Landscapes of the Interior:

Ethnobotany and Sense of Place among Karen Refugees

Terese Gagnon

Mentor Professor: Dr. Virginia Nazarea

Table of Contents

Index of Plants:

Many thanks are due to all those who, in different ways, helped to make this project a reality and helped me to grow along the way. Thank you foremost to Moo Paw, San Nie, Ta Hay, their families and all the Karen individuals who so generously brought me into their fold. Thank you for all your time, your hospitality and your friendship. I can't tell you how grateful I am for all that you have taught me, most importantly about kindness. A resounding 'thank you' to the phenomenal CURO program at UGA, who made this all possible… I don't know how I became so lucky to attend a school with such a unique and distinguished program. Special thanks to Matt Jordan for putting up with all my questions and for being such a wonderful source of encouragement to undergraduate researchers across the board. Thank you the UGA Libraries for never ceasing to amaze and delight, with all that you offer us. To the incredible people who make up the UGA Anthropology department, thank you for nurturing my love of the disciple and for pushing me to see the world in new and unexpected ways. Many thanks to Jubilee Partners for the immense hospitality and guidance: thank you for the beautiful work that you do and for inspiring so many with your vision. Thank you to my friend Chad, who first introduced me to the Karen families in Athens: thank you for sharing your compassion and enthusiasm. Thank you to my parents, Tom and Helen for all your support throughout this process… but mostly for being two wonderful human beings and for loving me a lot. Thank you to Dr.Tobin, my reader for being such an exceptional teacher and scholar and for agreeing to be a part of my madness. Especially, thank you to Dr.Nazarea, who started this all. Thank you for your overwhelming generosity and for feeding me in so many ways. It has been a wonderful journey!

Academic Abstract:

Forced by ongoing government persecution to leave their homeland in Burma, Karen refugees residing in Georgia continue each day the process of remembering and reaffirming their cultural traditions while seeking meaning and belonging in their new environment. Through engaging in interviews and gardening practices with the Karen people this project examines the anthropological phenomenon of the "landscape of the interior", particularly as experienced from a transnational perspective. Recognizing the value of preserving genetic biodiversity alongside culturally situated knowledge, it aims to record- through the process of memory banking - ethnobotanical traditions of the Karen and their cultural relationship to the natural environment. One important product of this research is a compendium of plant species grown by Karen gardeners in Georgia. This compendium includes plant characteristics, methods of cultivation, uses, religious/cultural significance and photo documentation. Additionally, this project explores the role of 'interior landscapes' in shaping relationships with a new inhabited environment. This investigation seeks to benefit the Karen people and the community at large by encouraging the continuation of traditions — creating senses of 'rootedness' and preserving ethnobotanical knowledge and biodiversity. This research is approached with the belief that practices of remembrance and resilience are often the strongest means of combating forces of hegemony and oppression.

Burma: A Ghost

For Moo Paw and San Nie, my teachers

Mountains sing of home

Their soft refrain says

Come rest in my embrace

Rice dances in fields

Waiting to be cut

By the hands of friends

Grandmother sits near

A tale on her lips,

Of tigers in the woods

Water babbles by,

Inviting movement

Heralding new life

Now, Crack! All is still.

Gun, fire breaks dream

Like a metal gong

The sweet breeze carries

Notes of burn remains

The stomach of Earth groans

The mountains soft song

And grandmother's tale

All stop to witness there

Grief wells up from deep

Not even sleep

Can bring home back whole

Only Earth and time can heal.

Part One:

Introduction

-"Every man [or woman] carries within him[or her] a world which is composed of all that he has seen and loved and to which he constantly returns, even when he is traveling through, and seems to be living in, some different world." – David Sutton (Sutton, 2001: 73)

-"They lie in me like underground water; every well I put down taps them…why does that early imprinting, rather than all later experience so often dictate my dreams' form?" -Wallace Stegner (Van Noy, 2003:163)

So, you thought we were composed of atoms? I am here to tell you we are not. We are actually made up of thousands of tiny stories. Ok, perhaps we are muscle and bone, but we are also layer upon layer of dreams and memories. We are the product of our surround and our creative interpretation of its materiality. We are that first breath of crisp dawn air and split neck sunburn on a summer night. We are the way our teeth sank into the red flesh of the strawberries, and the sulfuric smell of marsh mud. We are the embodied delight of seeing our father there with his gift of fruit in a bright plastic cup, and our own imagination of the time Uncle John sank into the swamp with boards tied to his feet. We are history and hope, folklore and imagined future. We are sight and smell, and taste and touch and the strange way these congeal in the organ of the memory. We are all that we have ever known and that which we have not know but, have received, via story, via blood, via the ephemeral inheritance of cultural imagination. We are that

which we have gazed upon, dreamed up, dwelt upon and tried to drown out. We are all these things that we carry within us, which inform our actions, our identity and our perception of the world as it exists. This is the "landscape of our interior". This is what we are really made of.

We are born of myth and myth is born of us. So too is our relationship to environment - that which grants us our being and which we shape through our actions and imagination. For, the very presence of human perception within space transforms physical space into what we term 'place', through the weaving of an enmeshed poetics of understanding. As Leslie Marmon Silko states, "So long as the human consciousness remains within the hills, canyons, cliffs and the plants, clouds and sky, the term landscape, as it has entered the English language is misleading." This is because, the definition of landscape as " 'A portion of territory the eye comprehend in a single view', does not correctly describe the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings." Rather the relationship between "perceiver" and "perceived" is infinitely more complex. In truth "viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on." (Silko 1990) Human physical and mental engagement with the co-constituents of a landscape bears to life a complex matrix of meaning.

Across centuries, and even over the span of a human lifetime, deep feelings and knowledge are established about locations through the act of dwelling in place. The active process of dwelling- achieved by both the individual and the collective- is a relationship of 'coming into being' within a situated environment, carved out by distinct structures of imagination and social relationship. "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. That value can be objective and empirical, defined by a border or survey marker, but it can also be imaginative and phenomenological, if writers of place can be believed, defined by memory and affection." (Van Noy 2003) If we take a broad

view of it, we see that through dwelling, the history of a place, the landscape and human beings therein, interact to perpetually create and recreate one another. Thus, when one of these forms 'passes away', beyond the immediate sphere of existence, it presence is still deeply engrained and sensed through the lingering impressions it leaves upon the contiguous elements that remain.

Recently, "A range of disciplines have begun to conceptualize space and place as complex socio-cultural constructions, rather than simply physical locations." (Gustayson 2001) The work of scholars has helped us to see that the tangible aspects of our environment serve as the building blocks of our cultural imaginary. Our collective imagination, in turn, comes to shape the very landscape from whence it is formed. For,

> Places, we realize, are as much a part of us as we are of them, and senses of place- yours mine and everyone else's- partake complexly of both. And so, unavoidably, senses of place also partake of cultures, of shared bodies of 'local knowledge'…with which persons and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance. (Basso 1996)

Thus a "place" is not static or even universal to all who would come to know it. Rather, to a large degree it is culturally conceived, personally engaged, and perpetually dynamic.

This organic constitution of place becomes even more fluid in the transnational context; where a worldview cultivated in a distinct milieu is confronted by an alien environment. Here it becomes evident that "spaces cannot be reduced to a single discourse with prescribed meanings." Instead, we see that "space represents an individual's dynamic dialogue between the past and the present." (Sahlins 1985) In this context, complex transnational discourses of place emerge, which seek to find the connections between past memory and present experience. In so doing

they reorder space and imagination to create "places" that is altogether new. In these transnational spheres, "Stories transform spaces into places by providing spatial organization, opening a legitimate theatre for 'practical actions' and 'authorizing the establishment, displacement and transcendence of limits'" (De Certeau, 1988: 125) In the transnational construction of place, just as we witness in syncretic religion, the narratives of home reweave themselves to make sense of wholly new facets of reality.

