, and they need to go back to their count – their home country and at this time they cannot take their wives to their country because their wife and their kids doesn’t have anything

KL: any citizenship?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: And so they were, um, the people in Burma made them leave?

HD: yeah

KL: But then the other country they were going to would not give them citizenship to bring their wife and kids?

HD: Yeah, like the first Muslims started like that just

KL: That’s what that’s what I’ve read and that’s what
HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: that’s what San Da said, although there’s different groups that came in different ways. I guess there’s some Chinese Muslims that came

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and then there’s the um the sea people that came from the sea who a lot of them settled like in Karen state which is I’m guessing is, maybe, these guys. And then there’s the Arakan area of Burma.

HD: Umhuh.

KL: that has a lot of Muslims

HD: Yeah

KL: Have they been to the Arakan area or is that a different group?

HD: speaks in Burmese

KL: Did they travel?

HD: translates my question into Burmese. She never heard any

KL: No, okay. Okay. I guess it’s the biggest area of Muslims. There’s lot and lots of Muslims there in Burma.

HD: translates my question into Burmese. She doesn’t remember

KL: Okay. That’s okay. Um, okay and what are some of the things that you said you’d like to go back to Burma if it got better. What are some of the things that you miss about Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Is, uh, important thing for her because she miss her parents and family who live in

KL: And so are your parents and family still are there? Yeah. Okay. Was she a citizen in Burma? Did she have citizenship?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: No, she doesn’t have citizenship
KL: in Burma?
HD: No
KL: No? Did, does her family? Do her parents?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: The people who live in the jungle, in Karen state, they don’t have citizenship but right now some people who, some people have citizenship.
KL: But not – but some of the Muslims did?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: and the first time if you were to give permission (?) it’s really hard. You have to pay a lot of money. But, right now (?)
KL: So even though she’s lived there her whole life she’s lived there her whole life and she was born there
HD: Umhuh.
KL: she wasn’t considered a citizen unless she pays lots of money?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: When she was born in Burma she used to have a citizenship card, but after the village destroyed she didn’t have it?
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: So the card was destroyed when the village was destroyed?

YM: Umhuh.

KL: Okay

HD: It’s not really like a citizenship, like a document

KL: a document

HD: you could travel around to different places in Burma,

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: like a green card you can travel around in Burma

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: So, it didn’t mean that she was a citizen. It just meant she could travel?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No, it’s not a citizenship

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Did she travel a lot in Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: just stay home

KL: Okay and so in the U.S. does she want to become a citizen?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she want to become a citizenship of America

KL: Why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Because she says she decide she’s going to live in America forever and it’s better to have a citizenship.

KL: So, even if things got better in Burma? Or if things got better she might go back there, she just doesn’t think they’ll get better? (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, even if Burma ever gets independence just go over to visit and keep coming to America.

KL: Why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just visit, visit their relatives, her parents and brother and sister

KL: But why not move back?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: it’s just like she wants to travel

KL: [To Jnut Bi who is visiting] Can I get a picture of your daughter blowing bubbles, that’s so cute (laughing). If she does it again can I get a picture? Is that okay?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Okay
JB: answers in Burmese
HD: she said
JB: answers in Burmese
KL: If she doesn’t do it again it’s okay. I’m just gonna sneak up on her.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: [watching a lot of bubbles floating through the air]. They stay they stay there so long. It’s so cool (laughing)
HD: (laughing)
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: It’s okay she doesn’t have to. But, if she does I’ll get a picture (laughing). You want to blow some more?
YM: speaking in Burmese
HD: speaking in Burmese
KL: (laughing) That’s really cute. I’ll try and develop a copy and get a copy for you if that’s okay.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: You’d like one
HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughing)
KL: Would she like one?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay. Okay back to the interview (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Okay. American society is very different from, um, Burmese society I’m guessing, yes?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Did she say yes?

HD: Yeah

KL: Does she think it will be hard to teach her kids to be good Muslims in this society that’s so different?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she said

KL: What will be hard?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, she said she can’t— It’s hard because (?)

YM: answers in Burmese
HD: when the kid like, uh, get married with other people it’s not – it’s really hard to keep on to your religion

KL: It’s really hard to what?

HD: It’s really hard like a to control on their their religious

KL: To for them to keep their religious traditions?

HD: Yeah

KL: Is that important to her?

HD: For religions?

KL: Umhuh.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s very important.

KL: So what kind of things is she doing to try and help teach her daughters to do this?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: And her son

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, she just teach them, um, they just teach the kids about religious and read them, work with them in the old religion

KL: And read to them?

HD: in the old religion

KL: In Arabic? In Karen?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah they just read to them in Arabic (?)

KL: Okay some Muslims like in the middle east are critical of the United States because they, like, some of our movies have a lot of, um, I don’t know maybe relationships that aren’t appropriate for their beliefs and language that’s not appropriate, not modestly dressed and things like that. What does she think? Does that concern her or does she watch those movies?

HD: (laughing)

KL: Good luck asking (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (laughing) Yes is a problem to her, yes too.

KL: What does she think? Are they does she want her daughters to watch those films or no? Do they does she want her daughters to watch any movies?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes watch those

KL: It’s okay for her to watch movies, the kids? What kind of movies? All movies or just some?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She watch a lot of movies like a sometimes Burmese movie, India movie (?)

KL: So she said like

HD: English movie
KL: like Burmese movies  
YM: answers in Burmese  
HD: cartoon movies  
KL: cartoons?  
HD: English movie she watch all of them. [to baby] Oh!  
KL: So she said Burmese, Indian movies, Thai movies  
HD: Umhuh.  
KL: translates my question into Burmese  
YM: answers in Burmese  
HD: Korean, mostly like to watch Korean  
YM: answers in Burmese  
KL: Korean?  
HD: Korea.  
KL: Korea?  
HD: yes  
KL: By Japan Korea?  
YM: answers in Burmese  
HD: Yeah  
KL: Oh, wow  
HD: Just some of the love stories (?)  
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yeah, love stories
KL: Love stories?
HD: Romantic stories
KL: Oh, okay
HD: I don’t know I have seen a lot of people watching Korea movie
KL: Lots of people do?
HD: Yeah. Because they have an interpreter in Burmese
KL: They have a what?
HD: They have the sub
KL: Sub titles?
HD: in Burmese
KL: in Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: (?) Korea movie (laughing)
End of recording
Continuation of March 5, 2010 interview:
HD: Watch the movie (?) (laughing)
KL: (laughing) Okay, now we’re I’m still here and I’m still it’s still March 5th. This is Karen Lambert and my interview is going on with Ya He Ma
Someone in background
KL: We’re talking about Korean movies that she likes.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: “Lovely Heart” and this is the Burmese?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: is called yeah this is
KL: Okay and this is a Burmese movie? [holding the movie in my hand and looking at the different languages on it].

HD: um, Korean

YM: Korea

KL: Korean oh it’s Korean. Is there any Korean anywhere?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Korea

KL: Is the Korean language?

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Korea, yeah, Korea

KL: do they have any language in Korea, is this Korean?

HD: This one is Korean

KL: Oh this one’s Korean, right here?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: That’s so short

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

HD: Korea (?)

KL: And it’s also in English then, huh?
HD: Yeah
KL: Huh is it a romance? It looks like it’s
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: it’s like a chick-flick? (laughing)
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: We have movies in America called chick-flicks that are movies that like we think girls will like cause they’re like romances and they’re like all happy and stuff
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: Is it kind of like that? It’s kind of like a chick-flick.
HD: Yeah
KL: (laughing). So she likes to watch lots of movies?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes, sometimes
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: Maybe we should just be like one more minute
HD: Umhuh.
KL: and then be done. Does her husband still like work at JBS?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese
KL: How many refugees are there from Burma [in Cache Valley] right now? Still about a hundred or less or more?

HD: I think 135

KL: 135

HD: Yeah

KL: (?)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Why, why do you think there are now 135 why so many more?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Because a lot of them work in the JBS

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: So, are they still hiring?

HD: Hum?

KL: Are they still hiring at JBS?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

Babies crying in background

KL: Oh, Jackie. So, sad.

HD: (?)
YM: (?)

KL: Okay, I’m done.

End of recording
Interview 5
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)
Ka Ma Din (KD)
Translator: Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)

Date: April 19, 2010

Place: Ya He Ma’s home

KL: Okay so this is Karen Lambert I’m here with Ya He Ma and her husband and two daughters which daughter is not here? The youngest right?

Someone in background: Yeah

KL: Not her youngest daughter and then her son is also here and I’m here with Chapter and my daughter, Jackie, and we’re doing some fact checking of some information I got previously. So. Um, so, I read about how you sit like to sit on the floor instead of on your couch and that’s because that’s a custom from Burma, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yeah? Okay. And, because some of the other women, like San Da, likes to sit on her couch better but you still like the floor better?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, right now it, its good to live to sit on the couch

KL: She likes sometimes likes to sit on the couch?

HD: Umhuh yeah

KL: But we’re on the floor?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: does she prefer?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah Ya He Ma like, she love her couch better

KL: But when I’m here it’s just because there’s lots of people then so that’s why

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Okay (laughing) That’s good

HD: Okay

KL: And, um, but it is true that it’s a custom to sit on the couch in Burma right? I mean on the floor.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: And Thailand

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yes

KL: Yes, okay that’s customary both in the, in Burma and in the refugee camps?

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay

HD: speaks in Burmese

KL: just want to make sure I understand (laughing)

HD: speaks in Burmese. Yeah, that’s good (?)
KL: Okay, um, and this, the, what you’re wearing is called a sarong? Is that the right word in English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Is sarong in English, but in Burmese Ta May

KL: How you spell that? Do you know?

HD: speaks in Burmese

KL: Oh, well. Oh I can. I think

HD: Ta May T A

KL: T what?

HD: M A Y. Tay May, I think.

KL: T E?

HD: T A

HD: M E Y Temey

KL: M E Y

HD: M A Y

KL: M A Y

HD: Yeah, I’m not sure (laughing)

KL: T E M A Y maybe?

HD: Yeah something

KL: And it’s a popular style in Burma, yes?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: For both men and women?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Yes. Okay.

HD: But, they call different for the women temay (sp?) and for the men longyi

KL: Do you know how to spell that?

HD: Longyi, Longyi. L O K Y I

KL: K

HD: Y

KL: Y I

HD: Longyi. I don’t know [should be longyi, I believe.]

KL: Okay, but in English the word would be sarong for both

HD: Sarong, sarong, yeah, I think

KL: Okay. A popular

HD: (?)

KL: Sarong, okay. And, um, so and this is for you Chapter but I’ve read that over the last 3 years more than 130 Burmese refugees have made their home in Logan. Does that sound about right to you?

HD: Yeah

KL: Around that
HD: Yeah, around 130 live in Logan

KL: And it’s to escape civil war in their country

HD: Yeah

KL: and a prison-like environment in the Thailand refugee camps?

HD: Yeah

KL: That sounds accurate to you? All right and then I say it’s hard to know an exact number as people continuously come and go, right? Um of the total number of refugees approximately 30 are Muslim, said Chapter (laughing)

HD: (laughing) I’m not sure

KL: Does that, is that a good guess, do you think

HD: Yeah, I think

KL: Yeah, okay

HD: Maybe I don’t know I’m not sure

KL: You’re not sure

HD: (?)

KL: Okay and then Ya He Ma is 37, are you still 37 or are you now 38?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 38

KL: Now 38

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: Okay
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 38

KL: Okay. What day is her birthday?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: January 1

KL: Okay

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 72

KL: 1972

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay, so Jan. 1, like just about everybody else (laughing)

HD: (laughing)

KL: That’s a popular day.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (?) Lots of people call the same birthday

KL: Because they don’t know

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: Yes

HD: translates my question into Burmese

Husband in background?
KL: Okay, so some of the things that you left behind are you left the sunshine of Burma for Logan where it’s colder, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, sunshine more in Burma

KL: And there’s more rain there?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: In Burma like a full month for rainy another full month for

KL: Summer?

HD: like a summer another full month for cold, a little bit cold. Sometime really cold.

KL: Not as cold as here, right?

HD: Yeah. But they don’t have snow, just only melt, like dew, melt (?)

KL: Okay, um, and she left Burma in 2000, right?

HD: I didn’t

KL: In the year 2000?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yes, 2000

Husband in background

KL: Okay, and you stayed in a fenced-in, guarded Mae La Refugee Camp. There was a fence around it, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: And it’s only somewhat safe right because people can break in and attack it or still fight with people in it. Is that correct?

HD: Hum?

KL: Is it on is it still a little bit unsafe because people could attack the refugee camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Okay. Um and she was in the refugee camp for 7 years?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yes, okay and then you and your husband and 3 daughters had a chance to leave, um, and come to the U.S.?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Okay and was there barbed wire around the camp?

HD: Wire?

KL: Barbed wire? So, it’s like wire that has the little barbs that are sharp?

HD: Umhuh.
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

Husband in background

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Okay, and in Burma did families all live close to each other?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yes okay

HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughing)

KL: And is it normal for most of the people that lived around you to only eat halal meats? Were a lot of them Muslim?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (?) Muslim people

KL: Um, she also left behind her – Also they would say prayers in Arabic there lots of people would say their prayers in Arabic right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese, Arabic?

KL: Arabic, the prayer they would pray in Arabic

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yea they do both. Some people do it in Arabic and some do it in Burmese. People doesn’t know how to read Arabic just pray in Burmese.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Does she know how to write in Burmese?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yes?

HD: No? No? (laughing)

KL: Who do I believe? (laughing)

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes she know how to read in Burmese how to write

KL: She knows how to right?

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay just a little or a lot?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Just in the normal (laughing) just in the medium, not much, not a little, just in the medium

KL: Does she still take classes of the English language?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Is she learning to, um, write in English now?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes. She got better with learning English after you came.

KL: Are you still helping with the classes?

HD: Yeah, I just sit down by the people all the time, but (?)

KL: Is it Monday and Wednesday?

HD: It’s Thursday

KL: Tuesday and Thursday

HD: Tuesday and Thursday, yeah.

HD: [babies talk in back ground] Jackie!

KL: Okay and in the refugee camps were her siblings, her father and her mother, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, they still live yeah. He’s live with her brother, his sibling in refugee camp

KL: What was that?

HD: He live with his siblings in the refugee camp

KL: He lived with his siblings?
HD: yeah

KL: Um

HD: But she doesn’t have any siblings in refugee camps.

KL: No where do her siblings live, does she have any?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Her siblings live in refugee camp too.

KL: How many siblings does she have?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Four, four

KL: Four?

HD: Four sibling

KL: And are they all in the Mae La Refugee Camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: One, one sibling in Mae La, one in Mae La Camp, the other three in Burma.

KL: Okay and her father and her mother are they in the Mae La Refugee Camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No

KL: They’re in Burma?

HD: Yeah

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, she said that, um just only her dad now. Her mom is passed away.

KL: And her father lives in Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yes

KL: Was her father, I mean her mother, alive when she left?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yes, she already pass away when she left Burma

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Oh, her mom pass, pass away when she was a babe, like 15, 14

KL: Oh you were little?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

Background playing with babies

KL: Do you talk to your mom I mean your dad and your four siblings on the phone?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, sometimes

KL: Yeah and do they have cell phones?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: (?)

KL: Okay I asked you before if um about women’s rules in Burma and you said mainly men worked outside the home and women take care of their families

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Okay, um, and you said only a few women work outside the home, right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: yes

KL: Okay, in my essay that I wrote here I talk about how I could relate to that because my mom stayed at home to raise me too. Um, you can tell her that then I’ll say more.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: um, but in the U.S. a lot of people do lots of different things.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
KL: But you said that you, um, in the U.S. you thought a lot of women work away from their families some for money or some just for go to school or lots of different reasons.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay and so you were just saying that um it’s a different kind of people in America than in Burma

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, quite a while

KL: And I asked you if you thought it was good

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: And you said yes because people have a choice and can do whatever they want. Did I understand?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Do you want your daughters to be a to have children and be mothers and take care of their kids or do you want them to work and have jobs outside the home or what do you want for your daughters?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, she want all her daughter to work after (?) they become adult yeah they
KL: Work outside the home? Or inside the home? Or both?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah just wants work outside, outside the home.

KL: Why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese (laughing)

HD: (laughing) Because in order to earn money for their life and for their education

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: And for living, (laughing) living.

KL: When they have children what does she want them to do or does she hope they will have children?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Oh, Jackie.

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: It depend on them

KL: Depends on them?

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: Okay

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese
KL: Well, what will depend on them if they want to have children or if they want to work while they have children outside the home?

HD: Um just if they want to work

KL: What was that?

HD: It depend on their daughter because if they have a husband if they can just, they can just come to the husband, if they don’t want to work and she says she doesn’t know for the future

KL: She doesn’t know what?

HD: She doesn’t know how to like after the children become adult she just leave it to them. They don’t (?) anymore.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: they don’t know how to (?)

KL: Right but what does she have an opinion though of what she would like them to do?

HD: She said like she want her daughter to stay working after they get married or have a children stay working

KL: Why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Because if they get married and they have to find, they have to earn money for their rent and for their family because like uh, they don’t have their own house, they cannot live together, mostly in apartment have a limit like a four people they cannot live more than 4 people that’s why they have to work for their rent or pay their

KL: Rent?

HD: Yeah
KL: Okay I understand

HD: Their responsibility

KL: Right I see. What partly what I meant is and I think I understand that she wants them to just have the option to have a job or

HD: Yeah

KL: thinks that would be a good thing, but partly what I wanted is like um like would she if the husband has a job

HD: Umhuh.

KL: does she want her daughters also to have a job and then put the kids in daycare or she could watch them or something?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: If they don’t need the money or what if they don’t need the money?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, just depend on the daughter. If they want to work they can work because they can take the children to the day care. If they don’t want to work and they can talk to husband let the husband work.

KL: Okay. Okay. So then you said that you felt like you have a very important responsibility as a mother. Is that accurate?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: And she said that she likes it and thinks it’s important to help the kids not get hurt and make sure they do good things? [Baby screams in background]

HD: translates my question into Burmese
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: [talking to Jackie] Oh, oh, Jackie. [turning back to Ya He Ma] And do you.

HD: Oh, oh, Jackie. Do you want to play? Do you want to play? Come to me.

KL: She’s sad. She’s having a hard day. She’s a little bit sick.

HD: (laughing)

KL: Okay so I wanted to ask, um, she mentioned earlier that she wants to teach her kids about the culture of Burma and the Burmese language and Burmese styles. How important is that to her?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s very important for her.

KL: Why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Because she said that it’s very important to, mmm, to let the kids follow their culture because like American people have a lot of different styles and if they can come to the kids

KL: Americans have a lot of different what?

HD: different style

KL: Styles?

HD: Styles

KL: Of what
HD: Like of clothing something like that yeah and she said that it is very important to preserve their culture and wearing them and can speak their own language, too.

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: But, is it okay if her children also wear American styles or only Burmese styles?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, is okay

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Then why does she want them to know Burmese styles?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: He said that it is very important because some women in America they wearing something like too short

KL: Yeah

HD: and for them just wear something long is very important to wear something that covers the whole (?)

KL: Right, something modest

HD: Yeah is modest and

KL: So, it’s important to you that your daughters dress modestly whether it’s American or Burmese styles?

HD: translating

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes
KL: Is it hard to teach your daughter when there’s so many different things being taught in America than were taught in Burma?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: No, it’s not really hard.

KL: That’s good

HD: because they are really good kids

KL: Why does she think there’s. Oh, is your phone ringing?

HD: Yeah [answers phone]

KL: [baby coughs] Bless you Jackie

HD: [talks on the phone in the background and finally gets off]. It’s Alex.

KL: Oh good.

HD: (?)

KL: [?] know Alex also – Everybody knows Alex

HD: Everybody know Alex and me (?) (laughing) Yes.

KL: So I was asking her if she feels like her kids are good girls because they have a good mom?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, they are really good kids.

KL: Yeah, but why does she think people turn out to be good kids? Does she think it’s because of their parents or just because they’re born that way or both?

HD: translating
KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Because the parents is good and the kids is good too.

KL: So, both.

HD: Yeah both (laughing)

KL: Does she think the same?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: So, she goes to her, um, classes at the English Language Center on Tuesday and Thursday night?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Does anyone else from her family go or just her?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, he’s going to Riverwalk class.

KL: And that is the same one as her?

HD: No, she’s going to ELC because she is in level one. She’s going to ELC, but he’s been going to the beginning class in Riverwalk.

KL: So he’s beginning and she’s level one?

HD: Yeah

KL: Which one’s more advanced, level one?
HD: Level one, yeah (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

HD: Level one (?) and then (?)

KL: Okay and how long are the classes for? Three hours?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 3 hour

KL: Hum

HD: (?) 3 and a half hour

KL: Three and a half hours? Does she get tired sometimes?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Sometimes she, sometimes she want to sleep, so sleepy.

KD: answers in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: When does her husband go to classes?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Monday and Wednesday

KL: So tonight?

HD: Yeah
KD: answers in Burmese

KL: What time are the Monday, Wednesday classes?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: 6:30 to 9:30

KL: Okay. And her classes are from what time to what time?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: 6 to 9:30

KL: 6 to 9:30?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Wow, long classes. So why is she tired? Because she’s been working all day with her kids and everything or just because the class is so long or both?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (laughing) Because she’s working with the kids all day long (?) tired.

KD: answers in Burmese

KL: Okay what kind of things has she learned?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: She has learned, um, learning writing and speaking
KL: Has she learned how to say her name when people ask her her name?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Okay and earlier, Chapter, you told me that it’s harder for some people when they don’t have a really strong basis in Burmese, like Ya He Ma, to learn English because they have to learn everything from scratch. Is that true?

HD: For English?

KL: Yeah

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes, that’s true.

KD: answers in Burmese

KL: Okay and she wants to learn English so that she can go shop at a store or take her kids to school without a translator, right?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: And she wants to get a driver’s license?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yes (laughing)

KL: Does her husband have a driver’s license yet?
HD: translating
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: You got one? Oh good.
YM: answers in Burmese
HD: He got her got her driver license in Arizona state.
KL: Oh, is it easier there?
HD: translating
KD: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes
YM: answers in Burmese
KD: answers in Burmese
HD: Because they have a translator
KL: They have what?
HD: A translator (?) and they can (?) It’s easy to understand.
KL: So does he drive his car to work now?
HD: translating
KD: answers in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Is it a Volkswagen?
HD: Hum?
KL: Is it a Volkswagen car? His car? What kind of car does he have?
HD: translating

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Ah, I don’t know. It is a Germany mainland

Husband: Germany

HD: Germany made

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Germany made? Volkswagen’s are made in Germany. Is it a Volkswagen?

HD: I don’t know (laughing)

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Does it have the [I drew the symbol for a Volkswagen].

HD: Yeah. You know this one?

KL: Like that?

YM: answers in Burmese

KL: Volkswagen?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese


HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Okay, yeah that’s true.
KL: Okay. So, um, what does the Muslim faith teach about the importance of education for women?

HD: Hum?

KL: What does the Muslim faith teach about the importance of women going to school and learning and education?

HD: translating

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: They teach the women about how to read in Arabic.

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: (?) men women work

KL: Does the Muslim faith teach that it’s good for women to go to school or bad for women to go to school or just doesn’t say anything about it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s good

KL: Yeah. Um does it teach that it’s more important for the man to go to school or the woman?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Or the same?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

HD: He said that like, uh, when they are a little girl and a little boy they can go to the same class, like after they usually have their own class, like when grow like older they usually have a separate class, women go to a women’s class and
YM: answers in Burmese

HD: and man go to man class

KL: So, when they are younger they have separate classes and also when they are older?

HD: Oh, no, in the younger they have the same class then when they grow older then they have separate class.

KL: Oh. And why is this?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: (laughing) yeah, he said that after the people who got older, sometimes when they have the same class, both women and men, because they are not really interested with education. If they separate class only man or men and woman go together they will interested in classes.

KL: Instead of focusing on

HD: Yeah

KL: keep interested in

HD: Yeah

KL: the person.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: (laughing)

KL: Okay, is it, um, are there different rules for men and women and what are those?

HD: Different rule?
KL: Different rule like is it? This kind of goes back to what we were talking about earlier, but, like, in the, some faiths teach that it’s more the men’s responsibility to provide for the family.

HD: Oh

KL: That’s really important. Is that true in the Muslim faith for them?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

YM: answers in Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, because the man is have more responsibility

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Yeah, for the Muslim faith, like a, women have a responsibility to control all the whole house, like uh, the husband have to make money and to take make a (?) for their family.

KL: Get the money to buy food?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

KL: Okay, um. I talk about how in some like I have been to a lot of school and attended like the University and lots of classes, but I talk here about how I feel like you’re, you’re teaching me because you’ve had a lot of life experience and so you have a lot of wisdom and you, you teach me because of that even though you haven’t been to as much formal school.

HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughing). Yeah

KL: Yeah, so we’ve done gotten quite a bit done what if we try and do some more on Saturday would that be good and then maybe I can take a couple pictures now. Is that good?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
KD: answers in Burmese

KL: Um, also we need to do the forms again

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Sorry

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: So, I need to have one for him one from you Chapter one for her husband since he her husband spoke too

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: (laughing) So

End of recording
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  
Ka Ma Din (KD)  
Translator: Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)  

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)  

Date: April 24, 2010  

Place: Ya He Ma’s home  

This is Karen Lambert and I’m here with Chapter and I’m at Ya He Ma’s house with her whole family I think is here today. Um, it’s around 10:30 am and Ya He Ma’s husband – and how do you say your name could you?  

KD: Ka Ma Ren  

KL: Ka Ma Ren?  

KD: Ka Ma Din  

KL: And how do we spell that?  

KD: K A  

KL: K A  

KD: M A  

HD: M A  

KL: M A  

KD: D I N  

KL: So its K A M A  

KD: Yeah  

KL: D I N  

KD: Yeah
KL: And how old are you?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: (laughing) he doesn’t know his age

KL: When is his birthday?

HD: You were born in 1973?

KD: Yes

KL: 1973? So, is his birthday Jan. 1, 1973?

KD: Umhuh


KD: (?) okay 1973

KL: Okay and Ka Ma Din

KD: Ka Ma Din

KL: Ka Ma Din

KD: Yes

KL: has been telling me about some of the hospitality, um, traditions when people come to Burmese houses usually the Burmese family will put a big mat on the floor like the one that he just put out today that is blue and white and yellow. And then they will offer them bitter [actually betel] leaf and bitter [betel] nut with a white powder that they mix together and he said sometimes they have all the little powdered tobacco too.

HD: (?) said seven years

KL: And he said that if you eat only the bitter nut [betel nut] and white powder that sometimes it can give you kidney stones, but if you add the leaf that it will not give you kidney stones. So I was going to leave this on in case he has any more interesting stuff that I’m missing cause I’ve been missing out because I didn’t think I needed a recorder (laughing). So, only the bitter nut and the white powder leads to kidney stones, but for some reason the leaves make it so it doesn’t do that, huh? That’s interesting.
HD: Yeah. Translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

Much conversation in Burmese between HD and KD

HD: Do the white powder make make, from?

KL: No

HD: It make from the rock

KL: The rock?

HD: like they burn the rock and the rock is burnt and it become powder and they get the powder like a

KL: Oh, really so it’s burned rock?

HD: Yeah

KL: What kind of rock?

HD: It’s like a rock, clay.

KL: Like clay?

HD: Yeah, clay is a big rock.

KL: So is it like soft clay or is it just like hard clay?

HD: They’re really hard one. That’s why becuz mostly the people eat a lot of this with the leaf they can get kidney stone.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KD: answers in Burmese

HD: Like a white powder

KD: answers in Burmese
HD: they can use for other kind of thing. Like there is something they can use for the painting the wall and painting the house and they can use for eat with the betel nut, the betel leaf.

KL: Okay. I’m going to go see what your wife is doing [I go into the kitchen with my camera and photograph and observe Ya He Ma who is cooking a traditional Burmese meal].

HD: translates my words into Burmese

End of recording

Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM) 48:15
Translator: Kyaw Eh or Joe (KE)

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)

Date: September 2, 2010

Place: Ya He Ma’s home

KL: This is Karen Lambert, I’m here with Ya He Ma and Joe and Ya He Ma’s son and we – it is September 2nd 2010 – We are in Ya He Ma’s living room and I have some questions about the refugee camps. So I was wondering what you remember about the refugee camps?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: She live in refugee camps for 7 year

KL: Okay and did she like them?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: She she didn’t like them, how, ‘cause she did because there is no place to leave

KL: There’s no place to live or leave?
KE: Live

KL: Live

KE: live there is no place to live, the other, kind of like beside the refugee camps

KL: And why was that a problem does she feel like she wanted more opportunity or what, what was she unhappy about?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes because uh, they gave just only, the U.N. gave the food, the other kind like um rice and oil and other kind of like for the refugees and because she said that there is no money to spend so the other kind of like the clothes or for the baby for the children something like that.

KL: And what would she have liked to spend money on what would she have liked to be able to have that she didn’t have?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Kind of like um she would like to things spend money kind of like to send her children to go to school, kind of like that sort of thing, better school something like that.

KL: If you had more money you could send your child to a better school inside of the refugee camp?

KE: No

KL: Oh

KL: So what is

KE: yeah, but but some some schools they collects kind of like um the money cause the better school.

KL: Some of the schools cost money

KE: Yeah
KL: and so there were better schools that cost money
KE: better school yeah
KL: in the refugee camps
KE: in the refugee camp
KL: So some of the people who had more skills taught
KE: Yeah
KL: Okay, um, so if you had money then you could send your kids to better schools
KE: better schools
KL: but there was no way to get money unless you left the camps is that right?
KE: Umhuh.
KL: Okay. And so she wanted her child to have go to her children to go to better schools is that right?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes
KL: Okay, um, did her children go to school there?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes
KL: So all 3 daughters?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes all 3 daughters

KL: Did she think that they went to a good school?

KE: Pardon me?

KL: Did she think that her daughters went to a good school?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Kind of but she is not sure that is better or is not, kind of, because she did not know the about the school

KL: Okay

KE: because of the, the situation is a close to their live their house and she sent hers daughter.

KL: So she sent her daughters there because it was close to their house

KE: was close their house

KL: Okay. And did she or her husband go to school there?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: No

KL: Is that because there were no schools for adults? That’s what I think she told me before?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah there’s no
KL: Okay and um what did her house look like? Where did she live in the refugee camp? Did she live in a tent or a house or?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah kind of like, a, a, a, hut it is H U T?

KL: Umhuh.

KE: Yeah something like that

KL: What was it made out of? What did it look like?

KE: Made with a bamboo with a, the roof is, um, with a leave? How did – I don’t know how to call it.

KL: Was it made out of bamboo leaves or rub or big tree leaves or?

KE: Yeah, a big tree leaf sometime in the, the mix with I don’t know how to call is a

Conversing in Burmese

KL: Okay so was there just a dirt floor or did they have some kind of floor?

KE: The floors is with a bamboo the

KL: Covered with bamboo mats?

KE: Yeah

KL: Like the mat she has here?

KE: No is not mats kind of like what they with a knife they use

KL: the leaves?

KE: the bamboo

KL: the bamboo leaves?

KE: Yeah something like that
KL: So it was just kind of like a pile of leaves to walk on

KE: Umhuh.

KL: or was it woven?

KE: No

KL: No?

KE: Kind of like of a but some there’s a different

KL: like pull leaves and just put them all over the floor is it kind of like small little bits of leaf like sawdust?

KE: No

KL: or like big leaves or?

KE: Kind no but with the bamboo the the bamboo is the whole right

KL: Umhuh.

KE: they use with a knife and they kind of like they put on the floor

KL: Oh so they kind of made like a wood floor with the bamboo

KE: Umhuh.

KL: so they like flatten the bamboo and make it into like

KE: Yeah yeah yes

KL: wood and they put it together to make a hard floor

KE: Yeah, yeah something like that yeah

KL: Okay so she would she have to sweep it to clean it or how did she clean?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes every day she cleans with a broom

KL: Does she have mats also that she put on top of it like she has here? Here she has a pretty mat?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: So they put mats and you brought those out for guests?

KE: Huh?

KL: Did they bring those out for guests when people came over or for themselves for family gatherings or when did they use their mats?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Um when they go to sleep go to beds

KL: Oh so you slept on them?

KE: Yes

KL: Did you use them at other times?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: But sometime when the guest come

KL: Then the guest would sit on the mats too?

KE: Umhuh.

KL: Did she have any furniture besides the mats?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: No

KL: No furniture?

KE: No furniture

KL: Did she have furniture in Burma?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: No

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: because she live in, uh, countryside if there in the town kind of like in Rangoon or something like that they have, but in countryside mostly there’s no

KL: Okay

KE: furniture

KL: In the refugee camp did she have enough food?

KE: Food?

KL: Was she hungry or did she have as much food as she wanted?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: She did have enough food?

KE: (?)
KL: She had enough food or she was hungry?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: It depends on the, the money, if you have a much monies you can buy a every-things in the camps, but the people who doesn’t have monies but sometimes…

KL: Where do you get money though if you lived there for 10 years or a really long time how do you have money if you can’t work?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Oh, kind of like, uh, the other the other people when they build the house, kind of like her husband’s friend – They build a house that’s why they get money from there

KL: So other people would pay him money

KE: would pay

KL: for helping him build a house?

KE: Yes

KL: Okay so your husband builds houses in Bur in Thailand he built houses?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: And then she make a sewing sewing machines

KL: She would make sewing machines?

KE: Yeah sewing

KL: She’d make the machines or just sew?

KE: No just sew. She sew the clothes something like that
KL: And that was in the refugee camp?
KE: In the refugee camp
KL: Did they
KE: (?)
KL: Um I know that they weren’t supposed to leave the refugee camps, right? They were always supposed to stay there?
KE: Umhuh.
KL: Correct? Did they was she was she always supposed to stay in the refugee camp?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes
KL: Did she sometimes leave anyway?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yeah, but sometimes she said about 10 or 15 day but she they went out they went out of the camps and went in work at a corn farms and cabbage farm something like that
KL: And, um, could she have gotten in trouble for doing this?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes
KL: What could have happened?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: She always have to worry about the Thai police and the Thai soldier

KL: What were the consequences if you got caught? What would they do? What would the Thai police do if they found you?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Um, when they when they found the them they put in jail they put in jail in for about one month or something like that two months and then they took them back to Burma

KL: Does she know anyone that this happened to?

KE: Pardon me?

KL: Did she know anybody that this happened to?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: She says yeah she has been caught

KL: She was caught?

KE: Yeah, she was caught herself

KL: How many times?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Just one

KL: So then what happened to her?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Um just only one days and then the police took them back to Burma

KL: So she was put in jail one day

KE: just one day. But is depends on the people. But some people was you know they put a long time some people

KL: So where was she put in Burma was she did she go back to her village where she’d lived before?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Because she doesn’t have any more her house in Burma

KL: So when they put her back in Burma where did she go?

KE: She came into she come into Thailand again and then she kind of like they hide how does they call it

KL: She

KE: the the way

KL: she snuck into the camp?

KE: Yeah, yeah she come come back again something like that

KL: Okay. So did she, she was put into Burma one day and the same day she came back or?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah just one, the same day.

KL: When she was caught by the police for was she working in a corn field or a cabbage field or what was she doing?

KE: Pardon me?
KL: When she was caught by the, um, by the Thai police

KE: Umhuh.

KL: was it the Thai police first of all? Yeah

KE: No it was not it was not Thai police (?) there are Thai people

KL: I know, but the they were the policemen for the Thai people, right?

KE: Umhuh yeah

KL: and those were the people who caught her, right?

KE: Um

KL: When they caught her did they, was she working in a cornfield or in a cabbage field or what was she doing?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Um they the police did not do nothing the police went to them and then called them call them they go to the police and they the police put in in the kind of like the truck jeep truck something like that

KL: Like a jail truck?

KE: Yeah kind how does they call it kind of the police car who put

KL: Does it have like bars and stuff around it or something? (laughing)

KE: Yeah lot of no lot of people they put in the

KL: So it has like a lot of room in the back for

KE: Yeah yeah

KL: lots of people?

KE: Yes
KL: It was it a truck or a car?
KE: It was a truck
KL: Okay, um, was she with other people when they caught her or by herself?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: It was a lot of people
KL: Did she were they her family? Or her friends?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Um the friend and her husband
KL: Did she have children then?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: No
KL: So was it when she was a newlywed?
KE: Newly?
KL: Had she just been married?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Oh because a just only, just only, uh, her a couple she and her husband went outside and their children live in refugee camps with her
KL: So she had her three daughters at that time, but they were in the refugee camp?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: So was she worried about them?

KE: Really?

KL: Was she worried?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: She was concerned? So, she her husband and her friend were all put back in Burma together?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes, just all together

KL: And they all came back into Thailand the same day together at the same camp?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah

KL: And when she was caught was, was she in a cornfield or a cabbage field or what kind of field was she in? What kind of was she what was she doing in Thailand when she was caught?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Because the, the early morning the police came into their house they did not wake up from their nap.

KL: They were living in a house in Thailand?

KE: Yes, because outside it's not in a refugee camps is a outside of the refugee camps they went in work in other corn farms something like that the cabbage farms and they have a hut how is it called H U T?

KL: A hut?

KE: A hut, yeah, a hut they build a hut and they

KL: Her husband built the hut?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes, kind of like a hut some more hut

KL: So, he built a hut so that they could go work in the fields?

KE: Umhuh.

KL: Okay and were they were both working in both kinds of fields when they were caught they were just traveling and doing lots of work for lots of people or for just one farmer or?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: The same place yeah

KL: They were working for just one farm?