Immigrant gardens and the food that they produce are particularly powerful makers of place. They quite literally transplant the forms and perception of home onto a newly inhabited space. These vibrant sensory elements of the landscape- experienced through taste, touch, smell and sight- cross the divide between the interior and the exterior; dissolving the distance between person and environment. "Transnational" gardens and the produce they create are thus locals where, through embodied experience, "reality is made exactly equivalent with memory." (Van Noy 2003)

Such seemingly abstract notions of place and identity quickly gain salience when encountered in their embodied state: in this case, in the faces of Burmese refugees of the Karen Ethnic group, around whom this investigation is centered. My friendship and work with Karen families living in Georgia has informed my understanding of these issues. In witnessing their negotiations within the slippery terrain of the transnational, I have come to further understand the importance of home landscape and its vibrant sensory elements. Through my work with them I have come to witness their deep connectedness to landscape, memory and imagination.

In the scribbling contained here I desire to provide a patch-work glimpse of the rich agricultural knowledge, biodiversity and cultural identity tended by the Karen in Georgia. I hope

to present this heritage as it exists in its truest form: nestled within the larger context of cultural imagination and sense of place. In conducting this research I have particularly sought to explore the ways in which the inner landscape, the "landscape of the interior", shapes interactions with the physical, lived environment. In attempting to glimpse how the forms and colors of home might influence one's imagination, I have come away with an understanding that plants and landscapes- as experienced through stories and the senses- can powerfully encode memories of alternant truths. They not only provide tangible evidence of parallel ways of being and knowing but in fact become the very manifestation of such truth.

Ultimately, to preserve botanical variety and agricultural wisdom is to salvage the complex structures of feeling enmeshed, for the Karen, in natural artifacts. To actively give life to such objects and the worlds they carry with them is, in a small way, to fight against the hungry jaws of modern narratives of loss. It has been said that the work of the faithful scholar is "to turn space into memory, memory into text and texts into power." (Siewers 2009) The Karen have done the first. This project seeks to do the second. The third is in the hands of the reader.

Beginnings

This unforeseeable journey began with an invitation from my friend Chad to participate in tutoring refuge children, whose families belonged to his church. After several such invitations I finally made it up the big hill on North Avenue in Athens Georgia, to the quiet apartment complex where I first met the families of Moo Paw and San Nie. As I came to learn, these families, refugees from Burma of the Karen ethnic minority, had been forced to flee their home by political violence against the Karen that has now been ongoing for over 43 years. Though the

story was not immediately clear to me, I eventually came to understand that, as their villages in Karen state were being burned and attacked by the Burmese (the ruling majority), the Karen people had escaped to the forest where they lived like ghost. There they hid in caves and traveled covering their fires, until they at last made it to the Thai border. There they became residents of one of the nine sprawling refugee camps that currently dot the Burma, Thai divide. They lived in this space of perpetual 'in-betweeness' for several years… until the day when they flew across the world to seek a place of tentative refuge in the United States.

After first meeting the Karen families I began going regularly to tutor and visit. As I grew to know them I became increasingly overwhelmed by their abundant kindness and their elegant manner of being. Though we greatly enjoyed tutoring, Chad and I began to feel that there were others ways we could be of help. With the support of university and community organizations we embarked on a project to create a garden space for the Karen families. The goal was to establish a spot where they could grow the plants they knew from home, in greater number and variety than their small apartment complex afforded. We hoped that these crops could be grown for their own consumption and also sold to local residents as a source of income, to supplement their work at the chicken plant.

Simultaneous to these activates of tutoring and garden plotting -as a student of anthropology- I was enthusiastically engaged in studying aspects of landscape, memory and place making. Serving as research assistant to a phenomenal professor, Dr. Virginia Nazarea -whose specialty this area is- I worked compiling information about immigrant gardens and transnational food practices. In such context, of course, I couldn't help but share my experiences with the Karen and my impressions of their remarkable gardening abilities. After listening to my vivid accounts, Dr.Nazarea encouraged that I consider doing research with the Karen, related to

their gardening practices and my preexisting interest in the subject of "interior landscapes." I excitedly began pursuing this possibility. In such a way my relationship with the Karen people evolved from one of tutor and occasional visitor, to that of persistent inquisitor, fellow gardener and friend. Through the course of this process I undertook to record aspects of Karen ethno-botanical knowledge and cultural memory. In so doing I also came to witness their emerging construction of a transnational sense of place and its relationship to the "landscape of the interior."

My research initially drew on my experiences of gardening with San Nie, Moo Paw and their children in the Karen market-garden plot we had begun in Athens. I also came to learn a great deal through cooking, laughing, telling stories and generally being with Moo Paw, San Nie and their families. With time, through the phenomenal support of UGA's CURO undergraduate research program, my investigation expanded to include work with other Karen in Georgia, namely the sizeable community of Karen residing in Comer Georgia.

The rural North Georgia town of Comer is home to an intentional faith community Jubilee Partners, whose members seek to live out the word of God through simplicity and a commitment to peace and social justice. As a central part of this mission, Jubilee has been welcoming refugees from around the world since 1980. In recent years these refugees have come almost exclusively from Burma; members of various ethnic minority groups- including the Karen, Chin and Karenee, displaced by the ongoing political violence perpetrated by the military regime of Myanmar. Jubilee's main involvement with the refugees is to host newly arrived families for a period of about two months. During this time they teach refugees basic English and survival skills for life in the U.S., while providing them a peaceful setting to recover from some

of the traumas so recently escapes. As much of life at Jubilee is centered on gardening and a strong sense of community, refugees feel greatly at home.

Yet, normally after this initial period of hospitality it is time for refugees to begin establishing themselves in general society. Most often this means moving to the ethnically diverse region of Atlanta known as Clarkston, where a great many Karen have come to reside. However, in the past few years there has been a rural resettlement effort in which many of the Karen families living in Atlanta have moved back to Comer and surrounding areas, seeking a more closely-knit Karen community and an environment more similar to that of home. In an effort to help these families achieve their garden aspirations (gardening being widely recognized as *the* defining aspect of Karen life), Jubilee established a space called "Neighbor's Field." Here Karen neighbor families can maintain plots, to be used as they desire. Thanks to the great kindness and hospitality shown to me by those at Jubilee, it was in this transposed 'landscape of the interior'- a mini patch of Burma set upon the north Georgia scenery- that I came to understand much of what I have learned regarding Karen gardening, memory and sense of place. There, in Neighbor's Field, the Karen have created- amidst the messy slippery terrain of the transnational- a little slice of Burma that is not only practical but also poetic. In addition to providing food and familiar rhythm of work Neighbor's Field is a place of sanctuary. It gives, to the Karen who tend it, a little balm for the ache of such forceful displacement.

In-situ Threats and Trans-situ Hopes: traditional Karen life and threats to environment and cultural memory

The preservation of Karen biodiversity and enmeshed knowledge and structures of feeling as it exists 'out of place' (in the gardens or refugees) is especially important in light of the numerous threats facing its "in-place" perpetuation. In addition to forceful political violence, factors of increasing state control of lands, development discourse and forces of globalization together pose a great challenge to the continuation of traditional Karen agriculture and way of life. In their homeland of Burma the Karen practice an age-old tradition of swidden agriculture or rotating cultivation, in which fields are used for no more than one to two years. They are then allowed. to lie fallow for as many as nine to eleven years. Karen ecological practices have been noted by many as remarkably sound. Their staple crop is rice; know to the Karen as 'the sustainer'. It is the terraced rice fields, nestled in a verdant valley of the hill country, which serve as the iconic image of the Karen landscape. At home in the hills and valleys of Burma, the Karen employ a substance strategy that importantly combines agricultural production, vibrant home and community gardens, and an extensive utilization of forest resources. (Anderson 1993)

Sadly, recent decades have witnessed drastic changes in the relationship of Karen people to their land. This is due to a crippling combination of political persecution, industrialization, expansion of the Burmese onto Karen lands and increased state control of the forest. This has driven the rich ethnobotanical traditions of the Karen to the brink of disappearance. As human geographers working in the region have witnessed:

> [The Karen] have been significantly impacted by global and environmentalist discourses. The Karen, traditionally viewed as conservationists, have had to abandon much of their

> local knowledge… Minorities such as the Karen have only limited access to political power and thus to ways of actively influencing environmental policies according to their own ideas of a viable future. Instead their local farming practices involving the use of forests and forest products have been marginalized as a result of state control over forest areas. (Tomforde 348)

Though relatively few in the international community are aware, the Karen stand at the center of the world's longest ongoing civil war: which many describe more accurately as an ethnic genocide. The situation is complex and the resentments deeply rooted- yet it can be generally understood that state retaliation against the Karen on the part of the Burmese regime, began after the Karen gave aid to British forces during World War Two. As has sadly been the case in too many episodes of history- the British reneged on their promise of protection to the Karen, leaving them to suffer the burning of their fields and villages and mass acts of violence at the hands of the Burmese military. The situation continued to escalate over the years:

> In the 1970's the Burmese junta implemented a strategy called the four cuts. This tactic aims at eliminating the Karen's food, supplies, information and recruits. The army limits access to food by not allowing the Karen people out of their village so that they can farm their land. They also confiscate produce and farm animals and place land mines in fields in order to make them inoperable. The intent of these actions is to starve the Karen into submission and assimilate them into Burmese culture. ("Food as a Weapon of War?!" Novemebr 25, 2009)

Elder, gardening advocate and refugee David Saw Wha testifies, "Our people have always been farmers. Farmers of the river lands, of the mountains, and of the forests. Due to

civil war in Burma, more and more of us have migrated from our native lands and many now life in refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border." (Saw Wah 2007) It is difficult to carry on an agricultural tradition, or any sustained rhythm of life, while your homelands are being destroyed and your people dissipated. Saw Wha relates:

> The Royal Thai government, its citizens and non-governmental organizations have been very generous in their support to us. We have food shelter, health care and education, and for this we are very thankful. But while we have been living in refugee camps we have slowly been losing our heritage, our wisdom and our ways. For our children, rice comes from a warehouse, not grown by our own hands. (Saw Wah 2007)

For the Karen, whose identity is so intricately tied to place and agriculture, the challenge of passing on their traditions without means to propagate its most defining elements is a daunting one.

In addition to these forces threatening lived tradition, the long-standing closed political nature of the country has made it virtually impossible for outside researchers to document dying practices and plant varieties. As is likely the case in many nations (the United States not exclude), "much of the botany and conservation activity [of Myanmar] is carried out in the ministries and departments devoted to maintaining and utilizing the natural forests…Ironically in some cases the same ministries in charge of preserving natural areas are also in the process of exploiting them." (Kress 2009) "Although Myanmar is not an exceedingly large country (an area slightly smaller than the state of Texas) it harbors over 60% of the world's remaining teak forests." (Kress 2009) Sadly timber products, born of these old growth teak forests, serve as the country's main economic "natural resource." Such forests- once carefully tended by the Karen

and other ethnic groups- are rapidly disappearing as countries such as China clamor to buy up Teak by the truckload. Botanist David Kress, one of the few foreigners in his field to visit the country in over a century, has witnessed that the, “The exodus to China, India and Thailand of Myanmar’s vanishing biodiversity continues at an ever-accelerating pace.” (Kress 2009)

Along with such an erosion of environment and biodiversity comes the endangerment of Karen cultural tradition and social identity, tightly interwoven with their relationship to the landscape. The threat of this double loss, of environment and culture, represents an incredibly critical situation. For as Virginia Nazarea so eloquently states, “Genes and cultures have something very important in common: both are repositories of coded information essential to adaptations and survival.” (Nazarea 73) These two forces, cultural knowledge and biodiversity, are not only beautifully similar in this regard; they are utterly co-dependent. Since their conception they have existed, intertwined. To separate them would be a death to both. C. Nadia Seremitakis paints a disquieting portrait of just such amnesia in the wake of globalization and industrial agriculture, saying, “Sensory premises, memories and histories are being pulled out from under entire regional cultures and the capacity to reproduce social identity may be altered as a result.” (Seremetakis 1996) Similarly, as the Karen are displaced from their homeland- exiled from its storied landscape, its rich sensory elements and its rhythm of life- their vessels for memory become that which they can carry on their backs. In light of this situation there is a critical need for the documentation and “re-sprouting” of Karen biodiversity and ethnobotanical practice.

Objectives: pickling memory, glimpsing the terrain of the interior

Quite beautifully, “It is through the stories that are born in objects and substances that a community narrates itself in an open-ended fashion that cannot be reduced to a pre-arranged structuralist game plan.”(Seremetakis 1996) The plants which the Karen cultivate are purveyors of history, identity and emotion. They are the form and the substance of an elegant life-world. Thus, through this project I seek to carry out a patch-work pickling of both plants and memories - giving special attention to stories and embodied experience.

My intention is to record aspects of plant diversity and the memories that accompany it, not as “distilled elements of value” but rather as vital threads, which together form the rough texture of a life-world garment. The ultimate goal of this project is closely mirrored by the fanciful image crafted by Salmon Rushdie, in which his preservation-minded protagonist explains his strange and all-consuming occupation, saying:

> And my Chutneys and Kasaundies are, after all, connected to my nocturnal scribbling, by day amongst the pickle-vats, by night within these sheets, I spend my time at the great work of preserving. Memory, as well as fruit, is being saved from the corruption of the clocks (Ray 2004)

In a similar manner I have sought to undertake a mad scrawling of memory, tossing stories and scraps of knowledge here and there to aid in the flourishing of a “trans-situ” conservation. For, if it is not possible to preserve plants and cultural tradition in their place of origin (as, painfully, is much the case for the Karen of Burma) then we can take hope in the practice of meeting these

things where they reside: in the pockets and memories of their keepers, the immigrants and refugees in our own communities. (Nazarea)

Methods: seeds, food and stories

The methods employed in this investigation consisted primarily of in-depth semi-structured interviews, complimented by practices of gardening and cooking. Engaging in such participant observation served to greatly elucidate aspects of embodied knowledge, existing outside the realm of verbal communication. I worked frequently, over a two year period, with a small group of informants consisting principally of two women and one young-adult man. Further research included a survey of the gardens of roughly eleven different Karen families and discussions with gardeners about plant preferences and memories of home.

As my first relationship with the Karen was people that of tutor, or 'teacher'- as the mothers refer to us, I made it my routine to visit in the early evenings on weekdays to tutor first and afterwards gradually slip into the reminiscent conversation of our interviews. My initial intention was to primarily engage Mo Paw, mother of one of families and most avid gardener (in her mid fifties) and her eldest son Ta Hay who is highly enthusiastic and well suited to serve as interpreter. However, it is interesting to note that as the activity of the evening would shift from homework and tutoring, towards discussions of the Burmese landscape and plant memories from home, the entire family would physically draw inward around me, until we were all sitting together on the floor in a close circle. Plates of food surrounding us in perfunctory Karen hospitality, we would lean in towards one another. I would feel the energy in the room blossom as everyone eagerly partook in the sharing of knowledge and memories.

There was, at first, the problematic fact that plant names did not inhabit for us a common vocabulary. However, this was resolved as we developed a unique process of translation that allowed us to arrive at a mutual understanding of the plant in question. This amusing system employed pantomime, drawing, and description of the plant's physical appearance, uses, odor, feel, taste, etc. The immense gratification of the ensuing "ah-ha!" moments was virtually incentive enough for engaging in the interview. Additionally, once a certain level of comprehension had been conferred, I would write the plant's name in English and Ta Hay would write its Karen name beside it, in the beautiful curved script of the Karen alphabet, which looks like a serpentine series of infinity marks, and then also in the phonetic translation.

Oftentimes when a verbal-pantomime understanding could not be reached, one of my friends would lightly sketch the vegetable they were attempting to describe on the page of my note book. Then, frequently it would become apparent that the fault lay not with our abilities of communication but with my utter ignorance; the form not being one that I recognized. Such drawings, as in the case of the Daikon Radish or the Jackfruit, would come in handy for future reference as I consulted with others whose Asian plant knowledge was more extensive than my own. One of the greatest sources of excitement between myself and the Karen people were our impromptu episodes of "show and tell" in which an object of discussion that had proved unfamiliar to me would suddenly be materialized from the kitchen or some mysterious location, to my obvious wonderment and the great delight of all.