KE: Umhuh.

KL: And the at the farm did they do corn and cabbage, both, or what vegetables did they harvest at the farm?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Just only corn

KL: Only corn

KE: Yeah

KL: So it was a farm corn? I mean a corn farm.

KE: Corn farm

KL: Yes. Uh, okay. Did she leave the refugee camp often after that or often all together were there many times that she left the refugee camp?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: For about 5 times

KL: Did she leave more times after the time when she was caught or was that the last time?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: For about, about 2 times when she was cau, um, by the police

KL: So she went 2 more times after?

KE: Yeah

KL: So, did it make her very nervous when she left or worried?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes
KL: It did?

KE: Yeah

KL: So why did she do it then?

KE: Why?

KL: Why did she leave the camp if it made her so nervous and she was afraid of getting caught by the police?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Because, the, she doesn’t have any money to spend for her children that’s why that she left, uh, refugee camps and to find a job something like that farm to get money to come and spend with her family something like that

KL: Okay so it was very difficult to get enough money building houses or sewing clothes?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah it, it is really difficult because her husband did not get money every day. She also did not get money every day but when the people needed kind of like um need, uh, build a house they come and call him to go but kind like a oh

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: kind like a one month or two month, just one time two times to build a house something like that

KL: So like two times a month?

KE: Something like that and then she said that they have to use the money every day to spend the money every day because the there’s a problem
KL: What did they need money for? What kind of things did you have to spend money on in the refugee camps?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Kind like there the cake for the childrens the cake or somehow does call it the cake or the desserts for the children and for the their family’s they usually cook the curry

KL: And it costs money to cook the curry?

KE: Umhuh.

KL: So you have to buy the curry is that why or what does it cost money? What costs money?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Kind like a they used to buy, um, vegetable and the meats or something like that kind of like a chicken or kind of like a beef or fish or something like that and they cook, they cook the curry at home

KL: Did they buy halal meat and fish and chicken? Did they sell the special halal meat for the Muslims?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: Did that cost more money or the same amount?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Um the beef it is more expensive

KL: Halal beef is more expensive?
KE: Yes

KL: What about the chicken?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Because it’s different there. The chicken is a kind of like, um, the feed a home chicken and the farm chicken is a different prices. The farm chicken is, uh, cheaper than the chicken that they feed at homes.

KL: And were both halal or just one like halal, like okay for Muslims or are both farm fed and house fed both halal or is only one of those halal? I’m trying to understand if she had to spend more to get halal chicken. Or if she could just buy any live chicken and just kill it and then it would be halal?

KE: Umhuh.

KL: What did she do?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Because, uh, the halal chickens is, uh, cheaper than the when they chicken from the outsides.

KL: The halal chicken was cheaper

KE: Cheaper

KL: than than what?

KE: than the chicken from the outside kind of like from the farms chicken farms or something like that.

KL: So it was cheaper from the outside?

KE: Umhuh.

KL: Why is that? Is it because they raised it themselves or why?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: She did not know (laughing)

KL: Well how did they get halal chicken? Were they alive when they bought them or did they buy already dead chickens?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Mostly they bought kind of the alive chicken

KL: Okay and the more expensive chickens were they already dead or were they alive too?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Is a kind of like a because it’s a different price of alive chickens and already dead chickens

KL: Which ones are more expensive, the dead or the alive?

KE: The alive the live chicken is more expensive

KL: Oh, more expensive for a live

KE: Yeah because

KL: So

KE: the delicious, the taste is a different when they cook

KL: So, it tastes better when it’s alive

KE: Yeah
KL: So could you buy halal chickens that were alive or halal chickens that were dead?
[I didn’t really understand the concept of halal. Looking back, I believe any live chicken could be killed in a halal manner.]

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: A because they can use by themselves kind like a the chicken from outside they bought the chicken from outside they can kill by themselves. They can use halal by themselves.

KL: So basically she could buy any chicken and kill it so it was halal? Is that right?

KE: No

KL: No, okay

KE: because they the Muslims are mostly, they kind like a goat or the chicken alive – the other people kill, they did not they never they never eat them?

KL: eat them?

KE: eat them.

KL: But

KE: They they have to

KL: if they buy any live chicken and kill it themselves, it's okay

KE: Yeah

KL: is that right?

KE: Yeah, yeah, it’s okay something like that. And then kind of like a husband, daughter, friend, kind of like, he is also a Muslim, he kill, then that they can eat it

KL: Okay

KE: the other people, all the religion, kind like if they kill they can they never eat some-thing like that
KL: Oh, okay that makes sense. Okay and so they could buy a live one from a farm or from um a house and as long as they kill it themselves it’s okay.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes that’s

KL: Okay so what kind of food did they get free? Did the United Nations give them any food free?

KE: Over there?

KL: Umhuh, in the refugee camp.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Um, the United Nations pay, uh, give them rice, um, bean, yellow bean, chili and fish paste

KL: What?

KE: Fish paste

KL: What’s that, fish paste?

KE: Fish paste, yeah, do you know, that? (laughing)

KL: Is the chili pepper or like chili like that has beans and

KE: No chili pepper

KL: pepper

KE: Yeah

KL: Okay, chili pepper, fish paste, what else?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Only salt
KL: What?
KE: Salt
KL: Salt
KE: Salt, yeah
KL: Okay.
KE: and chimone (?) powder how they say yeah and, um, coal
KL: Coal?
KE: how to say call is coal
KL: Like the you the things you light fire
KE: Umhuh.
KL: to cook with?
KE: Yeah
KL: Okay coal
KE: Coal
KL: or charcoal maybe, is it coal or charcoal?
KE: Charcoal
KL: charcoals are the ones that you put like on a grill in the U.S.
KE: Hum
KL: coal is like big black chunks of stuff that you get out of the mountain and you can light it also and start a fire
KE: Oh no is a kind like a coal is they make a longer in the we need to cut to make it small to cook the curry

KL: So maybe coal

KE: Yeah

KL: Maybe it is coal

KE: maybe coal, yeah

KL: Okay, okay. And so was this enough to live on or did she need to buy more?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: and oil

KL: What

KE: oil

KL: oil

KE: Yeah

KL: Did they give her curry powder or curry?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: And then because they cannot eat with her the whole family just only this and then they need to buy besides these food kind like a vegetable or something like that the other the other thing the other food kind like a fish

KL: Needed to buy like fish and meat and vegetables

KE: fish, meat and vegetable

KL: so all of that costed, cost money
KE: Yes

KL: Ah did they grow gardens?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: There is no place to grow the vegetables because in refugee camps is a really close house kind like a hut one by one, is a really close, there is no space

KL: Were there any buildings besides huts in the refugee camp?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: There is just only the same the same house

KL: Did they have a mosque?

KE: What?

KL: like a place to worship for the Muslims?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Um yeah

KL: There was a mosque was it like a little, a big hut?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: um the mosque is a bigger than the house

KL: Was it still made out of bamboo?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: No said the the floor put the ceme, with the cemes

KL: Cement?

KE: Cement yeah is cement yeah

KL: Oh wow

KE: and upstairs they put with the upstairs they put the how does call it kind like a

KL: Wood?

KE: Wood yeah wood and the roof is with a how does it call

KL: Cinder block or um wood um oh

KE: Is a really hot when the sun get up raise is a really hot when we live in it and mostly in Thailand they use a lot Thailand

KL: Um I don’t know

KE: There is no I never seen I never seen in United States the

KL: I don’t know then. Is the roof like this one? [gesturing to the poster of Ya He Ma’s dream house].

KE: Is not like this one

KL: No?

KE: No

KL: Is it, huh?

KE: I don’t know

KL: Is it made out of metal?

KE: Yeah, yeah, yeah

KL: Metal?
KE: Yeah, yeah, something like that. Yeah metal yeah (?) they make a long what I don’t know how to say

KL: like a long slab

KE: Yeah, yeah, yeah something like that

KL: and is it flat or is it ridged?

KE: Um is ridged

KL: Ridged

KE: Yes

KL: Okay. Were there other churches there besides the mosque for like the Karen people like were there Buddhist monasteries or?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Baptists churches?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes there are monastery and church a lot of church

KL: Were there different faiths of churches or mainly Baptist?

KE: There is a different a lot of different (laughing). They have a lot of (laughing)

KL: Okay. Um, what does she do most of the time?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Mostly just, um, just um, spend time at home stay at home

KL: What does she do at home?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: but sometime when the people they meet they sew the clothes or the shirts or something like that, they sew clothes
KL: And does she sew them at home or somewhere else?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Just home, just at home
KL: So she had her own sewing machine?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes
KL: Does she like to sew?
KE: um, to sell?
KL: Does she like to sew?
KE: to sew oh
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yes
KL: She likes it?
KE: Yes
KL: OK? Um, what what else did she do at home?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Just only cook the rice for the children, cook the curries, that’s it, just stay home, clean the house

KL: Clean?

KE: Yeah

KL: Did the different women go and visit each other and talk?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: Mainly family or friends or both?

KE: Um, just um her

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: because mostly in the refugee camps they know each other, they know each other because the house were close, they’re close, because the other friends or their families they know each other they talk go in each other’s house.

KL: Okay, so she had many friends and family who came?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: There’s a lot

KL: A lot. Why, why did she leave? Was she sad or happy to leave?

KE: to leave?
KL: To leave the refugee camp to come to the U.S.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes, she said that she’s very sad because they are split, their family or their friends where they live close together in the refugee camps, but right now they spread all over the world, kind like a Norway countries, Australia countries, Canada countries, something like they go.

KL: She has relatives and friends in Norway, Australia and Canada?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Just friend, not relative

KL: Okay. Does she want to eat dinner soon? Are they, am I keeping them from having dinner?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: No, no.

KL: Okay, maybe five more minutes or so?

KE: It’s okay

KL: Okay, um, so why did she give up all of her friends to come here?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Because it depends on when they went to the OPE they call us OPEs the U.N. United Nations they open kind like uh: “who would like to go to Norway, who would like to go to um England or Australia?” They apply that country because it’s different.

KL: And why did she apply to leave to go to a different country?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Is kind like, uh, they learn about the other countries, kind like a the friends her friends. They interested to go to Canada that’s why they apply to go to Canada. The other kind like the other people interested to go to Australia. They apply to Australia, but that’s their choice.

KL: Okay so why did she apply to go to the U.S.?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: She like U.S.

KL: Why

KE: She interested, but she when she live in refugee camp she heard about from her friends because the United States is, uh, is a better than the, the best countries in the world.

KL: That’s what they told her?

KE: Yeah

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

Someone else in background (male) is also speaking in Burmese

KE: Um and then there is a they and the United States the American people they didn’t discrimination, kind like of race, or color, or their age, they, they heard about that like that is better than the other countries.

KL: Now that she’s here does she think that it’s true?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: Yeah, that’s true

KL: So, is she glad she chose the U.S.?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah, she is very glad

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: because when she live in refugee camps there is a no jobs to work every day. To get money is a really hard, to get money

KL: So is she happy that her husband has a job?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah

KL: Does it make things easier or is it harder here?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: here is better than in Thailand because it just only work places one place work to work in Thailand they have to go anywhere in the rainy season in the summer season something like that is a

KL: When he was building houses you mean?

KE: Pardon me?

KL: When he was building houses he had to go during all these times

KE: Umhuh.

KL: or is that he’s saying?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

Someone else in background (male) is also speaking in Burmese

KE: Yes

Someone else in background (male) is also speaking in Burmese

KE: because when he live in Thailand whenever or when kind like a he will go outside he a have to worry about Thai police or the Thai soldier is a really difficult he is in the morning, he a go to job go to work, is a that is a really better than over there, really best.

KL: Does it, um, do they miss Burma and do they miss Thailand?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Both of them, Thai and Burma, because they were living over there and in Burma they were born over there the place kind of like origin where they are born is over there miss all of them.

KL: All right, um, okay I think that’s good for today because they can go eat dinner.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: I have some forms that I’ll need them to sign, to, the same ones I’ve had in the past saying it’s okay for me to use these to put into the archives at USU.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: Is it okay if I just – I left it in my car can I go grab it really fast and then come back?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yes

KL: Yeah okay I will go grab that and be right back.

End of recording
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  
Translator: Kyaw Eh or Joe (KE)  
Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)  
Date: September 2, 2010  
Place: Ya He Ma’s home  

KL: This form basically just says that they release the information to become public information as part of the archives at Utah State University that could be used for research or for, um, part of the history of this area. Like it means I can use it for technically I can use it for my thesis, um, or other people could use it for research they’re doing to understand the refugees here.

KE: Um, hm.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: So they put their name here and then they sign it here and they put the date which is September 2, 2010, here and then um since they’re adults they don’t need to fill this part out. I can fill this part out right here, um, and then they need to put their address so there, there, there, and their telephone. So that’s what they and since he’s talking he needs to sign one and she needs to sign one and you need to do one since you are my translator and then I’ll do one, but I could do it later, so, so.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KE: Me, too?

KL: Yeah, and if they can be for all of the past interviews, I have some I think from her from every interview, but just in case there’s one I’ve forgotten.

KE: Translates my question into Burmese.

KL: Riverwalks Apartments and then building number I guess for you though it’s your address

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: They have a camera on their computer. Do you talk to family?

Another voice: Yeah
KL: Oh, I do the same thing. That’s fun.

KE: That’s it, right?

KL: That looks good. That looks good and then you should put your phone number

KE: Oh, phone number

KL: and maybe just put Logan, Utah Logan here Utah here and then your zip code

KE: Oh, sorry (laughing)

KL: That’s okay

KE: Yeah. Is that Logan here?

KL: Yeah. So, I will get the pictures developed and bring them in tomorrow. How big would they like their pic their family picture? Like this big or like, like a 5 by 7 would be about like this or 8 by 10 would be like this.

KE: Like this?

KL: Yeah

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Yeah, this would be better

KL: Like this big?

KE: Yeah

KL: Okay

KE: This is better

Phone ringing, conversations in background in Burmese

KE: Is that your part?
KL: That looks perfect. Thank you Joe. Here I’ll fill out my part now

KE: Now is print name right here? That correct?

KL: Yes

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: And actually you need to print your name still, too. So I put my name in and you can put your name there. Do you both work together at JBS? Joe

KE: Yes

KL: and, are you in the same department?

KE: No

KL: No

KE: Is a different he works at the fabrication I work at a (?) floor

KL: Oh okay. Do you sometimes see each other?

KE: No, just onl, when – we never because of the time is different

KL: Oh

KE: (laughing)

KL: you work different shifts

KE: Yeah, different shifts

KL: Okay so does he need (?)

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

Conversing in Burmese between Joe and husband (?)

KL: Ya He Ma are you still taking English classes?

YM: Yeah
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
KL: Yeah good two days a week?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
KE: Three day
KL: Three days? Oh wow Monday, Wednesday, Friday now?
YM: Yeah
KL: Is
YM: no Friday
KL: no Friday, which days?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
YM: Monday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
KKL: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, oh, so Chapter went to California, yes?
YM: Yeah
KL: So who is the helper now? Is it Joe?
KE: No
KL: or someone else?
KE: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KE: There is no translator
KL: There is no one?
KE: No interpret
KL: Because they’re all getting so good at English they don’t need one now?

KE: (laughing) Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Is your husband taking any English classes?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

Husband: Answers in Burmese

KE: No

KL: Why not?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

Husband: Answers in Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KE: Because there is a lot of times, many times, to have to work

KL: Late?

KE: Yeah and come late and tired, really tired

KL: Oh

KE: (laughing)

KL: That makes it hard

KE: Yeah

KL: Is your wife teaching you everything she learns?

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

Husband: Answers in Burmese
KE: (?)  
KL: (laughing) You just filling out the address for him?  
KE: Yes  
KL: Okay. It would be good if he could at least make the signature himself  
KE: Umhuh.  
KL: So.  
KE: Translates my question into Burmese  
Conversing in Burmese  
KL: Did Ya He Ma make curry again? Rice?  
KE: Translates my question into Burmese  
YM: Answers in Burmese  
KE: Yes  
KL: What? Curry?  
KE: Curry, yes  
KL: Okay for a second it sounded like you were saying enchilada (laughing)  
KE: (?)  
KL: Is that the way you say curry in Burmese?  
KE: Oh hen  
KL: Henchilada?  
KE: Henchila  
YM: Henchila  
KL: Henchila means curry?
KE: Curry did you did you cook did you cook

KL: Do you cook curry

KE: curry?

KL: Henchila

KE: Henchila

YM: Henchila

KL: Ah interesting. Hum I in Spanish there’s a thing called enchilada

KE: What is that

KL: is like rolled corn tortillas with cheese and it sounded a little bit like like that word

KE: Enchilada (laughing)

KL: (laughing) so ench you said chilada

KE: chilara

KL: chilara

KE: is a really hard (?)

KL: chilara so is that two words?

YM: en chilara

KL: So chilar is

KE: Do you speak Spanish too?

KL: speaking Spanish (laughing)

KE: Oh good

KL: Do you speak Spanish at all?
KE: No
KL: (laughing)
KE: (?) (laughing)
KL: Yeah
KE: So I have a question Karen.
KL: Yes
KE: Do you know where is they sell the United States map a map of the United States?
KL: Map of the United States?
KE: the big map yeah
KL: the big ones?
KE: Big one
KL: Huh the best place I can think of is Utah Geological Survey probably has really big ones but they’re clear down in Salt Lake.
KE: There’s a no here?
KL: But there’s probably somewhere here um I would go into the Chamber of Commerce which is you can look it up in the phone book um but if you look up the Cache Valley Chamber they could either tell you where to buy a map or they might even have a map.
KE: Okay so if you know anywhere here so could you buy for me one as a big one I would give you money
KL: I probably could find somewhere
KE: Find for me one
KL: I could what if I try and call tomorrow and just find out for you if I if there is a place here that sells one
KE: Yeah because um
KL: and then I could tell you tomorrow. Do you want one?
KE: Yes
KL: For what?
KE: For kind like a a big one
KL: Umhuh.
KE: just so do they have a for Utah?
KL: They have them just for Utah and they have them just for Logan also
KE: Oh really?
KL: Yes
KE: A big one or small?
KL: Probably big and small, both.
KE: Oh yeah
KL: Either one
KE: I need a Utah, Utah
KL: One, Utah
KE: Utah and the whole United State
KL: You want one of the whole U.S. and one of Utah
KE: Um one Utah yeah two
KL: So that you can learn the different places?
KE: Because of my dad’s he need, he want to see where I live in United States.
KL: Your dad?
KE: Yeah

KL: I thought your dad was dead?

KE: No

KL: I thought your dad died in the Karen obviously I didn’t understand

KE: Yeah, yes because um my mom’s

KL: Huh

KE: he, he

KL: Your mom remarried?

KE: Yeah she she get

KL: Oh so your step-father

KE: kinda like yeah oh they call step-father?

KL: That’s what we call them is step-father. Your father is usually your biological father

KE: Umhuh.

KL: and then if your mother mother remarries then

KE: Step

KE: that’s your step-father

KE: oh step yeah my

KL: But some people if they feel very, very close to their step-father and they really love him then they will call him their father

KE: Oh so but no my me I never live close to my step-father

KL: Right

KE: because he call me son he would like to look at the place
KL: So he wants a big map not a little map

KE: Yeah a big kind like yeah big like this

KL: Like that okay well I’ll see if I can find one and let you know when I see you tomorrow.

KE: Umhuh.

KL: So but anyway thank you it was good so good to see you Ya He Ma

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Okay, you’re good (laughing)

KE: (laughing)

KL: Your English is getting much better.

YM: Yeah

KE: Translates my question into Burmese

End of recording
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  
Translator: Lah She Wah (LW)  
Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)  
Date: September 3, 2010  
Place: Ya He Ma’s home  

KL: This is Karen Lambert. I’m here with Ya He Ma and her two oldest daughters, I think? Yes? Oh, and her third daughter, her younger daughter. For a second I thought you were a friend. You’ve grown up. You’re getting so big. So, her three daughters and her son are all here. And I’m here with Joe’s wife who I just met and can you remind – Can you tell me how to spell your name?  

LW: L A H, L A H, La, W E H  
KL: W E H?  
LW: A H, the same  
KL: Oh, A H again  
LW: Lah Wah  
KL: Lah Wah  
LW: Yeah  
KL: Okay, that’s pretty easy to say  
LW: Yeah  
KL: Lah Wah  
LW: Yeah  
KL: And Lah Wah is translating for me for the first time today since Joe has some things he needed to do. So, some things I wanted to ask about is yesterday I was asking a lot about the refugee camps and I wanted to know – yesterday she was telling me that the school was bad or no she didn’t know if the school was bad, but she wanted to, no, she wanted to have money to send her children to a better school
LW: Umhuh.

KL: In the refugee camp that’s part of the reason why she wanted to be able to earn more money

LW: Umhuh.

KL: So, why was it important for her to send them to a different school? Did she think it would be better than the one they were at?

LW: trans in the refugee?

KL: In the Mae La Refugee Camp

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, she says in her children educate good for their, their future.

KL: Did she feel like they were going to a good school in the refugee camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He says this school different from here. Here is better, he says.

KL: So, yesterday she told me though she wanted to send her children to better schools within the refugee camp

LW: Umhuh.

KL: Is that? Did I understand – did she? She’s made me think that there were better schools and worse schools in the refugee camp and if you had more money you could send your children to better schools in the camp.

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, he says in Mae La Camp they had a like, like a religions for sponsored, kind of like a mission they call mission school. That school is better for the every, every stu-
dent because they, they teach everything like, uh, is Thai language and specially Eng-

KL: So, they had a special school through the church

YM: Yeah

KL: and it was a better school

YM: Yeah

KL: than the regular school because they learned Thai language and English and other things?

LW: They said they could do very far there they can speak um Thai and English a very well.

KL: But that costs more money?

LW: Ah yeah

KL: Oh

LW: And also there’s a problem with religion too. So, if you, you went to this school you need to be their religion.

KL: Ah, but she’s not. Was it a Baptist school then or Christian?

LW: Uh, yeah. Uh, yeah.

KL: So, um go ahead.

LW: Um, he said she never went to this school. So uh left the country for United States and then they stays um he says she says a no problem for their children they already can speak English.

KL: Right. So if they went to that school they would have no problem coming to the U.S.?

LW: Yeah because he he through um his children um can speak English right so they

KL: That’s what her husband thought?
LW: Yeah they no need to need translate or no need to call for nobody to help them like that

KL: Um but they didn’t go to that school did they because of the religious issue and because of the money?

LW: Yeah

KL: Were there, um, the school she went to did her I mean her children went to did she have to pay money for them to go to school in the refugee camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Uh, no not that much, just a register. It, it cost thirty, thirty but per person like that not too much.

KL: Thirty dollars per person for registration fees?

LW: Yeah

KL: And did she feel that it was a good school?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Is a good, like kind of normal, he said

KL: Just normal?

LW: Yeah

KL: So what were the problems with the refugee camp? She, it sounds like one of the problems was it was you weren’t allowed to leave and she didn’t like that

LW: Uh huh.

KL: and also she was concerned that they couldn’t earn enough money. Will you ask her if did I understand and if there were other things that were problems?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He, um, she says as a refugee he um she feels um not enough for her and um her family because um they need more money for, like, kind of a stay alive

KL: To stay alive?

LW: Yeah

KL: So because they didn’t get the U.N. didn’t give them enough food is that why?

LW: Enough food, but not enough for everything.

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: So why did they need more money to stay alive?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He says is for her family for her chicken um kitchen because um the refugee they get like a bean and a rice so other things and like kind of a meat if they need to buy or to for eat yeah she says because she need to eat every day.

KL: And beans and rice aren’t enough?

LW: Yeah so they want to eat like kind a meat and fish sometime or buy the food

KL: Okay and so what were other problems there wasn’t money to buy enough food

YM: Umhuh.

KL: What were the other things she did not like about the refugee camps?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: He says uh, over there every day look after the like the community like in a refugee community look after that but he feel like not um not safety, not to live to to live right?

YM: Yeah

KL: So she liked the community but she is that right?

LW: Umhuh.

KL: but she didn’t feel safe

LW: Yeah.

KL: Okay

LW: Um he says um he is free

KL: She didn’t feel free.

LW: Yeah free in America is a free in the refugee is just inside the refugee we can’t go outside um we cannot walk outside just say in inside the camp so nothing improve

KL: Okay. And did she say that she didn’t feel safe there also or just free?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: A say not free

KL: Not afraid?

LW: Yeah no afraid.

KL: Was it safe?

LW: Uh, yes

KL: It was safe.

LW: Sometime they have problem with soldier, the Thai soldier
KL: But did she ever have a problem with the Thai soldier inside the camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: No

KL: What kind of problems did other people have? Did she know anyone or hear of anyone that had problems?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: She no, no

KL: No problem? But you knew of people that have had problems that you’ve heard of people?

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay

LW: I know a lot.

KL: Are you Karen?

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay, like Joe? Okay and were there things that she liked about the refugee camp? She says that she had – She told me she had lots of friends there and everybody knew each other just about and there was lots of community so she liked that about it. What other things did she like?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Just he says, um, she says he happy he has fun and the community the thing that they can go outside

KL: She liked the friends and community but she didn’t like that they couldn’t leave
LW: Yeah

KL: Okay

LW: If you go outside part time we go and cut bamboo for their food if the soldier saw them he then and some people they arrest and send back to refugee camp

KL: So did she they went outside sometimes to get bamboo for food

LW: Yeah, bamboo

KL: bamboo shoots?

LW: everything, yes

KL: And for wood

LW: yeah for (?)

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Okay and yesterday she told me she left the camp about 5 times?

LW: Umhuh.

KL: Was that just to work on farms or was that including when she went to just get bamboo and things like that?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Oh, kinda like they go a farm, um Thailand landlock kind like they growing corn and growing bean they they go to work over there

KL: So they grew corn and beans

LW: Yeah

KL: and cabbage probably. She said cabbage yesterday.

LW: Yeah. Said they pay them for a summer one hundred baht per day that day
KL: One hundred what?
LW: One hundred baht
KL: what’s that
LW: um Thai That baht
KL: How do you spell it?
LW: B A T H [Later checking indicates Thai money is measured in bahts].
KL: B A
LW: T H
KL: T H
LW: H yeah
KL: That’s the name of the money there?
LW: Yeah
KL: Is bath
LW: Yeah we call dollar over there we call baht
KL: and you could earn a hundred bath per day
LW: Yeah
KL: working at the farms
LW: Yeah. That why I said they go a two or three day, they come back so they need to go like nobody knowww
KL: Oh okay
LW: if they know they will go out
KL: So five times she told me about she was always going to work at farms
LW: Umhuh.

KL: but did she also go leave the camp other times to like get bamboo?

LW: Umhuh.

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: (?)

KL: Yeah did bamboo grow in the camp?

LW: No

KL: No okay

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: So how did her husband get bamboo to build houses cause her husband built houses she told me

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Uh, in the camp, um, they they get some bamboo, but not enough for build house so her husband went outside and cut a bamboo and sometime her husband buys some bamboo from somebody

KL: So, people would want to go run out and try and find this um leave the camp to find bamboo so they could sell it or build houses

LW: Yeah

KL: or things or cook with it

LW: Yeah so they got some money from the kids

KL: So did her husband leave more than her? Did her husband
KL: How many times did her husband leave?
LW: More than 10
KL: More than 10 times?
LW: Yeah
KL: For how long?
LW: For a month
KL: For a month at a time?
LW: Yeah
KL: Wow did he ever get caught by the police?
LW: Yeah, yeah
KL: Just the one time when she got caught also?
LW: Yes

KL: But not another time?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: No

KL: So you you were both together when he got caught

YM: Yeah. Answers in Burmese

LW: Just once

KL: Just when they were together okay. And, when they were caught they were, um, the police found them in a hut at a corn farm, right?

LW: Umhuh.

KL: Do you do is that what she said?

LW: Yes

KL: Okay um alright. So some other questions I had were if she doesn’t mind me asking I was wondering how much her husband is able to make per hour at JBS and can he make a lot more than he could make in Thailand?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He says that he is at JBS and they come more money because he said he they had every day for working over there in Thailand is not for every day.

KL: Right can she tell me how much he makes per hour?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Her husband or her? Her husband?
KL: Her husband

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: About a 12

KL: About 12?

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay and then she worked there when she first moved up here, right?

LW: Yeah

KL: And did she make the same?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, hers is a eleven twenty cent

KL: Because she didn’t work there as long?

LW: Um, yeah

KL: Eleven twenty seven?

LW: Yeah twenty twenty

KL: twenty

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay. Did she like working there?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah
KL: Yeah? Was she happy or sad to quit?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: She sad um he sad he sad he had to look after the his baby her baby

KL: Her husband wanted her to look after their baby?

LW: Yeah

KL: did she want to or did she want to be somewhere else?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Say he want to work because nobody look after the baby

KL: What was that?

LW: Um he went to work. Because a nobody look after the baby so he quit and look after the baby.

KL: she quit?

LW: Yeah

KL: And she wanted to quit to look after the baby?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He say if the baby grow up about 5 year he would go back to work

KL: Who would take after who would watch after the baby then if she went back to work when the baby was five who would she have watch the baby?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Grandma
KL: Her grand, the grandma
LW: He said mother-in-law, her mother-in-law
KL: Does your mother-in-law live here?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah
KL: In Riverwalk?
YM: Yeah
KL: How long has your mother in law lived, lived here?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Um, more 3 year
KL: And why would she want to go to work when the baby is five?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: He said he don’t want to stay at home anymore
KL: Okay. Why not?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Um, she says if they were both husband and wife they got more money and they save their money for their children to send to school

KL: It sounds like it’s very important to her to send her children to school. Is education very important to her?

YM: Yeah

KL: And why?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um she says that before he um she and educate he can read and they can write so he had she had to work really hard like (?) so she says that her child will grow up and she don’t want to her child work really hard like that

KL: So in the U.S. sometimes parents worry about spoiling their children and they want them to work really hard because they don’t want them to get spoiled – not all parents thing that but a lot, like some do, I would –

LW: Umhuh.

KL: Um does she want her children to be able to work hard, but just not too hard?

LW: Umhuh.

KL: Or does she worry about spoiling her children?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um he says um everybody is need to work. If her child grow up need to work too because it would better job.

KL: Um, but does is she concerned about spoiling her children, like when her children are little, does she want them to like work in the home or does she want to have them learn to work hard?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah
KL: How does she teach her children to work?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: He he um she teaches only in in here he says a how to cook and how to wash and how to clean home and how to set the thing at home
KL: So how to cook and wash
LW: Yeah
KL: and clean the home and what else?
LW: um you know like in a set up in order things
KL: keep things in order?
LW: Yeah
KL: Does she feel like she works really hard at home?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: He said not hard
KL: Not hard?
LW: Yeah
KL: No?
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: She say everything easy here. In Thailand has the water you had to go. You went to take the water and come back home and washing by hand so hard. Here is easy, she said.

KL: Which does she like better?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah better

YM: (laughing)

KL: So, would she like to get more education here?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah, he said right now he went to school ESE school

KL: Right now she’s learning English

LW: Yes

KL: and would she like to do other things besides that?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yes, he says a going to school and want to work

KL: Okay, now I wanted to ask some questions about Burma, back in Burma

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: What does she remember about Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: So, she said what do you want to ask?

KL: I’d like to know um did she live in a hut in Burma similar to the one she lived in the ref, in, in the refugee camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: In Burma is a hot

KL: It was hot?

LW: Yeah

KL: Did she live in a hut though like a house made out of bamboo?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: But Thailand and Burma say not really different and hot

KL: Yeah

LW: yes kinda similar

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: yeah bamboo, bamboo hut

KL: She lived in. Did her husband build it?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah

KL: Was it nicer than the one in Thailand in the refugee camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He says in Burma is a better because a in refugee is a little space so they were something kind of a roof of bamboo so they need to go outside. In Burma is everything they can get. Also more space too.

KL: Did she live with her parents when she was growing up in Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah, he stay with, uh, her parents, uh, before she get married.

KL: Okay, but after she got married she lived by herself with her husband?

LW: Yeah

KL: Did she like Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yes

KL: What did she like about it?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah, she said she born as Burma he like it. Also her parents and her brother and her sister are there, so she like.

KL: So she liked that her family was there?

LW: Yeah and she born there.

KL: And her parents were there, her parents and how many siblings again remind me?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Six
KL: Six siblings?
LW: Yeah
KL: And are all her siblings still in Burma?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Um, one in Thailand, one in refugee camp
KL: So there’s one in Thailand
LW: Yeah one in
KL: outside of refugee camp
LW: Yeah
KL: and one inside of the refugee camp and the rest are in Burma?
LW: Yeah
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah in Burma
KL: And she’s the only one in the U.S.?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yes
KL: Did she play games with other children in Burma?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah
KL: Like what?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Just go outside to (?) and ride bicycle
KL: She rode a bicycle?
LW: Yeah
KL: and what else?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: No, not too much, that’s it.
KL: She rode her bicycle and that’s it?
LW: yeah Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: He went kinda kinda how do you call – the ceremonies and the like that I know before here in Logan the ceremony (?) something like that they had concert
KL: Concerts?
LW: Yeah like
KL: They had concerts in Burma too?
LW: Yeah, but is a different from here said he (?) his her children
KL: Her children what?
LW: he went with her children to
KL: She went to concerts with her children?
LW: Yeah
KL: Okay, does she go to concerts here?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: No, just uh her children
KL: Her children do?
LW: Yeah
KL: Does she like music a lot?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah
YM: Music
KL: Did she do people do recreation, like hiking for fun, or camping or boating or fishing?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: No
KL: No, none of those, not even um going in boats or fishing? No okay. Do they garden? Like some people here for fun they like to garden and grow flowers and vegetables.
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah
KL: They do gro did did she have a garden?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: yeah
KL: What did she grow?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Bean, more like a fruit, vegetable
KL: Is your food done?
YM: Yeah
KL: You can go get it if you’d like. Here should we stop this for a second?
End of recording
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  28:09
Translator: Lah She Wah (LW)

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)

Date: September 3, 2010

Place: Ya He Ma’s home

KL: This is Karen Lambert. It’s September 3rd. I’m continuing my recording with Ya He Ma and with my translator whose name is Lah Wah and we have been talking some more about what Ya He Ma’s life was like in Burma and she was just telling me that she had a garden and she grew beans, fruits and vegetables. Did you enjoy gardening? Do you think it’s fun or did you just do it so that you had food?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Both

KL: Did she raise animals?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah, just a little bit

KL: what animals?

YM: Chicken

KL: Only chicken?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, cow
KL: She had a cow?
LW: Yeah
KL: Just one?
LW: Chicken, um cow
KL: How many cows?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: One
KL: One cow?
LW: Yeah
KL: Anything else?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: No
KL: Was the cow a milk cow or a beef cow?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: A meat cow
KL: A beef cow
LW: Yeah
KL: So, did she get milk or how did she get milk?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah
KL: How did she get it
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Um, one, one and two bottle per day
KL: One or two gallons per day?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: bottle
KL: Hum?
LW: bottle
KL: like cups? Bottles?
LW: bottle yeah
KL: One or two bottles a day. Where did she get the milk from?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: From cow
KL: So from her cow?
LW: Yeah
KL: So it wasn’t a beef cow. It was a milk cow.
LW: Um in Burma they don’t call milk cow call beef cow not specially when the the cow has baby they get meat from them not specially.

KL: Okay in the U.S. sometimes people have um cows that they use use mainly for milk

LW: Uhmuh.

KL: and then they have other cows they use mainly for beef

LW: Uhmuh.

KL: But, sometimes they do that also.

LW: Yeah Translates my question into Burmese

KL: So, this was for both. It was for milk and then when it

LW: Yeah

KL: if it had a baby then they would use it for meat?

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay. Okay and did she have to walk a long way to get her water?

LW: Uhmuh.

KL: in Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, not really

KL: Where was the water?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Um, how do you call the hole?

KL: A well?

LW: Yeah a well and sometime the river

KL: So, she went and got it from a well and the river. Did she have a well on her property?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah

KL: Was the water clean and good?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah clean. In the well is a clean in the river is a not really.

KL: Why did she get water from the river then?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: (?)

KL: She didn’t get it from the river?

LW: No because she says the river really far from her home

KL: Okay, so did she have to work really hard in Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He said for same day he had to take the leaf for for root her roof
KL: for the roof?

LW: Yeah

KL: had to take the leaves

LW: yeah leaves and for roof and cut up firewood for the rainy season and after the rainy season had to grow rice so she says that really hard because if the rainy season we can’t go outside because a lot of water

KL: So during the rainy season you didn’t go outside?

YM: No

LW: You go to the fire and then you grow the rice

KL: You grow rice after the rainy season or during the rainy season?

LW: During

KL: during

LW: Umhuh.

KL: But you stay inside? How do you grow rice if you stay inside? Just most of the time you stay inside and sometimes you go outside to farm?

LW: Um the first month of the rainy season come they dig it up you know and they take all the class everything and they grow it after two month they grow rice

KL: So the very beginning of the rainy season they dig holes and

LW: Yeah

KL: they plant the rice

LW: Yeah

KL: and then it grows and they stay inside

LW: Yeah

KL: because it’s cold and wet
LW: cold

KL: and so

LW: but not really because a lot of water we cannot walk some they go by boat and

KL: They go by boat?

LW: Yeah

KL: so does it flood?

LW: Yeah

KL: it floods

LW: just boat they make

KL: Some people go by boats does it does the water go inside of their house?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: because they they make a really tall I no how to call

KL: stilts?

LW: yeah is really tall

KL: Um, so the houses are built on stilts?

LW: Yeah

KL: Are they also in the refugee camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: No refugee doesn’t really
KL: they’re on the ground?

LW: Yeah

KL: Does it flood?

LW: Um in the refugee camps, um, not really.

KL: So it’s not as rainy?

LW: It’s a rainy in the refugee camp, but not like Burma. Burma is after rainy the water is still there so just two or three days it go off in refugee there is is a better than Burma

KL: So and there’s lots of it’s like a lake outside?

LW: Yeah

KL: in Burma

LW: Umhuh.

KL: So she grew her own rice?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: So he work for other person other people for because she do her there often her often

KL: So her husband works for other people who farmed?

LW: Yeah

KL: during the rainy season he works for them?

LW: Yeah

KL: So he goes out and works, but she mainly stays home. [I think I perhaps misunderstood and actually she went out and worked in the rice farms too.]

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah go outside work

KL: Okay. So they just have a little garden and the cows and chickens.

LW: Yeah

KL: Why did they leave Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um he said she says her her mother in law in Thailand so her husband want to go to Thailand so he can with her husband

KL: Was her mother in law in the refugee camp?

LW: Yeah, so call them to come to refugee camp so she come with her husband and children to the refugee camp

KL: Was she happy or sad?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He says um just a not really sad because he ride she ride to refugee camp so he no need to plant rice and don’t need to worry about house, everything

KL: I don’t quite understand.

LW: Umhuh.

KL: You were saying she wasn’t very sad because when she arrived at the refugee camps there was rice and stuff and she didn’t have to worry about things?

LW: Yeah in Burma he said she had to buy everything

KL: So, she liked the refugee camp better than Burma or did she like Burma better than the refugee camp?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Said Thailand better in the refugee is better

KL: And why?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He she says in Burma is a not a lot of work for working, not a lot of job of working, so if they don’t had a job in Burma, so they had to worry about the food everything. In the refugee camp if they can’t work even they can they have food for eat. A lot of people (?)

KL: A lot of people do this?

LW: Yeah

KL: Like the bitter leaf and the bitter root [betel leaf and betel root]

LW: Yeah

KL: that are not.

LW: Yeah

KL: Does Joe like it?

LW: Sometime

KL: Do you?

LW: No

KL: No? (laughing)

LW: No

KL: Do women or just men?
LW: Both

KL: Both men and women like bitter nut [betel nut]

LW: Is a you find someone and then you go and visit my village so nothing to give to you for eat just a little give

KL: So it’s a gift that people give

LW: Yeah

KL: people a lot?

LW: Yeah

KL: Oh okay. Does Ya He Ma like bitter nut and bitter leaf or does her husband? [betel nut and betel leaf]

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Sometime

KL: Sometimes, but mainly her husband?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah. Oh, in Burma everywhere, everywhere they eat (?)

KL: Everywhere they eat what? The bitter leaf? [betel leaf]

LW: eats the bitter [betel] nut but here is not fresh and for bitter [betel] leaf in Burma is fresh leaf

KL: they’re fresh and these are not fresh

LW: Yeah
KL: Was there enough food in Burma or was she hungry a lot of the time? Is that why
she was happy to leave?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Not enough food and you have money you can eat if you don’t you can’t have
food, hungry

KL: And it’s is there not enough work in Burma so it makes it hard for some people to
earn enough money?

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay.

LW: Even if though you graduate high school or college no work no job. Some people
have to go back to farm and they grow rice. Some people they went to Thailand for ille-
gal worker, migrant worker.

KL: Um, what about the violence? Is there lots of violence everywhere, um, where she
was from will you ask her or not very much?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah had some

KL: there’s some violence?

LW: Yeah

KL: Was that part of the reason why she left or did she leave mainly because she
wanted to be able to have more food or be with her mother in law?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: For food, for a (?) her problem
KL: Solve her problem?

LW: Yeah so

KL: Which problem?

(?)

KL: Did her brother did her siblings and her parents have enough food?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Not enough, but they had to work and like one day, one day, one day like that

KL: So her siblings and parents why, why didn’t they leave?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Because, uh, everybody can’t stay in the refugee camp if you are a refugee if you are not a refugee you cannot stay in refugee camp because us her parent is not a refugee so stay in

KL: Why are they refugees?

LW: Hum?

KL: Why are they not considered refugees? What makes somebody a refugee?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Because they like Burma better. So, they don’t want to leave her parents don’t want to leave Burma

KL: But she doesn’t like Burma as much as her parents?

LW: Yeah
KL: So she didn’t like Burma as much as her parents?

LW: Yes

KL: So, she could leave. Was she very sad to leave?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah because he leaves her parent, her sibling, he sad

KL: Are her parents and siblings considered refugees or why is she a refugee?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, so her parents didn’t come to Thailand, Thai refugee, stay in Burma so just only her come to refugee in Thai refugee.

KL: So if you go to the refugee camp that makes you a refugee?

LW: Um, no

KL: No?

LW: No

KL: How do you become a refugee?

LW: Um because

KL: How did she become like how what process did she have to go to to become a refugee?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He say that first he arrives, she arrives in refugee, like in a committee, kinda a UN committee, not a UN, kind of a camp committee, kinda interview her first interview for where are you from, why you come to you come to the refugee camp and that
KL: So what did she tell them why did she tell them she had come?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um, he just say because her problem with a problem food, not enough food and other things, I don’t know and because when he first came in the refugee he stay in a refugee camp for 7 year after that they became um she became a refugee. Before before 7 year um she stay in the she stay in the refugee but she not a refugee. Are confused?

KL: It’s a little confusing. So she was

LW: Yeah

KL: allowed to stay in the camp but she wasn’t considered a refugee

LW: No

KL: because she wasn’t fleeing violence

LW: Yeah

KL: is that what happened?

LW: Yeah

KL: But then after 7 years since she’d been there so long they decided she was a refugee?

LW: Yeah

KL: Oh

LW: So

KL: But, her parents would they have been allowed to go in the refugee camp then also?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: So her parents don’t like the refugee because they thought in a refugee not free they when they stay in refugee they can go outside even that’s why they don’t like. So they stayed in Burma

KL: Then why did she like it?

LW: Hum?

KL: What did, why did she like that?

LW: The refugee?

KL: Umhuh why did she like that better than Burma?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Um he says um in the refugee he can improve her life and also

KL: Improve her life in what way?

LW: can come to, um, can resettlement to other country

KL: So when she went to the refugee camp was she hoping to be able to leave and go to another country?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: No

KL: What was she – Oh, what did she say?

LW: No he just stay in a refugee camp just a a year go they come call refugee for resettlement so she applied.

KL: After one year?

LW: 7 year
KL: After 7 years. So when she went what was she hoping for?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: She say in Burma she has a problem with food and

KL: Oh, that’s your cell phone

LW: for food for job and need to worry so that’s why he came to stay and the refugee he don’t worry about the things that he worry in Burma

KL: So when they went to the refugee camp at first were they planning to stay there a very long time or not so long?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: So long, the whole

KL: They were planning on staying a long time?

LW: Yeah

KL: Their whole life?

LW: Yeah

KL: In the refugee camp?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Oh, she says not the whole life yeah he work and went back to Burma is a Burma is a democratic.

KL: So, when they first went they thought they’d go to the refugee camp for a little while and they’d go back when it was a democracy?

LW: Yeah
KL: Did they think that would happen soon?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Not sure

KL: Okay

LW: because she says that she didn’t understand about the politic, just the people say hear from friend

KL: So did people other people think it would that she talked to?

LW: pardon me?

KL: Did other people think that it would become a democracy?

LW: Yeah

KL: So she thought it might

LW: Yeah

KL: What does she think now?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: She doesn’t know

KL: She’s not sure

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay. Um I think we can stop we’ve already gone a little longer than I meant to so um this is good. Should we um could we come back another day like maybe next Tuesday or Wednesday

YM: Umhuh.
KL: and I’ll talk to Joe or you. Either. Would either you or Joe be able to come

LW: yeah

KL: do you think? Yeah, probably is Tuesday or Wednesday better? I would for sure like to do it Wednesday but maybe also Tuesday

LW: Yeah, that’s okay

KL: Maybe both?

LW: Yeah

KL: Um, okay is 4:30 again good or a different time?

LW: yes 4:30 because we finish three, three thirty, um, we went back home

KL: Okay

LW: need time

KL: Do you want to ask them if Tuesday and Wednesday work for them?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah

KL: It’s okay? Okay,, um and then I need them to – I need you and her to sign a form again

LW: Umhuh.

KL: So

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: This is the same form that you filled out yesterday and you filled out a lot of Ya He Ma (laughing)

LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

End of recording
Interviewee: Lah She Wah (LW)) and Ya He Ma (YM)

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)

Date: September 3, 2010

Place: Ya He Ma’s home

KL: Okay, so you said, let me make sure that I have this down. It, it’s September 3rd and I just finished talking to Ya He Ma – this is Karen Lambert – and I am now talking to my translator Joe’s wife. This is the first time she’s translated for me and her name is me double-check

LW: Lah Wah

KL: and Lah Wah is telling me a little bit more about their refugee camps to add to what Ya He Ma told me. So you were saying that they don’t know a lot about the refugee camps. Do you think you might know a little bit in addition to what they told me?

LW: I think so.

KL: Okay

LW: Because for me I used to stay in a refugee camp for 9 or 10 year

KL: Okay

LW: long, long time.

KL: So, you stayed there 9 or 10 years

LW: Yeah

KL: and what was it like?

LW: Pardon me?

KL: What was it like?

LW: Um, the refugee camp?

KL: Umhuh.
LW: like a, like stay in a prison

KL: So would you rather live in Burma or the refugee camp?

LW: Um, who?

KL: Did you like the Burma better or the refugee camp?

LW: I like Burma better because Burma wasn’t free [maybe she meant camps weren’t free?]

KL: You went there because Burma wasn’t free?

LW: Yeah

KL: Where were you from in Burma?

LW: Um, part of Karen state

KL: In Karen state?

LW: Yeah

KL: did you know Joe in Burma?

LW: Um, no, in refugee camp

KL: In refugee camp you knew each other

LW: Yeah because I work for woman, a woman organization for a woman right in Thai. So, I, I travel a lot. That’s why I meet h, I meet my husband.

KL: What was the woman’s – What did the woman’s organization do?

LW: They do for woman rights and the Thai right and also they promote for woman right and they get education and also they get, um, we teach, we call literacy, um literacy, like kinda ELC. We teach the basics of their language. If a Burma who, if Burmese we speak, we teach them, this is Burmese. If Karen teach the basic Karen. So, because a lot Karen people, um, they, they can’t really write just only speak then and we so even though they can read their. So we give for woman, we give a job. So, we, they weave in a shawl like kinda skirt and we sell, we sell for them and we give them money to them so they got, they had extra pocket money.
KL: So you helped them to find jobs?
LW: Yeah
KL: In the refugee camp?
LW: Yeah
KL: What kind of jobs?
LW: The weaving
KL: What, weaving?
LW: Weaving, yeah, weaving and we get a trainer for teacher or literacy teacher.
KL: Why did you do this?
LW: Um, because, um, a woman stay in the refugee camp they did not have job, just stay in the house and cook in there.
KL: What was wrong with that? Was that considered bad?
LW: Uh, I think so, yeah.
KL: Why?
LW: Um, because, uh, they if we get a job they can made money and they can feel confident. Oh, I can work, not, not only husband. There they learn that their husband only work. So if we give them jobs so they also know oh they have confidence oh I can work I can help my family and my husband
KL: Right. I think that it’s important what they work the work they do in the home too.
LW: Yeah
KL: Do you think so or not so much?
LW: Um, I think so. The work in house is really important too, but, uh, in the community if their husband thinks the hard, the housework is nothing.
KL: I I don’t understand, what?
LW: The housework, like in their community and their husband does nothing, so for woman is really hard.

KL: It’s really hard

LW: Yeah

KL: to be at home because, why?

LW: Uh, you know if we stay we stayed in house, is not good. So woman said they don’t know anything about the community, anything about the what happen, nothing, just if we get their educate, we give them jobs so they know more, I think.

KL: So you give them more options?

LW: Yeah, more options, um, we like a now we have (HA?), we invite a woman in the camp to come, like in our meeting, uh, we discover their problem, we discuss their future are there to every, not every must, two time a month like that because they had to do a lot of thing.

KL: Okay

LW: Yeah

KL: Was it were any of the Muslim women involved or was it mainly the Baptist

LW: Um, all women involved we, we kinda all women

KL: Because I know that some people in the Muslim religion like in my religion which is the Mormon religion believe that it’s, um, that being a Mom is very important and, um, are you supporting them in that or are you saying that they should try and have other people watch their kids so that they can go and do other things?

LW: No, we we try, we try then a different way not only look after the children, um working in the home we try to how you say other different ways even though they can participate in the community they can not manage as a leader, just only men can participate. If a woman got any vote, [the men say] “Oh, you don’t know nothing, not educate, even though you can write your name. We don’t like that,” and like that

KL: So even
LW: So even the woman feel really shy. Is the man taller then they feel really shy, “Oh, I won’t go again ever. I go back home. I want my home.”

KL: So, you’re trying to give them more confidence to be able to be involved in the community and

LW: Yeah

KL: to write and to become educated and things like that

LW: Yeah

KL: That sounds very interesting

LW: Yeah and also for young, for young woman we have

KL: Do you understand what we’re saying?

YM: a little

KL: No? Do you want to explain to Ya He Ma what we’re talking about so she knows?

LW: Translates our discussion into Burmese

LW: She know that we call Karen Woman Organization

KL: It’s called the Karen’s Women Organization

LW: Yeah

KL: What does she think about it?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Uh, she says good because they help woman a lot, help a woman a lot.

KL: she thinks it’s a good organization?

LW: Yeah
KL: Was she a member of it?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: No

KL: She was not a member, why?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: He says, um, she says, she feels she is nothing. She is nothing.

KL: She thinks she is a nothing? [I’m not sure Ya He Ma really thought she’s “nothing,” as I think she’s quietly proud of her accomplishments. I’d like to ask more questions about this.]

LW: Nothing

KL: Oh

LW: A lot of woman feel like that.

KL: So sad.

LW: Yeah, oh they can’t they educate right. Oh, they can do for me nothing. Oh, I stay home. I stay there oh and that.

KL: Oh, you aren’t a nothing Ya He Ma.

LW: Yeah

KL: I think you’re very amazing. You do wonderful things.

LW: If we invite a woman, “So, please come,” we are, “No,” they say. “Oh, I don’t know nothing.” That’s why we get, uh we educate a lot, we call media a lot, we invite woman many, many time and that’s why right now we have a kinda, we call young woman leaders in school. For a young woman, we give them leadership, everything, like in uh, political economics, language, in office, in how to work within the community
KL: Huh. Inter, very interesting. Just really quickly did you leave Burma because of violence or because you were looking for work or because you needed

LW: Because of violence and civil war

KL: Because of violence and what?

LW: civil war

KL: civil war?

LW: Yeah

KL: So in your area there was a lot of violence and war

LW: a lot, yeah

KL: So like Joe, because Joe had a lot of violence

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay

LW: A lot, a lot

KL: Yeah, Joe has kind of a sad past. Do you, did you have family members who also fought in the Karen National Union?

LW: My father

KL: Your father did?

LW: Yeah

KL: Is he still alive?

LW: Yeah, he still

KL: That is good. So like Joe, Joe’s father died though, right?

LW: Yeah

KL: Yeah
LW: That’s why we had, we leave our parents, brother and sister. We haven’t see each other. We need to stay separate(?)

KL: Right, so it’s, uh, is it still called the Karen National Union? Is that the right name?

LW: Um, yeah

KL: Yeah and your father still fights in it

LW: Yeah

KL: Is your mother, um, do you keep in touch with your mother? Is she still alive?

LW: yeah, she still alive.

KL: Do you keep in touch with your father?

LW: Um, no.

KL: No, because he’s in the military?

LW: No, right now no more

KL: Oh, he’s not in the military anymore?

LW: No right now he become a mok

KL: He’s coming back?

LW: Mok

KL: What does that mean?

LW: Mok, like a Buddhist religion.

KL: Oh, a Monk

LW: Monk yeah

KL: Oh, are you Buddhist?
LW: Yeah

KL: You are Buddhist?

LW: Yeah. Before my father a Christian, um, right now, he became a Buddhist

KL: and so now you’re Buddhist too?

LW: Yeah

KL: Were you always Buddhist?

LW: Me?

KL: Um, huh.

LW: Yeah

KL: So your father was a soldier, but then he became a monk

LW: Yeah

KL: Do monks fight or no?

LW: No

KL: So he doesn’t fight anymore

LW: No

KL: Does he keep in touch with your mother?

LW: No

KL: do they still live together?

LW: No

KL: No?

LW: No, no more

KL: are they still married?
LW: Yeah

KL: they are married?

LW: They are marriage right now is no more

KL: They’re not married any more

LW: no

KL: No more? Are, is your mom sad?

LW: Oh, happy

KL: Happy that they’re not married?

LW: Because he is you know is a my father is a become monk so my mother had to run away all the time and had to hide all the time so

KL: Because he was a monk, why?

LW: Uh, is uh he a monk my mom thinks is better because, uh, she need, no need to go worry about him, worry about her children, and also because my father drink a lot too, drink alcohol a lot.

KL: He drinks alcohol a lot

LW: Yeah

KL: Does he still?

LW: Right now no more

KL: Not any more now that he’s a monk?

LW: Yeah

KL: Okay. Does Ya He Ma know what we’re talking about now?

LW: (laughing)

KL: I hate to talk and not have her understand. Do you want to explain?
LW: Translates a summary into Burmese

LW: Yeah he understand little (laughing)

KL: Yeah, she’s learning a lot of English. I think she understands more than I know.

LW: Yeah

KL: I almost don’t need a translator Ya He Ma (laughing)

LW: (laughing)

LW: So, when I left my village and went to refugee, so I don’t know nothing. I just, um, went to school came back a summer day and kind of stay with my parents. At the time, uh, they have fighting, two army groups, like government soldier and ethnic soldier they’re fighting, and I’m going to find vegetables for dinner,

KL: Umhuh.

LW: so that’s in April, in April, they’re fighting. Oh, I thought, what happened with two of my friends. So we’re three. So, they fighting. Some people are running, um with uh, I ask them what happen they said fighting in the village but I

KL: So this was in the village where you lived?

LW: Yeah I live a far from them

KL: all the people were running because of the fighting

LW: Yeah, they are running so I ask them, “Where, where do you go?” “We don’t know,” they say we run they run away. So I went back my home, “Oh, they say you no need to go back all the village are fire or how do you say?”

KL: burned

LW: burn in fire

KL: burning

LW: yeah so oh I how do you say I really scared crying. So, where are my parents? They don’t know. They says we also afraid too you know it just I was I think 17 or 16 like that
KL: You were sixteen or seventeen years old?

LW: Yeah, so I ran, we ran, everybody run in the forest, oh.

KL: So you just ran to the refugee camp?

LW: No, no in the refugee there’s in the forest I with my 3 of my friends. Oh at the nighttime we really hungry nothing to eat we did not know nobody, nobody in the forest, we just keep cry, cry you know like and the mosquito, mosquito bite, bite, biting us, oh a lot, so we, we don’t know how to do nothing. We just did sit in and cry. Hungry, hungry we eat a kinda bamboo tree, has in the forest has bamboo tree. We eat bamboo tree and then no (?) tree, banana tree.

KL: What kind?

LW: Banana tree

KL: Oh, so you ate, um, bamboo tree

LW: bamboo tree and

KL: the bamboo shoots

LW: Yeah, bamboo shoot and a banana tree

KL: and bananas from the banana tree

LW: Yeah. Banana trees are not really big just more so we can eat, and we had water, water from

KL: from the banana

LW: Yeah from the tree

KL: Oh, you ate the tree itself?

LW: Yeah, we had the water from the tree.

KL: Water from the tree?

LW: Yeah
KL: So, were there any bananas or was it the wrong season?

LW: Um, no. We can’t see any banana just a we can eat because you know stays this small, so we can eat, and then the two days after, the morning, we hear somebody walking, like kinda group, we did not know how many people. They’re walking. Um, we just go to ask them, oh we just ask food for them. “Do you have food?” something like that. “Oh,” they ask, “Where are you from?” “We are from this village.” “Oh, your village is burned.” “So, I ask them, “Where do you go?” They said they will go to the refugee camp. “Oh, okay, we’ll follow you,” they said. “We go, like group, then 15, there two or three family before they get our food. So, we follow them.”

KL: So, you, the people you found, were going to the refugee camp?

LW: Yeah

KL: and you followed them?

LW: Yeah, we follow them and so nobody know where the refugee camp. They just hear refugee camp right there so

KL: You were just walking through the jungle

LW: Just walking

KL: looking for it

LW: they don’t, they don’t know, the way to go to refugee camp

KL: Is that what it was like for Ya He Ma? Did she know where the refugee camp was?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Oh, she don’t know, but her mother in law came at the other

KL: Her mother in law told her how to get there?

LW: Yeah

KL: So she knew where she was going?

LW: Yeah
KL: Who did she go with?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Oh, with her mother-in-law, mother-in-law

KL: Oh, the mother-in-law came to get them

LW: Yeah

KL: and then went with them?

LW: Yeah

KL: So, it was just her and her husband and her mother in law walking through the jungle?

LW: Yeah

KL: Just the three? And the three girls?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: Yeah

KL: And anyone else?

LW: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

LW: No

KL: Is she friends with her mother-in-law? Are they close?

LW: Who

KL: Is she close with her mother-in-law? Are they friends?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah, close they stay together.
KL: All right – Are they? Do they still like to talk to each other and go visit?
LW: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
LW: Yeah, go and visits
KL: Okay. We went way longer than I meant to but
End of recording
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  
Translator: Nyunt Aye (NA)  

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)  

Date: September 9, 2010  

Place: Ya He Ma’s home  

KL: All right, so, this is Karen Lambert. I’m here on September 9, 2010, with Ya He Ma and today I have another new translator and could you spell your name and say it, say it correctly for me?  

NA: Um, my name is New Ay the pronounce is to spell is N Y U N T last name is A Y E  

KL: Okay and New Ay  

NA: Yeah  

KL: Is that pretty close to how you say it? Okay has agreed to translate for me today. And are you Karen or what is your ethnicity?  

NA: Yeah, I am Karen  

KL: You’re Karen  

NA: Yeah  

KL: Okay and are you from the Mae La Refugee Camp?  

NA: No, I am from Umpiem Mai Refugee Camp.  

KL: Oh a different one. You’re the first one I’ve talked to not from the Mae La. What’s it called again?  

NA: Um Umpiem Mai refugee camp  

KL: Ompia
NA: Ma, U M P H I E M

KL: U M

NA: M P H I E N

KL: N as in No

NA: M

KL: M as in Ma Htwe Hla

NA: Okay

KL: Or

NA: Umpiem Cam C A M

KL: Camp

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, um, are there many people from that camp in this area?

NA: Yes

KL: Are they

NA: a lot a lot of people

KL: Okay are there more from the Mae La refugee camp?

NA: Um ref Mae La refugee camp is more than Umpiem.

KL: Because it’s so big

NA: Yeah

KL: I was told that the Mae La refugee camp was the biggest. Is that true?

NA: Yeah, Mae La refugee camp is really big.

KL: Okay all right. Um and how old are you?
NA: I am 21 right now

KL: 21, okay.

NA: Yeah

KL: So, are you single?

NA: Yeah I am

KL: Okay. Did you know Chapter?

NA: Yes I do.

KL: Okay

NA: He is my best friend

KL: Oh, he’s – really?

NA: Yeah

KL: He was – He translated for me before he left for California.

NA: Oh cool I heard about that too

KL: Yeah

NA: and then that times I was at um high school

KL: Oh, wow

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, so anyway, Ma Htwe Hla, I mean Ya He Ma – last time um we were here you were talking with Lah Woo?

YM: Lah Wah

KL: Lah Wah

NA: Lah Wah
KL: Lah Wah about

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: about the women’s

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: about the women’s organization that she was involved with, yes?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Did you know of that organization in Burma?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So she says she don’t know about that and that in the refugee camp she

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: so she don’t know about just only on Lah Wah and that organization then she knew some

KL: So the refugee camp she learned about it a little bit?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She says she just heard about. She don’t, she did not have a study to learn anything about that just only heard from when Lah Wah

KL: Okay
NA: talk to you.

KL: Okay and does she think it was good or not so good or what did she think?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes she said is good, really good for her

KL: Right, why does she think it’s good?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She said is really good because the women have organization and then they have to learn stuff and the stuff and then have the protection (?) or something she says just can say it like that

KL: She said they can learn stuff

NA: They can learn about more and what to do official something will be good for them and then put will be good for protesting

KL: To protest?

NA: protest all

KL: Protest what?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So she say it like for some the family the, the family know like can protest about the woman why not the husband and the wife when they have the fighting or something. They be like and you know sometime the husband get a angry you know his wife and they can tell some he was be wrong so the woman can go the organization the organization and tell about what be happen like that

KL: So if like the man hits the woman you mean?
NA: Umhuh

KL: or if the man is violent. Is that what you’re talking about?

NA: Yeah

KL: he gets angry?

NA: Yeah

KL: So like domestic violence?

NA: Yeah, yeah

KL: Oh

NA: she like that

KL: So she thinks that is good because the organization will help

NA: Yeah

KL: the woman?

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, um, when Lah Wah was here she was talking about some other things the organization also does like teaching literacy and, um, helping women obtain education and that type of things. Did, were there opportunities through that organization for, for Ya He Ma?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So, she say, yeah it really good, um, before they are they look at they have it they do it. So right here she want to know do they have it or they do it here

KL: She wants to know if they have the organization here?

NA: Yeah

KL: I’m not sure. Lah Wah would probably know (laughing).

NA: (laughing) Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: But there are other women’s organizations in the U.S., besides that one. I don’t know if that one exists here, but there are a lot of women’s groups that do lots of different types of things. Like there are groups that deal with domestic violence and try and help people in those situations. There’s groups that teach literacy like the English Language Center, um, there are, um, church groups, like my church has a women’s organization. There are a lot of women’s groups so you can let her know that.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Okay is she, um, I’ve heard from some that sometimes domestic violence is a problem in Burmese culture. Does she know – what does she think about that? Does she think that that is a problem or not so much?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She, no, no problem

KL: She doesn’t think it’s a problem?

NA: No, she say no.

KL: But she said that this organization was good because sometimes people can go for help if there were problems. Does that – so were there sometimes problems?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She no problem so
KL: She doesn’t know of any people that have problems with that?
NA: She don’t know about that. She not know.
KL: Okay
NA: Yeah
KL: Um does she know of any husbands who like yell at their wives or hit them or any-
thing like that?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She said she doesn’t know
KL: Doesn’t know, okay?
NA: she doesn’t know
KL: Right. In the U.S. sometimes that’s a problem
NA: Oh
KL: Like it’s like hopefully in most situations it’s not a problem, but there are times
when it is a problem in some relationships.
NA: Oh
KL: But, in the U.S. it’s very bad if a husband, like, hits a wife
NA: Oh
KL: his wife or does something like that that’s it can get him in big trouble
NA: Yeah
KL: in the U.S.
NA: Yeah, yeah
KL: So you can tell her that. That’s why I was asking that.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Okay um last time I was asking her also, um, about when she was working at JBS and she said that she wanted to quit when her son was born because she wanted to be with him and I wanted to ask her a little bit more of why. Why did she feel like that was important?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She said just only he got a (?) baby coming she got a baby just like that she quit (?) job.

KL: Um, um, and how long does she want to stay home with her baby?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say right now she want to apply back job, but sometime she think she might get or she or not gonna get it, like that.

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So and she want to ask question. So the people cannot hiring her and do they have, do they, do they have a job for her or?

KL: I don’t know

NA: like that (laughing)

KL: Yeah, she’s, she’s wondering if they have jobs?

NA: Um, yeah, she want to she want to work right now she say.

KL: Yeah? Why?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So all the time, um, so all the time at home is like boring, boring and then when we walk and then get to be like you know good healthy exercise or something so just stay home and take a you know he just eating and sleep (laughing) and just like that she say.

KL: Does she enjoy cooking?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, every day she say.

KL: She likes to cook every day?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, she like to cook. She really like it.

KL: Yeah. Okay does she like to clean her house? (laughing)

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she like it. She do it every day too.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So some the house is like sometime and the cooking’s every day.

KL: Does she, um, try and teach her children?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA:  Yes

KL:  Does she enjoy that?

NA:  Translates my question into Burmese

YM:  Answers in Burmese

NA:  So she teach about, um, to read and to study and then to sew, to sew, like sewing the dress or sewing the clothing or something. She get a machine sewing machine.

KL:  Does she teach them about her values like her religion and her beliefs?

NA:  Translates my question into Burmese

YM:  Answers in Burmese

NA:  Yeah, she did.

KL:  like what kinds of things are important for her to teach, does she think?

NA:  Translates my question into Burmese

YM:  Answers in Burmese

NA:  She say the important for her is they have a writing there and then she teach them. They have the book, a book.

KL:  The Torah?

NA:  Yeah, a book for the Torah yeah

KL:  So she teaches them the Torah?

NA:  Translates my question into Burmese

YM:  Answers in Burmese

NA:  Yes, she do.

KL:  What is this writing on the wall?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She say she can read it, but she cannot tell in Burmese.
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She can tell she cannot tell the meaning in Burmese
KL: So she can read it in Arabic, but she can’t tell the meaning?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She can read in Arabic so she cannot tell the meaning [I’m not sure if they’re saying she can or can’t read it in Arabic].
KL: Okay
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So she say she has been learning about Arabic. Yeah she has been um she has been learning about Arabic so and then they they have to so when they study Arabic the meaning and mostly the meaning and they need to study another school then just only the important, only the man, they can take it another school the woman the woman they cannot take easy for another school
KL: They cannot take what?
NA: They cannot they cannot go into (?) to get a study there
KL: They cannot go into
NA: Just only the man
KL: they cannot go into the school?
NA: Just only husband, for someone like family, they have a family, right?
KL: Where? I don’t understand what she’s talking about? Like going to church or going to like the synagogue

NA: Yeah, yeah to church

KL: or I mean the Mosque?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Just she say just a few only the woman go into, um, the different other school like Arabic to like um (?)

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah like like a monk like a monastery just like a monastery like our best school monastery before they was we learning together for the men and women and after then when they leave to study another step just a few just a few with the woman a lot of the men go into like a monastery yeah

KL: Except for it’s not a mon, it’s a Mosque

NA: Yeah

KL: for the Muslims, right?

NA: Yeah, yeah it just got to call it that

KL: Okay and so since she’s a woman has did she have a chance does she have a chance to learn Arabic now is she learning Arabic?

NA: Right now just study on

KL: On her own?

NA: um, translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: right now she no more study

KL: she doesn’t study Arabic?
NA: Yes, she doesn’t study anymore, right now.

KL: When did she study it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Before um she she had Burma

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: When she was in Burma she studied

KL: Oh okay

NA: Arabic

KL: Was that when they were mainly only men?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: When there was a time. So they learn it together both the men and the woman

KL: And did she learn in Thailand?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No. She said just only Burma

KL: Okay. Um, in Burma did they learn? Where did they learn? Was it in the Mosque?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Yeah like the like the um yeah like a monk like a monastery at the monastery not like Buddhist monastery they have a kind different like the monastery like a monk they have a monk too. They have monk too

KL: The Muslims have a monk?

NA: Yeah, like, like, yeah, like a monk something

KL: But it’s not a real monk. It’s just similar?

NA: Yeah

KL: to a monk you’re saying

NA: Yeah, yeah, yeah

KL: like a their religious leader

NA: Yeah exactly

KL: their spiritual teacher

NA: Yeah

KL: or whatever

NA: Yeah so

KL: Okay and then their Mosque, which is like a monastery

NA: Yeah

KL: Are you Buddhist?

NA: No I’m not Buddhist

KL: Are you

NA: But I was be Buddhist um before I was I was 10 years old

KL: You were 10 years old

NA: I heard about the, um, gospel, the scripture
KL: Are you Baptist then or?

NA: Yeah, I’m baptized

KL: Baptist

NA: Yeah, I’m Baptist

KL: Oh, okay

NA: when I was 11 years old

KL: and you were 11?

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh, okay

NA: and then I go to (seminary?) and study about a lot of the scripture and about that and then share it to the other people.

KL: Oh okay

NA: I share it to the other people. I know about it a lot.

KL: Okay, I knew a lot of the Karen people were Baptist, so

NA: Cool

KL: Yeah

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, um, all right. You just used a lot of, um, comparisons to Buddhism to explain things so I was wondering

NA: Good

KL: Um, all right. So she doesn’t wear a does she wear a head covering when she goes outside?

NA: Oh
KL: Some of the other Muslim women do

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Um she say she did not wear just only some time so she say and then some people like you say some people go outside they wear she say is really good for them when they wear (?)

KL: She said it’s good for other people

NA: Yeah

KL: who want to but she doesn’t do it all the time

NA: She doesn’t do it all the time just only couple of time (laughing) for, for her

KL: Why?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, because she don’t like, sometime. So, when the people the other people they wear cap is they would get a lot bless from God she say

KL: So the other people would get blessings from God

NA: Yeah a lot (laughing)

KL: What about her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say lucky more when the people wear cap they are liking more and then

KL: God likes them more

NA: Yeah is that thing
KL: So why doesn’t she wear it then?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say there is a

KL: a ritual?

NA: like religious, for they’re, they are religious

KL: they are religious?

NA: Yeah

KL: Is she religious?

NA: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah so they need to wear they need to wear like the dress of the cover their their body and that is their religious mark

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Oh yeah

KL: Um is she religious?

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So she say um she don’t like to, she don’t like to do like that all the time, that she says she all she get a more sin (laughing). Sometime she get more she have she she has more sins.

KL: She has more sins?

NA: Yeah

KL: So a sin to her is just doing things God doesn’t want her to do?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Or Allah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say just like the woman for them all they don’t need to do like know pretty just not the other kind just just cover and just only their religion

KL: Umhuh.

NA: the dress, they are dress

KL: So she said that’s what women are supposed to do Who are Muslim?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Why doesn’t she do it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So she says she, she don’t want to

KL: Why not?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say she like somethings. Um I can’t say (?) why she don’t want to do (?) be- cause a a lot of stuff and like make a lot of a lot of stuff for her and so too many and then

KL: Is it hot?

NA: she don’t want to wear yeah is is it’s not hot like (?)

KL: It’s uncomfortable or heavy or what does

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Not heavy like, in your house, like you have too many trash or is there you have a lot of stuff you have many things so you look something oh my house is (?) you too many kind of like

KL: It looks cluttered?

NA: Yeah, yeah, yeah

KL: And does she feel like she looks cluttered if she has that much stuff?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So the people usually they do does not clutter for them and then she just wear sometime she just she don’t wear it all the time she just she just wear sometime you know like when they have a they are day or something sometime she wear it outside

KL: For an important event?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah just for her she wear it like for important day or something
KL: Like a religious event or something?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Yeah
KL: Okay does she think it’s hot to wear?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Not really hot
KL: It’s not really hot
NA: Like sometimes hot on summer, she say yeah is really is hot too.
KL: So it is hot or it’s not it’s a little bit hot?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
KL: Or a lot
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Um depend on the region, the weather
KL: Depends on the weather?
NA: Yeah, depend on the weather
KL: But that’s not why she doesn’t wear it then?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So just stay home and then she doesn’t wear and then only sometime for important
day and the important for the religion and then she at home she wear like this clothing
because is easy for them her to do her stuff or to clean her house and cook.

KL: Right

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay early on when I interviewed you, Ya He Ma, you said that you think it’s very
important for you to be home with your children and that you like being a mother be-
cause you feel like it’s a really important job. And then later you said you were thinking
of um that you want to go get a job. Do you believe both or are, um, what what are your
thoughts? Have you changed your mind? Do you understand what I’m asking?

NA: Yeah, yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she say there’s a part she, um, usually for her culture like, usually the hus-
band working, they’re working. So, the wife stay home and take care of the children and
sometime, sometime, and then the woman help the husband too and then right now why
she want to work because right now the children grow up a little bit and then the chil-
dren, if the people gonna take care take care for her children, and then she can work.
She can have help her husband and help family and more.

KL: Okay

NA: Yeah

KL: Um last time she said she wanted to wait till her son was five did she change her
mind about that then?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So, she say yeah, just only sometime she think, just only she think, um, she want to work. Just like that so.

KL: So it depends what mood she’s in

NA: Umhuh.

KL: she changes her mind?

Na; Yeah she just she just think if the people gonna take care of the children she can work or she can take care of the children now, just to think, she see.

KL: So she’s hasn’t decided what she thinks

Na; Yeah

KL: she’s kinda thinking of lots of things

NA: Yeah, yeah

KL: Oh, I do that too sometimes, a lot of times.

NA: Oh (laughing)

KL: You can tell her that (laughing)

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say, but for you it’s really easy and you can get a job and for her you can get you can go difficult.

KL: Umhuh. Oh I don’t know it’s not always easy for me either to make choices. Like right now I’m spending most of my time with my daughter too, but sometimes I wonder if I should spend more time with my daughter or less time.

NA: Umhuh.

KL: but I feel like it’s important to be with my daughter also so.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, she say yeah, to say yeah for her right now she want sometime she

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, she say sometime she talk to her husband. She say, ‘I want to work.’ She talk to her husband and then also then her husband say, ‘Hey just take care your children. I don’t want you work right now. When you, you should, you baby gonna grow up more and then you can work.’