During these lively evenings of interviewing, the types of questions posed included:

- "What plants and/or plant species are prominent in your memory of your home in Burma?"

- "In what ways did gardening activities and/or interaction with plants and nature characterize your daily life in Burma? How are these experiences different in your new home in the United States?"
- "How do aspects of the natural environment (or semi-natural environment) of Georgia compare with those of your homeland?"
- "What significant personal memories do you have connected to specific plants and/or natural landscapes?"

As a counterbalance to the verbal, analytical approach of the interviewing process I sought to obtain insight into the Karen peoples' "landscapes of the interior" from a different vantage: engaging in physical gardening activities. These activities were illuminating in numerous ways; largely that they conveyed the Karen peoples' embodied knowledge in relation to plants and gardening. When I first came to know her, Mo Paw already maintained a small but impressive raised-bed garden at the apartment complex where she lived. However, the majority of our gardening together (along with San Nie and the children of both women) was carried out at the market-garden site in Athens and in Jubilee's Neighbor's Field in Comer.

The market-garden site was a lovely quarter acre plot of farm land, made available to us through the generosity of the UGA department of Horticulture. It served as a space for Moo Paw and San Nie to grow a greater variety of their traditional plants, and in larger quantities, than their small home garden space allowed. Additionally, the rural landscape of the garden provided a treasured respite from the daily scenes of apartment complex and city streets. Simply being in this space evoked a great sense of joy and relaxation in the Karen women. The garden had a special way of calling forth the songs, stories and movements of home.

It was interesting to observe the immediate response of Mo Paw and San Ni upon seeing the market-garden for the first time. They took to the space like fish to water. Something in the relatively flat green tract of land must have sparked the recollection of a rice field. For excitedly, totally unprompted, the two women began demonstrating the movement of sowing rice. They called the attention of my friend Chad and I, pantomiming the way one stands in a fixed spot and extends their arm towards and away from the body: letting fall a gentle cascade of imaginary rice seed on the surrounding soil.

Like seeing a dancer move in her element, the natural resurgence of the embodied motion of gardening flowed forth from the two women with utmost grace. The speed and effortlessness with which they tackled the tasks was nothing short of awe-inspiring. One day, after a long secession of rigorous gardening, one of us remarked to Ta Hay that we were sorry for it being such a hard day of work. Immediately, with a laugh and a broad smile, he exclaimed "No, don't be sorry! This is life. This is what we *do*!"

Also fascinating to behold was the manner in which hidden memories, hidden seeds, and hidden enthusiasms slowly emerged with the accrual of trust and time. Early on, disheartened at what seemed to be a total absence of any Burmese seeds among the Karen families and very little reticence to impart stories of plants and gardening, I began to think that the excitement for the subject was mine alone. However, just when I least expected it, the seeds and the stories- as if from some magical spring- began to flow forth. Though I still do not fully understand the process by which it happened, I found myself taken from a role of pulling to one of hastily being lead by the hand. Just days after my inquiries concerning the presence of Karen seeds were met with blank stares and shakes of the head, I received word that Mo Paw had unexpectedly shown up to the garden plot with numerous bags of traditional Karen seeds, excitedly asking when they

could be planted. My only explanation for the mysterious apparition of the seeds and stories is, perhaps, that cultivating fertile soil is the necessary first step in the reception of such precious cargo.

Part Two:

Plants, Landscape and Sensory Memory

"The senses represent inner states not shown on the surface. They are also located in a social-material field outside of the body." (Seremetakis 1996)

"And Suddenly, the memory returns…when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remains poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection." Marcel Proust, Swann's Way (1934:36): (Ray 2004)

As scholars have recently articulated, and as musicians, artists and authors of fiction have expressed over centuries: collective memory resides within natural objects- born through the senses. Or, perhaps more 'scientifically' put, culture and biodiversity hold deep and complex connection. The taste, feel and form of local plant varieties- nestled within their layered context- are powerful sediments of history and emotion. They are the tools with which a community both constructs and reiterates their cultural imagination. Like art or architecture, language or belief, plant varieties set the stage for a situated understanding of the world. But what happens when

this emplaced cosmology is uprooted and dropped within a new environment- one where both the material and imagined boarders of possibility are drawn in entirely different form? This is the age old, yet very raw, dilemma of the displaced. How does one go about making a life within a place whose narrative is outside one's own story?

Virginia Nazarea states, "The domestication of an alien landscape must be one of the greatest challenges to human fortitude and imagination." In this constant state of in-betweenness "two simultaneous stresses impinge on one's consciousness daily" the 'out-of-place' person feels the weight of two worlds. He or she is pulled by opposing forces, sensing both, "the need to reshape one's environment and the need to reshape oneself." (Nazarea 2005) In this liminal space plants that recall the landscape and structures of home are a great comfort. Their memory-laden forms serve as portable alters. They become quiet anchors in a translucent, shifting world.

Nazarea invites us to consider, "If seeds and memories are important to people who are rooted in places like the heirloom farmers and gardeners of the American South, how critical are these "resources" to people who have uprooted from their places of origin and settled in a foreign land or, for that matter, who perpetually negotiate two worlds, never completely belonging to one or the other?" (Nazarea 2005) The taste, smell, and feel of these specific varieties are tied to the memories and emotions of home. Their familiar forms evoke the visual landscape that burns within the head and the heart. By digging into the earth of an unfamiliar land, immigrants and refugees- such as the Karen- find a means of authorship in the narrative of place and possibility. Immigrant gardens transcend time and space to make real the imaginative landscape of the interior.

However, this process of re-ordering place begs the question: who is allowed to contribute to the definition of a place? Does the right to weave meaning into materiality solely belong to those whose ancestors have inhabited that space since time immemorial? Is the creation of local identity exclusively the right of the privileged and powerful? Surely in our kaleidoscopeing world, such a limited notion of ownership can scant be upheld. What then is the role of immigrants and the marginalized in the authorship of a place?

If we view "imagination" as being "a collective tool for the transformation of the real, for the creation of multiple horizons of possibility", as does Arjun Appadurai, then we can observe that, "engagement with the empirical world can be somewhat different depending on what translocalities you inhabit mentally, in and through the imagination." (Appadurai 1991) Immigrants, refugees and all others living at the fringes of the dominant paradigm of a place surely perceive in forms that hold a distinct hue and flavor.

Appaduri defends the right of these 'alternant visions' to contribute to the collective seeing of a place. He states, "Even the poorest of the poor" (and perhaps the newest of the new) "should have the capability, the privilege and the ability to participate in the work of the imagination." (Appadurai 1991) What is more, not only do marginalized individuals hold an inherent right to contribute to the understanding of place: their unique views, their situated knowledges are an abundant gift. The horizons of possibility carried by the underprivileged and the "out of place" add to the complex notes of a community. As has been supported by scholars across disciplines- from biology to anthropology- complexity is the great key to survival…and also to vibrancy. Like new genetic material, immigrant innovation has been the restorative lifeblood of communities throughout history. In countless cases it has been immigrant visions which have allowed for the organic evolution of place: heralding new vitality and breathing life

into lost tradition. There could hardly be a more radiant testament to the power of alternant imagination than that lived out by Karen refugees in Georgia.

Upon the rolling landscape of rural and semi-rural North Georgia, Karen refugees have transposed a sensory landscape of memory, through the cultivation of home and community gardens. There the Karen go about the practical but also poetic work of tending the flavors, fragrances, and feelings of home. Through the fortitude of their creativity the Karen "re-imagine" the Georgia landscape in light of their own interior landscapes. In so doing they re-create the material elements and the embodied practices that constitute Karen identity.