KL: Yeah

NA: But, she say yeah I’m just thinking about it right now for future she say like that

KL: Okay yeah

NA: just talk to her husband

KL: Right okay. Yeah sometimes I talk I talk to my husband about things like that too because I’m trying to decide what’s best for my family and best for me and best for my husband, because I want to do what’s the best for everybody.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Something else I wanted to ask – She told me last time that she left, um, Burma because her mother-in-law led them to the refugee camp so they could get food. Did I understand correctly?

NA: Her mother in law?

KL: Yeah, her mother in law led her to the Mae La Refugee Camp before her – there was no violence at that time, but they were hungry and they couldn’t find enough work?

NA: Oh

KL: Is that, did I understand correctly?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese.

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So, she say, yeah, um, when she was be she left Burma they came to the Mae La camp and then the first time difficult for them, for for food and for something what they needed

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Okay she say she already talk to you, like she last week, she live in Mae La camp a long time like take 7 years

KL: Right I know yes um but what I was trying to check is that she went there before there was violence in her village which she says that’s true, correct?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say yes, but, um, the people keep the food um back. The sun really bad the people give the food like rice and oil.

KL: Yes

NA: and bean or something (?) but for some and just one one month one month a person for the they keep the one box the rice and one box of the oil um one bottle of the oil and the chili a little bit and bean a cup or two cup I think before um every month they start over for just December, January first the people keeping next next next (?) is can be February first right so before um before they cannot begin another month to it’s not like only fifteen days they take and then or twenty day and then they gone their food is gone

KL: So in the refugee camp she saying they gave her like maybe one box of rice

NA: Yeah

KL: and one thing of oil at the very beginning of the month and they won’t give any more ‘til the next month

NA: Yeah

KL: but the food will be gone

NA: Yeah
KL: half way through the month

NA: Yeah, yeah

KL: and then she’ll

NA: like twenty days gone but they still to take they needs to take like 30 days

KL: Right

KL: like that

KL: so they’re still hungry

NA: Yeah sometime

KL: Okay partly why I wanted to make sure I understand when she was leaving is because um I wanted like another time she told me that her village had been destroyed

NA: Umhuh.

KL: and she’d heard stories of violence? I was wondering if her village had been destroyed after she was already in the camp

NA: Oh okay

KL: and how she heard about it

NA: Okay

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Okay, yeah, she say in the village in the Burma is really hard everything release to go to work by self and then when they came to the refugee camp they get better life, but some people and she some people they get food um all people they get food but some replace before the end of month the food was be gone is just like that

KL: Right but has her village been destroyed?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Um, when?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Oh okay she say yeah and when she did not remember of the day and year the time she say usually what happened rainy like over there we have only 3 season like 3 weather like hot, cold and rainy and there in America we have 4 seasons the weather

KL: Okay

NA: Yeah they have

KL: So she said that um it’s usually rainy there?

NA: Yeah um

KL: when the (?)

NA: usually happen the

KL: what usually happened?

NA: the rain the rain every time

KL: the rainy season?

NA: Yeah, yeah

KL: What happened in the rainy season

NA: because because why she and when mostly rainy we cannot find we cannot locate the food must be very can’t get it

KL: So it’s very difficult to get food during the rainy season

NA: Yeah
KL: well that makes sense because you mainly just want to stay inside because it’s flooding outside,

NA: Yeah

KL: is that right?

NA: Yeah, yeah and then

KL: Okay

NA: when they move to the Mae La camp the get some food some oil some food yeah is better than better for them they get

KL: Right

NA: they get better

KL: That makes sense

NA: Yeah

KL: Um, what I wanted to know though is how did she find out her village had been destroyed?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah she say how to do how to look in the how to look in the (?) she says she um she didn’t have any idea and she did not hardly do nothing and she say um they just only walking if you would get a job like people walk there people walk there and people work a day and for the food at nighttime is like that in the morning work and the evening for they can have a food like that in the village they just save their life like that

KL: I don’t understand so the morning people work and then they eat

NA: Like like people work in the morning like like people work in the morning you know people can get a food or can have something

KL: Cannot get enough food
NA: some money and then they can they can have some food some eat to eat and for the evening is like that work a day and for night time for their they can save their life about that

KL: Right

NA: Yeah

KL: Um but I was trying to understand how her village was destroyed. So

NA: Village destroyed

KL: Yeah um are you do you understand my question because she keeps on answering talking about like the problems of not having enough food but did I understand correctly when she was saying that her village had been destroyed also by um like by the soldiers?

NA: Oh

KL: Or was it not destroyed, is her village still here?

NA: Oh

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes , sometime was so there’s. She don’t know about right now before was be happen that

KL: Before what had happened?

NA: before happen like no the soldier come in the Burmese soldier, they come in the village and people and village need to give the food or something and to work with them to to help them if they need the the village people then they do something for them the village people kind of needs to need to do everything need to be done

KL: So before the soldiers came into the village and then told the people that they had to give the soldiers food?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Yes

KL: Yes, okay and were some of the people taken as porters? Is that what you mean when they you said that they had to help the soldiers? [From later research, I believe she meant forced, unpaid labor for public works projects, although she could have also meant the soldiers used the people as porters or mine shields].

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes she say but was different

KL: Was this when she lived there or was this after she already left?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, before, um, when she left she still here, yeah.

KL: When she was still in her village in Burma?

NA: Yeah

KL: this happened

NA: Yeah, was something like that and then right now she left was be happen all was happen right now she don’t know but

KL: So they might have rebuilt the village?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She don’t know

KL: So, the soldiers came when she still lived there, um, was it scary when they came?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
NA: Yeah, so sometimes she scary. Sometime she not afraid, um, because when she afraid about for the well being people kind of fighting about and shooting.

KL: How old was she?

NA: Before she was twenty years

KL: She was twenty when the soldiers came?

NA: Yeah

NA: So, when she was a a child, when she was a child, yeah. So sometimes the soldier come in and she was, she saw that.

KL: Just one time or many times?

NA: More than one time

KL: Okay. But that’s not why she left?

NA: So, her husband in the, in the camp and then her husband call. Yeah, her husband, her husband mother is no, like she’s mother-in-law, just know about her and then call her and then she come in the Mae La camp.

NA: Asks question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say in the Mae La camp is we be safe, life better there than Burma.

KL: Okay, um, but she doesn’t know if her village still exists

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No, she don’t know anymore. She says so long time ago like 10 years

KL: Okay. Does she, do men and women have different roles in Burma? Do they do different things?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No, she say.

KL: Not different roles?

NA: No different, she say, no different roles. She don’t know about that and the family just stay in the family.

KL: That’s what women do or men too?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese.

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, she say another, the other, she doesn’t know about that. She just know about, for example, when they get married they just stay with their family they just want and be with the family and that.

KL: Did she live with her mother in law when she got married or by herself or just with her husband?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So she just be with her husband and the family like that

KL: What did her husband do?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Like under table work, like is call under table work

KL: In Burma?

NA: Um, yeah in Burma

KL: Under the table work?

NA: Like

KL: Odd jobs

NA: the America call under table you know what that mean? I heard that before.

KL: like illegal word?

NA: like people work you know like the other person you know say hey you can work for me today I gonna pay for you and then you can you can um you want to work with me like couple hour than I pay you that day

KL: So, odd jobs?

NA: Yeah odd job

KL: Odd jobs. Her husband worked odd jobs in Burma.

NA: Yeah, just like that

KL: Was it mainly building houses or farming or lots of different things?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She say, um, her husband work like farmer for another people
KL: Right
NA: just work day by day, like that
KL: So he did not build houses in Burma just in Thailand?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Yes, she say her husband work for the house build
KL: He built houses too
NA: Yeah
KL: Okay, um, I think that’s good for today.
NA: Oh
KL: So, um, is there anything else she wanted to talk about or tell me about?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She said just that
KL: Okay, does she ever have, does she have any questions for me?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She say no questions
KL: No questions, okay
NA: She (?)
KL: Okay well thank you
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say um she ask do you want to have some food for her, she make, she is making some food like, like, like she no food no rice like sticky rice, something you want to have it?

KL: You can tell her that sounds really good, but I am supposed to go

NA: Oh

KL: eat with someone else (laughing)

NA: Oh she say um

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She thank you, she say

KL: Okay thank you (laughing)

NA: (laughing)

KL: Okay

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Um so I have these forms to sign and then also I am going to go write all of this down and then go through one more time with my writing and check all the facts and then I’ll probably want to come back tomorrow

NA: Umhuh.

KL: to just check any last questions I have and I think I’ll be almost done

NA: Umhuh.

KL: Um, could you tell her that?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, so is, is it okay if we come tomorrow, if she, if I’m ready?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay and okay I hope I’m not taking too much time

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: but I enjoy talking to you. It’s very fun. I really enjoy being able to visit you, so.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Okay, so here are the forms again.

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Oh

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She just ask what we need to do right now

KL: Okay

NA: and have pen

KL: Okay here’s a pen

NA: Okay (laughing)

KL: (laughing) Okay so she needs to put, she’s done this before, here’s the last one she did.
NA: Oh

KL: she has we have to do one every time

NA: Wow

KL: just to make sure that because I have to have one at the end when I turn in to the library

NA: Umhuh.

KL: all of my tapes and transcriptions

NA: Umhuh.

KL: and so I get one every time just to make sure I don’t forget at the end

NA: Oh

KL: so she just needs to do the same thing as before – So, put her name here, her name here, she needs to sign it, um, actually yeah that she needs to sign it there so it’s the same here and then this one actually goes onto the back and then there’s one for you too for your name and everything and I’ll just do mine later

NA: Yep

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

End of recording
KL: This is Karen Lambert. It is Friday, September 10, 2010, and it’s the last day of Ramaden. It’s, what time is it now? Is it 4 p.m.?

NA: Yeah

KL: About. It’s about 4 p.m. and I’m here with Ya He Ma and my translator Nyunt Aye.

NA: Yeah

KL: and in addition, um, Yah He Ma’s oldest daughter – Are you the oldest?

Daughter: Yeah

KL: Oldest daughter is here and her cousin, who’s name I don’t know. What is your name?

JB: Jan Bee, Jan Bee

KL: That’s right. Spell it for me one more time

JB: J A N

KL: Jan Bi, right?

JB: Yeah

KL: Jan Bi

JB: B I

KL: Okay, all right and I’m following up with some more questions for Ya He Ma. But today is kind of a special day though. Everybody’s dressed up in nice clothing because
they just went to a feast for the end of Ramedan or Ramadan and a lot of them are sharing different treats with each other. Her, um, Ya He Ma’s mother-in-law just sent over some treats and Ya He Ma shared some treats with me also that are made out of a kind of glutinous rice from Thailand and coconut milk and, um, some sugar and some other things on on it, but it’s really good. Um, so anyway (laughing), um, I wanted to ask you, though, I was trying to look up some more history on the refugee camps and you lived in Nabu, correct? Is that the name of the town that you were or the village you in, was Nabu?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Nambuna

KL: Nabu?

NA: Yes

KL: And what I was reading said that Nabu was destroyed in 1997 by the, um, SLOC when the military came in. Does that sound right or does that sound incorrect to you?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she say.

KL: Yes? Okay. It said that when it was destroyed the mili, military destroyed the Mosque in the village and they also drove out around a thousand Muslims. Does that sound accurate?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: That’s true?

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay. Was she there when it happened?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: So behind her, just the village, Nabu village.
KL: Umhuh.
NA: behind there
KL: Behind there, what?
NA: behind like, know the neighbor, she didn’t
KL: She was in the neighboring village?
NA: Yeah, she was there
KL: Oh, so she didn’t live in Nabu. She lived in the neighboring village?
NA: Yeah, yeah
KL: Oh, so.
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She just behind
KL: What was the name of her village?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Deyeto, deyeto, she said.
KL: De Yet O?
NA: Yeah
KL: Do you have any idea how to spell that?

YM: No

NA: De Yet O

KL: What’s your guess?

NA: She said really close, you know. Nabu village, so, just behind so she just call

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: just behind Nabu, just like that

KL: Was it smaller than Nabu?

NA: Um, it’s a small village like, just behind that they call

KL: Just kind of like an empty area behind it?

NA: Yeah

KL: Like kind of a country

NA: Just only small place

KL: Okay

NA: like the the farm

KL: So, kind of like the outskirts, the farmland?

NA: Yeah, yeah yeah just farmland

KL: So it was called De Yet O, the farmland?

NA: De Yet O

KL: De Yet O was the name of the farmland

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay so it was not a village
NA: Yep

KL: Okay and she was there in 1997 when Nabu was destroyed? Is that right?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: She was, okay. Did she see it destroyed or did she just hear about it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She see it

KL: She see it

NA: Yeah

KL: What did she see?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She says, she saw the soldier and the soldier coming, and there what soldiers do

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

NA: um, was the soldiers do, and, uh, she doesn’t know exactly, but soldier take it all some thing, you know just like that she see

KL: They came in and then they took off after they?

NA: Yeah they they take um something

KL: They take things?

NA: Yeah kind of a thing that just like that
KL: Did they burn the village?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Just aban, just abandon the village

KL: The people abandoned the village?

NA: Yeah, the soldier coming, but the soldier doesn’t burn the village, just only the soldiers tell, tell the people really hard

KL: Scared the people

NA: Yeah scared them and um tell the people you guy need to get out this village and then the soldier come in tell

KL: So did the people leave?

NA: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, so then the people left. Did she leave also from De Yet O?

YM: De Yet O, yes

NA: De Yet O

KL: De Yet O?

NA: Yeah

KL: Are you from De Yet O also, De Yet O also?

YM: No
KL: No. Are you from Nadu? Nabu?

YM: No, I have the Burmese

KL: Umhuh.

YM: that little kid coming to Thailand

KL: Oh, so you grew up mainly in Thailand?

YM: Umhuh.

KL: Okay. So what did she still stay in De Yet O?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, she just, she stay there and then not too long in there, she came to the Mae La camp.

KL: So from what I figured that was probably around 3 years later that she went to the camp. Does that sound right to her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes she said

KL: And when she left did she leave just because she was trying to get food and work, she was hoping for more food?

NA: In the

KL: In the refugee camp

NA: In the refugee camp

KL: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, when she get in the refugee camps she just walk further and other people day by day just like that

KL: Did the fact that the, um, soldiers had driven the people out of Nabu – Did that scare her when that happened, when she heard about it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

NA: In the refugee camp? When she came to the refugee camp?

KL: No, before the refugee camp

NA: Oh

KL: When she was still – In 1997, 3 years before she went to the refugee camp

NA: Umhuh.

KL: Um and the soldiers came to Nabu and scared everybody out of Nabu and told them to go away, was she afraid when she heard about that?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she was afraid too.

KL: She was afraid?

NA: Yeah

KL: Yeah. Did that make her want to leave or no?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No

KL: She wasn’t afraid?
NA: She was afraid, but the soldier doesn’t tell their village

KL: Oh so – So, she was afraid, but she didn’t want to leave, right?

NA: Yeah, she was afraid and

KL: but she still wanted to stay because they didn’t tell her she had to leave

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay, yeah, okay I understand. Okay did she sew when she lived in Burma?

NA: Sew, oh?

KL: Did she sew clothing like pretty clothing she made for her daughters?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: She did. Did she have a sewing machine at her house?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She didn’t know, yeah

KL: Where did she keep it? Did she have a table or did she keep it on the floor or where was it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Keep on the table

KL: So she had a table in her in her house

NA: Yeah
KL: Okay

NA: but they didn’t have electric lights like this

KL: So was it a pedal

NA: Yeah just a pedal

KL: a pedal?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So she say um she just she just sewing tin he light sometime and not too much

KL: Just for her family?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes sometime with a neighbor too.

KL: Okay and what type of things did she sew?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Like kind of like that

KL: So clothing?

NA: Umhuh.

KL: Did she sew tablecloths or curtains or anything else?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes she did it
Conversing in Burmese

KL: So how did you sew your daughter’s outfit? Did you buy the fabric with all the sparkles on it that she’s wearing right now?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah so um from the another country and then she make, she, she sewing but she just um from the original

KL: Umhuh.

NA: original scarf is coming like that and then she sew it back there

KL: The material came like that?

NA: Yeah the material came like that

KL: So event the sleeves, the sparkly stuff on the sleeves and on the front, all of that was already like that?

NA: Yeah, yeah, she sewed

KL: Okay does she have to sew it onto the shirt?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Is your friend leaving?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah
KL: Before she leaves, can, since she talked a little bit can she sign a release form please?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

JB: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes she say

JB: Answers in Burmese

KL: She only said a little bit but in order for me to put this, um, recording into the archive I’m supposed to have everyone who talks in it

NA: Umhuh.

KL: sign a form saying it’s okay

NA: Okay

KL: So I’ll stop this for a second and then we can do that.

End of recording
KL: This is Karen Lambert. It is Friday, September 10, 2010, still we just paused our recording for a moment because Jan Bi was leaving and we wanted to have her sign a permission form for what she said earlier. We are now resuming and we’re here with Ya He Ma, her middle daughter, her youngest son and our translator, Nyunt Aye.

NA: Yeah

KL: So um I was asking Ya He Ma about the outfit that she sewed for her daughter and I was asking if she had sewed on all of the sparkly stuff down the middle of it and along the tops. If that was stuff that she bought and then sewed it on or how she made it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: She sewed it on?

NA: Yes, she sewed on that

KL: Did she have a table in the camp and what kind of sewing machine did she have in the camp?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So just only the the sewing machine there’s only one the table off there and then they did not have another table because

KL: Oh, so, it the sewing machine was the kind that comes

NA: Yeah
KL: in a table and you fold it

NA: Yeah

KL: into the table?

NA: Yeah

KL: Ah, okay, yeah

NA: Yeah just like that

KL: Was it how did she get the sewing machine did she buy it or did she bring it with her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She bought, she buy it

KL: In the camp?

NA: She buy, um

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: yeah in the refugee camp

KL: Was it expensive?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: the person who sell it to her is like her, like her unc, her uncle

KL: Her uncle
NA: Yeah her like that because the they are neighbor and they know each other. So, like not really expensive.

KL: So, he gave her a good deal?

NA: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: So, he wasn’t not really related, but they were really good friends, right?

NA: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Is that right not related?

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay

NA: Not related

KL: Um, why did she want it? So that she could sew her family clothes or so that she could sew clothes for other people and earn money?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say, yes, um, for the family and another way sometime the people come in and they need to sew clothing she make for them and then

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: and then they pay money for her and then sometime you know when she think about um if if we cannot sew if we did not have a machine to sew and sometime we
need to go to a lot of people we need to make the clothing to sew to let them sew and then we need to pay like that so it really good way for them, for, for her family

KL: To save money?

NA: to save money some

KL: So they buy their own? They don’t have to pay other people

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay that makes sense. Does she have something that is her favorite kind of thing to sew? What kind of things does she really enjoy sewing?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say she like to sew everything. So, she favorite every, everything

KL: (laughing)

NA: and then she like to to sew her children clothing and anyone – like for the table

KL: Does she sew much now that she’s in the U.S.?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Before she, she has sewed like, um, more than in America.

KL: More before she moved here?

NA: Yeah

KL: Why?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, America here so no nobody doesn’t need to sew a lot of clothing in America
KL: So you can just buy it already sewed?

NA: Yeah

KL: Yeah sometimes here it’s more expensive to sew it, I think. Um, but it’s prettier (laughing)

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say we go to the DI, like, she pay, um, like cheaper and then we just buy five dollar we can get good clothing

KL: Yeah? I go to the DI sometimes too (laughing). I’m living on a student budget my I spend my money on tuition.

NA: I do too (laughing) I bought things first time I go to the people take me to the Deseret Industry and look at boy really nice clothing so I pick out, pick out a lot (laughing)

KL: (laughing) Yeah, does she understand what I said too?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She do too

KL: Yeah

NA: sometime I go to the Wal-Mart I see nice clothing but is expensive (laughing)

KL: Yeah

NA: we can get it just only two three we pay too much money and when we go to the DI we get a lot

KL: How did she get the money to pay for her sewing machine in the refugee camp?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: She say her husband work sometime in then they pay just a little bit little bit

KL: So they paid for it gradually?

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh okay so her, the man who was like her uncle

NA: Yeah

KL: said that it’s okay

NA: Yeah

KL: you take it and then just pay me a little for it

NA: Yeah, yeah when you get money yeah just pay a little bit little at a time and then sometime her husband work and her husband and give a little bit little bit and then when she’s sewing some people pay for her, she pay back like

KL: Okay so she bought it right when she got to the refugee camp at the very beginning or how long had she been there before she bought it?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: After she came to the refugee camp yeah she bought it

KL: Right away?

NA: Yeah

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: And was it the kind with a pedal or was it electric?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: with a pedal
KL: It had a pedal?

NA: Yeah

KL: What kind does she have here? Is it electric or does it have a pedal?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah right now she has an electric.

KL: Electric. Which does she like better?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say, um, electric’s better

KL: Electric’s better

NA: Yeah

KL: Why does she like the electric better?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, does not use any like leg to do

KL: It doesn’t, she doesn’t have to work as hard

NA: Yeah, yeah

KL: to move, move the pedal?

NA: Yeah is easier than pedal the pedal is just

KL: Okay, I also wanted to ask her um what what kind of fabrics did she use. Does she know the names of the fabrics that she used?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She don’t know the, the kind

KL: She doesn’t know the kinds okay

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She don’t know

KL: Were the fabrics similar to what she’s wearing now?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, just like this

KL: Like that so you right now you’re wearing the plain sage green top shiny buttons and then your skirt your wrap has a lot of patterns all over it and it’s pretty green and black

NA: Translates my comments into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: What did she say?

NA: She says yes, she like that

KL: Yeah

NA: and that like color she like it

KL: Yeah? What clothes does she like better does she like the ones that she makes herself better or does she like the ones that she buys at DI better?

NA: (laughing) Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Yes, she say she like better is for her sewing. And then sometimes she, she go into DI or someplace and then she go grab some clothing body and the size big or and she like she will buy for her and then she sewing make (?) for is really really good

KL: So she takes the clothes there and then she makes them better

NA: Yeah

KL: She like customizes them, makes them prettier

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh that’s good. You’re very talented that you can do that. I wish I could do that better.

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So sometime she go into DI she bought like you know the clothing is really tall and really long and she cut it and she sewing some make for the like T shirt something.

KL: Oh, okay. So the one that she made she’s wearing right now did she make that here?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she, she sewed here

KL: She sewed this outfit here?

NA: Yeah she sewed this outfit here, but the you know the, the one of the like skirt is from Thailand

KL: The, what is from Thailand?

NA: This from Thailand

KL: The skirt is from Thailand?

NA: Yeah
KL: But her shirt is from here?

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh, okay, okay.

NA: She brought she brought with her at Thailand

KL: She did she bring a lot of stuff here with her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Not too much. So, so, um, she can she can call her some people in Thailand and then some people can like mail her to the post office to send to her

KL: Oh, so she when she moved from Thailand to here she could call them up and they mailed her her stuff that she left?

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh, interesting

NA: and sometime she can like she send the money or something

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: so like if she has brother and sister or in the refugee camp and she send the money they can mail they can go to the post office and can send for her here, just like that

KL: Okay, so did she have lots of stuff mailed to her after she came here?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Not too much

KL: Just a little bit?

NA: Just a little bit
KL: What kind of stuff?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say like this picture

KL: Oh, did she own these in Thailand?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah in Thailand these picture they own in Thailand or (?) but she just call and her like people in neighbor in Thailand and then they send the money they send

KL: Did they go, went and bought them to send her or were they things that she had left there?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She said people sell in the camp

KL: People sell them. So she sent the money and then her friends

NA: Yeah

KL: or her siblings or whatever bought them and then sent them to her

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay

NA: Just like that

KL: Why did she want these pictures?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: It’s beautiful she say (laughing)

KL: Does it remind her of home?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Does she sometimes miss her home?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she say

KL: And does these help her miss it less because it makes her feel more like she’s at home?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she say so

KL: Okay

NA: but she say another one is real house that’s not pretty like that (laughing)

KL: The houses here are not pretty like there?

NA: No, if if she gonna have a house, but just not pretty like that

KL: Pretty like what?

NA: Like, like this picture

KL: She would like a house as pretty as the one in these pictures?
NA: Yeah, but as soon when she think, she think if she gonna have a house she gonna has a house will be, will be not pretty, will be not beautiful like that

KL: Why not?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Because the money (laughing)

KL: Ah yes. So, this would be her dream house?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Yeah, it is very pretty. It looks like it has a big deck and then it looks like there are big logs holding it up above the ground is that so that if it rains and floods the water doesn’t get into the house?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Yeah. Okay, um, is this a house in Thailand? Is it a real house?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She got in Thailand

KL: She thinks so in Thailand

NA: Yeah

KL: Yeah is it for a very rich person, ‘cause it’s a very big house?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Yeah what other stuff did she bring from Thailand to here?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Some shoe

KL: Did she bring those on the airplane?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say not in the airplane

KL: So, they were mailed to her?

NA: Yeah

KL: What else was mailed to her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She gonna look

KL: She’s gonna show me the shoes that she brought?

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay can I take a picture of this house?

NA: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say, yes

KL: Okay thank you. So that I remember what house she thinks is so beautiful

NA: (laughing)

KL: Okay I’ll stop the recording for a second since she’s

End of recording
Interviewee: Ya He Ma (YM)  
Translator: Nyunt Aye  

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)  
Date: September 10, 2010  
Place: Ya He Ma’s home  

KL: This is Karen Lambert. It’s still Friday, September 10, 2010, and, um, Ya He Ma is showing me some of the things that she asked, that she sent money back to friends and family to have mailed to her from Thailand. So, I’m going to describe those and I’m also going to take some pictures. Is that okay if I take pictures of them?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese  
YM: Answers in Burmese  
NA: Yeah  
KL: Yeah, okay.  
NA: she say, yeah.  
KL: So, what are they?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese  
YM: Answers in Burmese  
NA: (?) for face  
KL: They’re all things for the eyes?  
YM: Answers in Burmese  
KL: Oh, for their hair  
NA: For hair  
YM: Answers in Burmese  
KL: Does she wear them herself?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: When she wants to look pretty?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Okay, I’m going to take a picture up close of it in her hair. Okay, now a little bit closer? So, it looks like they are sticks made of either metal or wood and then they have a big pearl and then they have kind of sparkly glittery metal and um gems coming down. So, those are very pretty. Did you make them or did you buy them?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Just buy

KL: Buy them?

NA: Yeah

KL: And then what is this in the box?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: Is it something like makeup for her face?

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah makeup for face. She has one open

KL: Okay, she gave me this powder. Is it similar to this?

NA: Yeah, before I see that. People make like tree, tree bark.
KL: Yeah, it’s made from tree bark.

NA: Have you use it?

KL: No, it’s still closed.

NA: Oh

KL: This is what you gave me. Is this the same as that or different?

YM: No, is different

NA: Different

KL: It’s different, okay.

NA: different. Oh, this one for this.

KL: This is the same as that?

NA: No

KL: No, it’s different.

NA: is different

KL: So is this for your skin? It’s a cream that you put on your skin? Can I take a picture so I can remember what it looks like?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Oh, turned my camera off.

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: I’m having problems with the light. Here let me change the setting. Okay so this is something – Is it something that you use only for special occasions or do you use it all every day?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: Yeah every day
KL: Every day. Does she put it all over on her face everywhere or just
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KL: Oh, okay
NA: Yeah
KL: So it’s like foundation?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KL: I have foundation too. Mine is in a bottle like this
NA: Oh
KL: But I just wear it under my eyes (laughing)
NA: (laughing) Oh
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KL: What is the other type? What is this other stuff?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
KL: Archee Burra time pure pearl cream for export only. And it says that – It says a lot of stuff in a lot of different languages. Looks like many people who speak many languages buy this.
NA: Yeah, like many people use it, maybe Chinese

KL: Chinese people also?

NA: use in Korea

KL: Are these Chinese symbols down here?

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Can you tell? Is it in Burmese anywhere?

NA: They have Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No Burmese

KL: It’s not in Burmese?

NA: They have Thai

KL: Thai

NA: And then this Chinese or Korea

KL: Either Chinese or Korean, you’re not sure

NA: No

KL: and then it looks like it’s in English

NA: Yeah English right here

KL: Oh, interesting. So she has people mail her this stuff from, um, Thailand?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, they have Burmese here

KL: Oh okay
NA: They have Burmese (?)

KL: and that came with this?

NA: Yeah

KL: That’s instructions

NA: Yeah in both

KL: It’s in so many languages wow

NA: Yeah Burmese (laughing)

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

KL: And then what are these? Are these vitamins, multi vitamin?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: For face

KL: Oh, it’s a cream with vitamins in it?

NA: Cream

KL: for your face?

NA: Yeah

KL: It says, ‘world’s number one fair and lovely multi vitamin total fairness cream,’ (laughing) interesting. So does she put this on underneath her foundation?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Yeah. Is it expensive to have them send her these from Thailand?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, she say. For the Thai money is like a hundred [says something in Burmese] hundred or five hundred and a half or something.

KL: How much is that in American dollars does she know?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Like four or five dollars, five doll

KL: Just to buy this?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

NA: Yeah, just to buy this, buy

KL: Okay and then how much does it cost to have it shipped?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So like twenty five kilo

KL: Like what

NA: Um one box gonna be half like twenty five kilo you gonna pay like Thai money is like six thousand, for Thai money, six thousand

KL: It’s like six thousand in Thai money. How much is that in American, does she know?

Na; Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Like two hundred
KL: Around two hundred dollars in American?

NA: Yeah

KL: And how much stuff can she get in a 25 kilo box

NA: Yeah twenty five kilo box

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Can you hold your hands like maybe about a foot long

NA: Yeah like that

KL: and like maybe a foot tall

YM: Yeah tall

KL: and then a foot wide? Yeah

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Like something things heavy so get some more if like something that’s not heavy get a big box

KL: Right so if it’s light you can get more and if it’s heavy you smaller

NA: yeah

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Oh, like they have all things in box, um, only one thing and then some people if they gonna take for somebody you bring you stuff like if gonna heavy you put half if gonna be not heavy you can put full

KL: Put more

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh, so they bring all those stuff and then see how much they can fit
NA: Yeah

KL: Oh, that sounds smart. So, can she buy this stuff in the U.S. or no?

NA: Those?

KL: Yeah

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: It’s not available in the U.S.?

NA: No

KL: So, that’s why she wanted them to mail it to her. What else did she have them mail to her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So usually she use it.

KL: Did she have them mail mail her anything else besides the maps and the makeup and the hair ornaments?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, something

KL: What else?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Oh, like picture. They mail her that
KL: Pictures?

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Oh, before she says she has take picture with you and then the picture photo like that in the picture photo, like that, in American.

KL: So she put portraits from Burma too?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

NA: Yeah she send to the, um, to the

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: um yeah she send directly to the major city, it’s called (?) and then people in the camp they come and get it.

KL: Oh, so it’s – How, so did she send pictures like the ones I took?

NA: Umhuh.

KL: to them?

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh

NA: She send with you too

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: yeah with you picture to

KL: Oh wow

NA: (laughing)
KL: We should get a new picture with us because I don’t really like the picture that I would have had before. It wasn’t very good I don’t think (laughing). Um so she sends them pictures, does she send them anything else?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No only picture

KL: Okay

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: When the winter snow coming so, so they take a lot of picture here with the snow when the winter and then we go into the store Wal-Mart or whatever now Wal-Mart picture and take it because people in the refugee camp they never they haven’t seen snow.

KL: Okay

NA: Me too before

KL: Yeah, before you came here?

NA: the first time (?) snow wow I’m really happy I’m playing with the snow (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: So how did she get here? Oh. Did she take an airplane to get here from the refugee camp?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So first thing they, they are in the refugee camp, they take like a a truck, a van to the Bangkok city

KL: they took a van or a bus
NA: Like a like a bus

KL: Like a bus

NA: a whole people like van

KL: Bus

NA: kind of van

KL: to Bangkok?

NA: yeah to Bangkok and then they get airplane

KL: Was it the first time she’d ever been on a plane?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: What did she think?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She very good for her. She like it

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah, she like it, she really like it. And then she stay, some people stay, before she, um, arrive there on plane you would get dizzy or something.

KL: Did she get dizzy?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: No
KL: Was it scary at all?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: When the plane gonna come down yeah a little bit was too scary for her
KL: Yeah? Did she look out the windows?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: No
KL: No?
NA: No
KL: Never looked out the windows? Why?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: No
KL: Why not?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: because the the window was been closed
KL: Oh it was closed
NA: Yeah is closed
KL: and it was covered

NA: Yeah

KL: Oh okay

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Okay, um, what did she bring on the airplane?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say just only five kilo she can bring with her on the airplane with her she can she can bring no she can carry with her that’s all

KL: Only what she could carry with her?

NA: Yeah, five kilo about like this only jacket and the important thing like paper work for her just like that

KL: Did she have bags of stuff she could carry with her?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No

KL: Not even bags?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Big bag um big bag just go a different way, she say

KL: There were big bags

NA: big bags go a different way like for for her is coming another on another plane
KL: So she checked them in the airport first and then she got on the plane and then they arrived later? She had big bags, but they didn’t go with her in the airplane they went in a different way to the U.S.?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say the bags go other way, um, the way different for her and then she came to the Utah, Utah state, and then she the bags was returned around there she already just get just got

KL: when she got to the state of Utah then the bags were there?

NA: Yeah

KL: So, what did she put in all of the bags. Now many bags did she have including the ones on the airplane and the ones that went separately?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: so three bag big

KL: three big bags?

NA: Yeah

KL: How many of them did she carry on the plane?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, five people is three bag

KL: five people

NA: Yeah, three bag in there in the airplane

KL: So the three bags were for all five people
NA: Yeah

KL: Oh interesting. So what did she bring? What was what was what of her stuff was in the bags?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Just only clothing, yeah, just only clothing, she say.

KL: Was the skirt she’s wearing one of the things in the bag?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Okay, and then on the plane she carried her paper work and a jacket?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: Did she have a purse with any money?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No money

KL: No money? Was she scared to come here?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No
KL: Why not?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Because while on the plane for someone in Thailand they came in the they come down to for someone in Japan and the other people show them, ‘hey you need to go here here or um people have to show to show them how to go, how to do, for to get on an airplane.’

KL: So people had shown her how to get into a plane

NA: Yeah

KL: so she wasn’t scared to get in a plane

NA: Yeah

KL: What did she think about coming to the U.S. She was going to a country that was far, far away from where she lived that was very different was that exciting or scary or how did she feel about that?

NA: Okay

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, the first time it was real scary for her live you know um she never have been there is far right and then she thought how many some people some people um tell when you need to arrive like 3 plane two place and would say and yeah she was little bit nervous

KL: You need her a tree place what does that mean?

NA: Um three plane the first plane take her to Japan and get another plane

KL: Oh, she had to transfer

NA: Yeah transfer
KL: Oh, how many times did she transfer and where to she transfer from Thailand? She went from Bangkok in Thailand to Japan and then where next?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Three transfers

KL: So Thailand to Japan and then where?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Oh Japan, after Japan to the Los Angeles

KL: Japan to where?

NA: Japan to Los Angeles, L A

KL: L A, Los Angeles

NA: Yeah Los Angeles Los Angeles

KL: then where

NA: Utah, after Los Angeles to Utah

KL: That’s a long way

NA: I do too, like that

KL: That’s the same one you went on?

NA: Yeah

KL: the same way? Okay

NA: Some people went to the Japan to Chicago

KL: to Chicago?
NA: New York and then they come to Utah

KL: But you went this way you went from

NA: Yeah

KL: Thai to Japan and then Japan to Los Angeles

NA: Yeah I did it

KL: and then to Utah. Okay when she went did she go with her husband and her three daughters on the plane?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yeah

KL: Okay. When we were talking before she told me that in the rainy season she had to take leaves from the roof and she had to cut firewood. Is that because she was – I was reading more about the houses or the huts that they lived in and it said that they had to replace the roofs every two years is that what she was talking about was she saying that she had to take the roof off and replace it before the rainy season so it wouldn’t leak? Is that what it was for?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say yes

KL: So, she replaced the roof?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: So, did she do it every year she replaced the roof or every two years or every three years or how often?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Just every, every year

KL: Every year. Why?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, because when the rainy coming and then if they did not already, already have already make it every year so when the rain coming is gonna be a problem for them they can’t they cannot go that easy, they cannot go get easy because the rainy when they save it they have it and there was be rainy they can’t, they can’t they can use it, they can make it fire or they can they can

KL: So if they if they prepare ahead it’s easy

NA: Yeah

KL: to make a new roof but if they don’t then it’s hard because it’s raining so hard it’s hard to get the materials

NA: Yeah, yeah it’s hard

KL: And would it leak then if they didn’t make it is that what she said?

NA: Yeah she said like that

, KL: Okay

NA: and then she can’t repair until um they can use prepare until the rain stop

KL: Oh okay

NA: Yeah

KL: That makes sense and so did she also store wood and collect wood before the rainy season?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese
YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes

KL: And that was for cooking her food?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Yes, for food

KL: Okay. Okay. Um, in the refugee camps what were the stores like?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Not the same like that, really different

KL: Right

NA: she say so the same like a building I got to tell like, they make like bamboo and tree and some leaf some leaf to call just like that leaf

KL: Okay. How did her mother die?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Like get sick

KL: She got sick, okay. What kind of sick? Does she know?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, she don’t know, she say

YM: Answers in Burmese
NA: oh, so kind of, um, she, she sick and she die because no good healthy for she did not have, she did not have a good health,

KL: Okay

NA: just like that

KL: Okay

NA: was being home how many year, how old

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: like 40 years old

KL: When she was about forty, that’s very young.