The plants grown in Karen gardens are largely those of food. And food- that which is consumed- is a powerful local of confluence between, landscape, memory and self. Even in the commercial, industrialized sphere of modern cities, food is one of the most defining elements of place (how would we conceive of New York without its pizza Paris without croissants or Georgia without peaches?) This principle is only truer in settings where sustenance is directly linked to the immediate landscape, where its production characterizes the work of everyday life. In these instances, "Food is particularly potent as a place making practice because it links the land to the hearth and the hearth to the heart through the mediation of produce." This is reflected in the ways Karen women use the bounty of their garden to cook up familiar worlds of taste and imagination. Food, "crosses the border between the outside and the inside and this principle of incorporation touches upon the very nature of a person," and arguably the very nature of a "place"- as space given meaning through its association with people. (Scholliers 2001) In the creation of a cuisine the material reality of landscape enters into a dynamic dialogue with culture, each shaping and reshaping the other in a roundly reciprocal fashion.

This important relationship between food, place and identity becomes exceptionally evident in the context of the transnational. As evidenced by the practices of the Karen, "The link among produce, land and homeland is evoked most directly by the kitchen garden." Through her vigilant work of growing and cooking the flavors of home Moo Paw has carried on and passed down to her children a sense of Karen identity through replicating the experiential elements of home cuisine. Her plot in neighbor's filed not only constituted a familiar visual landscape, but also a landscape of consumable inclusion, through the foods that it bears forth. Opo squash, roselle, eggplant, long bean, bitter melon, cucumber, sweet potato leaf: all these are woven into a tasty tapestry of imagination that is Karen cooking. Her children, in growing up inside these smells and flavors, have received a legacy of Karen cultural memory, that -where it not for Moo Paw's garden- would have slipped into the realm of sensory loss.

As Serimitakis tells us, "the human body is not principally a text; rather it is consumed by a world filled with smells, textures, sights, sounds and tastes, all of which trigger cultural memories." (Seremetakis 1996) From all that I witnessed, here in the face of globalization and modernity, it is particularly the women who pass down this a-textual history imbued in plants. While husbands occupy positions within the formal, industrial sphere it is the wives and mothers- in tending the gardens, cooking the foods, and telling the stories- who carry on the rich legacy of cultural memory.

Plants, in encoding stories and emotion, weave a history of social relationships. David Sutton states, "Food does not simply symbolize social bonds and divisions; it participates in their creation and re-creation."(Sutton 2001) The wisdom born of these bonds, not recorded in text, is carried on through memories anchored in sensory detail. Not only for the Karen but for many

communities, these un-official renderings of the world pass particularly through a female line of gardeners and cooks.

Taste tied to landscape: characteristic flavors of the Karen

"The experience of sensing places is both roundly reciprocal and incorrigibly dynamic. As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, the same ideas and feelings animate the places on which animation has been bestowed." (Basso)

In describing Karen food-ways and cultivation practices one thing is so ever-present that it could almost be overlooked: rice. The Karen consider rice the sustainer of life. In Karen language the word for 'food' is synonymous with the word for 'rice'. Thus, if one has not eaten rice, one has not really eaten. Furthermore, a common greeting among the Karen is to say "na àw māy wēe lee ahh" (have you eaten rice?"), to which one would answer "ya àw māy ta wēe di bà" (I have not yet eaten rice) or "ya àw māy wēe lee" (Yes, I have eaten rice.) Another one of the most common Karen phrases is "àw māy" (Eat rice.) These linguistic practices further illustrate the deep-seeded importance of rice the Karen. (Anderson 1993) ("Drum Publication Group Website")

Rice cultivation defines both the visual landscape and the seasonal round for the Karen in their homeland. The vivid green, terraced patties that surround Karen villages are one of the most defining elements of their distinct place in the world. The planting, communal harvesting and pounding of rice all cohere into the seasonal and daily rhythms of life for the Karen. The

process of the growing and processing of rice carries with it social bonds and symbolic value. Thus, for the Karen in North Georgia, where the soil and climate do not permit rice to grow, this absence is a notable removal from the life of home.

Most of the Karen I encountered had previously lived in cramped refugee camps where rice came in food-aid bags from a warehouse. Thus, the amputation of rice cultivation from their lived experience was not totally novel. However, many of the Karen still lamented to me the loss of this practice- so central to their identity. While they were sure to make it very clear that growing rice is *hard* work (being out in the fields for hours, pulling a plow with only the aid of an animal or your own strength), it was also clear that this work carried many beloved associations.

Moo Paw and Ta Hay would tell me about the cycle of planting and harvesting the rice, counting on their fingers, "In the spring, in these months, maybe March through May, we plant… in the fall, in the months maybe July through November we harvest." They would demonstrate for me the deeply embedded movement of each step of the work: the gentle scattering motion of casting the seeds into the fertile ground, the choreographed movement of drawing your arm in wide circles- cycle in hand- to harvest the tall shifting grains. They pantomimed for me the pounding of the rice by hand to loosen the hard outer husk- a process known as polishing the rice- and the motion of tossing the rice into the breeze and catching it in the sieve-like basket, to separate the grain from the chaff.

Moo Paw and Ta Hay talked fondly about how each family, or extended family, had their own field but that when it came time to harvest everyone would work together and help one another bring in the bountiful yield…working, "this day in one person's field, the next day in

someone else's." When asked if they can note a difference or prefer the taste of rice grown and pounded by hand to that bought in stores, the answer is a resounding, "Yes!" They tell me that the rice which comes from the store (even that of the ethnic markets they vigilantly seek out) "does not have any flavor…not like the rice that we grow." The Karen describe to me the rice they grew in Burma as being flavorful and distinct- a sensation that they cannot quite convey in words but one which is greatly known and loved. Sadly, as it stands now, the embodied experience and flavor of the rice grown by hand is an element of sensory memory central to Karen identity that stands poised to slip into the dusky realm of loss.

Yet, while rice in its 'true' form hovers as a void in the lives of Karen refugees, there is much cause for hope. Much of this hope sprouts from the make-do resilience and out-of-place memory blooming in the transnational landscape of Karen gardens. A beautiful pantheon of home plants faithfully populates the gardens plots and kitchen counters of the Karen in North Georgia. Through my experiences talking, cooking, eating, and gardening with them, I have come to a sort of distilled understanding of Karen plant-related practices and preferences, as they exist in their adopted Georgia home. Through my survey of Karen home and community gardens, primarily located in Athens and Comer Georgia, I have found that a specific collection of plant species appear again and again.

These plants are documented in the plant compendium that serves as appendix ii. to this work. In this compendium, plants I have encountered in the plots of the Karen are pictured alongside descriptions of their characteristics and a diverse sprinkling of cultural knowledge and associations regarding: cultivation, culinary uses, practical and medicinal uses, as well as cultural symbolism and personal narratives. Much thanks is due, for the creation of this compendium, to the abundant insight shared with me by friends connected with Jubilee partners- who have been

gardening with the Karen for a great deal of time and who's knowledge of such is vastly more extensive than my own.

A few of the plants, presented in the compendium, which I found to be most characteristic of Karen gardens in Georgia include:

-Amaranth

-Basil

-Lemon Basil

-Bitter Melon

-Daikon Radish

-Bottle Gourd

-Corn

-Cucumber

-Eggplant

-Hyacinth Bean

-Long Bean

-Okra

-Opo Squash

-Peanut

- Peppers

-Spicy Thai Peppers

-Pumpkin

-Roselle

-Squash

-Sweet potato

-Tomato

-Watermelon

Additionally, from what I gathered through sentiments expressed in actions and conversation, the Karen - as a general rule- hold special affection for a particular handful of food plants. These include:

-Pumpkin

-Cucumber

-Sweet Potato

-Bitter melon

-Long bean

-Okra

-Roselle

-Basil

These plants are ones traditionally cherished by the Karen, which also thrive in the environment of the south-eastern U.S. Pumpkin leaves, for example, are a staple food for the Karen, alongside that of rice. Cooked into a watery, spicy curry it is sometimes eaten by the Karen in Burma for the equivalent of breakfast, lunch and dinner. (Anderson 1993) When I would ask Karen individuals what they would most like to grow in their 'ideal' garden, often the first answer would- with little hesitation- be "pumpkin!" However, it was some time before I realized that when they said this it was particularly the leaves of the plant, even more than the fruit, that so provoked a wistful smile. Cucumber too, was always among the first mentioned 'wish' plants for the Karen. This fondness was reinforced by the nearly universal presence of the delicate curls and flowers in of cucumber vines in the Karen gardens I surveyed: as well as cucumber's ubiquitous presence, sliced raw alongside Karen dishes.

Though perhaps not occupying such coveted ranks as pumpkin and cucumber, the Karen also hold special affection for sweet potato, bitter melon, tomato, long bean, okra, roselle (a species of Hibiscus, used by the Karen as an herb) and basil. All of these plants appeared with great frequency in the Karen gardens that I visited and where consistently central elements in the Karen meals I ate and learned to prepare. However, what separates this handful of plants from the others grown and cooked by the Karen, is the special fondness with which the Karen spoke of these particular species. Not only are they beloved in the practical gustatory sense, they seem also to be especially potent symbols of Karen identity and tradition. For example, my friend Ta Hay once told me, describing the importance of Basil to Karen people: "It smells really good- the smell is very important for our people. When the Karen people go to the store, anytime they smell this they miss their country…In Karen state there are lots beautiful places to go- like the

forest or the waterfall or the river. We go with groups to do a picnic- everyone brings food and then we share the food together- always there is basil!" Thus, plants tied to home- for the Karen- are more than just preffered foods. They are vibrant elements of the landscape, deeply enmeshed with history and emotion. They appeal to the tounge, as well as the eyese, the hands the nose and the heart.

The significane of these plants is attested to by the fact that the Karen have set up an informal market at Pilgrim's Pride (the poltry plant at which almost all Karen work). In this make-shift system families living in Atlanta and other urban areas where they are unable to garden, purchase these beloved crops from entrepreneurial Karen grandmothers and grandfathers who tend lush gardens in their off-hours from the chicken plant. Faced with the numerous stresses of life as a refugee (taxing work, low income, limited transporation, language barriers, cultural stresses and more) it would be all too easy for the customos and flavors of home to be left abandoned by the side of the road. Thus, the determination with which Karen individuals seek out the sensory elements of home is a testament to the power of landscape and memory that cannot be ignored.

Fish Paste Doesn't Forget: Karen cooking as practices of identity and memory tied to place

"There is no escape from home and its flavors" – Krishnindu Ray (Ray 2004)

Anthropologists hold a not-so-well kept secret, which is just how enjoyable our 'research' can be. For one who enjoys people and relishes an ever-expanding wonder at the

world, it is sometimes hard to believe that activities such as gardening, cooking, talking about dreams and stories and getting to know people really qualifies as 'research'. And yet –when done with reverence, fortitude, and a critical mind- it does. So, I am slowly learning to grow comfortable with the term. Thus, much of my research (no quotation marks) has included time spent not only among weedy garden rows but also in the transnational kitchens of the Karen: spaces filled with the fragrances of fish paste and turmeric. Through a series of hands-on Karen cooking lessons (mostly at the enthusiastic instruction of Moo Paw and San Nie) I came to better understand the swirl of motions and ingredients that create the flavors I so greatly enjoy.

The essential, ever-present component of Karen cooking, I came to learn is, rice- the fundamental requirement of all Karen food. Around this base Karen cuisine takes shape in the form of curries, soups, and savory pastes. These are all flavored principally by some combination of tomatoes, fish paste, turmeric, cayenne, chilies, onion, garlic, parsley, roselle, lemongrass, basil and a handful of green herbs and wild plants not common to the English vernacular, such as wood sorrel.

Often a dish is comprised solely of a mountain-high, steaming bowl of rice, massaged with the hands to incorporate a spicy paste made of herbs or spices mixed with chilies, fish paste and often tomatoes. When a substantial protein is present in a dish, it generally inhabits the form of egg (perhaps the most common), chicken, pork, fish or occasionally shrimp. Most of these meat or egg dishes as well with a combination of fresh herbs, spices and fish paste. Herbs most often come from home gardens or the gardens of friends and family. The spices which the Karen people use generally come from a variety of ethnic markets or large international markets, mostly located in Atlanta. Some favorite shopping destinations of the Karen include: the vast Dekalb Farmer's Market (conveniently located to the part of Atlanta where many Karen live) as

well as Vietnamese, Thai and even Mexican groceries. The fish paste and large bags of rice- two Karen staples- are also procured primarily from Asian and international markets.

With rice cooking away in the rice cooker, the other elements of a Karen meal come together in a swirl of sprinkling and stirring. Together they combine to form the distinctive flavors of home. Frequently, spicy, tangy, pastes and sauces are created as a separate condiment to be added to foods, such as plain rice. However, sometimes herbs, spices and fish paste are cooked directly into the vegetables and/or meat or eggs that comprise a dish. When this is the case, generally the complex of seasonings is created first. Triangulations of flavor might include: lemongrass mixed with chilies, garlic and fish paste or, tomato simmered with turmeric, onion, pepper and a magic white 'salt'. After this succulent base is achieved, in go the fried egg, pork, chicken, or fish and any vegetables that will comprise the dish. When all these elements have sufficiently stewed together, the dish is finished and ready to eat. It is then enjoyed, spooned over a copious bowl of rice, to be mixed in, scooped up and savored with the fingers.

Any Karen person will be quick to tell you that Karen do not so much have set meals but rather eat "when they are hungry". This has been roundly confirmed by a friend and former Jubilee volunteer who has lived with Karen families for several years. However, in my experience it is not uncommon for a Karen family and their guests to sit down together to enjoy heaping bowls of rice and a sumptuous array of dishes: curries, sauces, soups and sides of fresh or boiled vegetables. Typically seated in a circle, on a straw mat set out in the center of the room, it is usual that someone – often a father or mother- will bless the food in Karen. Everyone then partakes in the bounties of food and family. In the context of such meals, some of the most poignant stories have been shared with me. One such time was the day of my first official Karen 'cooking lesson' with Moo Paw.

At Moo Paw's happy tutelage I had spent the better part of the morning and afternoon learning the best way to peel eggs, how to make red pepper flakes, how to pick off the young edible parts of "weed" plants, how to crush garlic and onion with the big wooden Chat-u, how to make crispy fried eggs in turmeric sauce, and how to best slice watermelon with a machete …among other things. Throughout the whole process Moo Paw kept flashing an ebullient smile, pointing and chuckling, "teacher…student. Today, student…teacher," indicating her amusement at the reversal of our usual roles. It was there, amidst our revelries in the egg and spices, stories and emotions not previously shared flowed out like an exhaling tide. Touching the warped metal of pans brought over on the plane from Thailand- the intricately carved knife, a parting gift from the brother who stayed behind- Moo Paw told me of the great, incessant pain she felt at her separation from her family.

She told me of her aging mother and father, back in the camp in Thailand, who called several times a week. Each time they cried on the phone and said, "Moo Paw, ha key ha key", "Moo Paw, come home, come home!" She showed me, tracing the line with her finger, "Moo Paw cry, cry." She told me of her father, the great gardener, who is now sometimes too frail to go out to his garden- how he tells her on the phone that her mother is sad, so sad. "She not eat, because she is so sad. She misses Moo Paw." Moo Paw told me of her great wish to bring them all here to live with her in Georgia- a yearning uttered again and again over the enduring course of our friendship. This was no superficial hope, as she lamented to me the exact cost of a single plane ticket from Thailand. "Moo Paw does not work. Moo Paw no money."

She told me too of her fear for her parents' poor health. "I don't know. My father, maybe he die in the plane", she said, striking her chest with the palm of her hand to indicate the force of a heart attack. Even with the power of her desire the obstacles for Moo Paw loom great. Yet, I

have come to firmly believe in force of Moo Paw's love and imagination, like that of many of the Karen people I have encountered. Having witnessed the transformative power of her vision I hold faith in her underground agency- beyond the improbable, and in the face of the seemingly insurmountable.