NA: Yeah, forty years old. She’s mom die forty year

KL: Were you very sad?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So she was be like 10, elev, um, twelve years old, when she was twelve years old so she, she get she feeling sad

KL: Wow.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: I just ask why, why because you get sick and because she was be young she don’t know ’bout nothing so she did not get a mom no more so she feels sad

KL: What do Muslims believe about death? Do they believe that they’ll see people again after in another world or another life or do they believe that they’ll never see them again?
NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: So, she believe, um, like maybe gonna come, gonna next life, yeah

KL: See in next life?

NA: Yeah

KL: That is the same that Mormons believe too, that my religion believes.

NA: Oh

KL: Okay

NA: The Mormon?

KL: Yes

NA: Oh I do go to the Mormon church every week

KL: Oh you do?

NA: Yeah

KL: I thought you were Baptist

NA: Um but I’m no, I’m not yet baptize again because I already baptize when I was eleven years old in the refugee camp

KL: With the refugees

NA: Yeah, so when I came here

KL: at the Baptist church?

NA: Yeah

KL: Right

NA: Yeah I came here not ready baptize again
KL: Oh, okay

NA: But I go to the Mormon church every week and learning a lot of stuff

KL: Oh okay

NA: So I’m I’m following the commandment

KL: Oh okay. Um All right. So, are you having a big dinner pretty soon? I noticed that a lot of people are coming over here. Is it because they are going to eat soon?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No just they come in, they just eat like that

KL: Just to

NA: Just they they coming and they just grab the food and to eat just like that

KL: They’re snacking on all the deserts

NA: Yeah

KL: for Ramadan, ah okay

NA: So right

KL: That is good

NA: That’s it

KL: Okay did she ever see anybody who was attacked or killed by soldiers?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: Never
KL: Never, okay. Um, is there anything else that she wanted to tell me or wanted me to ask about for today because if not I’ll probably end for now.

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: No

KL: No, okay. I might bring my daughter by next week. Would you like to see Jackie?

NA: Translates my question into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

NA: She say, yes

KL: Yeah, she is really big (laughing). She walks now.

NA: Yeah

NA: Translates my word into Burmese

YM: Answers in Burmese

KL: Okay, so if you will do that – oh here’s your boy

NA: Wow

KL: he just got home

NA: Who are you? I know you?

KL: Okay I’m going to end the recording so that we can sign the sheets again

NA: Yeah

KL: Thank you

End of recording
APPENDIX C. TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEWS WITH SAN DA

Interviewee:  San Da (SD)
Translator:  Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)
Interviewer:  Karen Lambert (KL)
Transcriptionist: Angela Swaner, with later editing by Karen Hunt Lambert
Date:  October 16, 2009

[The background is filled with the sounds of San Da’s children and later they turn the television back on, adding to the background noise].

KL:  So I have talked to, um, do you, does she know Ma Htwe Hla?

Dh:  translates my question into Burmese

SD:  answers my question in Burmese

HD:  Yeah

KL:  Yeah and then I also just talked to – What is her name? I don’t know her as well.

HD:  Her name?

KL:  The one I just met.

HD:  Um that’s

KL:  before

HD:  Ya He Ma

KL:  Ya He Ma.

HD:  speaking in Burmese

KL:  Do you know Ya He Ma?

HD:  translates my question into Burmese

SD:  ?

KL:  Okay and I was wondering if I could interview you also and I would put your – I would be writing your story – and then it would be on a document that’s available as part of the history of some of the refugees who came here, um, up in the library.

HD:  translates my question into Burmese

SD:  answers my question in Burmese

HD:  Yes

KL:  Yes, okay, it’s something that like her children could read her stories when they get bigger, so they could read about what her life was like, and if she forgets she can go back and read too (laughing)

HD:  translates my question into Burmese

KL:  But, it’s also something that people that are doing research or writing articles or whatever, can go and read and use too.

HD:  translates my question into Burmese

KL:  Did she – Is that okay?

HD:  translates my question into Burmese

SD:  answers my question in Burmese

HD:  Yeah

KL:  It’s fine. Okay, um. Is it okay if I ask you some questions now?

HD:  translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Yeah, okay, is it okay if I record them?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: It’s okay. Okay. Do want to just put it next to her?
HD: Okay
KL: Okay so first of all how do you spell your name?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: San Da
KL: How do you spell that?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: S E N
KL: S E ?
SD: S E
HD: S A
KL: A N
HD: S A N
KL: N as in NO?
HD: Yeah
HD: S A N D A, yeah
KL: S A N?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: D A?
HD: San Da, D A, Da
KL: Is D A a different word?
HD: Yeah
KL: San Da?
HD: San Da umhuh
KL: Okay
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: Is that the whole name?
HD: Yeah the whole name.
KL: Okay. How old are you?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: twenty nine
KL: twenty nine? Oh, you’re younger than me (laughing). [a later look at the date San Da gives for her birthday, in comparison to my birthday actually indicates she’s a few months older than me. I never had a chance to clear up this confusion.]
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: I’m thirty.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: (laughing) Okay. And how long has she lived in the United States?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Over 1 years
KL: Over one year?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: And she’s lived in Logan for only one month or for how long?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, one month in Logan
KL: Where did she live before Logan?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: Salt Lake
HD: Salt Lake
KL: For how long? The whole time?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: One years
KL: What did her family do in Salt Lake?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: They do work in the – in – in the, Salt Lake. Just the husband came to the Logan
KL: Oh
HD: to work in the (?) in JBS
KL: The whole time?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: So she lived in Salt Lake and he lived here and in Salt Lake
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Oh, was that lonely?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Why did she live there?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, at the first refugee resettlement they have, they used to live in Salt Lake
more than 6 month and they can move to the other city. [Director of Refugee Services in
Salt Lake City Gerald Brown said this is not true, as refugees are free to go wherever
they want in the U.S. anytime. However, if they move within the first eight months of
arriving they might lose access to many government services.]
KL: They’re supposed to stay there for 6 months?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Do they still require that?
HD: Right now?
KL: Umhuh.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah after 6 month they can leave.
KL: Okay but she probably had a lease or her kids were in school or something?
HD: Umhuh translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah they were contract and a lease
KL: So, she lived there with the kids?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, she live with her kids
KL: How often was her husband home in Salt Lake?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, she, he usually go back to Salt Lake every weekend.
KL: Where did he live during the week?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, um, he live in, um, I don’t know the address – is about one hundred, one thousand north, 300, 200 West.
KL: About one hundred, two hundred west?
HD: Um, no, one thousand north
KL: About one thousand north?
HD: North, yeah, and three hundred west, I think.
KL: and three hundred west?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: With roommates?
HD: Yeah, with a roommates, but right now they’re all gone.
KL: Because she’s here now.
HD: Yeah
KL: Okay. And is she happy to be here now?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, is happy (laughing)
KL: Yeah? Does she miss Salt Lake?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, she miss Salt Lake. Salt Lake is okay and Logan is okay too (laughing)
KL: Which does she like better?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, she likes both
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: because she used to live in Salt Lake for a long time, she thinks Salt Lake is better, but right now Logan is better too (laughing)
KL: Did she have lots of friends in Salt Lake?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Does she miss her friends?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: live in Logan?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Uh, her mom and dad in Logan too
KL: Oh her mom and dad
HD: and brother and sister, yeah
KL: So, your mom and dad and brothers and sisters live in Salt Lake?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, in Salt Lake
KL: Okay and do her husband’s family live in Salt Lake too?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
HD: her husband?
KL: her husband’s family?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No, just him
KL: Just
HD: him the hus the husband doesn’t have a relative or brother sister who came to America
KL: He does have a brother or he does not?
HD: No he does not have
KL: No relatives?
HD: No relative just him, but she have more relative, father, sister
KL: Okay, what refugee camp was she in?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Mae La
KL: Okay, so everybody was in Mae La that I’ve talked to
HD: Speaks in Burmese
KL: Did she know any of the other refugees who live here from then?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Yeah
HD: she knew someone
KL: She knew some of them?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Does she like being closer to her husband though?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes (laughing)
KL: (laughing) So she’s lived here just over a year in the U.S.?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, over a year
KL: How long was she in the refugee camp?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: 10 years
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Over 10 years
KL: Okay, so she was in the refugee camp over 10 years?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: and then how was it – Was it 11 years ago she left Burma? [If she left Burma when she was ten, and is now around 29 or 30, she actually must have spent closer to twenty years in the refugee camp].
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, about 10 years
KL: about 10 years ago
HD: she said more than 10 years. She doesn’t remember
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: She got… She says she got married too early when she was sixteen (laughing)
KL: Oh wow
HD: Yeah (laughing) That’s why she has a lot of kids.
KL: You can tell her I got married late. I got married when I was 27 (laughing)
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: That’s why I only have one [child] (laughing)
HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughing)
KL: But I’ll probably have another one sometime (laughing)
SD: says something in Burmese
HD: Yeah she says she has, um, one sister left in the Mae La camp. She have 3 kids
KL: 3 kids?
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Uh, she’s already plan come to the U.S. too, but they already apply for the same time, but right now she’s been here about one years, her sister is not coming yet.
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: So her sister’s planning to come here?
HD: Yeah, they plan the same time, but she have to wait for a long time.
KL: Why does she have to wait?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, she doesn’t know because her sister was to come, but she had to wait. She doesn’t know what’s wrong.
KL: Okay. Um, so she and her sister were both planning to come at the same time, but then her sister had to wait?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes they said they had plan the same time
KL: Is it a younger or older sister?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Younger sister
KL: Does she miss her sister?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, she miss her
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Sometime when she try to call her sister in (?), she says she miss all the family
KL: So does the sister have a phone?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: A cell phone or a different kind of phone like a land line?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, a cell phone
KL: Okay and let me get her – I got her name, but what is her husband’s name and her kid’s names
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Mong Ma
KL: Is that her husband
HD: Yeah
KL: How old is … ? How do you spell it?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
HD: M – Asks San Da question in Burmese
SD: M A U N G
HD: A U N G
KL: M A U N G?
HD: Umhuh and another word M
SD: M A I N G
HD: M E I N G
KL: M A I N
HD: N no N
KL: oh N
HD: No N (?)
KL: N as in NO?
HD: N A I
KL: Okay so kind of like the little boy?
HD: Yeah (?)
KL: except for he’s Maung Ma (CHECK)
HD: Yeah (laughing) Maung Ma
KL: This and her husband is Maung
HD: Maung Naing
KL: Na? Nine?
SD: Maung Naing
HD: Maung Naing
KL: Okay the other woman has a little baby named (?)
HD: translates my question into Burmese (laughing)
HD: Yeah
KL: Okay how old is her husband?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: (laughing) thir um thirty three
KL: Thirty three?
HD: Yeah
KL: How old are her boys?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: or what are her boys names?
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: N A I N G
KL: N E I N G
HD: Yeah like (?)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: N A I N G
KL: N A
HD: Yeah yeah N G
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: L I
Conversing in Burmese
SD: L I N
HD: L I N N yeah
HD: Naing Lin twelve, twelve years
KL: Okay
HD: Maung Min Tun
KL: M
HD: A
KL: A
HD: U N G
KL: So like that?
HD: Ma M I
SD: M I
HD: M I
KL: They’re both after their dad L Y N
HD: No M I
KL: Oh
HD: M I N
KL: M I N?
HD: T U A
KL: Tua?
HD: N T U N
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Nine years
KL: Nine
HD: Yeah
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Z A W
KL: What? Z?
HD: Yeah Z A W (laughing)
KL: Z A W
HD: Z A W Zaw Min Tun
SD: M I
HD: M I N T U N Tan, Zaw Min Tun
KL: How old is he?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Two, over two years
KL: Okay and then the girl?
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: M Y O M Y O
KL: Okay what M
HD: M Y O, M Y O
KL: (?)
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: W I N
KL: So M Y O
HD: M Y O yeah M Y O another name
KL: twice?
HD: Yeah twice M Y O
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: I N
KL: Like that?
HD: Yeah (?)
KL: And how old
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: 7 month. She’s an American.
KL: Okay. My daughter is 4 months, almost 5 months.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Okay. So, does she miss Burma?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: (laughing) Yeah. She miss the Burma but she cannot go back to Burma right now
KL: Why?
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Because is hard for them
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Because it’s horrible there?
HD: No is not horrible but
KL: It’s hard?
HD: Is hard yeah because they do not have enough money to pay for the flight
KL: Oh
HD: Yeah
KL: What does she miss about it?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Just miss the relative and some of sister
[San Da talks to her children]
KL: What is she watching? Is she watching a movie or television or what is this?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Just the movie
KL: What movie?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Just the movie
KL: What has she been doing this morning? Is she cooking? It smells like she’s been cooking?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, she’s cooking.
KL: Yeah, what does she cook?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um, she cook, um, shrimp
KL: Oh, shrimp.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and cook the potato
KL: and potatoes?
HD: Yeah
KL: Is it curry?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes, curry
KL: Does she like to cook?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Me too.
HD: translates my answer into Burmese
KL: Does she like to sew too?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Okay did she sew in Burma and in Thailand?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
[a child starts to complain/cry]
KL: We’re probably good for today
HD: Yeah
KL: Do you think we could come back? Is that okay?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: That’s okay. So, is it okay if we come back a couple of times and talk to her?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: Okay, thank you.
HD: translates my question into Burmese
End of recording

Interviewee: San Da (SD)
Translator: Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)
Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)
Date: December 30, 2009

KL: Hi, this is Karen Lambert I’m preparing for an interview with San Da, who is 29, at Riverwalk Apartments. We’ll be meeting at her home on December 30th 2009. Chapter
will be translating and I’ll be there with my daughter, Jackie, and in addition to San Da there might be some of her family members in attendance. Anyway I’m just testing here.

End of recording
Interviewee:  San Da (SD)
Translator:  Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)
Interviewer:  Karen Lambert (KL)
Date:  December 30, 2009

KL:  So this is Karen and I’m here with Chapter, my daughter Jackie who’s asleep and San Da whose house this is and it looks like two of her boys and her little daughter are also here.
HD:  3 boys
KL:  Oh one of her boys is in the other room
HD:  Yeah
KL:  so 3 of her boys are here.  And her little daughter who it looks like has earrings now.
HD:  (laughing)
KL:  When did she get her ears pierced?
HD:  translates my question into Burmese
SD:  answers my question in Burmese
HD:  Yeah one month ago
KL:  One month ago?
HD:  Umhuh.
KL:  That’s pretty
Child in background
KL:  How old is your daughter now?
HD:  translates my question into Burmese
SD:  answers my question in Burmese
HD:  Um from January just turning 10 month
KL:  10 months?
HD:  Yeah
KL:  Okay my daughter is 7 months now she’s
HD:  translates my comment into Burmese
SD:  answers in Burmese
KL:  She’s sleeping (laughing)
HD:  translates my comment into Burmese
SD:  answers in Burmese
KL:  Yeah.  So okay and I wanted to ask you today a little bit about your history.
HD:  translates my question into Burmese
KL:  For instance I was wondering if I could get some more information about what Burma was like and where you lived in Burma?
HD:  translates my question into Burmese
SD:  answers my question in Burmese
KL: But where did you live in Burma? What was the name of the village or the city?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Lam Boy
KL: Do you have any idea how to spell that?
HD: (laughing) I don’t know how to spell it
KL: (laughing)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Lam Boy
KL: L Y
HD: Yeah Lam Boy
KL: Lam?
HD: Lam Boy
KL: Lam
HD: Lam Boy B O I
KL: Oh B O R?
HD: Yeah W
KL: W?
HD: Yeah Lam Boi city
KL: that’s the city?
HD: Yeah the (?) city (?)
KL: I’ll try spelling (laughing) So that’s the city and that is in is it in like a larger county or province
HD: Like county like a county like a
KL: It’s in a county?
HD: (?)
KL: It’s in a it’s in a county
HD: like in Cache
KL: So what would be the name of the county?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Kwa Poon village
KL: Kar Poo?
HD: Kwa Poo
KL: Kar
HD: I think T A
KL: T A maybe?
HD: Yeah Tar
KL: Tar Kwan?
HD: Kwan
KL: With a K?
HD: Yeah, Kwan
KL: W?
HD: W A Kwan Po (?)  
KL: Kwa Po  
HD: village  
KL: and a village is larger than a city?  
HD: Um smaller than city  
KL: Oh so this is the village inside of this  
HD: Yeah  
KL: larger city  
HD: Yeah (?) city  
KL: Okay  
HD: Kwa Po  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
KL: Tar Kwa Po?  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
Conversing in Burmese  
KL: Okay now is that in Karen state?  
HD: translates my question into Burmese  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
HD: Yeah in Karen state.  
KL: Okay so all of you are from Karen state?  
HD: translates my question into Burmese  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
HD: Yeah  
KL: Chapter do you know where this village is? Have you ever  
HD: (laughing) No I never  
KL: Okay (laughing) okay. And how big is the village?  
HD: translates my question into Burmese  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
HD: Um, it is not really big like over one hundred houses one thousand houses  
KL: A thousand or one hundred?  
HD: translates my question into Burmese  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
HD: One thousand houses yeah  
KL: Around one thousand houses  
HD: Yeah  
KL: Okay and are most of the people there Muslim or Baptist or animist or Buddhist or?  
HD: translates my question into Burmese  
SD: answers my question in Burmese  
HD: Just only Muslim  
KL: Only Muslims  
HD: Umhuh.  
KL: And how long did she live there?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um she live there 10 years
KL: Until she was 10 years old?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes
KL: And then she went to the refugee camp from there or where did she go next?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Up till then she went to the refugee camp.
KL: Okay, does she, does she remember Burma then?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No, she doesn’t know anything (laughing)
KL: She doesn’t does she have like little memories occasionally?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Up till like the the village is destroyed and she came to the refugee camps and
never go back and she doesn’t know anything more
KL: Okay so did everyone from the village go to the refugee camps?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes but a lot of people they spread out they go to the refugee camps some people
go to the (?) different part
KL: So a lot of people went to the refugee camp and then some of them went to different parts of Burma?
HD: Umhuh yeah
KL: So that’s kind of the same as in the other
HD: Yeah is the same
KL: areas
HD: Like (?) village (?) but after (?) just this part of some of the people don’t want to
go to the refugee camp they stay (?)
KL: Okay. She’s waking up. Hi Jackie
HD: Momma’s here
KL: (laughing) How are you?
HD: She’s look at me she’s smiling at me.
KL: Okay so you went to the refugee camp in Thailand?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah in Thailand
KL: How did
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Mae La
KL: The Mae La refugee camp?
HD: Yeah
KL: Like Chapter too?
HD: Yeah the same camp
KL: and how did you get there? Did you walk?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: They have to walk across the jungle about two weeks a week a week (?)
KL: And who was with her how large how many people?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: 8 people count came with her
KL: Eight people?
HD: like her brother and sister and one (?)
KL: Like brother and sister and one uncle?
HD: Yeah and parents and
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: When she came to the refugee camp she take (?)
KL: Umhuh.
HD: is not is so small it
KL: She was that small?
HD: Yeah
KL: Or was she 10? Cause he’s not 10.
HD: Um but bigger than (?)
KL: But but little
HD: a little yeah
Conversing in Burmese
KL: How long was she in the refugee camp?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: She live in the refugee camp they after (?) she came to when she came to America
I don’t know how long
KL: Around 10 years?
HD: Yeah over 10 years, about 15 years
KL: About 15 years?
HD: Yeah
Conversing in Burmese
KL: What does she remember from the refugee camps?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: What was it like?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese (laughing)
HD: When she live in the refugee camp like a she have a good friend a good time but just only they don’t have (?) and like they have to stay in the tent [later I learned they lived in huts, rather than tents] for like a in a tent [hut] they also (?) food and some other stuff from the (?)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: but she can’t stay in the refugee camp she never get out [CHECK RECORDING]
KL: Oh, oh your son’s not happy
SD: Oh
HD: (laughing)
KL: Oh
Baby crying in background
KL: Here I’ll stop this for a second.

End of recording
Interviewee: San Da (SD)
Translator: Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)

Date: December 30, 2009

HD: Um this year three years
KL: (?) to turn three?
HD: Yeah
KL: In January?
HD: turn three years
KL: Okay. Okay we’re continuing again. So you said that you had a good time in the refugee camps but you didn’t have opportunity.
HD: Like a to go has to stay in the camp all the time (laughing)
KL: Yeah
HD: Yes she said like
KL: Okay in what ways did she have a good time?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: (laughing) answers my question in Burmese
HD: She doesn’t know how to say it (laughing)
Conversing in Burmese
HD: Yeah like a
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Umhuh.
SD: answers my question in Burmese (laughing)
HD: Yeah she said um when they live in the refugee camp she have a good time like to stay with her family and (?) they don’t need to worry like about food (?) and just (?) they cannot get out if they want but they have to stay in the camp all the time. There is a big problem of
KL: She was still a child did she play did they play games or do anything fun with the other children?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
Conversing in Burmese (laughing)
HD: Umhuh.
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um when she was a teenager she play with other friend and go to school and have (?) sometime
KL: She helped with the household with cooking?

HD: Yeah cooking
KL: Did many people have close friends um at the refugee camp or did they spend most of the time with their family?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah some of the people they have um friend some of people who doesn’t want to make a friend just stay with the family all the time (laughing) only like me yeah I stay with my aunt’s family all the time

KL: Hum

HD: where I had fun just playing playing the volleyball and soccer all the time I make some friend too

KL: (laughing) Did she play sports?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Sometime like she play in the volleyball with a friend

KL: Does she play other sports?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No

KL: She lived with her mom and dad both?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she live with her parents

KL: Does she have siblings?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: How many?

HD: How many translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Um 6 siblings

KL: Six

HD: Yeah

KL: All of them lived with her?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Were they older or younger?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: (?) older
KL: All of them were older?
HD: Um no she is the older
KL: She is the old one.
HD: Yeah she is the older
Conversing in Burmese
HD: All of her sibling here they live here in America but only one left in Thailand in the camp
KL: All of her siblings live in America except for one
HD: Yeah just one one brother live in camp
KL: And why does he still live in a camp?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: For her brother who left in the camp he already plan they already plan to come to America but he still waiting for the date the due date they are to come and he doesn’t receive the date yet
KL: Okay
HD: Yeah just he still waiting
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Are her parents here?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Her parents live in Salt Lake
KL: In the refugee camp did she live with any extended family?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes is all live with her family
KL: So like what about grandmas, grandpas, uncles, aunts?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No they she doesn’t (?)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah like she have a aunt they live right close to each other
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: There is her her brother kids
KL: Oh wow
HD: who left in (?)
KL: Are those pictures in the camp?
HD: Yeah
KL: Oh can I look at them?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: Oh, interesting. I’m looking at pictures of San Da’s niece and nephew this is the same girl right, the same boy?
HD: Um oh yeah the same girl
KL: who still live in the refugee camp the Mae La refugee camp. Pretty, how old?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: eight years
KL: eight years?
HD: Yeah and five years
KL: And five years old?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: They have another boy
KL: They have another boy?
HD: Yes
KL: also he’s two years? The is this how the refugee camps look mainly with the cinder blocks and um cement and kind of not that fancy looking kind of?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah there is the house
KL: Is this the house they live in right here?
HD: I don’t know
KL: the cinder block house?
HD: Look like a Mosque
KL: A Mosque?
HD: Yeah
KL: Is it a church?
HD: They have Mosque there
KL: Okay
HD: Umhuh.
KL: So are the houses similar to this?
HD: No, not really.
KL: Are they more like tents?
HD: Umhuh.
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Here is the
KL: Oh, so this is your sister?
HD: Um translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Oh, that is her sister
KL: Her sister
HD: Umhuh.
KL: And this is what is this paper that she’s showing me?
HD: This paper is like a
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: is a M O R U (?)
KL: M O I
HD: like a is so the people like they are legal to come to the other countries
KL: Oh okay
HD: with this paper
KL: So it’s the paper that
HD: Umhuh.
KL: it’s kind of like their
HD: like the
KL: legal document
HD: yeah refugee certificate refugee (?)
KL: Oh okay
HD: they give them
KL: That’s interesting
HD: Yeah
KL: Is this a Mosque that they’re standing in front of?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: It is a house I don’t know it’s some
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: they just build this (?) 2 years ago it’s not too long
KL: They just built what?
HD: they just build it
KL: They built it so it’s where the Muslims go to pray and things like that?
HD: Umhuh yeah
KL: In the refugee camp
HD: Yeah
KL: And where do they get the cinder block?
HD: Cinder block, which one?
KL: Well, this is looks like it’s made out of cinder block.
HD: Oh
KL: or bricks is that brick?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Oh like a they try to make this one
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: like a some are like a his her sibling who live in America have they like a (?)
KL: Oh to buy it
HD: Yeah
KL: So they bought it from the people who live in Thai?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah they just buy it from Thai
KL: Okay so people in the U.S. sent money back to the
HD: Umhuh.
KL: refugee camp
HD: Yeah
KL: so that they could buy it?
HD: Yeah
KL: Oh what about the clothes that the kids are wearing? They’re wearing nice clothes. Are they clothes that they would buy in Thailand or where did they get their clothes from?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: They just buy in the camp
KL: So you can buy in the camp?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Where did they get money from?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, lot of people they talk to each other just like a like a sibling in America just ask for the money to get their clothes like this
KL: So, people back in the U.S. send them the money to buy things?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Okay. Your niece and nephew are very pretty or cute kids
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Who are – is this the same boy right here?
HD: No
KL: A different boy? Oh, is that him? [gesturing to her son]
HD: Yeah he’s
KL: Him?
HD: Yeah (laughing)
KL: That’s your son?
HD: Yeah.
KL: Is that? What is he doing in the picture?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: That is the school in Salt Lake – took picture for him
KL: Okay
HD: Yeah
KL: He wore his hat to school?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: What kind of hat is it. Is that a religious hat or what?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Religious
KL: Is that like a skull cap or something like that?
HD: Oh there is the religion hat
KL: It is?
HD: Yeah for the Muslim
KL: What is it called or what is it?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um there is the hat like they have when they go to the Mosque. They have to put it on. Without this hat they cannot go to the Mosque
KL: And he wore it to school too?
HD: Yeah, sometime (laughing)
KL: Is this a religious school or just a public school?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah just public school
KL: Public school?
HD: Yeah
HD: and they still they celebrate the Halloween and like a (?) they just go wear their cultural clothes
KL: Oh, that’s funny.
HD: Yeah (laughing)
KL: So it was for Halloween?
HD: Yeah this for the Halloween.
KL: Is this last year last October?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah last year last year Halloween
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Just the most recent one?
HD: No it’s the last year
KL: So a year and a couple months ago
HD: Yeah umhuh
KL: Okay.
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: And the last two years in Salt Lake this one
KL: Okay
HD: Yeah
KL: And who’s who are these
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: This for the school camping
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah for him yeah
KL: Oh is this him?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: And who’s this?
HD: Is the daddy
KL: Oh that’s the dad
HD: Yeah
KL: Oh, okay
HD: is the daddy
KL: Okay the diploma is what?
HD: I don’t know really what
KL: the diploma in the JBS training program
HD: Yeah
KL: and is therefore awarded this diploma
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Okay well those are interesting pictures thanks for sharing
HD: translates comments into Burmese
Talking to baby
KL: You have a good son he’s helping a lot (laughing)
HD: translates comments into Burmese
KL: What are your kid’s names? Can I write down your kid’s names?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: (?)
SD: N A
KL: N as in nut?
HD: N A
KL: N A?
HD: I
KL: I
HD: N G
KL: N G?
HD: (?) L I N (?) the older son
KL: and how old?
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: twelve
KL: Okay and the next
HD: (?) N A U N G M I N T U N
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and another boy Z A W
KL: Z A
HD: W yeah
KL: W?
HD: (?)
KL: M I N
HD: Yeah T U N (?)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: three
KL: three
HD: and another (?)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: (?) M Y O M Y O (?) W I
KL: W I
SD: I
HD: N
KL: N? And how and she’s 10 months?
HD: 10 month
KL: Okay and what is your husband’s name?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Mang Mang?
HD: Mong Ma
KL: How do you say it?
HD: M A U N G
KL: M A hard to see it from here. M A U N G?
HD: N G N A I N G, N A I N G
KL: and how old is he?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: I think he was born in 1974 I don’t know how long how old is he
KL: 1974 so he’s probably around maybe 35 or so? Or
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Thirty four or thirty five
KL: Thirty four, she doesn’t know what year he was born
HD: January first
KL: January oh like everyone, January first (laughing) Which means he doesn’t know huh?
HD: Uhmuh.
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Oh
KL: Okay and she was born or she is twenty nine when is her birthday?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: January first
KL: January first
HD: January first 1975
KL: Okay so she’ll be thirty this week?
HD: Yeah
KL: Or at least according to the date that she thinks (laughing)
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: (laughing)
HD: (laughing)
KL: In Burma do you keep track of birthdays very much is that?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No (?) birthday they will celebrate ()
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: (?)
KL: Is that why they don’t know when their birthday is
HD: Yeah is there mostly they don’t celebrate the birthday
KL: Do the Karen people celebrate the birthday
HD: Some Karen people who are the Baptist they do celebrate birthday
KL: But others don’t?
HD: Other don’t. I never celebrate my birthday
KL: You never did
HD: Yeah
KL: Do you know what day your birthday is or is yours January first
HD: No
KL: (laughing) No
HD: Just March 7th
KL: March 7th?
HD: 1985 just (?)
KL: March 7th. Okay so people don’t celebrate their birthday huh? That’s interesting
HD: Yeah
KL: So in the refugee camp she lived with her mom and her dad. Was she closer to her mom or her dad?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah both is close to his parents
KL: Okay what was her mom like?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah her mom is fat a little fat
KL: (laughing)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and her hair is too long
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and she have broke her arms twice, both arms
KL: How?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um her mom have her hand broke
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and she have her heart disease sometime when a disease come and she just fall over all the time
SD: answers my question in Burmese
Talking to baby
KL: What kind of things does your mom like to do?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um her mom she just doesn't have any (?) to do anything special because her health is not good (?)
KL: When her mom was younger what kind of things did she do?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Sometime she just make the like a cookies and sell them to the other people

KL: In the refugee camp?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: What kind of cookies? What’s in them?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: They call it like a donut
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: like they say in more like in Burmese like a donut

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: is round like this like a donut

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: It’s shaped like a donut?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Or does it taste like a donut?

HD: (?) and some other cookies I don’t know the name

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Umhuh.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Oh, her mom is making the cookie and sell to other people all the time

KL: To help earn money in the refugee camp?

HD: Yeah just to earn, earn some money

Talking to baby

KL: Did her mom sew?

HD: Hum?

KL: Did her mom sew?

HD: Sew?

KL: Yes

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No

KL: No

HD: She can’t

KL: Does San Da sew?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Does she sew?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: How did she learn?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Um she just learn herself in the camp

KL: but her mom never learned

HD: No

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No never learned

KL: Do did her father sew?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No
KL: Do many men sew?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, some men sew
KL: Do, um, more men or more women?
HD: Yeah sometime both men and women sew
KL: Do her siblings all sew then?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No just only her
KL: Does she like to cook?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah she like to cook
KL: Did her mom like to cook a lot too?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: Did her dad cook also?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: Who cooked more, her mom or her dad?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Mom sometime dad
KL: Did one do it more
HD: Yeah mom
KL: Her mom
HD: mostly her mom

Talking to baby
KL: So how did she decide to go to the U.S.?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: (laughing)

Kids in background

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Okay maybe it’s a good time to end (laughing)

HD: (laughing) She decide to came to America because she leave the refugee camps she can’t stay but doesn’t have like a like a good choice like America and they don’t have work and a job they don’t have they don’t make enough money for the family and they came to America and like the husband is work and making the money for the family and
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: they don’t (fear?) like the police and don’t need to ask anyone. Is very good to live in America, she said.

Talking to baby, Chapter singing to baby

KL: Is that a song in Karen

HD: No it is

KL: or Burmese

HD: Japanese

KL: a Japanese song?

HD: Yeah

KL: How did you learn a Japanese song?

HD: I have one friend

KL: from Japan?

HD: Yeah

KL: and he taught you or she taught you?

HD: Yeah, he um, he teach me

KL: Wow, you’re learning lots of languages

HD: Yeah

KL: (laughing)

Talking to baby
KL: Why did she choose the U.S. instead of the United Kingdom or Austria I mean Australia or Canada?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Um she she chose the U.S. because her sister already came to U.S. and they decide like they are going to come to the U.S. too (?)

KL: Why did her sister choose the U.S.?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, her sister doesn’t know anything before she came to America like America call the people and they just a plan

KL: America call what do you mean?

HD: (?) like a call people

KL: Call the people? What does that mean?

HD: like a like people can (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: that um the U.S. said the people could come here

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and then they were like okay let’s go there

HD: Umhuh yeah

KL: So they didn’t get to choose that was the only option they had was the U.S.

HD: Yeah they they yeah (?) for the refugee was to come (?)

KL: Because the U.S. allows more people to come here?
HD: Yeah not like the other countries the other country it is really hard to (?)

Talking to baby

KL: She just wanted to play she likes to play, play play.

HD: Did you have a good time here?

KL: Okay I think we’re good for today. Would it be okay if I take your picture or get a picture of you?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yes okay

End of recording
KL: This is Karen Lambert. It’s January 6, 2009, and I’m here with San Da and Chapter and my daughter Jackie and San Da’s youngest girl and boy are both here also and some of the others might be in the other room. Um, I’ve typed up all the notes from my different interviews and I was looking over them and I have a couple of questions – some facts I wanted to check. So first of all when you were in the Thai refugee camp did – and you said everyone in your family came to the U.S. except was it your brother or your sister?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Okay and she’s married too

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: And these are the sister’s kids?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay so the sister has how many kids?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: 3

KL: Okay and you said that your sister was very sad when you all left and you, was crying is that right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she sad because all of all of her parents and her sibling went to America she want to come to America too

KL: Yeah and she’s already going through the process of trying to come to the U.S. right?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she already she already plan to came to to come to America and she just waiting

KL: Okay

HD: is still waiting

KL: Right. Okay and I know that you don’t know all of your birthdays but so I don’t keep getting your ages wrong I thought I’d get an approximate birthdate

HD: (laughing)

KL: (addressing San Da) So yours was January first, right?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: It is January the 11th
HD: asks in Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
SD: January
HD: First?
HD: asks in Burmese
KL: and then what year?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

Hs: Um 1979

KL: 1979?
HD: Yeah
KL: And that’s hers?
HD: Yeah
KL: Okay
HD: asks in Burmese
KL: Her husband
HD: asks
KL: her husband – Maung Naing?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Maung
KL: Maung
HD: Naing
SD: Naing
KL: Naing
HD: Yeah Maung Naing
KL: And what is his birthday, January first?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: January first ,19
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: 74
KL: Okay and Naing Lin?
HD: Naing Lin
KL: Naing Lin?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes Naing Lin
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: conversing in Burmese
HD: May 5
KL: What?
HD: Um
SD: May 25
HD: May 5th
KL: May 25th?
HD: twenty five
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Oh May 25th
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: 1997
KL: Okay. And Maung Min Tun?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: Maung Min Tun
HD: Maung Min Tun
KL: Maung Min Tun?
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: July 31st 2000, 2000
KL: 2000. And Zaw Min Tun
SD: Zaw Min
HD: Zaw Min Tun

SD: July … then answers my question in Burmese

HD: July 6, 2007. (turns to child who was talking in background and says) Good job

KL: And Mvo Mvo?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Myo Myo

KL: Myo Myo

HD: Myo Win

KL: Myo. Is it Myo?

HD: Yeah Myo

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: (laughing) and that was October?

SD: January

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: or January?

HD: January

KL: January

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: January 12th 2009
KL: Oh

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: 2008

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Oh March March 11

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: March 12th

KL: March 12

HD: 2009

KL: March 12th 2009 so April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, January so about 10, 10, eleven, months

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: 10 months

KL: (watching the kids) She’s getting good at crawling

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

SD: speaking in Burmese

KL: Okay and so you are now 30? Yes?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: Happy Birthday (laughing)

HD: Birthday

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: You said that when you lived in, um, Burma you did not celebrate birthdays?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No, no

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Now that now that she’s in the U.S. does she plan to celebrate birthdays?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No (laughing)

KL: No? Okay.

SD: conversing in Burmese

KL: Okay and (long pause) when she lived in Thailand or in Burma did she um sit on couches or did she sit on the floor when she met with people?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Um in in Burma in the camp she just sitting on the floor (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Which does she prefer?

HD: what?

KL: Does she prefer to sit on the couch or on the floor cause when we visit um some of the others they like to sit on the floor.

HD: Umhuh.

KL: (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She prefer sitting on the couch (laughing). It’s better

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: but in Burma they don’t have money to buy a couch

KL: Okay. And I was told that your husband teaches Arabic classes? Is that correct?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: What languages doe she speak?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Burmese

KL: Is she taking an English class?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: She just—is she in your class?

HD: Umhuh in, in Riverwalk. She have to go to the English language until this semester

KL: Oh she has to go to the English Language Center? The Riverwalk one’s gone too?

HD: Because she can’t go to the level one because (?) level, level one

KL: Level one

HD: Yeah

KL: in the English language thing. Okay

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Okay does she speak Arabic? Any does she know any Arabic?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No (laughing)

KL: But her husband knows a lot?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Does he get paid to teach Arabic classes or just does he just do it to be nice?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Right now he doesn’t teach but on the he just teaches Arabic in the (?)