As we continued to cook that day, she told me of the dream her husband Ro Gold had the previous night. In this dream he had been at their new house in comer, where they would be moving in the coming weeks. There he was surrounded by tigers and snakes and was trying to fight them off, unconsciously kicking and hitting Moo Paw, until she woke him from his fraught sleep. She laughed as she told me of this, and I wondered aloud if she had ever seen a tiger, in Burma. No, she told me, never with her own eyes, "but I have seen the bone." "Tiger bone?" I asked. "Yes", she told me. "When my babies were little, I bought the bone form the man, the hunter. I use it to make the powder to cover the baby. Put it on every day [while the baby is very young]." "Very expensive", she told me. "This much…maybe twenty dollar." She showed me, pinching the top digit of her index finger. "Is the tiger bone to protect the baby?!" I asked inquisitively. But with that she was already off to another topic. As we worked she sang in Karen, words that I could not recognize by a sentiment I felt I understood. Here in the domain of her small kitchen was the first time I had ever heard Moo Paw sing…something I would come to experience many times later as we worked together in the rows of our garden haunts.

When our morning's work was finally complete- the eggs richly stewed the rice cooker full- we placed the green straw mat in the middle of the living room. I set out the white plastic bowls with the pink roses, to be filled with each person's rice, and transported from the kitchen each steaming dish that Moo Paw placed in my hands. Moo Paw's children left their various occupations (watching TV, bouncing on the couch) to form a circle around our miniature feast.

Moo Paw asked if I would say a blessing for us and I insisted that it was better she. So, bowing her head she whispered a benediction in Karen, folding us in with the gentle cadence of her speech. After deeply savoring the first bites of our labors- the sun sliding into the small apartment between the slants of the blinds- Moo Paw began to tell me something…something she cared that I know.

"In Burma" she began, "We ate like this, but with our whole village, many many people." Then, she said, "The Burmese come. With guns. They kill our people." I flinch as she immolates with her hands the spray of an automatic weapon. "They come because they know we will be eating, all there together. They kill us…because we are Karen." Stunned by the raw edge of this sudden memory, I can do little but shake my head in sorrow, in pain, in sympathy that can never really know.

A thousand questions fill me head…"But you got away? Did this happen several times? They came purposefully because they knew everyone would be gathered for a communal meal?" But it is only, "how can people do such things?" that escapes my lips. And it is no matter because Moo Paw, who can drop such bombs and then brush them away with the wave of her hand, is already on to the next thing. She is busy telling me now about how Karen people make their houses on stilts out of woods and bamboo (she know I will be impressed). They make their roves out of leaves, she tells me brightly, but the rain doesn't get in!

Another time, at Moo Paw's new home in Comer; she recounts to me how when Ta Hay, her eldest son, was a baby they fled their village under attack by the Burmese. Traveling in secret through the woods, they "crossed the river", living off what they could forage and hiding their fires when they dared to make them. She tells me of how they hid in a cave for several months

before finally making it to relative safety at the Burma-Thai. I imagine young Moo Paw, with baby Ta Hay living there in darkness and uncertainly. My head reels. What different worlds we have known, Moo Paw and I. What might eyes that have witnessed such pain, see in this same Georgia landscape that we gaze upon?

Indeed it seems that complex emotions permeate her memory of home and her relationship to her new environment. Beauty and nostalgia tangled up with the metallic taste of violence, she tells me that she would love to come visit my home further in north Georgia, the land of mountains and waterfalls… almost like Burma! But later, when laying more practical plans for such a trip she tells me, "I don't know. Maybe Moo Paw not go. If I see the mountain, I think I will be sick." She clutches her stomach and I realize the deep currents of her associations. She does not simple mean car sickness. Memory flickers just below the surface of the present. We with our deeply human eyes can never really separate our interior landscape from that of the supposed exterior.

Memories of the Mango Tree: absentee plants, nostalgia and tales of perseverance

An impressive overlap exits between the plants which grow in the Karen people's homeland of Burma and those which thrive here in the foothills of Georgia. None the less, there are some absences. Primarily tropical trees and shrubs, too hot-blooded to contend with the Georgia frost, their abundance is wistfully remembered and deeply missed. Such absentee plants,

as the Karen have informed me (sometimes communicated through our own versions of charades and Pictionary), include:

-Mango

-Banana

-Coconut

-Papaya

-Lemon

-Pineapple

-Taro

-Durian

-Jackfruit

The attributes of these lost relatives are both praised and mourned. The Karen count to me on their fingers the cost of purchasing these now luxuries at the store. Moo Paw tells me emphatically about seeing Mango at the store, maybe two or three dollars for just *one*! She is scandalized and not about to be taken in by such robbery. There will likely be no mango at their house. “In Burma we had two mango trees in our backyard. We could not eat them all!” Her children tell me proudly. And yet, the Karen, as in many aspects of their life, have not given over quietly to such a stark reality.

A large (albeit fruitless) banana tree stands at the center of Jubilee Neighbor's Field: a testament to Karen hope and persistence. Just as numerous Karen individuals have come down sick foraging for plants seemingly related to those wild species gathered in Burma, so too has many a practiced gardener tested the waters of the Georgia climate with adventurous patches of that which they have been told will not grow. With such perseverance the Karen have found wild edibles that most Georgia natives don't know of, and have sprouted forms the Dixie piedmont didn't know it could contain.

Place as Performative Ritual: patterns of work and gardening for Karen refugees

> *"Sense of place is made up of the experiences, mostly fleeting and un-dramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. It is a unique blend of sights, sounds and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as times of sunrise and sunset, of work and play. The feel of a place is registered in one's muscles and bones." (Van Noy, 2003, 152)*

As briefly touched up earlier in this paper, if physical aspects of environment are important in the construction of "landscapes of the interior", so too are the daily rhythms of lived experience. This dimension of place too, is worth examining as in plays out in a transnational context. Critical to note is that, "The political and poetic have to be synthesized at the level of the everyday experience." (Seremetakis 1996) As described to me by some of the youngest member of the Karen families, "in Burma everybody works in the fields, every day, even the little kids!"

How might a reality where the day to day activity consist of farming alongside your brothers and sisters, father, mother and extended relatives butt up against a daily routine of :going off before dawn to school /work in a chicken plant (the Karen father's place of employment), where the entire day is spent inside, removed from your family, from which you return home in the evening to a mountain of homework and the buzz of satellite TV; only to wake up the next morning and enact it all over again? Or, perhaps even starker to consider: how might a mother's life of gardening, weaving, and rice milling centered firmly in the family/community round, translate to being home alone in a dark apartment for the better part of each day? Where is the 'connection' that allows past experience to make any sense out of this new reality? Ray, in "The Migrant's Table", states, "To work the soil is to produce a place. The problem becomes how to produce a home in a land that is not yours." (Ray 2004) These are the factors to explore and consider when examining the politic of the everyday, and the way in which embodied routine constitutes place.

The vast majority of Karen families in Georgia support themselves through employment at the Pilgrim's Pride poultry plant. With a reputation as hard workers with exceptional knife skills, I have been told that Karen individuals have sometimes been hired by the plant 'sight unseen', on the mere fact of being Karen. While it is an almost universal rule that male heads of household and elder sons go to work at the chicken plant, some Karen women are employed as well. I know of elder Karen couples, with no young children to care for, who work at the plant together. I have also met a tough, resilient single mother (widowed shortly after arriving in the U.S.) who works full time at Pilgrim's pride, in addition to being mother to four young children. Those employed at the chicken plant rise each day in the dark pre-dawn, around 4:00 am. Often carpooling with friends and Karen neighbors who don't have vehicles, they make their

pilgrimage to work on the line. Even in families where only the father works, the mother, and sometimes children, will rise alongside him to prepare a breakfast of rice and see him off for the long day. It is not until evening, around six or seven PM that the tired caravan of workers will return to the comfort of their home and family.

In Burma, mothers, fathers, children and grandparents all worked alongside one another in the fields. Yet, here in the U.S. life dictates a markedly more compartmentalized routine: some family members off to work on the line, others off to school, others staying at home with children or left alone to the quiet of a dark apartment. Thus, for the Karen of Georgia it has become often the mothers, along with retired elders who carry on the daily work of digging into the Earth – into memory. Husbands and fathers, often as ardent gardeners as their wives, find their opportunities for cultivation limited to that of Sundays, their sole day off. Yet, many still find the time in these precious few moments of respite, some even driving an hour or more in order to do so.