KL: Oh okay

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Why does he not teach here? Is there no need?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: um he doesn’t want to teach

KL: In the camp? In the camp did he get paid to teach or did he just do it to help?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, he got paid a little bit

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: When he live in the Mae La Camp he teach Arabic and then after he came to America he have to work all the time to support his family

KL: He sad?

HD: Um, no, he just he’s okay

KL: When he teaches Arabic here at Riverwalk?

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No

KL: There’s no one anymore because there used to be one down he taught

HD: Oh it is (too much background noise to hear responses or questions)

KL: He teaches his family?

HD: Umhuh yes

KL: But he teaches Ma Htwe Hla’s kids

HD: Yeah

KL: and I don’t think they’re family or anything

HD: Yeah they are relatives

KL: Oh, they are relatives?

HD: Yeah [still not sure if this is true or if there was a miscommunication here] (turns to kids) You want it?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

Conversing in Burmese

KL: Wow she can walk even (referring to San Da’s daughter)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: It’s okay (referring to kids) He’s getting so big

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Okay and in the refugee camp did you do anything to earn money or what or did you watch your kids or what did you do?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Sewing the clothing at home and take care of the kids

KL: She sewed clothing at home

HD: Yeah umhuh

KL: Did she sell the clothing?

HD: Yeah

KL: Oh, he’s not happy

HD: (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

KL: You wanna come over here and sit with me? Do you want some paper and you can draw with it?

HD: (laughing)

KL: Here

HD: (laughing)

KL: Let’s see here – Does he like to draw?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing) He’s running

HD: (laughing)
KL: (laughing) Oh, wow

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing) Does he like Shasta?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, I think he is a very energy person yeah?

KL: He has lots of energy, yeah.

HD: Yeah

KL: He is three, right?

HD: Yeah three

KL: about three. He has much more energy than me

HD: Yeah (laughing) Thank you (addressing San Da’s youngest son who is running around)

KL: (laughing) Did you have orange Shasta in the refugee camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes, we have some

KL: You have Shasta? And apparently your little boy likes it a lot

HD: (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah

KL: How is being in the U.S. different, um, for your family, for you, when you’re at home with your family?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (laughing)

KL: You have the recorder?

HD: Yeah it’s right here

KL: Okay, okay

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

HD: She’s so surprised because when she came to America everybody looked like new and the house and the apartment is changed and they have the electric light and the electric water and running water

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: And because they just only take shower at home. In the camp they have to go and take shower far away (laughing) yeah they don’t have running electric and running water. They have to carry the water all the time. So, living in America is a lot of fun.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She say in America is very important to have a job, easy to have a job is not really is really hard (laughing)

KL: Is it less important in Burma or Thailand?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Or the refugee camp areas?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: In refugee camp they can’t stay with a job because they receive food from U.N.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: In, in, Thailand in the camp because they have their own like a tent (later I learned refugees actually lived in huts made of wood or bamboo, rather than canvas tents like I at first pictured). They don’t need to rent, just only they stay in all the time

KL: She said that she was so depressed when she first came here because everything looked new?

HD: Everything is like so weird

KL: Weird

HD: Yeah, weird

KL: So, she was depressed

HD: Yeah (laughing). Everything is very different to her

KL: And she said the house and apartment, um, what did she think about it?

HD: In America?

KL: Um huh.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because it’s very new to her because she never seen the house and the apartment like this before.

KL: And what, what was what was new about it?

HD: Hum?
KL: What was new about it or like what was different about it?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because in the camp they just live in the tent and because they never see how it was made by the cement and, and, have two story, three story like this before (laughing as a child makes some sounds) Um, he is talking.

KL: But um the Mosque is made of of bricks. It looks like in the refugee camp

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Is that just for a very special buildings?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Just only for the Mosque

KL: Only the Mosque

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and everything else was tents

HD: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: tries to speak

KL: What did the, oh I’m sorry

SD: finishes her thought

HD: Some of the people like have a lot of money they got can (?) just be in the hall where there’s cement

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: some of the refugee people maybe all will buy bamboo and wood

KL: What was that?

HD: (?) B A M

KL: Bamboo

HD: Bamboo yeah (laughing) and wood

KL: bamboo and wood is what the refugees used?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: And did they all live in tents or did some of them live in buildings?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah all the people live in the tents. Me too live in tent (laughing). She lay on the floor every time (laughing)

KL: With blankets or what?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes, they have a, they have a mat, like a Ya He Ma, Ya He Ma call one

KL: Ya He Ma?

HD: Yeah

KL: it’s a Ya He Ma

HD: Yeah (?) they pull the mat on the floor

KL: Oh

HD: Yeah
KL: Right

HD: yeah this one and she would do this one and this

KL: they sleep on it Okay

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Like the one that you sit on

HD: Umhuh yeah (?) there’s a mat a rug or a mat.

KL: And did they use blankets?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah they use a blanket

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah they use a blanket

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: They got blankets from the UN

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: mat and blanket were delivered from the UN

KL: Right

HD: Yeah

KL: Is it more work to take care of the house here or in the refugee camp?

HD: (laughing) translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese (in the background her son is trying to talk to her)

HD: More work in America (laughing)
KL: Yeah, why

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: because you have to clean and take care of the the house because it’s not their house and they rent it they have to keep the house clean all the time, yeah

Conversing in Burmese

KL: Is it um different being a mom and taking care of her kids here as opposed to there or is it the same?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: It’s different when she live in the camp sometime she take they can keep the kids with the parents. But, in America they cannot keep the kid with um her parents and just only she have to take care of the children all the time, watch, all about the kid and take care of them (?)

KL: So she’d leave them with her parents? And what would she do?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Um, in a in camp sometime when she need to go out to she just left the children with her parents

KL: She used to go out where?

HD: Um go places with friend and she left the kid with her parents and her siblings but when she came to America sometimes she says she afraid to go out (laughing)

KL: Because she has no family in Logan, right?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: In Salt Lake she has family there. Was it easier?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s easy

KL: Did she leave her children with her parents or her siblings in Salt Lake?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah sometime

KL: Yeah sometimes. Like in refugee camps or different was it more similar then?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah it’s different

KL: In what way?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: In the camps sometime when she she left the children with a friend with her parent is okay because they don’t need to worry but in America if they left the children with with a friend is so different yeah to leave the children with others just only for the relative

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Just only for the relative

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: in the camp because sometime when the children is lost she can go ask the other friend because she know how to speak their language but in America if something happen with the children and kid is lost and she doesn’t know how to ask anybody
KL: That would be scary

HD: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, it’s very scary

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: One time this, this guy go out and because the door um the door is open and he go over himself and go to a friend house is around the riverwalk and she just look at his son and she cannot find anyplace and they so worried because when when the son go in but finally she found him in a cabin house

KL: A what?

HD: she follow him in a (?)

KL: another house?

HD: another house

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: she says it so worry everybody

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: and she said in America sometime when the children lost and she cannot find the children she will be in trouble

KL: (Pause)

HD: Talks to a child

KL: How important is her religion to her? Is it very important?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, it’s very important

KL: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She says she love other religions, but it is very important to keep the Muslim, Muslim religion

KL: She loved other religions or people in other religions?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: People in other religions?

HD: Yeah, she love it, but is very important to keep the, the Muslim religion to her

KL: So, that means no drinking alcohol,

HD: Umhuh.

KL: um, eating halal meat, all of those things?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, you have to kill the meat themselves. If they don’t kill it they can’t eat it.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: What?

HD: They have to kill like a chicken. If they don’t kill it they cannot eat it, they have to kill that themselves and then they can eat it.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah and then they have to cook it themselves too. If they don’t cook they cannot eat it
KL: Cut it?

HD: Yeah if they don’t cook

KL: Cook cook (?)

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay

HD: If they don’t cook they cannot eat it.

KL: Why?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah because is is what a religion tradition for them

KL: Is it because is has to be cooked

HD: Umhuh.

KL: separately from the like the dairy or

HD: Yeah

KL: kind of like kosher?

HD: Umhuh that is their religion culture

KL: How did how are you supposed to kill an animal for it to be halal?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: For example when they kill the cow like a two person have to have to work together to hold the cow and kill it.

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: And then when they kill like a cow, the cow’s should have supposed to die on their hand if the cow isn’t dead on the floor on the ground then they can’t eat it. If the cow came sometime where they came like if the cow is die on their hand they cannot eat it. They have to put it on the ground before the cow is dying.

KL: So it has to be on the

HD: they have to put it on the ground before the cow is die.

KL: Oh, interesting

HD: Yeah is very interesting (laughing)

KL: So have they killed a cow in Logan?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: And bought it from a farmer?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: If if they need the meat for the cow they have to go down to Salt Lake because they have a Muslim store for killing the cow or killing some other animals there.

KL: They have a Muslim store?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Is it a Muslim store or if it a Southeast Asian store?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah Muslim store

KL: Oh, okay.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: There is a people from Asian but he is a Muslim yeah. Muslim
SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Do they ever kill their animals here in Logan to eat, like chickens or anything?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

Hs: Yeah she kill a chicken one time in her house

KL: She did?

HD: Yeah she

KL: Serious?

HD: Umhuh.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She said, um, she did it two weeks ago in her house

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah sometime she can they can go buy the food but when they when they eat it like she feel not really good for them just so they have to kill them themselves before they eat it.

KL: So they can go buy the food in Salt Lake at the Muslim market

HD: Umhuh.

KL: but they don’t feel as good as if they kill it themselves?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Because their religion teaches it’s better to do that

HD: Yeah umhuh.

KL: But it’s okay to buy it
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah in Salt Lake they have a Mosque and beside the Mosque they have a Muslim store and they can go buy it at that place because they do the same they like (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: It’s not really a store like a like a house is for the place to kill come and to sell the meat for the Muslim people

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because in the Mosque beside the Mosque they have a one person take care of the animal when the people come bring the animal and they have to kill it and sometimes the people can’t kill it themselves and after that he take care of the meat and for everything for the Muslim people to go there and to get the meat to buy the meat.

(laughing – hiccup, you got a hiccup – talking to Jackie – I like blue eyes, I have brown eye all the time, Jackie, Tony Jaa, Ganke Cha?)

Conversing in Burmese between HD and SD

HD: (gesturing toward the television, which is playing) He’s a very popular actor in Thailand this guy

KL: What’s his name?

HD: Um Tony Jaa

KL: Tommy Ja?

HD: Yeah

KL: Hum. How do you spell it, do you know?

HD: T O N Y

KL: T O N Y

HD: Yeah. J A A

KL: J
HD: A A

KL: A A. Tony

HD: Jaa

KL: Jaa

HD: Yeah

KL: except for you call it Tommy Jaa

HD: (?) yeah (laughing) Yeah they just say in Thai different. In America the Tony Jaa in in Thai Tony Jaa (laughing)

KL: (?)

HD: Tony Jaa

KL: Are the movies a lot different in Burma and in Thai?

HD: A little, the, the movie from Thailand or Burma are they?

KL: from here

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Are they different a lot?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah very very different because American movie have a lot of technology thing in Burma have different thing like a family story, love story (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

KL: (Talking to San Da’s youngest son who was playing with the carseat). Let me show you something? See these little latch look here see the latch and there’s one over here too and you push the latch and then you pull it, see and then you push the latch again and you pull the latch But if you just pull up it doesn’t work.
HD: (laughing)
KL: Nope you have to push the latch like this
HD: (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese, playing with babies

HD: He is a Hollywood actor right now yeah
KL: Oh really?
HD: Yeah
KL: In the U.S.?
HD: Umhuh.
KL: Tony Jaa?
HD: Tony Jaa, yeah
KL: Oh really is this an American movie then made by Hollywood?
HD: Um this one made by Hollywood
KL: by Hollywood?
HD: Yeah
KL: And what is this movie called?
HD: Is a Ombah
KL: What?
HD: Obah
KL: Obah?
HD: Yeah
KL: Kind of like is it the name?

HD: There is a kind of like a like a for the Buddhist religion they have a the head of the religion is they call it Obah and the head of the religion is lost he have to go find it this really interesting

KL: Somebody kidnapped him?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: And Obah is the name of the religious leader?

HD: Yeah the the religious leader

KL: And is it spelled O space B A?

HD: O N G B A K (?)

KL: What was that?

HD: O N G Ong B A K Bak Ongbak

KL: O N G

HD: O N G B A K

KL: B A K

HD: like a (?)

KL: O N G B A K?

HD: Yeah, Ong-Bak

KL: Um interesting. Talking to child, do you want to help me to move this here push this in and let’s see do you want to try? Do you want to push this and I’ll push the one over here and we can see if we can move it gotta push really hard. Good job do you want to do it again?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Push in good job (laughing)
HD: (laughing)
KL: He has so much energy he likes to jump and play and
HD: translates my question into Burmeselates to San Da
KL: Were you other boys so energetic?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, sometime they do the the same thing (laughing)
KL: Yeah? (laughing)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: I probably was that energetic sometimes too
HD: (laughing)
KL: but not anymore (laughing)
HD: translates my question into Burmeselates to San Da
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: Is it hard when it’s cold because they can’t go outside and play they have to stay inside?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah, is, is really good in the snow because he doesn’t want to go out. He want to stay home all the time and sleep watch the movie
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: in the summer he like to go outside. His mother is so, so worry about his going to be lost (laughing)
KL: Okay so that’s a really big worry.

HD: Umhuh yeah. In winter is better (laughing)

KL: Okay

Conversing in Burmese

KL: So your daughter is American. She was born in America.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: What do you think about that?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese (laughing)

HD: She doesn’t know

KL: Does it have like is it um considered like a status symbol or a good thing among other refugees or is it a bad thing or like losing their identity or how does she see that?

HD: If?

KL: Do you know how to ask her that? (laughing)

HD: No, other kids?

KL: For her

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and for is she proud to have an American child

HD: Umhuh.

KL: or is it is it like status or like
HD: Oh yeah

KL: a good thing

HD: Umhuh.

KL: or is it bad or?

HD: Umhuh okay.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because the she so happy because the the kids were born in America they become the American citizen directly. They don’t have to apply or do anything for their citizenship.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

Conversing in Burmese

HD: But yeah she have a question but she got a a daughter born in America and how many year that they can get a like American passport American citizen for the daughter?

KL: For the baby?

HD: Yeah for the baby.

KL: I think she’s already an American citizen, right?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Immediately?

HD: She got like a birth certificate and a social security

KL: Right so I think she can get a passport now

HD: Umhuh.

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

Conversing in Burmese

KL: Why was she wondering? Does she want to go travel with her?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because she doesn’t understand. Like her someone her friend told her like the kid who born in America and told her said the kid cannot go back to Thailand to visit (?)

KL: Oh

HD: Just her friend told her

KL: I don’t think that’s true

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she doesn’t like just only his friend told her like the children who born in American and cannot go visit Burma and cannot go to Thailand (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

HD: Yeah this one is the Ong-Bak.

KL: What was that?

HD: Yeah this name

KL: This is Tony?

HD: Yeah this is the story about this one, like of the people had it

KL: Who is the guy with the mask?

HD: I don’t know

KL: Is that like, is that what’s the mask?
HD: Which one?

KL: Is the mask a Buddhist mask?

HD: Oh yeah, yeah, this one. Is looking for this hat yeah because in his, his village because one of the people took this hat and his village he doesn’t have any water they have to go get this hat and put back in the place

KL: So if they put the hat back they think it will rain again?

HD: Yeah, rain again

KL: and they’ll have water

HD: yeah umhuh

KL: Oh, interesting.

HD: Yeah this very funny story (laughing) yeah

KL: Oh, it’s a Buddhist?

HD: Yeah, Buddhist story yeah.

KL: Are the Buddhist the most pop, um, the most powerful people in Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, is the more powerful in Burma

KL: The government is Buddhist?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, they most all the government they are Buddhist

KL: Okay, I was reading a book about Muslims in Burma
HD: Umhuh.

KL: and it was talking about how a lot of the Muslims were traders from the Middle East originally

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and they went into the ships along the coastline and some of them married the Muslim women

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and stayed there

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and the Buddhist government wouldn’t let them if they wanted to leave their camp their women and the children could not leave.

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Have you ever heard anything like that? Is that similar to what you’ve heard or what she’s heard?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah that’s true

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: What part is true?

HD: Um yeah like a like you said like a for a long time ago like a some of the other people they came from Bangladesh

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah (?)

KL: Um
HD: and they came to Burma and they marries I don’t know what they marries a
woman I guess after they married and they have a kids and at this time the Burmese try-
ing to drove all the parents the dad all the dad they can go back to Bangladesh because
they have a passport or something like this and then only the only the wife and the kids
left in Burma. Yeah I’m not sure yet I heard something people told me like this. Yeah
she told me like this too.

KL: So she said the Muslims are from Bangladesh?

HD: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Talking to child Are you brushing your teeth?

HD: Yeah she said because she doesn’t understand just only (?) for grandparent told her
like this

KL: Her grandparents told her this?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Some are like um Muslim people they marries a Karen or Burmese like a after the
Burmese (?) just so they have people left in Burma like a pa like a mom and kids be-
cause they cannot go back yeah (laughing)

KL: So the the woman and the kids who were deserted by their husbands they’d re-
marry to maybe someone else?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t she doesn’t know (laughing)

KL: Oh

HD: Yeah I don’t know

KL: Well what was the story that she heard from her grandparents?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she never she never see it but just really her parents told to her talked to her

KL: Her parents?

HD: Umhuh told to her

KL: What did her parents tell her exactly?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Like a her parent told her like a her great grandparent is a

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: a person from Bangladesh and the grandma is great grandma is person from Burma. Yeah she no like this

KL: So was the person from Bangladesh the great grandpa

HD: Umhuh.

KL: a sailor?

HD: Umhuh sailor yeah and they

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah is a sailor

KL: Okay and he he left after he he had a family or did he stay with his family?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah after after they got a family and the Burmese government is keep their (?) to go back to their country

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: So the Burmese they would like take the grandfather out?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and made the women stay there?

HD: Yeah because the woman they don’t have like a passport they cannot go back

KL: Oh

HD: to stay with him

KL: So he didn’t the husband didn’t leave he was kicked out?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Was he Muslim?

HD: Yeah

KL: And were and his wife and children were they Muslim before he met them or they became Muslim

HD: No after

KL: after

HD: after yeah after they married.

KL: So that’s how her family became Muslim?

HD: Umhuh yeah.

KL: Okay maybe it’s a good time to end

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: (?) (laughing)
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

End of recording
Interviewee: San Da (SD)
Translator: Hser Doh or Chapter (HD)

Interviewer: Karen Lambert (KL)

Date: March 29, 2010

KL: This is Karen Lambert and I’m here with San Da and Chapter and Jackie and San Da’s youngest daughter and I think her youngest son are both asleep on the couch (laughing) oh her youngest daughter is awake now just looking around. So we’re sitting on the floor by her yellow and blue mat this is really pretty and we just I just gave then a Sobe Chapter and San Da both a Sobe and they are first a little concerned that there’s a picture of Lizards on the front. They thought it might have lizards inside (laughing) or it just means it’s not something they normally eat in Burma so. Anyway so how’s everything been for you San Da?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Good, yeah? That’s good. Um I’m putting together for school a presentation on all of the information about your like and um Ma Htwe Hla’s life and Ya He Ma’s life and so I have been working on that and putting it together and then also I um was wondering if I could get some more pictures of you to go with it if that’s okay.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Is that okay? Okay. I would want pictures of her like just doing normal things – not just sitting – like cooking or

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: or talking to her kids

HD: translates my question into Burmese
KL: or working

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Is that okay? (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Yeah?

HD: Yes

KL: Okay um when does she normally cook if I wanted to get a picture of her cooking?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: three o’clock

KL: three o’clock

HD: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Um so today at three o’clock today

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: just stay and take pictures?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Okay that would be great. Maybe I can try and look at the foods and figure out what they are

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Oh okay I haven’t developed yet the other pictures I took of you but maybe after I take some more I can develop you and get them and give you copies also.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese (answers the phone and talks for a minute)

KL: Okay so first I have some more questions.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: talks in Burmese

KL: (laughing)

HD: It’s okay

KL: Okay um also one question for um Chapter. What was the number of refugees and how many of those in Logan are Muslim do you think? Or does she know?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: About 30 I think

KL: About 30 of them are Muslim?

HD: Yeah
KL: around, about (laughing). And then you thought there were around 150 total refugees or how many?

HD: Yeah, I’m not sure. Yeah, about the people in in my house (laughing) I not look at how many people

KL: You don’t know anymore?

HD: Yeah I don’t know exactly how many people in Logan

KL: Do you have a guess?

HD: I have a guess but I’m not sure (laughing)

KL: Yeah. More like a hundred, more like a hundred and fifty, more like a hundred and twenty

HD: I think hundred twenty all together

KL: It would be a hundred and twenty around?

HD: A hundred thirty I think

KL: Maybe a hundred and thirty

HD: But I’m not sure, yeah

KL: Are, so, because it just keeps changing all the time?

HD: Umhuh, just changing all the time. Some will move in in, move out, go anyway, they switch all the time

KL: Okay. (pause) Okay. So, some other questions – In the refugee camp the only money that you were able to get was that from your husband teaching the Arabic lessons or did you have other jobs you could do?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, just only her husband teaching and receive some. (looking at Jackie) She’s cute.
KL: (laughing)

HD: She’s cute now. I love the blue eyes

KL: Yeah

HD: (laughing) I want to have it

KL: (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

KL: What did she say?

HD: She is a girl or a boy

KL: Girl

HD: I said a girl

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She says they have seen it far far away just got bigger

KL: She’s big

HD: Yeah she’s got bigger

KL: Yeah she has. Her hair is all messy today

HD: (laughing)

KL: cause she had pigtails

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: What did she say?

HD: Just the hair is is good

KL: (laughing) I tried to comb it before I came but it didn’t stay down it just went shhhhh
HD: translates comments into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: It’s okay

Conversing in Burmese

KL: (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

KL: Okay other questions are

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: I have so much stuff here to go through it now. Did she ever find out about whether she’d be able to get a passport for her daughter to go back if she wants to?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

HD: Is this for her or for her daughter?

KL: For her daughter because she asked me before if her daughter who was born here would be able to get a passport

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: I was wondering if she found out

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No not yet

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t understand English (laughing) she just

KL: Okay I can check for her but I think that probably if the Burmese government is good that they will let her have a passport that the U.S. would let her have a passport to
go there but they wouldn’t let her go if it’s really violent where they think she’d be in danger

HD: translates comments into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Okay

HD: (?) go to Burma soon

KL: She wants to go to Burma soon

HD: Me

KL: Oh you do?

HD: Yeah

KL: Are you going to?

HD: Not yet but for two years I have to work on mission

KL: You want to go on a mission

HD: Yeah, I would leave in August.

KL: Oh wow

HD: I don’t know where I have to go yet

KL: Wow

HD: I want to go

KL: But you want to go back to Burma?

HD: No

KL: No (laughing)

HD: (?) or American, Canada
KL: For your mission?
HD: Yeah
KL: But you said you want to go back to Burma sometime?
HD: Yeah
KL: Yeah? What for? To see your family?
HD: Just visit my family because
KL: Yeah
HD: I never see my family for a long time and so
KL: Do you talk to them on the phone a lot?
HD: Not many often
KL: No?
HD: just sometime
KL: Just sometimes? Why not more often?
HD: I don’t know what they call me I can’t call them but is in Burma is sometimes hard to talk to them they call like just call a lot on mine and we talk
KL: Yeah that makes sense. Does she talk – Most of her family’s in Salt Lake now. Does she get to talk to her family in Salt Lake a lot?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Oh yesterday she there yesterday. She is in Salt Lake
KL: Oh
HD: and the weekend she went down in Salt Lake
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and visit her family
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and she have another she have a brother in Texas
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: and they call each other
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: she have one more
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: oh she have one more sister in (?)
KL: Right she told me and she’s sad (laughing)
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Sometime when she call her sister in (?) she’s always cry because she want to come to America
KL: Yeah
HD: all her family came to America
KL: Has she found out if she’ll be able to come yet?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Um she doesn’t
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yes

KL: It’s okay? Okay.

Conversing in Burmese

KL: (laughing)

KL: What do you think? [talking to my daughter in reference to San Da’s daughter who’s wearing a lacy dress] Do you wish you had a pretty dress on? Mommy didn’t put a dress on you. (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

KL: Is the jewelry that you are wearing from Burma?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Like the necklace and the

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: and

HD: yeah from Thailand

KL: From Thailand

HD: Umhuh.

KL: What about the one she’s wearing

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: is that from Thailand too?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, Thailand.
KL: I was reading about Burma yesterday and I was reading about um at least in the main part of Burma maybe not in um some of the smaller villages but in the main parts there was a lot of um change in how women saw their roles over the time period and some women started to wear sheer shirts over like a kind of a bodice

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and it was really controversial a lot of people were really unhappy about it and where before a lot of women stayed at home and raised their children more women started to work outside of the home in Burma just like in the U.S. Um is that do was that true in the part of Burma she was from or is that just in the big city and do you know anything about that? Chapter (laughing) Do you did you know anything about that?

HD: Yeah I read the story in the in the news last 2 weeks ago like in the Burmese there was change something like a they would like everyone have a job like the women can work but I’m not sure yet if they already starting it or not.

KL: You read that in the newspaper huh

HD: Yeah

KL: Okay

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Oops (laughing) you just broke that rubber band

HD: (laughing) translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t have a she doesn’t heard any

KL: No

HD: Yeah

KL: What does she think about that does she think that’s a good idea or bad idea?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: She doesn’t know?

HD: Yeah

KL: What do you have to wait for how did they decide if you can come?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Like um from in 2007

KL: What was that?

HD: In um like in 2007

KL: Umhuh.

HD: they have like a interview they finish interview but I don’t know they don’t (?) they have to let

KL: So no one’s gotten asylum since then?

HD: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (?) her sister kids they want to see their cousin and it’s (?)

KL: So they interviewed both of you and all of your kids before you came?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Yes

HD: Yes

KL: Okay um does everyone who’s interviewed get to come?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah mostly the people come after their but some people I don’t know. They don’t

Conversing in Burmese

HD: Yeah most of the time they call each other on the weekend to talk about they want to come to U.S.

KL: So her sister calls on the weekend

HD: Yeah

KL: every week?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Some time they (?) have with the her sister who live in camp and know what’s going on or something wrong they cannot come to America they want to know

KL: She wants to know what’s going on and why they can’t come yet

HD: Yeah

KL: And do they know why?

HD: No they don’t.

KL: That’s sad.

HD: talking to baby You blowing (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

Conversing in Burmese

HD: Sometime like a her family and her parents want to support the family who who left in (?) but sometime they don’t know how to support for them
KL: In what ways do they want to support them?

HD: Because they got to wait for a long time they are not coming yet

KL: Right and they can they like send them money or send them?

HD: Just for the like a talk to the people the organization who work there and figure out what’s going on that they cannot come

KL: They can’t talk to them?

HD: Yeah they can’t and they don’t know how they never talk to the people and

SD: answers my question in Burmese

Conversing in Burmese

HD: Sometime she heard like America is going to closed for a refugee to want to come to America

KL: They sometimes are afraid that America will close

HD: Yeah

KL: to the refugees

HD: they heard but they are not sure if for example even may have closed for the refugee to come to America they so worry about she was so worry about how she (?) but she has to stay there along with her family and she doesn’t have any relatives there.

KL: Yeah it’s sad. And it’s your younger sister right or is it older I forget

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Her younger sister

KL: Younger sister?

HD: Yeah
SD: answers my question in Burmese
KL: She’s the oldest right?
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Yeah
KL: Okay
HD: translates my question into Burmese
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: She is the fourth, the fourth child
KL: The one who’s there?
HD: Yeah the fourth child.
KL: Okay
SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: It’s the yellow pages
KL: Oh okay
HD: She has a picture I don’t know when I’m going to speak this fluently I just they have a big problem all the time I don’t know how to speak English (laughing)
KL: What was that?
HD: I don’t know when I was speak English fluently (laughing)
KL: Yeah you speak pretty well
HD: No not yet
KL: I was looking back at some of the transcriptions of my very first interviews with you and Joe and you are so much better. Oh cute. Where is this? Where is your sister? Is this in the (?) refugee camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: They have Christmas trees?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No it’s just only they go to the people who take the picture they have a Christmas tree.

KL: Oh a professional picture

HD: Yeah

KL: professional photographer comes there?

HD: Umhuh yeah

KL: Do they pay money for the to take the pictures?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Why is she holding her phone in the picture?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She took a picture when she talking to someone on the phone
KL: So who took the picture?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: A store photo photographer store person

KL: Yeah but somebody called right when she was getting her picture taken?

HD: Yeah (laughing)

KL: So it was just an accident that she was talking on the phone? Or did she want to be on the phone in the picture?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes somebody called when she took the picture

KL: That’s funny can I take a picture of the picture?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: So I can remember?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: Yeah okay.

Conversing in Burmese between Chapter and San Da

HD: She speak Burmese Karen fluently

KL: She speaks Burmese and Karen?

HD: Umhuh.
KL: Oh, wow, how does she know Karen?

HD: They go there in refugee camp

KL: So she taught

HD: they are mostly Karen people there

KL: Oh yeah

HD: You have a friend you can talk to each other

KL: How old is your sister, she looks very young?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Nineteen

KL: Oh, wow, yeah she’s very young. How many kids does she have?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Three (laughing) three

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: In Burma does the Burmese government like people to speak any language but Burmese or do they only like people to speak Burmese?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: They can talk some language too

KL: In Burma

HD: Umhuh.
KL: Is that what you remember also?

HD: Yeah

KL: Do they like people to speak mainly Burmese or in the schools do they only teach Burmese?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Only Burmese

KL: Only Burmese in the school

HD: they teach only Burmese yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: And it’s usually just the Burmese people who get a lot of education, right?

HD: Yeah

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Can I take a picture here with her kids all like that? Is that okay?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes (laughing)

SD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing as I watch San Da and her daughter) Oh cute. She looks so cute.
Conversing in Burmese (laughing)

KL: (talking to baby) What do you think Jackie

Conversing in Burmese (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

KL: So, why do you think the government dislikes the Muslims and the Karen so much?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t know (laughing). She doesn’t know.

KL: Does she remember, um, the violence in Burma or does she was she too young to remember?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she said

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She said she remember one

KL: She remembers one what?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She remember when she was a kid a time

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: and all the Burmese come to the village and they fought and she had to run to the jungle and stay in the jungle but she was very young.
KL: Is that the time when they fled to the refugee camp or was that a different time?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, after that she went directly to refugee camp.

KL: Before that – was that the first time she’d ever seen the military was when they made her leave and she went to the refugee camp?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: This is, she says, she used to see it like a before she went directly to the refugee camp like too many times but because the village is not destroyed yet and sometime they just go around another place and then the Burmese soldier go to another they just return home, but like the last time the village destroyed and the Burmese people they cannot return

SD: and

HD: and they had to run to the refugee camp.

SD: and

HD: Mostly when the village destroy (?) lot of family separated (?) they cannot get to each other.

Conversing in Burmese between Chapter and San Da (laughing)

KL: Her dress is pretty

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: I’m gonna get a picture of you holding her. Is it okay if I take the pictures without your um your (head covering?) on?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: She says they never had a women work in Burma

KL: In the part she’s from?

HD: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she have see the women working in the hospital or be a sale person sale

KL: In Burma?

HD: sale woman yeah.

KL: Did they like sometimes sell the food that they cook

HD: Sometime they sell the food they cook and sewing machine, sew clothing she says she like that she never see people who were in the company in the big (?)

KL: Okay. In the U.S. there’s a lot of different attitudes. Like some women think it’s really important to be able to be home with their children and raise them and other women think that it’s important to go out and have a job besides that. And to um maybe put their kids in daycare and just be with them part of the time. And some women don’t want to have children (laughing)

HD: (laughing)

KL: so lots of different ideas.

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: What did she think?

HD: She said sometime for her, when she leave the children with somebody who take care of, but sometime for herself she think it’s not reasonable, it’s not reliable

KL: Reliable?
HD: Yes

KL: because someone else yeah

HD: yeah but sometime they want to take their children

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: by themselves.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: So sometimes she wants to have other people watch her kids so she can take a break?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Yeah me too sometimes (laughing)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Umhuh.

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Some she remember when she live in Salt Lake and she would leave her kid in daycare and they call like if the kids they never see the people at they cannot talk, they just cry all day long and she, she was so worry about her kids.

KL: Why did she leave them in the daycare?

HD: Because her husband got a job at JBS and they had to work like a volunteer to pay for their rent

KL: So she had to work too?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: To pay for her rent and her husband also?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Where did she work?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Mostly when people have to volunteer they need to go to class and study

KL: They volunteer?

HD: Yeah like a volunteer like at the government would pay for their rent they have to study they have to work something like a cleaning something, but mostly they have to go to school and get more study

KL: So, they had to go to school and then they had to like do service or volunteer in the community.

HD: Yeah umhuh

KL: and then in exchange the government would pay for their rent?

HD: Umhuh, yeah

KL: And before her husband got a job at JBS

HD: Yeah

KL: they’d both she and her husband both did that?

HD: Umhuh.

KL: Okay

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, both of them to work

KL: Okay

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: So would they maybe like clean or do things like that or what kind of
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She said they had to do a lot of things sometimes study, sometimes learn more skills to work

KL: Sometimes what?

HD: learn more skill to work

KL: Learn more skills?

HD: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Mostly the people who doesn’t understand they would just teach the English and some of them who understand a little bit have to go out in some other places and

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: So, did she improve her English?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes (laughing)

KL: That’s good

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She said when somebody talk to her she can understand, but she cannot talk

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Like now, too, she understand us. She doesn’t know how to (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: Because she so afraid if she talk and she make mistakes people will laugh or something like this (laughing)

KL: Oh I won’t laugh

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: If – She can practice anytime she wants with us

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She says I understand correctly but she doesn’t know how to speak

KL: (laughing) Oh really?

HD: (laughing)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: (laughing)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Most all her brother and sister they are not afraid to talk the language and they speak English better and they speak like they pick up the language better than her

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She said her brother and sister they love to talk all the time when they see the people and they pick up the language quickly

KL: Yeah

HD: Sometime for her something she understand but she doesn’t want to talk (?) can talk to the people
KL: Right. Sometimes I speak some Spanish and sometimes I feel embarrassed because my Spanish is not very good so I don’t want to speak

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese (laughing)

HD: She is (?) like you do.

KL: Yeah. Sometimes I think I need really nice people to help me practice with them

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah (?)

KL: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (?) with a American people to go like to go to the (?) she understand (?) (laughing)

KL: Right

HD: Just laugh (?) (laughing)

KL: Did she did she decide to have the um her daughter in the U.S. or did she just end up having her daughter? Was it a surprise or did she plan to have her daughter in the U.S.?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah she doesn’t know (?) she’s going to have a daughter but in India they say have a daughter (laughing)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: What was that?

HD: She doesn’t know (?)
HD: like a (?)

KL: Umhuh.

HD: and some other (?) hospital and the doctor told them she was pregnant.

KL: Okay did did she want to be pregnant was she happy or sad?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah just happy

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: because she doesn’t have a daughter yet and she so happy.

KL: Does she want t have more kids?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No (laughing)

KL: No more

HD: No

KL: Why not?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because they have

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: she said like she doesn’t know if she go to have more or not if she have more it’s okay if not just like that’s okay

KL: Which would she prefer?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah is she’s going to have this she would have (?) she would have (?) kids

KL: If she has only 4 kids she’ll be

HD: Yeah

KL: will have enough

HD: Yeah she said

KL: but she said she wouldn’t mind having more or she’d rather not?

HD: She would have more

KL: She’d have so she’s either way she’ll be happy

HD: Yeah is four is

KL: Okay

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (laughing) she said like some days (?) children because after (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: more of the kids to take care of their parents when their parent get older

KL: She said sometimes it’s really hard to have children?

HD: It’s really good to have

KL: Oh it’s really good to have
HD: Yeah

KL: children because when the children get older they take care of their parents?

HD: When the parent get older the kid take care of their parent.

KL: Okay

SD: and (laughing)

Conversing in Burmese

HD: She say mostly mostly in the Muslim culture after like a the women they got marry they have to follow the husband and to live with the husband like a for the men after they get marry they still can live with their parents

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Where do her are her husband’s parents still alive?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah all the parent die

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: All of her husband’s parents are in

HD: Yeah they pass away

KL: Okay. Does she think that her kids when they her um her boys when they get married does she think that their wives will live with her?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: Yes?
HD: Umhuh.

KL: In the U.S. that’s not very common

HD: (laughing) translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Does she know this?

HD: Yeah she understand

KL: Does she think that her sons will be like most people in the U.S. or will they be different and be like

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Muslim

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Burmese Muslim?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t know it’s up to the kid (laughing)

KL: What does she want them to do?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t know (laughing) it’s hard she say

Conversing in Burmese between Chapter and San Da

KL: talking to babies Jackie shared her bow and he shared his turtle (laughing) and Batman

HD: (laughing)
KL: talking to babies are you playing with his toys Jackie? She likes to use her feet she’s a little monkey (laughing). She holds things with her feet. Does does she plan to have kids or does she just have kids whenever she happens to have kids like does she use like birth control or drugs or anything like that?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Birth control

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She says she use birth control

KL: What was that

HD: She use a birth control

KL: Yeah

HD: Like a is a needle like a needle I don’t know

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah a (?) they put in their arm

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Something I don’t know

KL: Did the doctor does the doctor do the needle?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes
KL: Okay so she’ll have to choose to have another kid or not have another kid

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She says she’s going to wait for a while (laughing)

KL: yeah

HD: (laughing)

KL: Yeah. In the U.S. lots of people have different attitudes. For me it’s very important for me to try and be with my daughter a lot of the time not all the time necessarily but a lot of the time because I want to teach her myself instead of have someone else teach her

HD: Umhuh.

HD: translates comments into Burmese

KL: Yeah so since I’m asking her questions I can tell her a little about my thoughts too (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese comments into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah mostly they do like that.

KL: Yeah some people think that’s important, some people not.

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing) Where are her boys today? Are they in school?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah, yeah in school
Conversing in Burmese between Chapter and San Da and babies

KL: In the U.S. in the history of the U.S. sometimes there have been problems with things like racism and people doing mean things to other people just like in Burma. Although maybe not quite as bad I’m not sure, maybe. But has she ever um have people been pretty nice overall or sometimes not so nice here?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Sometime when she’s she trying to talk to the people and (?) doesn’t say anything back to her like she say Hi and they don’t want to say anything

KL: So people where?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Sometimes she said when she go to the store shop and most some of the people they try to talk to her first but sometime when they talk some people when she trying to talk to her (?) when she try to talk to them but they don’t say anything when she says something

KL: So she thinks maybe they don’t understand or do you think does she think that they’re being rude?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She doesn’t know (laughing). Maybe doesn’t, maybe they do understand

KL: She said that um once her boy went outside and got lost

HD: Umhuh.

KL: and was really she was really scared has that happened again or no?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese
HD: No no more no more

KL: That’s good

HD: Yeah she just (?) all the time with him (?)

KL: Okay I picked up the picture because it was getting bent

HD: (laughing)

KL: (laughing)

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

KL: Yeah it’s probably important

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: She (?) she’s very fat but after like a

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: she stay camp a lot and worry a lot

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: she call she call (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: and now her sister called very (?) because them to worry and a lot (?)

KL: talking to babies Oh she has a book. It makes sounds

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah mostly her sister sometime (?) talk to her family in Salt Lake because is worry a lot and she calls sick all the time (laughing)

KL: The sister in the refugee camp?
HD: Yeah

KL: Why did she get sick?

HD: Because she worry a lot she want to come to

KL: She was worrying?

HD: Yeah

KL: Oh not working worrying

HD: umhuh, worry not working yeah worry (laughing)

KL: Does the sister still worry a lot?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah

KL: I’m looking at her table cloth. Is that common to have a table cloth with the lace around it in Burma or is that an American style that she

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yea something (?)

KL: In Burma sometimes they do that

HD: Yeah

KL: Did she buy it or make it do you know? You can ask

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: It’s just bought it she bought it
KL: She bought it

HD: Yeah

HD: talking to baby she’s not happy anymore

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: I don’t know

Conversing in Burmese

HD: Is just going to get something I think. Talking to baby Oh oh she is not happy anymore

KL: talking to baby do you need a hug from Mommy?

HD: talking to baby oh so sad

KL: Called a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle (laughing). I think it’s his toy

HD: Yeah you’re a cute man

KL: Yeah they’re Ninja Turtles

Kids in background: Bye, Bye little girl

KL: Okay tell your Mom I say Hi

Kid in background: Okay

HD: (laughing) talking to baby yep is you

KL: Um is it almost time for her to cook?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

KL: Yeah almost not quite

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Soon
KL: Okay so how does her her husband get to work or how do they get to Salt Lake? Does she drive?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yeah her husband drive

KL: Does he speak English yet?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes he speaks

KL: He speaks English

HD: a lot

KL: a lot

HD: Yeah he speaks a lot

KL: Why does he speak English so well?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Because he still learn the English in the camp and she also take a lot of class in America

KL: He did did she not take as many?

HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: No
SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Just used a book

KL: (?)

HD: (?) book and he (?)

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: (?)

KL: What about her? Has he taken more classes than her?

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Mostly her husband he studied anyway when he get the paper from somewhere and he get (?) and he look at a dictionary and he understand (?)

KL: So mostly her husband studies

HD: Yeah

KL: and when he sees a word he doesn’t know when gets a paper

HD: Yeah

KL: he looks it up

HD: He look at in the dictionary and then he try to think of what this word mean and he understand it because the dictionary (?) and he can read

KL: That’s good

Conversing in Burmese between Chapter and San Da and babies (laughing)

HD: Are we almost I have to go at two o’clock

KL: Okay that’s fine

HD: yeah

KL: Is it okay with her if I just stay and take pictures without you?
HD: translates my question into Burmese

SD: answers my question in Burmese

HD: Yes

KL: It’s okay. Okay thank you.

End of recording.
APPENDIX D. TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH HSER DOH

Interviewer: Karen Hunt Lambert

Transcriptionist: Karen Hunt Lambert

Informant: Hser Doh ‘Chapter’

Address: 558 N. 100 West Logan, Utah, 84321

Place of interview: Department of Workforce Services (180 North, 100 West Logan, UT 84321)

Date of Interview: Feb. 12, 2009

Other people present: at first Alex Mortensen and the instructors and students in the night ESL class going on at the same time, but toward the end most left and only the instructor Emily Songer remained.

Brief description of contents: Hser Doh discusses his life in Burma, Thailand and the U.S., including his experiences helping translate and ESL classes.

Chapter – 1 – (about 21 m)

Feb. 12, 2009, at the Department of Workforce Services; he’s one of the two main translators for the Karen and Burmese communities.

0.00 K: And this is Karen Lambert. I’m here with Chapter on Feb. 12, 2009, at the Department of Workforce Services and he’s the, one of the two main translators for the Karen and Burmese community. And Chapter how do you, is Chapter your real name or is that a nickname, or?

C: A Nickname.

K: It’s a nickname?

C: Yeah.

K: OK. And so your nickname, is it just spelled like “Chapter” with chapter books.

C: Yes.
K: And what’s your real name?
C: Hser Doh [Sounds a little like Chardo]
K: Do you want to write it down for me?
C: Yeah.
K: Oh, and so you have only two names?
C: Yeah.
K: Some of the people I’ve interviewed, they have about three or four. OK, and how old are you right now?
C: 23, right now.
K: So, you’re 23 right now?
C: Yeah.
K: And how long were you in the refugee camp?
C: Uh, 13 years.
1:00 K: And before that where did you live?
C: I lived in the Thai and Burmese camp
K: You lived in the Thai-Burma border?
C: Yeah:
K: What was it called?
C: Tak Masal
K: Tak Masal [I said it like Doc Masal]
C: Like Tak, tak
K: Do you want to spell that too?
Alex: That was the refugee camp.
K: So, that was the refugee camp where you where for 13 years?
C: Tak, Yes, refugee camp.
K: OK, and prior to that where did you come from?
C: I come from Burma
K: OK, where in Burma?
C: Karen state.
K: OK, the state of Karen?
C: Yeah.
K: Oh, are you Karen?
C: Yeah.
K: Well, that’s my name too. That’s kind of weird. So, you lived there then for 10 years?
C: uh
K: You lived there until you were 10 years old and then you had to go to a refugee camp?
2.00 C: Yeah
K: Why did you have to go to a refugee camp?
C: I see a lot of problems in ref -- Karen state. Because the Burmese soldier they came to the Karen state, they tortured the people and abused their human rights.
K: You said tortured the people?
C: Yes, tortured and abuse, rape the women and burn the house, burn the village, like this, then we’d have to flee to the Thai border to live in the refugee camp.
K: Had they ever come before or is this the first time they come?
C: They come every time.
K: So, they’d come before and this is the first time you fled? Or did you go back home afterward?
C: No people people are fleeing to Thialand to come like many times, like maybe 10 or 6? And they are fleeing to the Thai border.

K: So, they came to your village. What was life like before they came?

C: Uh, before they came?

K: Before the Burmese soldiers came what was life like in your town in Karen?

C: Like peaceful.

K: What did you do?

C: Like the people planted. They have the school.

K: What did you plant?

C: Plant rice and vegetables. Carrots, I think it was onion, fruit, like a mango, pineapple.

K: So, your family was farmers?

C: Yep..

K: Did you live with your parents?

C: Yeah. I didn’t live with my parents when I was a child because my parents had a farm. I lived in a different village, like Hyrum and Logan, like this. I went to a different village because I had school.

K: Oh, so you had school. OK. And was your family quite well off is that why you could go to school? Did it take money to go to school?

C: Yeah.

K: Your family had money to send you?

C: Not really. Someday we had to sell the fruits ??? and send their children to school

K: So some other people sent you to school who had the money. Who did have the money to send you to school? Sorry.

C: Just like an uncle or aunt they send their nephew and niece like this.

K: And you were the nephew?
C: Yes.
K: Did you have any brothers or sisters?
C: I have four sisters.
K: Do your sisters live here?
C: They live in refugee camp.
K: Oh, so they didn’t get to come?
C: I don’t know. Maybe in future they will come to America.
K: Are your parents alive?
C: Yeah.
K: Where do your parents live?
C: In refugee camp.
K: OK, so you’re the only one in your family who lives in the United States?
C: Yeah.
K: How long have you lived here?
C: About a year in a half.
K: OK. And before you lived here have you lived anywhere else in the U.S.?
C: Yeah, earlier I lived in Salt Lake City about six months and then I moved here.
K: You lived in Salt Lake City about six months and then you’ve been in Logan about one year.
C: Yeah.

6.00 K: OK, and how did you learn English so well?
C: Because I go to school. Where I live in Salt Lake I go to the Granite school
K: The granite school district
C: Yeah, district and after I moved to Logan I go to the Ellis school
K: Ellis Elementary?
C: Yeah, ELC
K: So they had you go to the elementary school with the little kids?
C: No, like ELC, like English Language Center.
K: Oh, English Language Center.
C: English Language Center yes, to study from diver… We came to study English, to practice speaking English and then they have you read and write everything in English.
K: OK, did you learn any English in the refugee camps?
C: Yeah, I learned some English there when I was a child, but no one speak English just only we read and write. We never talk to each other in English. Just speak native languages.

7.04 K: Cuz it’s not your native language?
C: Yeah,
K: What languages do you speak?
C: I speak Karen and Burmese also.
K: You speak Karen, Burmese and English?
C: Yeah, English, not really perfect.
K: Do you speak another language or just three?
C: Just three.
K: Three is good. That’s better than me (laughs)
C: (laughs)
K: OK, you’ve picked up English it seems very quickly.
C: No, have to learn every day.
K: Is Emily one of your teachers?
Emily: He helps with my classes.
K: And you come to help with her classes every week?
C: Yeah, I come every week.
K: On Thursdays?
C: No Thursday. Tuesday and Thursday

8.00 K: Oh, Tuesday and Thursday you have classes. And how long have you been helping to translate?
C: Uh, (Pause)
K: You don’t remember.
C: Do you know how long Emily?
Emily: It’s been five weeks.
K: You’re a paid employee with the English Language Center. Is that right?
C: yes
K: Yes, and so in the day you also have another job?
C: Yes, I work at Icon.
K: What do you do at Icon?
C: I do production.
K: You do production?. What do you produce?
C: I do athletics production?
K: At- large?
C: Athletics, athletics.
K: Athletic
C: Yeah, athletic production
C: yeah

8.59 K: So you help make treadmills.
C: Yeah, treadmills
K: And how many hours do you usually work a day?
C: We usually work four days a week, we work 10 hours every day, but sometimes we work 36, 35 hours a week.
K: OK, so you usually work 40 hours a week?
C: Yeah.
K: OK, how do you like it?
C: I like it because sometimes I have to learn to make a job, sometimes to talk with the people. I’m so happy to work there.
K: Why is that?
C: Sometimes I learn new English because some of my friends are English and I talk to them and sometimes I learn a little Spanish.
K: Oh, you’re learning a little Spanish? Wow. Good for you!

10.00 C: Yeah. (laughs)
K: Are there many other Karen refugees who work there?
C: Just me and another two guys who are with me at this company.
K: You and two others and then who are the rest of the workers? Are there some who speak Spanish?
C: No.
K: Or how are you learning Spanish?
C: Just really, I talk to my friend who is Spanish.
K: Is he Karen?
C: No, they are from, South American.
K: Oh, South American. And he works there too?
C: Yeah.
K: Where in South America is he from?
C: Mexico
K: Oh, Central America then, or North America actually.
C: Maybe Peru, I don’t know where they are from.
K: And, how long have you worked at Icon?
C: I work about 7½.
K: 7 months then? Where did you work before then?
10.55 C: Before I work at Icon I used to work at Miller, like Swift, like JBS Swift.
K: JBS Swift, the meat packing
K: Did you like that?
C: Yes, I like that.
K: So, why did you change jobs?
C: Sometimes, I wanted to have another experience, to change my job like this? [On another occasion, he said he did not like all the blood at JBS and that also motivated him to change work.]
K: So, when you
C: When I work at Miller I just really learn to cut meats? After I go to Icon I learn to work at production. Just learning a new job
K: What brought you to Logan?
C: Huh?
K: What brought you to Logan from Salt Lake?
C: I don’t know. I had a job.
K: K-did you work in Salt Lake?
12.00 C: Yeah, I worked there about one and a half months?
K: What did you do in Salt Lake?
C: I worked in a Taco B…
K: A Taco Bar?
C: Yeah, a Taco Bell.
K: Taco Bell?
K: Oh, so you’ve worked three jobs in the United States?
C: Yeah
K: You’ve had a variety of experiences then?
C: That’s not really good.
K: Not really good, why not?
C: I have to learn a lot.
K: What would you like to do? Do you have any ideas of what you would like to do in the future or?
C: Yeah, I have an idea like this. I’m going to get a high school diploma and then go to the college. Maybe for the future I want to become a nurse?
K: an economist?
C: No, I want to become a nurse.
K: Oh? You want to be a nurse?
C: Yeah
K: So, you’d like to go to Utah State?
13.00 C: Maybe for the future, but I’m not sure.
K: That sounds like a big goal. That sounds good. So, in addition to translating twice a week for the class do you do other translation work? Do you go to other homes and help people?
C: No, just the class.
K: Why do you speak better English than the others do you think?
C: I don’t know.
K: Have you had more opportunities or you’re just good with languages or I don’t know? (laughs)
C: I don’t know (laughs).
K: It sounds like you’ve had about the same amount of time to learn English as them, is this true?
K: Yeah?
K: OK, so you’re just a fast learner. (laughs)
C: Yeah, I have to learn it. (laughs)
K: Did you take any classes here yourself?
C: Sometimes in the weekend I just have a computer and I have a dictionary, a dictionary program and I learn grammar and the vocabularies and I check everything with pronunciation like this.
K: So you have a computer and you, when you listen to people talk, or what do you do?
C: When the people talk, someone I don’t understand, I check in the dictionary.
K: What people are you talking about?
C: My friends
K: Like if you’re just in a public setting you’ll look up words they’re saying?
C: Yeah
K: Oh wow. So how much time do you spend trying to learn words like that?
C: One hour every day.
K: Oh, really.
C: Yeah.
K: When do you do that?
C: Sometimes just really reading, sometimes just looking at the dictionary, sometimes writing like this?
K: Do you do it at the morning, or at night, or in the afternoon?
C: In the evening
K: In the evening?
C: Yeah.
K: Before you sleep.
C: Yeah
K: OK, What time do you have to be at work in the morning?
C: 5:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
K: 5:30 to 4 p.m. is your shift?
C: Yeah
K: and what time do you go to sleep at night?
C: Uh, 9 sometimes, 10.
K: So you get up really early. What time do you get up in the morning?
C: 4:30
K: So, you don’t sleep very much then.
C: Yeah.
K: OK, do you have many friends in the Karen community or the Burmese community?
16.00 C: Yeah, I have both.
K: Are all the refugees either Burmese or Karen who are from Burma?
C: Yeah. I have a friend from Cambodia, from Vietnam, some who are from American.
I go to the church.
K: What church?
C: By the university.
K: Is it Catholic?
C: No
K: Or Baptist? Or Mormon?

C: Mormon

K: Oh, you go to a Mormon church?

C: I have a friend. He is a doctor. He take me there.

K: Oh, a medical doctor or a doctor at a university?

C: Bear River

K: Bear River insurance or I mean Health Department (laugh)

C: Yeah.

K: OK, did you have any religion in Burma?

C: Religion?

K: Religion, Like did you go to any church or do any …?

C: Yeah, I go to the Baptist church.

K: Are most of the Karen people Christian?

C: yeah

K: Or Buddhist or Muslim?

C: I think we have three different religions in Burma. Some of the people are Buddhist and then some of the people are Baptist and then another religion is animist. Do you know what that is?

K: Uh.

C: They don’t believe in Buddha. They don’t believe in Christian, just really have their own religion like this.

K: It’s kind of a ritualistic and that type of thing. I know a tiny, little bit about it. No Muslims?

C: Yeah, there are some of them too.

K: OK, and do the different religions get along?
C: Get along?
K: Do the people of different religions get along or do they fight?

18.00 C: I don’t know. Maybe not.
K: Like in Burma are there Christians and Buddhists who are friends with each other?
C: Yeah, maybe. I’m not sure.
K: Or were all the people you were around Baptist?
C: Yeah.
K: So all the Baptists live together?
C: So the Baptists and the Buddhists together. They were not fighting.
K: So the Buddhists live by themselves too, not with the Baptists?
C: Yeah. [not sure he understood me]
K: So, the soldiers -- is it a religious thing that they want to kill the Karen people or is it an ethnic thing, situation, or?
C: I feel like this, with the Burmese solider
K: Why did they come to raid your village?
C: Because they want all of Burma to speak just only Burmese because some of the ??? have their own language – because some other ethnicities they want democracy. Dom-
cration.

19.02 K: Democracy?
C: Democracy
K: The Karen people want democracy.
C: So, they don’t want democracy. They just want to force the people to do everything the government wants. They don’t follow the people, just only the follow the law, the want all the people to follow the law. Some of the people do not want democracy.
They want an opportunity to learn and to improve their life for the future like this, but the Burmese don’t want, just to give opportunity to the Burmese people to give opportunity to the other people, especially the Karen people, they don’t really like it.

20.00 K: I was told there was an election many years ago and the people voted for democracy and the military government did not like it and so they took the leader and they locked her

C: Yeah, they do like that. They vote for the democracy. But, they have two choices. The Burmese government they do like this. You can not vote yes. You have to vote no. It’s forced. You have to vote like this.

K: Do people talk about politics there?

C: My family no. They are farmers they don’t know nothing.

K: So, do most of the people know what’s going on?

C: Yeah, going on.

K: They understand why the. Is there a lot of fear?

21.00 C: Yeah.

K: Yeah? OK. I have a lot more questions, but that’s probably enough for tonight. You probably need to get home and do some other things.

C: Uh, huh.

K: So, would it be OK maybe if I want to come again to a class and just visit or watch or whatever?

C: (laughs) nods?

K: OK, thank you very much.

C: Yeah, OK.

K: OK, we’ll just push this button right here and it stops it.
APPENDIX E. TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH KYAW EH ‘JOE’

Interviewer: Karen Hunt Lambert
Transcriptionist: Karen Hunt Lambert
Informant: Kyaw Eh ‘Joe’:
Address: 558 N. 100 West Logan, Utah, 84321
Place of interview: Kyaw Eh’s former home in Logan

Date of Interview: 022109
Other people present: Hser Doh (‘Chapter’), Alex Mortensen, various roommates who walked by at times.

Brief description of contents: Kyaw Eh ‘Joe’ tells the history of how he left Burma for a refugee camp in Thailand and then came to Salt Lake City and eventually Logan. He also discusses his role as a translator and announces he obtained a new job in Salt Lake City and will be leaving Logan on the coming Saturday.

‘Joe’ history at his home

022109 ‘Joe’ history at his home

I drove to the small house where Joe lived with his roommates, including Chapter, for this interview. One of the young men who lived in the house was making some kind of authentic breakfast in the kitchen. I believe it included fish, but am not sure exactly what is was. I sat in the living room with Alex, Joe and Chapter during the interview, while other 20ish young men walked through occasionally. It apparently was quite the bachelor pad.

0.0 Karen: All right this is Karen Lambert. It’s Saturday and I’m here with Joe and Alex and Chapter and I’m going to be talking mainly to Joe right now about some of his, um, history and then also about his role helping the rest of the people in his community to communicate. So, anyway. Uh. Just for the beginning of the interview, you told me this before, but, um, your nickname is Joe, right, and is it just J-O?

Joe: Yeah
Karen: No E?
Joe: J-O-E
Karen: Oh J-O-E. OK.
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: But, how do you spell your real name?
Joe: K-Y-A-W
Karen: K-A-
Joe: K-Y-
Karen: K-Y
Joe: A-W
Karen: OK
Joe: and E- Last name is E-H. [Pause] That’s it.
Karen: Like that. And so. Pronounce it for me, so I have it pronounced.
Joe: Kyaw Eh [Sounds like Jaw Eh]
Karen: Kyaw Eh?
Joe: Yeah
Karen: So it sounds similar to ‘Joe’

1.00 Joe: [laughs] Yeah.
Karen: OK, and so tell me. You’ve told me before but just so we have it on recorded tell me a little bit about your history. You lived in Thailand in the refugee camps? Right?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: So, tell me. Were you from the state of Karen before that?
Joe: Yes. At first I was born in Karen state and then for about, um, I don’t remember the day and the year.
Karen: You don’t remember the day or the year?
Joe: So, I just remember when I moved to the refugee camp.
Karen: Right, so do you put your birthday Jan. 1?
Joe: No
Karen: No? Oh.
Joe: No
Karen: Do you know your birthday?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK, what’s your birthday?
Karen: But, you don’t know the year?
Joe: Yes I do know.
Karen: Oh you do know.
Joe: ’79. 1979,

2.00 Karen: 1979?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK you’re about my age [laugh]
Joe: So I live in refugee camps for about eight years long.
Karen: For about eight years? Oh wow.
Joe: And so
Karen: And how old were you when you went to the refugee camps?
Joe: Uh
Karen: Was that the date you just gave me when you went to the refugee camps?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: Oh, so you don’t know your actual birthday though?
Joe: Birthday?
Karen: Birthday. Like when you were born?
Joe: No, I know my, my birthday. Because I don’t remember it’s like a lot of stories when I was young. I ran away like the Burmese military come. Everything was lost. Some things I remember, I don’t remember. I remember when I live in refugee camp. Yeah, that’s good. I remember that.
3.00 Karen: OK. So, um, when you fill out documents what do you put as the date of your birthday?
Joe: Date of birth?
Karen: Yes.
Joe: Aug. 15
Karen: OK. That’s Aug. 15, 1979?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: So, you’re 29?
Karen: You’re 29. OK. And do you remember when you went to the refugee camps? How old were you?
Joe: How old?
Karen: Yeah.
Joe: I think when I – 20. When I was 20.
Karen: You were 20?
Alex: 19 probably.
Karen: OK, and do know about what time of year it was. Was it? Do you know what month you went to the refugee camps or anything like that?
Joe: Day or month?
Karen: Yeah, when you arrived in Thailand.

4.00 Joe: Oh, I have a paper. I don’t remembers-- in my case – mmm, 19 and 1995, no, around there I think; 1994 or ‘95 something like that.
Karen: OK, and did you arrive by yourself or with your family? Or?
Joe: With my uncle.
Karen: With your uncle?
Joe: With my aunt.
Karen: and your aunt? And you said when you were younger you ran away from home? Why?
Joe: Well, it was because they were fighting. Like the Karen soldier – the Karen soldiers and Burmese soldiers, or something.
Karen: Were your parents Karen soldiers?
Joe: Yeah, my dad.
Karen: Your father was?
Joe: Yeah
Karen: OK. Was your mother a full-time mom or did she farm or what did your mom do?

4.58 Joe: Yes, like a paddy rice farm.
Karen: A rice paddy?
Joe: Yeah, a rice farm that she made. But, my dad just only stayed in jungle and fight back too.
Karen: Your dad stayed in the jungle? Is that freedom fighter? Is that what it’s called?
Joe: Yes, freedom.
Karen: OK.
Joe: So –
Karen: Your parents wanted democracy?
Joe: Like the Karen want independence
Karen: Independence from the military government that was there?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK and that’s partly why they don’t like the Karen people?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK and so, you didn’t like the fighting. Where did you run away to? When you ran away where did you go?

Joe: Well, I ran away. Like, uh, when we live in our village we dig the hole in the ground and like the up, above we put like the wood, a big wood. We’re afraid of the missiles, like how does they call it the bombs. We’re afraid of the – Sometimes when we go with a friend somewhere and then we don’t need nothing, anything and then we heard like the sound of gun, the fightrrrr, or something, and then we ran away, ran away and to find to hide in the ditch, hole. Something like that.

Karen: So, you ran away from your family or you just ran away from the war?

Joe: Oh, like a lot of times. Sometimes with family, sometimes just only with a friend, sometimes just by myself.

Karen: Did you live at home most of the time. Did you go back and sleep at your family, family’s house at night?

Joe: No.
Karen: No? You stayed wherever?

Joe: Yeah.
Karen: Where did you usually stay?

Joe: Stay sometimes, stay with a friend in house, and my friends’ house.
Karen: Were you, were you concerned that you might have to fight?

Joe: Pause.
Karen: Would they have made you fight? Did they have children’s soldiers?

Joe: No.
Karen: No. Not child soldiers?

Joe: No.
Karen: So, by running away did you get away from the fighting?

Joe: Get away?
Karen: Uh, huh
Joe: Yes.
Karen: You did.
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK. Did you. Was your family worried about you?

Joe: Yes, they were. But sometimes just only, you know, I lived just only with my mom. I [never] seen my dad a lot because my dad he lived in the jungle and he be, he was a
soldier. He never come back home – a year, two years, three years – one time he came to visit us.

7.57 Karen: OK and so was your mother worried about you being gone? Was your mother concerned about your safety or concerned when you left?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: Does she understand why you left?
Joe: Right now?
Karen: No, when you were young. When you ran away?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: Did she understand why?
Joe: Oh yes. She understand.
Karen: Was she upset? Or was she happy?
Joe: She not happy. [laugh] She was not happy. She was worried, she was worried about me. Something like that.
Karen: OK. Did you have siblings?
Joe: Siblings?
Karen: Brothers and sisters?
Joe: Oh yes.
Karen: How many?
Joe: All of, four all together, including me.
Karen: Brothers or sisters?
Joe: One brother. Two sisters.
Karen: OK, where do your parents and brothers and sisters live now?
Joe: Right now?
Karen: Yeah.
Joe: Right now, my dad he already pass away and like he fight the Burmese and he already pass away.
Karen: Did he die in the war?
Joe: Yeah, in the war. Yeah.
Karen: OK
Joe: So my mom right now live in the refugee camp and with my youngest sister. My younger brother he live in Bangkok. He work in Thailand.
Karen: Did he ever get any kind of citizenship or is he an illegal immigrant?
Joe: Illegal.
Karen: He’s illegal? K
Joe: Yeah, he’s illegal with my other sister.
Karen: Right. OK, and didn’t you say you had one more brother?
Joe: Excuse me?
Karen: Did you say you had two brothers?
Joe: No, only one brother and two sisters?
Karen: Oh, two sisters? Where’s the other sister?
Joe: The other sister with my younger brother. They live in Thailand, Bangkok. They work, but my sister she already got married.

Karen: OK. So one brother and sister live with your mother and then the other sister is married? [I misunderstood, as I seem to be doing a lot in this interview. Listening back at the tape it’s clear one sister lives with her mother and the brother and married sister both like in Bangkok – I believe.] And where’s the sister who’s married? Where does she live?
Joe: Right now she works in Thailand.
Karen: In Thailand also.
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: So, all three live in Thailand, except for you?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: And how did you come to the U.S.?
Joe: So, 19 – no -- 2003 or 2004; so the U.N., United Nations, they went to the refugee camp. So they ask people over there, refugee, who needs to go to third country? Do you known, do you understand, third country? Yeah, like Canada or like, uh.
Karen: Who wants to go somewhere else?
Joe: Who wants to go somewhere else. Third country. They called that third country.

Karen: Just because your first country is Burma and then Thailand?
Joe: Thailand. Yeah, third country. Yes, people who wants to go to third country they can apply like to U.N. can apply like application form. So some people they want to go to like Australia, like England, Poland, Canada, but me I, I, I chose U.S.
Karen: You chose the U.S. So they let you suggest where you wanted to go?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK. Why did you choose the U.S.?

Joe: Because I like U.S.A. When I live in my country, say, I really like U.S. because, so, everything’s like a democracy. Everything is freedom, I think, and then they
are very powerful in the world and then I like the pronunciation, like English pronunciation and U.S. English pronunciation. Like in Australia and English, their pronunciation I don’t understand when they, when they talk to me. Just only a ?? sounds. But, American pronunciation, when I live in refugee camps like I listen, I listen BBC radio, but I like American sound, pronunciation, I like better.

Karen: What was your form of information on the United States? Where did you learn about the United States in Burma? Did you have radio, television?

Joe: No television, when I live in my village there was no more, no electric, no television, just only radio.

13.01 Karen: There was radio though?

Joe: Yes

Karen: Did you listen to the news?

Joe: BBC radio, like in Burmese language.

Karen: What radio stations? Were any of the American or British radio stations available?

Joe: Two, yeah, yeah, two, two, both of American and British. Like VOA I listen to over here, VOA, Voice of America and over there BBC.

Karen: Yeah, I listen to the BBC sometimes so. OK. And so you told them you want to go to the U.S. Did they ask your mom or your sisters and brother if they want to go to the U.S.?

Joe: Yes, so they don’t want.

Karen: They said no?

Joe: No. Because it is so far away, you know. Distance far away and they have to wait and see in Burma if they change the policy, like in Burma from dictatorship and democracy they will go back, go back to live in our own land.

4.09 Karen: And why do they want to do that?

Joe: So, like, they don’t want to go away from their own land. Because our Karen people they really like, they really love their own land, something like that, where they were born, where they were born.

Karen: Are you sad to have left? Were you sad?

Joe: Yeah, but it depends on the life, it depends on the future, I had the choice.

Karen: Do you think you made a good choice?

Joe: Excuse me?

Karen: Do you think you made a good choice to leave? Was it a good decision?

Joe: Yes, for the future I think. A lot is better than, better than a refugee camp.
Karen: OK. How did you come to the U.S.? How did it happen? Did you, did they have you fill out forms and then have you get on an airplane or take a bus or how did?

Joe: Yeah, so the first we have an interview. It’s called they called IOM International Organization.

Joe: Organization Migrant. Something like that. Then after that we have a blood test or something and then we had to wait and see our name list in our camp and then we, like, what day or what time we had to leave from refugee camp to Bangkok airport. We take a, took bus from refugee camp to Bangkok airport.

Karen: OK, and then was there a plane that went all the way from Bangkok, Thailand, to the United States? Or did you have a lot of layovers?

Joe: There was only direct route, from Bangkok to New York. There was only one airplane.

Karen: Which airport? Was it to the Kennedy airport?

Joe: Kennedy, yeah.

Karen: OK. And then from Kennedy did you get on another airplane and fly to Salt Lake City?

Joe: Fly to Denver

Karen: To Denver?

Joe: And Denver to Salt Lake City.

Karen: So Salt Lake City was the first permanent stop you had in the U.S.

Joe: First permanent, yes.

Karen: And when did you arrive in Salt Lake City?

Joe: Aug. 9, 2007

Karen: OK, and so you’ve been here, let’s see, about a year and a half.

Joe: Yeah.

Karen: Is that right?

Joe: Yeah.

Karen: And. So. When did you first learn English?

Joe: I went to Granite High ELC. ELC.

Karen: ESL?

Joe: ESL. Oh, I’m sorry I mean ESL. Granite High School. I went there for about three months and then I found a job

Karen: Where?
Joe: At a Salt Lake Kmart store. We both [he and Chapter]
Chapter: (laughs) Yeah.
Joe: So we had to go to work for about 45 minute by walking, by walking. Every day we walk there. So the first we never seen snow. We never seen snow before. The first we have seen the snow in Salt Lake when we worked at Kmart.

18.04 Karen: Oh, OK.
Joe: It was really strange for us. We two were walking in the snow.
Karen: So, it was very strange?
Joe: So, yeah, so cold. We can’t stand the cold weather. It’s hard for us.
Karen: Right. You learned English in the refugee camps, right?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: And did you learn any English in Burma?
Joe: In Burma too, yes, a little bit.
Karen: And so in your village many people spoke a little bit of English?
Joe: No, there’s no more. There’s nothing. No people.
Karen: No one lives in your village anymore?
Joe: No.
Karen: But when you did live in your village people spoke a little bit of English? There were schools that taught a little bit of English?
Joe: No, they taught just only Burmese. Burmese language.
Karen: Just the Burmese language?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: You also spoke Karen to your family right?
19.00 Joe: Yeah.
Karen: Did you also speak any other languages there?
Joe: No, just Karen and Burmese.
Karen: OK. And you had to learn Karen at home because they wouldn’t teach it in school?
Joe: At home?
Karen: Yes.
Joe: Uh really. Yeah.
Karen: Did you go to school there?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: But, you learned the most English when you actually came to the U.S. and you actually speak it?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK. And so you worked at Kmart for how long?
Joe: For about two months.
Chapter: [says something – Joe listens]
Joe: Oh, a month and a half.
Karen: So, you and Chapter were there the same time?
Chapter: Yes, the same time.
Karen: Did you know each other back in Thailand?
Joe: Yes. We went to the same school.
Karen: The same school in the refugee camp?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Are you from the same village in Burma?
Joe: No.
Karen: You didn’t know each other in Burma?
Joe: No.
19.54 Karen: OK. All right. And so after a month and a half at Kmart what happened? Why did you stop working at Kmart?
Joe: We could not stand to walk, to walk in the snow [laughs] we talked to our supervisor and oh, we can’t stand the cold weather, to work in it. And then the police follow us three times because we have to wake up, go to work so early, 3 a.m. Like we cover our hat, our, like a thief, like a thief, like a thief, because of our cold, you know, and the police follow us. Ask – He ask us, “Where will you go? We answer like, “We will go to work.” “Why so early?” something like that. And three times I don’t like.
21.07 Karen: So they thought you were criminals?
Joe: Yeah, but I don’t like, something like that. I don’t like. The police follow us like we are thieves, something like that, they think. I don’t like to work like that, I explained to our caseworker. And then we stop work there and then they talked to, they talk to us.
Karen: Really quickly, what did you do at Kmart? Were you outside?
Joe: Clean up, cleaned up. Cleaned store.
Karen: So, in the morning before they opened you went?
Joe: Yeah. Yes.
Karen: So was that inside a lot of the time or was it all outside? I mean what
Karen: It was inside? It was just cold going there?
Joe: But inside there was not much cold.
Karen: Oh, it was. Did they not turn the? Is it cold inside or?
Joe: Inside it was warm. Inside it was warm.
Karen: Oh, it is warm. OK

22.00 Joe: Because of winter from our apartment to Kmart we walked back so it was cold;
Karen: So you talked to your caseworker and what happened?
Joe: So they were looking for another job and they find another job at Taco Bell.
Karen: At Taco Bell?
Joe: Taco Bell restaurant.
Karen: OK.

Joe: So we got just only 3 hours a day; 3 hour a day or like three day in a week, 4 day in a week. We don’t have not enough, we don’t have enough for rent and utilities. We can’t pay it.
Karen: How much was your rent in Salt Lake? Was it expensive?
Joe: Like $7 per hour.
Karen: Oh, so that’s what your wages were? Were $7 an hour? What about your rent?
Joe: Oh, rent. Rent was $600
Karen: For how many people were splitting?

23.01 Joe: For four people, two bedroom.
Karen: So, each person had to pay just a little over $100?
Joe: Yes, like and it concludes utilities
Karen: or $150.
Joe: includes utilities for about $800.
Karen: So that’s not really that much money?
Joe: Yeah, it’s not that much money because we get a lot of money, we get a little money it’s not much.
Karen: Were you working full-time?
Joe: No, just only part-time.
Karen: OK, that would be hard. OK, and then you worked at Taco Bell and were having struggles paying your rent and then what happened?
Joe: At work?
Alex: After Taco Bell what, where did you go?
Joe: After Taco Bell we stopped Taco Bell and then.
Karen: How long were you at Taco Bell for first?
Chapter: One month.
Joe: Yeah, just one month, I think.

24.00 Karen: Goll, you guys are workers [can’t quite be sure what I said]
Joe: Because, sometimes you know, three day in a week we don’t have nothing to do when we stay home. Sometimes like we’re lazy, there’s nothing to do. We would like to work like full-time.
Karen: So, you wanted a full-time job?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: And, Taco Bell was part-time. Was Kmart part-time too?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Both are part-time.
Joe: Both are part-time jobs.
Karen: So you needed a full-time job?
Joe: Yeah, and then CCS – do you know CCS?
Karen: JBS, you mean?
Joe: No, CCS, Catholic Community Service, that organization?
Karen: Yes I do.
Joe: They find, they looking for like a job for me at JBS Hyrum, and they contact each other. Since then we start to feel out application form and then we moved to here since Jan. 8, 2008.

25.09 Karen: So, you moved up here at the same time.
Joe: Yes.
Karen: So, you guys are good buddies. [laugh] You’re good friends.
Joe: Yeah. Thank you.
Karen: And so you’ve now worked at this job for about a year, at JBS?
Joe: Yes
Karen: And you like this one better?
Joe: Yes, I like
Karen: That’s good. Does it pay your rent now?
Joe: Excuse me.
Karen: Does it pay your rent now? Can you pay your rent now?
Joe: Yes, it’s better.
Karen: That’s good.
Joe: A lot better. It’s a lot better.
Karen: What does it pay at JBS if you don’t mind me asking?
Joe: Pay?
Karen: What does it pay?
Joe: $12.45 per hour. I get.
Karen: That’s pretty good. Yeah, you can definitely pay your rent on that I would think. And so Chapter worked at JBS with you at first?

26.00 Joe: Yes.
Karen: And now you work at Icon because you didn’t like JBS?
Chapter: ???
Joe: It’s so hard.
Chapter: It’s so bloody
Karen: It’s hard to have it so bloody and so you like Icon better? OK. And you do.
Chapter: [nods or something]
Karen: That’s good.
Karen: OK, so, let’s see how the recording is doing here and we’re going to start talking about some translating if it’s doing OK.

022109 'Joe' translating at his home

0.00 Karen: All right this is Karen Lambert again. I’m still here with Joe and Chapter and Alex. I’m interviewing Joe and we’re going to start talking a little bit about his work translating for some of the other refugees here. So, Joe, you, um moved up here and it sounds like your English was a little bit better than most people’s when you first came.
Joe: Yes, I think so.
Karen: OK and so how did you end up helping other people with translation?
Joe: So, I translate for other people at JBS, like the refugees who work over there and translate for them to go to, like to the nurse, like the hospital.
Karen: So if others of your co-workers go to the nurse

0.59 Joe: Co-workers yeah
Karen: or hospital you’d translate for them?
Joe: Yeah, something like that.
Karen: And did you get paid to do this?
Joe: No.
Karen: No.
Joe: I get paid by hour in work time.
Karen: Oh, so your work was paying you to do it?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: Because it was on work time?
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK. And at that time how many other Burmese or Karen refugees were there?
Joe: At Miller? At Miller?
Karen: Yes, JBS.
Joe: JBS? I think right now over there 30 people; almost 40.
Karen: Almost 40? And how many are there now? The same?
Joe: The same?
Karen: It hasn’t changed that much?
Joe: No.
Karen: OK. And in addition to translating at work you also translate I understand at the English Language Center. Is that right?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: How did you start doing that?
2.00 Joe: How start doing that? Like start translate for work? Excuse me?
Karen: How did you get involved with the English Language Center?
Joe: Like, at the first I went to school like at ELC
Karen: You took ESL classes?
Joe: Yes, ESL classes and then from ESL they have like a program for teach, they will teach refugees English, getting better and then they have a program like with Alex and since January, right, they start classes
Alex: Before January.
Joe: Before January?
Alex: It’s probably November, maybe even October.
Karen: What was happening in October or November?
2.55 Alex: Um, I started working about September and I needed to help to meet all the refugees and communicate to find out basic needs and get their information to register
them for English classes. So, Katie the director at the ELC told me I could choose a refugee to help translate and help me meet people and Joe was the one I knew the best so he started working with me.

Karen: So, he was the first refugee to start working at the center?

Alex: Uh, huh.

Joe: Yes.

Karen: And is that a paid job for you? Do you get paid too?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: So, you have two jobs now?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: Well good. And then you started working with Alex to do this. How often would you do this? How often would you translate?

Joe: Hour.

Karen: How many hours a week?

Joe: Um two days a week, three, three hours a day.

Karen: So, it’s just the English language classes you’re talking about?

Joe: Yes, yes.

Karen: In addition to that do you go to the homes with Alex to help talk to the refugees about filling out forms and applications and going to appointments and things like that?

Joe: Yes, before, before the class start we do like that.

Karen: It’s always on those two days then?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: How many hours is the class then? How many hours is the actual class for refugees that you help with?

Joe: From 6:30 to 9:30.

Karen: 6:30 to 9:30. So, it’s three hours, plus anything additional that you do out in the community?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: So, it’s actually probably

Joe: No, sometimes different. Sometimes Alex comes to my house and pick me up to go to some refugee to explain something, to took them to like the immunizations, something like that.

Karen: And that’s usually on either Tuesday or Thursday or is it sometimes on other days?
Joe: Yes, sometimes – No, sometimes different days, the other, we go to other refugee to talk to them.

Karen: So, it will be on a Monday or Wednesday?

Joe: Yeah whenever. Something like that.

Karen: And what hours do you normally work?

Joe: At English class?

Karen: No at JBS.

Joe: At JBS start at 6 a.m.

Karen: Everyday at 6 a.m.?

Joe: Everyday. And, but it depends on the job, some days a lot of cows, some days a few.

Karen: What do you do with the cows?

Joe: Oh because they have two parts. The first part they call clear flow. They take off the hide, take off the horn, everything inside.

Karen: So, you help take out the insides of the cow and prepare it to sell?

Joe: No, because I help train people over there.

Karen: Oh, you train people?

Joe: I train people from Burma.

Karen: Oh, because you can speak English.

Joe: When a new people, a new hire come I train them.

Karen: And you train them on how to clean the cows?

Joe: Yeah, how to cut, how to trim.

Karen: So, you know how to do everything? [laugh]

Joe: Yeah, I know a lot of jobs over there.

Karen: Because you have to teach other people how to do it. OK. How long have you been a trainer?

Joe: So, I think for about six months – almost about six months.

Karen: About six months?

Joe: Yes. About six months.

Karen: And before that did you actually do the jobs?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: You cut them and cleaned them and everything?
6.53 Joe: Yes, at first I work at fat fabrication. I trim the fat, trim fat, but I cannot stand the cold weather because the weather is cold. So, I talk to my manager. I talk to them, I explain to them I cannot stand the cold weather. And then he moved me to clear flow, but the weather is warm. I like it there. Then they train me every job. Like this job for about 2 or 3 days, I can do, I can do. And they train another job. I learn all the jobs in the clear floor, for over 20 places, 20 jobs I can do over there.

Karen: And they were doing that so you could become a trainer? And do you like being a trainer more than cutting the fat?

Joe: Yes, I like a trainer better.

Karen: It’s not cold.

Joe: It’s not cold.

Karen: That’s good. [with laughter]

7.56 Joe: And then like, I translate for every Burmese people and Karen people over there in the fat and clear flow [or floor?]. When their supervisors need me they call me with radio and then I went to explain to help them.

Karen: Can you get off early if you need to go help Alex translate? If somebody needs help in the community and you need to go translate will JBS be flexible with your schedule? Or can you only do it right when you get off work?

Joe: I’m not –

Karen: Do you understand?

Alex: So, do you ever leave work early to come translate with me? Or do you normally stay at work all day.

Joe: Oh no, no stay the full day

Karen: The full day?

Joe: The full day.

Karen: So, do you get very tired working from 6 in the morning and then sometimes going to classes until 9 p.m. at night?

8.55 Joe: Yes. But, before the first I went to school ESC class like Monday to Wednesday and Tuesday and Thursday I translate English class and then I’m so tired, I’m really tired. I cannot go to, I cannot continue to my English class and I stop.

Karen: You stop going to your English classes?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: OK. And is that partly – when you were in the refugee camp did you do stuff all the time? Were you busy like you are now?

Joe: No

Karen: What did you do?
Joe: At refugee camp we, they have, we have nothing to do in there. Went to school and after school we have a place to go, like we have games or with a friend to exercise.
Karen: Right, did you have books to read, um, I don’t know.
Joe: Yeah

Karen: Television, radio?
Joe: Yes, in refugee camps, yeah.
Karen: OK, how many times a week do you think you visit families? Well, actually first you said you got so tired you quit your English classes. Do you think a lot of the other refugees have the same problem? They get really tired with all of their work, so they stop taking their English classes?
Joe: Yes, I think so.
Karen: Yes. OK. And is it very important for them to learn English or what do you think about that?
Joe: Yes, to learn English is very important for us.
Karen: Yes, why?
Joe: Because if we cannot speak English it is so hard to find a job, first to find a job and then so hard to communicate with people who live here, the English people, the American people. So, it’s so hard to communicate with each other.

Karen: So, do you feel like it’s important for you to be doing the translating work you do to help the people with learning English and with helping them translate?
Joe: So, a few.
Alex: So do you think what you do for work with the English Language Center is important to help translate and teach English?
Joe: Oh, I’m not, I’m not clear. [in a whisper]
Alex: Do you think it’s important to translate to the other refugees?

Joe: Oh, Yes, yes, because some refugees they have basics of English. They don’t know nothing when they have lived in Salt Lake. When they went to school the teacher teach to them because they didn’t understand, they didn’t understand nothing. Like the time is long, and long. They get boring, because they did not understand. Nobody explained to them, like their language. Something like that.
Karen: You’re talking about the younger students?
Joe: No, adults, adults.
Karen: So, they get bored at the English classes because they don’t understand?
Joe: Yes, yes.
Karen: So, if you’re there they don’t get bored because you help them understand? Do you think?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: That’s good.
Joe: So, very important to translate for them, they like right now they’re interesting, more interesting to go to class
Karen: And you and Chapter are the two main people who teach those classes — is that right?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Are you the only two?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK. And do you feel like the other refugees are improving their English? Have they gotten better?
13.02 Joe: Yes.
Karen: Yes. When you were in classes did you feel – were you bored sometimes when you were first in classes or did you understand English enough when you came here to understand?
Joe: [Pause]
Karen: That’s a hard, that’s a bad sentence, question. When you were taking classes at Granite School District in Salt Lake City
Joe: Yeah
Karen: was it hard for you?
Joe: Yes, hard like listening is hard for me when teachers talk to me so I can catch the sound. It was really hard for me at first.
Karen: Did they have anyone who spoke Burmese or Karen or any other language who helped you at Granite School District?
Joe: No.
Karen: So, it was a native American, not Native American, somebody who was from America who taught you?
14.0 Joe: Yeah.
Karen: OK. And that was challenging?
Joe: Challenging?
Karen: Was it difficult?
Joe: Yes, difficult.
Karen: So, the people in Cache County have an advantage because a refugee is there to help them? That is good?
Joe: [Pause]
Alex: People in Logan who learn English, is it maybe easier for them because you and Chapter help translate?

Joe: Oh, yes, now it is getting better for them.

Karen: Do most of them like the classes or do they still find it hard because they’re tired or get bored or whatever?

Joe: Stew?? What??

Karen: Do most of them like the classes? That were refugees –

Joe: Yes,

Karen: Yes. Why do they like them?

Joe: Because sometimes, like we know each other, and then we talk to joking, something like that, they like, they interesting to come.

Karen: Do most of the refugees in Cache County know each other?

Joe: County? Refugee county?

Alex: In Logan.

Karen: In Logan?

Joe: No, I don’t think so.

Alex: Do the refugees in Logan do they know each other? Are they friends?

Joe: No.

Karen: No

Joe: No, not most.

Karen: Do some? Are there certain groups that get together besides work or at this class?

Joe: Yes, but some do and some don’t. Something like that.

Karen: What type of occasion would make you get together with other refugees?

Joe: What type?

Karen: Do you get together to do fun activities or just at work?

Joe: Oh, like our Karen people, twice in year we celebrate our Karen New Year and our Karen it’s called wrist-tying ceremony.

Karen: OK.

Joe: Twice a year. So, we go down to Salt Lake we organize. We meet each other. We make fun.

Karen: Was that in December that you had your Burmese New Year?

Joe: I don’t know Burmese New Year.

Karen: The Karen New Year?
Joe: The Karen New Year, yes, is like January sometimes, depends, sometimes in December, some year is January.

Karen: OK

Joe: It’s different a little bit.

Karen: And that’s the biggest event or holiday?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: Yes

Joe: So, yes, and August we have a Karen wrist-tying ceremony.

Karen: wrist-tying?

Joe: wrist, how is it called, wrist tying

Karen: You are saying it right.

Joe: writing trying, wrist tying, how do you say

Karen: Why do you tie your wrists or what is a wrist tying ceremony?

16.55 Joe: Yeah, so long time ago our Karen people, our Karen, the old people when we live in Mongolia, do you know Mongolia?

Karen: Mongolia, yes.

Joe: Mongolia. We move to a year in a year, we move to Burma; So before our Karen people they don’t know the alphabet to write it; and then our Karen people when they went to leave the other nation, they afraid to leave the other nation and they left their own language; their own culture and then the old people they celebrate. They make wrist tying; like when we meet each other, we see each other, we know this people is a Karen people, like a mark, a mark.

18.0 Alex: A mark or symbol.

Joe: like a mark, like a symbol of Karen people.

Karen: So, is it because you have like a bracelet on or is it because you tie it so tight it leaves marks in your skin?

Joe: Not so tight, a little string that ties.

Karen: You just leave it on, the string on, so that other people know you are Karen.

Joe: Yeah, something like where it’s cultural.

Joe: So, I have a newspaper from Salt Lake when we celebrate our Karen, Karen New Year. I’ll show you.

Karen: I think I read the article. Aaron Falk wrote it I think for the Deseret News. Did he write it? He used to write for the paper I write for and now he writes up there. So, I read his article.

Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK. I think that’s good for now. Is there anything else? Um, do you ever volunteer your time to translate or is it always paid through the English Language Center? Do you always get paid to translate?

Joe: Before we do like a volunteer.

Alex: Before Joe started working if any refugees had questions or problems, before Joe and I started working together Joe would just help them on his own time and not get paid for that.

Karen: But, now you get paid, which is not bad, right? That’s nice. OK. All right. Well, appreciate you talking to me a little bit. Let’s stop this again.

Joe: Thank you.

‘Joe’ bids Logan goodbye at his home: (6:39)

Karen: Hi this is Karen. It’s Saturday still. This is the third track. I’m talking to ‘Joe’ I’ve just learned Joe has a new job in Salt Lake City and wanted to talk to him a little about that since he might not be as available sometime soon.

Karen: So Joe. Where is your new job?

Joe: The Asian Association

Karen: What?

Joe: The Asian Association

Karen: OK. And they’ve hired you to do what?

Joe: To take care of the refugees from Burma.

Karen: So, you’ll work with the new refugees as they come in?

Joe: Yes

Karen: And the ones who’ve been there a long time also?

Joe: Excuse me?

Karen: Will you also work with the refugees who have lived there a long time?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: OK. Do you want to go to school?

Joe: Yes.

Karen: Where?

Joe: like community college

Karen: At the Salt Lake Community College.

Joe: Salt Lake Community College.

Karen: Is the job full time in Salt Lake?

Joe: Full-time, yes.
Karen: And when did you – Did you apply or did they contact you?
Joe: So, last Monday I went and applied for the job and this coming, like March 2 I have to go to work.
Karen: Your first day’s March 2?
Joe: Yeah, I have to start over there.
Karen: So, you’re quitting at JBS?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: And you’re quitting at the English Language Center and your friends Chapter and Alex are sad.
Joe: Yes, everyone says.
Karen: Everybody says they’re sad?
Joe: Yeah, and I too am sad because I have a lot of friends here. I have known a lot of friends here.
Karen: How have you liked Cache County for a year or Logan?
Joe: Logan?
Karen: Have you liked Logan?
Joe: Yes, I like very much.
Karen: What have you liked about it?
Joe: I like the place, area, quiet, the city is quiet and peaceful and like the people are very friendly here, my neighbor.
Karen: OK. Do you think you’ll like Salt Lake? You’ve been in Salt Lake City for a couple months.
Joe: yes.
Karen: Are you happy to return?
Joe: I have Karen people, over there a lot, a lot of people. But I don’t like the place to live, I don’t like the place like Logan. But, I like Logan better.
Karen: Why?
Joe: So, the car is not as crowded, there is not a traffic road, and Salt Lake is a lot of people and the car is very traffic sometimes when I go outside, go from place to place.
Karen: OK and explain a little bit more about what you will you be doing for your new job?
Joe: A new job.
Karen: What will be doing for your new job? You’ll be working with refugees and helping them as a caseworker?
Joe: Yes, something like I’ll take them to the hospital, something like that, take care of food stamps, something like that.

Karen: And you’ll be doing that full-time?

Joe: Yes, full-time. They told me full-time, but I don’t know the job anything about it.

Karen: Oh, OK. Do you want to go to school? You said that you want to go to Salt Lake Community College, immediately or do you want to wait a while? How quickly do you want to go to school? When do you want to start going to school?

Joe: I’m not sure it depends on my job.

Karen: How flexible it is and how much money you have saved maybe?

Joe: Yes. I think the day, in the morning I’m going, going to work. After work, if I ever have time enough, enough, I have to go to school. I need to go to school.

Karen: K-would you like to get a degree in something?

Joe: Yes, in my dream.

Karen: What’s your dream?

Joe: When I come to live in United States I need to get a degree something like that. A degree.

Karen: Do you know what you’d want to get a degree in?

Joe: Like what major?

Karen: Yes, what major?

Joe: Like, I’m interested in administration.

Karen: Business administration?

Joe: Like, yes, public.

Karen: Public sector? OK

Joe: I don’t know how to call it.

Alex: Human relations or

Joe: Human rel –

Karen: There’s a master’s degree in public administration.

Joe: Yes, I know a master, a master is so high. That I know I can’t get it. But, some degree I think.

Karen: Maybe start with an associate’s and move up?

Joe: Yeah.

Karen: OK and when do you move?

Joe: From here?

Karen: Yeah.
Joe: Saturday. Next Saturday
Karen: Next Saturday you’re moving? So you’ll be moving all of your stuff out?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Oh, sad.
Joe: [laughs]
Karen: OK, and you have a car, right?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: So you’ll drive yourself to Salt Lake?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Is anyone else moving to Salt Lake with you or you’re the only one leaving?
Joe: No, I’m just only one.
Karen: Just by yourself?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: Did you first learn to drive a car when you moved here?
Joe: Yes.
Karen: OK. And how long have you been driving?
Joe: Oh, from before I got a drivers license. I think.
???: [speaks in Burmese]
Joe: [speaks in Burmese]
Joe: Oh, excuse me I’m not clear.
Karen: When did you get your driver’s license?
5.57 Joe: Oh, I think almost nine months ago.
Karen: Nine months ago.
Joe: Nine months ago.
Karen: All right, well, I’m sorry to have you go. I’ve just barely met you, but it’s been very fun meeting you.
Joe: Yeah.
Karen: But, that sounds really exciting. It sounds like a good opportunity to help a lot of people.
Joe: Yeah, I’m interesting to work like that, a good job like that.
Karen: It sounds like a good opportunity. OK, Anything else you’d like to say?
Joe: No.
Karen: OK. Thank you.
APPENDIX F. TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH ALEX MORTENSEN

Interviewer: Karen Hunt Lambert
Transcriptionist: Karen Hunt Lambert
Informant: Alex Mortensen
Address: 1371 E. 260 North, Logan, Utah, 84321
Place of interview: Department of Workforce Services (180 North, 100 West Logan, UT 84321)
Date of Interview: Feb. 12, 2009
Other people present: Hser Doh ‘Chapter’ and the instructors and students in the night ESL class going on at the same time.

Brief description of contents: Alex Mortensen discusses his role as an employee at the English Language Center, his time in Thailand and provides general information on the refugees.

Transcription – Alex Mortensen 1-2; 02/12/09 [about 23 m]
021209 Alex Mortensen 1 at DWFS

This interview took place at the Department of Workforce Services during a night English as a Second Language class for Karen refugees that another refugee, Hser Doh or ‘Chapter’ was assisting with. As the Refugee Specialist with the English Language Center, Alex was there to answer questions about letters, bills or anything else the refugees needed help to understand.

0.00 Karen: Hi, this is Karen I’m here with Alex interviewing him about Burmese refugees. It’s Thursday Feb. 12, 2009. Let’s like it’s working OK. [I gesture to the recorder] Hold that if you want on your lap. You were telling me about those who work at JBS Swift? What percentage would you say?
Alex: For those who work probably about 95 percent of refugees in Logan work there. There’s just not that many opportunities for them to find work because of language barriers. There’s very few places that are willing to hire when you can’t speak any English.
Karen: So, the few that work at Icon -- you said a couple, maybe 1 percent, or?
Alex: It’s probably about, maybe, 5 percent of them work there.
Karen: So, just those two places, really.
Alex: Yeah, right now.
Karen: What do they do there?

0.57 Alex: Um, at JBS as far as I know they’re on the lines of the meat manufacturing, I don’t know what exactly that is, but they all have different jobs on that line, whether it’s getting rid of the hair or cutting bellies, different.
Karen: Have you ever gone in with them to talk to them at all?
Alex: I’ve been out a couple of times. I’ve never been in with them. I’ve been with the HR people, but not in the actual work areas at all really.
Karen: All right. And then the ones who work on Icon, what do they do there?
Alex: I’m not exactly sure. I think they’re on actual manufacturing lines again with, uh, equipment that’s made there.
Karen: So, is that what Chapter does?
Alex: Chapter would know a lot more about that.

1.45 Karen: Do they have to get up really early for their jobs usually?
Alex: Yeah, from what I know they get up around 4:30 to go out there and they normally get home on a good day about 4 and on a bad day, if they’re working overtime, about 5:30 p.m. so they’re pretty tired by then.

2.10 Karen: So you said they’re often home by 7? Asleep by 7?
Alex: Asleep by 7. If they’re not in English class, pretty much all the families, people they go to bed by 7 p.m.
Karen: So, is it hard for them to come to these classes because of that?
Alex: Yeah, that’s why sometimes they don’t come. They’re just not used to having some long days and working so much. When they were in Thailand in the refugee camps, they pretty much weren’t given work to do. So, they had a lot of down time, just kind of sitting around. So, it’s definitely a big change.
Karen: Meaning they’re physically not used to such a long days?
Alex: Uh, huh. And mentally also. It’s a lot different from what they’re used to.
Karen: Do they seem to be enjoying the fact that it’s different, or tired?

2.53 Alex: They seem tired, definitely. But I think they do enjoy it. Um, like English class I think they really enjoy getting out and having something productive to do rather than just sleeping and working. It gives something for them to do.
Karen: You said you’re working 35 hours, 30 to 35 hours, and then you’re also going to school?
Alex: Uh huh.
Karen: Uh, business major I think.
Alex: Yeah.
Karen: You better say it into the microphone because I don’t know if it will hear me.
Alex: Yeah, I’m working about 30 to 35 hours and then I’m also taking 12 credits up at USU and I’m in the business program.
Karen: And so how do you know – what languages do you know and how do you know them?

Alex: I speak Cambodian and Thai. I served an LDS mission in Thailand and I was called there speaking Cambodian and while I was there I picked up Thai as well.

3.50 Karen: OK. And how did they find out you spoke these languages or how did this job happen?

Alex: Um, my mom heard on the radio an ad for the English Language Center and I went down there just to volunteer because I knew there were some Cambodian students and so I met Katie, who’s the director down there and then a few weeks after that we learned about the refugees in Logan and more coming so they offered me a job to work as the refugee specialist to kind of coordinate the efforts and getting the refugees into classes and meeting their basic needs.

4.30 Karen: K- and, um, so, what did you think when they offered you the job?

Alex: I was excited. I mean where else could I find the opportunity to use Thai and Cambodian to work with the people of Southeast Asia? So, I love the job. I mean there’s nothing I’d rather do right now for work. So,

Karen: All right. So, when you go around talking to them, at the English class they’ve been offering for a couple weeks what do you speak to them in, what language?

4.58 Alex: I’ll speak Thai and if they know English I speak English. I try and speak in English as much as I can just because it’s good for them, but sometimes if I need to get something done I’ll just speak Thai to get it done quicker.

Karen: How many languages do most of them know?

Alex: Uh, most of them know Thai and Burmese. Quite a few of them, and Karen also. So, most of them speak two or three languages. Some of them like Joe for an example he speaks five and Chapter is three, or four, so almost all of them are bilingual.

Karen: In their culture I guess it’s just normal to speak a lot of different languages?

Alex: Uh huh. In Burma there’s a lot of different ethnic groups. And so the Karen people most of them can speak Burmese, but the Burmese people they can’t really speak Karen because Karen’s not as common of a language there.

Karen: OK, this class is Karen people right?

Alex: Uh, huh.

Karen: So, a lot of the people here are from Karen?

6.00 Alex: Yeah, they’re from Burma, but they’re the Karen ethnic group. There’s actually province in Burma that’s the Karen province, I believe. A lot of them live in that area, or they did live in that area.

Karen: And so why were they driven out of their country? Why did they live in the refugee camps?
Alex: Um, from my understanding it’s the Burmese government, kind of trying to do an ethnic cleansing in Burma. There’s been a civil war for over 60 years and so they, a lot of their houses were destroyed, their crops destroyed, and so they had to flee into Thailand as refugees and eventually were resettled here. But, most of them were in the Thai refugee camps anywhere from minimum of about five years up to 20 years.

Karen: OK, and what do you spend your 30 hours a week doing?

6.51 Alex: Um, I do a lot of house visits at night, helping with any kind of documentation they need, if they need help signing up for food stamps. Right now I’ve been doing a lot of work to get them applied for green cards. It’s just something that they need to get citizenship in the next five years. And during the day I work over at the English Language Center and teach a couple of computer classes and help out the English classes for the Cambodian students. So they’re not technically under the refugee program, but.

Karen: So, the computer classes are for who?

Alex: Right now they’re for anybody who wants them really. There’s a lot of Cambodians and Hispanics in them at the ELC. We are going to start a computer class for the refugees in the next couple weeks because that’s something they’ve shown a lot of interest in.

Karen: OK and. So, how much of your time would you guess is spent with the Burmese and the Karen people?

7.52 Alex: Um, out of 30 hours a week, probably 18 to 20 is with those people.

Karen: And is that usually house visits or?

Alex: House visits or I do go to the English classes twice a week and, um, that’s a time when people can bring bills, or mail they’ve gotten they don’t know what to do with it, they can bring that. It’s just a convenient time to address those concerns because there’s a translator in the classes.

Karen: So, in addition to the teacher who is either Chapter or Joe [actually they don’t teach. They help with translation]. How long have you had this job?

Alex: I started getting paid here in September and I did volunteer work starting in August.

Karen: When did you get back to the U.S.?

Alex: I got back in April. So, I was back a few months before I heard of the program and had the opportunity to go volunteer.

9.00 Karen: OK, and, I don’t know – What’s the best part of the job?

Alex: Just working with the people. It’s a very rewarding job, service oriented. They are very gracious for any help they are given and I feel good when I’m around them. They’re a happy, humble people, and very accepting.

Karen: What are some of the most common concerns that they have, that you’re able to help them with?
Alex: Uh, a lot of financial issues, banking, paying bills, um, utilities, finding housing, just anything they get in the mail really they don’t understand it because they don’t speak English yet. So it’s quite confusing to pay bills or figure out how to get social benefits with Medicaid, food stamps, those kind of things. Um, immunizations are another thing a lot of people have problems navigating that situation down at the doctor’s office. So,

Karen: That’s what you’ve been focusing on this week.

9.59 Alex: That’s one thing that’s a real, really important to get done, is their immunizations, their legal documents, to make sure they’re up to date on those, because that is something

Karen: Their medical documents?

Alex: Uh, huh. Because they come to the U.S. with an I-94 form, that’s what it’s called, but they need to apply for a green card after they’ve been here a year in order to get full citizenship in five years.

Karen: So, is that just a natural part of the process? When we accept them as a refugee, if they get their green card they can become a citizen?

Alex: Uh huh. When they get admitted to the United States as refugees they’re here as permanent residents, but they don’t yet have citizenship. That takes about five or six years to get that and the green card’s a very important step in doing that. So.

Karen: And they don’t get them within the one year can they get them late?

Alex: Yeah, you can do it later, but we try to get them within the one year, but there is no penalty if you were to apply for a green card after three years they still would be OK, but

Karen: It just takes longer to become a citizen?

11.0 Alex: Uh, huh.

Karen: And, so what are the advantages of having a green card?

Alex: To be honest I’m not sure other than it’s a necessary step to get citizenship.

Karen: Have you learned a lot with them job?

Alex: Yeah, I’ve had to learn a lot. Everything from paying bills to setting up utilities, all those things I’ve just had to just learn from experience, by just helping them. So, it’s been a good for me.

Karen: How old are you?

Alex: I’m 21

Karen: And where did you grow up?

Alex: In Logan, I was born and raised in Logan.

Karen: OK. So did you have a lot of exposure to different ethnic groups growing up?
Alex: Before my mission I didn’t at all. In Thailand, I was assigned to work in an international area, so I worked with people from Africa, China, Korea, Europe, from pretty much everywhere, we worked with them in Bangkok, so.

Karen: OK, and what do you think is the most important thing that you’d try and communicate with Cache County? I’m guessing these people rent from just normal land ladies or landlords. Is that difficult because the people they’re renting from can’t understand them?

Alex: Um, I haven’t heard of any problems from landlords really. When I’m with the refugees I just try and give them education to try and help them understand the importance of keeping their apartments clean, help them understand the importance of learning English to better their lives in the future, just because it’s hard for them to grasp that bigger picture of what they’re doing now and how that will affect their future.

Karen: What kind of comments have you heard about their experiences here, or?

Alex: Um, for the most part everyone I talk to really enjoys Logan compared to other places they’ve been because it has a little bit of a smaller feeling. Most of the refugees are resettled into fairly large cities, um, so they, from what I’ve heard they all really like Logan. They like the culture. They want to be more involved with the Americans, but it’s hard for them to find opportunities to do that cuz they’re busy and –

Karen: How many hours do they usually work?

Alex: I would guess 45 to 50.

Karen: That’s just at the one job?

Alex: Uh huh.

Karen: OK, That’s a lot

Alex: Uh, huh.

Karen: And do they get paid enough to pay their rent and everything.

Alex: Yeah, from what I know most of them get paid $11 to $12 an hour, which is for them very good.

Karen: Yeah. And how did they hear about the jobs? Do you know?

Alex: Um, from what I know JBS actually recruited a few refugees from Salt Lake City a little over a year ago and word just spread from there.

Karen: So how many are in Logan now?

Alex: Total refugees in Logan I’d say there’s probably about 100 right now, um, there’s going to be a lot more coming in the upcoming months because their families will be moving here.

Karen: So, is it mainly men right now?

Alex: Um, yeah, there’s. I think there’s six or seven full families in Logan right now. And there’s probably about ten men that have families in Salt Lake whose families are
waiting to come to Logan once their contracts with their housing in Salt Lake are finished up.

Karen: Do you know about when those end? Or is it all different times?
Alex: It’s all different times, but they’re all within the next six months probably. So, there should be a couple families come in the next two months and then summer time a few more families. So.
Karen: Let see how it’s going now. Stop it. [track ends]

021209 Alex Mortensen 2 at DWFS

0.00 Karen: All right. This is Karen. I’m here with Alex. Take two. So, I don’t know. What are some of the biggest surprises to you about the experience?
Alex: Biggest surprises. Um, what’s really hit me is just how foreign it is for them to be there. That’s, I kind of got a grasp of that on my mission, but it’s just a completely different world to them to be in a place where there’s so many rules, and laws, traffic lights, cars. For most of these people before they came to, before they went to Thailand they’d never seen cars or telephones or running water, electricity, and even in Thailand they didn’t have real exposure to those things. So it wasn’t until they came here they were thrown into this new world that was totally foreign to them, which I found it surprising.
Karen: So, what types of things have you had to teach them related to that?
1.00 Alex: Pretty much
Karen: Do they have any cars there? As far as you know.
Alex: In Burma the really wealthy people will have cars, but especially for the Karen people who are out in the jungles and things they didn’t have any kind of car and technology like that. As far as teaching them, everything from just how to keep your house clean, how to clean your toilet, vacuum. Um, we’ve had some hygiene lessons, how to use shampoo, toothpaste. Just a lot of things that they’ve never been exposed to, that we’ve had our whole lives, but they’ve never seen those things before.
Karen: So, uh, can you try to describe what you kind of think their life was like before they came.
Alex: A lot of the Karen people they worked just as farmers. They had rice fields they would work on.
Karen: Do you know if they were dry or wet rice fields? I was reading through a little information Katie gave me so I wanted to know.
2.00 Alex: I don’t even know the difference between. I would guess wet, from all the ones I know in Thailand. But, from what I know a lot of them did work on little rice fields like that, very simple lives, just, yeah, I don’t too much about their lives in Burma, as far as refugee camps they were confined to live in very small areas, like several blocks, very small spaces. They were not allowed to leave that area. From what I under-
stand you could be shot for leaving a camp or you could be arrested and put in jail. So, for many of these people for ten, twenty years of their lives they were in those camps where they didn’t have really any opportunities to work or better their lives.

Karen: Right. And so, do they have carpets? Do they have houses? Did they have toilets? Did they have utilities?

2.55 Alex: Um. From what I know their houses in the camps are really just little bamboo huts, um, as far as electricity goes they may have had one light, sometimes but maybe a TV, I don’t know if that’s right or not. But, they didn’t have any plumbing or carpet. I mean even in Thailand I didn’t see carpet the whole time I was there.

Karen: So, have many people gotten driver’s licenses since they moved here?

Alex: Yeah, the ones who are a little better educated, the younger guys here in their twenties who can speak a little better English. A lot of them have driver’s licenses.

Karen: And how long have they usually been here before that?

Alex: Um, I don’t know for sure on that. I would say six months. A lot of guys I’ve met they had their licenses before I met them. But, I don’t know. I haven’t met anybody who has been here more than two years. So –

Karen: So, the first ones coming up to Logan came probably two years ago?

3.57 Alex: Um, probably like 14 months ago were the first ones in Logan.

Karen: And are they all coming straight to Salt Lake once they get to the U.S. or do they come from somewhere else?

Alex: Once they get to Logan, there’s a family who came from Florida. There’s a family from Illinois, Texas, Arizona, just word has spread that there’s good jobs here, so people show up. They tell their cousins wherever they are at. But, the majority of them have come directly from Salt Lake.

Karen: Do they tend to live all in the same area when you make house visits?

Alex: Yeah, they like to live close to each other. Most of them live within a mile or a two of each other. There are areas where there are families grouped together, three or four households very close to each other.

Karen: Do they just live within their own apartment though?

Alex: Uh, huh, but their little community here in Logan, they’re very open and friendly with each other. They’ll just walk right into each other’s houses. That’s not awkward or weird to them at all.

Karen: Do they walk into other people’s houses?

4.56 Alex: No, just the Burmese and Karen friends they have. They’ll walk right in.

Karen: So, when you go doing translating, do you walk in or do you knock?

Alex: I knock. If I’m with Joe or Chapter they’ll walk in and I’ll follow behind them. But,
Karen: Huh, Do you remember your first day of work, or your first day of volunteering with the Burmese, or
Alex: Yeah.
Karen: What was that like?
Alex: My first day, really Katie didn’t really have too good an idea of what was going to happen with the program. So she gave me a list of some households she knew of and she said go meet them, see what their needs are and I didn’t have a translator at the time. So, it was kind of scary to go to a house and knock on the door and say I’ve never met you, but this is my name, this is why I’m here. It was kind of awkward at first and hard, but after about a week or two it was fine.
Karen: What language did you speak?
Alex: I spoke Thai. It was kind of cool. The first day I was working, I left my house and I was driving. I drove only about two miles and I saw two guys walking on the side of the road and they looked Thai so I pulled over and stopped them and they were Burmese refugees and they spoke Thai. So, I had them get in my car and I took them home and that kind of started off how I started meeting people.
Karen: So, that was the first day of your job?
Alex: Uh huh. I just saw two guys walking and they were the right people to talk to.
Karen: So, did they trust you?
Alex: Yeah, they are very trusting people, which makes them very vulnerable. That’s why anyone who does work with the refugees in their homes has to sign a waiver, because they’re very trusting people. They’re not used to being lied to or taken advantage of. They’re very trusting.
Karen: And so they’re very trusting and yet people tried to kill them and chase them out of their homes?
Alex: Uh, huh. Yeah, I think they may be naïve, but they seem very trusting toward Americans even when they haven’t met you.
Karen: And so you picked a, give me the scenario of the chronology of that first day, because I’m a little confused about that first day. I have you going to people’s houses and then picking people up.
Alex: Yeah, Katie gave me a list of about three households and that was all the refugees she knew of and so I had that list and I left my house and I was just driving and I hadn’t been to any houses yet, but I saw two guys walking on the road. I actually passed them and I felt I should go back and talk to them and so I went back and stopped the car and rolled down the window and said, “Where are you from?” They said, “Thailand” and so I spoke Thai to them and they actually ended up being from Burma actually as refugees. They got in my car I took them home, got some basic information from them and they were able to give me several leads to find other households in Logan.
Karen: So they do keep in touch with each other?
Alex: Uh, huh, yeah, they all know each other.
Karen: Do they get together – what kind of social events do they do?
Alex: Um, they don’t really have too many social events just because they are so busy with work. A lot of the men in Logan who have families in Salt Lake will go back down there on the weekends, but –
Karen: Do they drive themselves?
Alex: Uh, huh, they’ll carpool down.
Karen: And do they know where each other are or what each other are doing?
Alex: Here in Logan? They all work together every day, so I’m sure they talk together there and they all know where each other lives, so – and quite a few of them do have cell phones now. Do you want to interview Chapter before he goes, because he’s going to be taking off here?
Karen: Yeah.
Alex: Hey Chapter,
[Recording stops]
APPENDIX G: HERALD JOURNAL COPYRIGHT PERMISSION LETTER
Herald Journal  Feb. 1, 2010
75 West 200 North
Logan, Utah, 84321
435-752-2121

School of Graduate Studies
Utah State University
0900 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-0900
435-797-1189

To Whom It May Concern:

My former reporter Karen Hunt Lambert has requested permission to reprint a series of news articles she wrote on a population of Burmese refugees in Logan Utah. While the Herald Journal will retain copyright of those articles we would like to inform Utah State University’s School of Graduate Studies that we have given Karen permission to reprint her articles in her thesis.

Please feel free to contact me with any additional questions at the above number for the Herald Journal.

Sincerely,

Charles McCollum