Outside of these festive occasions, when the whole family and Karen community might be together in the garden, it is Karen women who return again and again to water, weed, harvest and sing. Generally in the mornings and the evenings- mostly when there is a spare moment- they go out to tend their gardens…that is, those who can easily reach the plots they maintain. For, transportation is no small factor in the gardening realities of the Karen. While desire and know-how is abundant, and available space not uncommon (due to the generosity of individuals and groups such as Jubilee and the UGA Horticulture department) being able to get to garden spaces continues to pose a significant hindrance to many. With limited vehicles, drivers (generally only the men having learned upon coming to the U.S.) and available time, regular attendance to remote gardens stands as a formidable challenge.

This is one reason many Karen families have elected to move from Atlanta and Athens, back to rural Comer Georgia - the site of Jubilee Partners, where many spent their first months as refugees in the U.S. There they are able to tend small backyard gardens, in addition to being within walking distance of a more sizable plot, generously afforded by Jubilee Neighbor's Field. In mornings and evenings, and particularly on weekends, neighbors field is not only reminisce of the Karen natural landscape, but also the human landscape. Young mothers with babies papoose-ed to their back, elders, middle aged women, young Karen men and gleeful children move gently, like bees, amidst the lush vines and whimsical trellises -their presence completing the portable alter of time and space. As the sun begins to set over this patch of interior landscape made manifest, someone sings softly, a tune in Karen, against the soft sprinkling of a hose. Even for I, who have not know the brutality of war or the ache of displacement…the world has rarely felt more peaceful.

Gardens and power: Karen imagination in the capitalist economy

In the illuminating article "Slave Gardens", Beth Tobin draws on historical accounts to reconstruct the resilient practice of slaves in the Caribbean gardening both for survival and as powerful means of agency. The article describes how slaves- drastically undernourished by their meager rations, became ill and died in considerable numbers. Plantation owners eventually becoming slightly more than indifferent to their "property loss" agreed to the proposition that slaves be given provision grounds, on which to "grow yams" and other foods for themselves. Slaves were only allowed to visit these plots in evenings, after the back breaking work of slave labor was done, and on Sundays, their one day of relative freedom. Yet, even after suffering

physical exhaustion in the plantation fields, slaves would enthusiastically make the trek to their provision grounds- plots of borrowed land. There they cultivated a magical array of colors and flavors, quite unknown to the monotone palate of plantation owners and their wives. The slaves, as the article describes, effectively came to create a "peasant economy" within the rigid structure of the slave economy.

Slaves not only ate the abundant fruits they grew, but also sold them to Europeans and other slaves at vibrant Sunday markets. The practices of resilience carried out in these provisions grounds not only gave nourishment to the bodies of the slaves but also breathed life into their long stifled memory and imagination. While it may seem a radical comparison, upon reading this article I could not help seeing a strong parallel to the lives of the Karen in Georgia. Newly living roundly within the capitalist system, the Karen with their gardens, have created their own peasant economy of resilience quite similar to that enacted in slave provision grounds.

Often on land that is not their own, the gardens of the Karen make up the gap between their needs for survival and what their carefully stretched income can provide: the produce grown in home gardens and Neighbors' Field making a significant contribution to what is consumed by Karen households. Like the joy that the slaves took in publicly boasting their lush produce at the Sunday markets, so too have Karen individuals (my friend Moo Paw among them) taken glee in carting the "bizarre" fruits of their gardens to sell at the local farmer's market…even if the profits are more symbolic than monetary. Still, what fascinates me most about the cases of both the Caribbean slaves and the Karen is the way in which these 'provision grounds' serve both as means of practical survival and of agency.

In growing that which they knew, their gardens became tools for the assertion of cultural memory and imagination. This intersection only reinforces the notion that plants, being elements of both landscape and body, (human flesh and the 'flesh of the world', as Merlu Ponty would put it) carry a unique, powerful ability to encapsulate memory, to transmit meaning. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) This layered semantics of plants is beautifully expressed as Tobin states:

> When Cliff lists the items Miss Ruthie grows, she does much more than provide those visual details that fill narratives of contemporary novelists. She is reciting words-yam, cassava, callaloo- that belong to ancient practices and old stories, some African, some Amerindian, some Creole, words that speak of the strength to survive and the power to resist terrible oppression…They are steeped in meaning so rich and varied that this attempt to recover the significance of provision grounds in their pre-emancipation context only touches the surface of this complex agricultural, economic, political and semiotic system. (Tobin 1999)

In a similar fashion Moo Paw, San Nie, in touching plants they knew as girls –in different settings and circumstances- saying their names aloud, the cadence flowing off their tongues like a charm- construct an 'out-of-place' sense of place and a sense of lived coherence. (Nazarea 2005)

Rooted in the Margins: Karen Resistance to Hegemony

"Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. Just as millions of anthozoan polyps create willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do thousands upon thousands of individual acts of insubordination and evasion create a political or economic barrier reef of their own." –James Scott, (Scott 2008)

The Karen, as a people, hold the distinction of having existed in the face of alienating 'otherness' for a very long time. Like a tree shooting up through cracks in the pavement, they seem to deeply own the position of marginality engrained in their cultural identity. For centuries the Karen have defined themselves in opposition to the cultural mainstream of the Burmese majority. Thus, upon coming to the U.S. they may, in certain ways, be more equipped than other migrants groups to resist the impinging pressure for assimilation. While school-aged children exhibit many attributes of a growing up "between two places", Karen adults, for the most part, show little or no regard for the need to become 'Americanized'. They are largely content to eat solely Karen foods, or those products known from Thailand.

While tee shirts and baseball caps are common attire among the Karen in Georgia, they also unabashedly sport the brightly colored, hand-woven fabrics of traditional Karen dress. (The men frequently praising the incomparable comfort of the "Karen skirt") It is difficult to say whether such attitudes are characteristic of first-generation migrants in general or something more uniquely attributable to a Karen comfort in resisting hegemony. Regardless, it is heartening to witness such blatant disregard for conformity- something to which even the most counter-culture of our generation can aspire.

Weaving Eco-poesies: What the Karen can teach us about dwelling in place

"Environmentalists need to tap into creative worlds of myth-making, even religion, not to better sell narrow and technical policy proposals but rather to figure out who we are and who we need to be." -Ted Nordhaus (Siewers 2009)

"In the end it is the texture of the story that marks our contribution to the world, the contour of our stories that etches our traces in the world." -Paul Stoller (Stoller 2009)

It is no secret that- in our world of strip malls, drive-throughs and bland tomatoes- there has been a steadily rising chorus of dissent against the "every place and no place" phenomenon that has come to colonize so many of our homes. We have come to realize we are not mentally, symbolically "where we want to be." But where do we go from here? In seeking to reconnect with the sensuous, poetic elements of our places, is it possible to journey backward while venturing forward? As our jaded, romantic generation endeavors to build for ourselves a new home of environmental harmony and rootedness, we might benefit from pausing to behold the Karen people's relationship to our dynamic space in the world. In viewing Karen interpretations of our broken, beautiful, half-wild habitat there is much that we can learn about the daily practices of living and breathing place. Through witnessing one alternative narrative for the cultural performance of landscape, we just might open the window to another.

In the end, it is the stories we tell which determine our human relation to environment. This perpetual, lived story telling is, inevitably, our only means of making sense of the world and our place within it. It pervades every action and attitude, no matter how grand or minuscule. "The state of the land- waste or fertile- depends on an ethical human relationship with the dynamic dimensions of the landscape." (Siewers 2009) In examining where the 'environment myth' of western civilization has gone awry, one could cite a willful ignorance of history and a long term vision that extends hardly beyond the life of present generations. As Wallace Stegner poetically expresses through his place-saturated fiction, "there is little barrier between human

hopes and expectations and the exterior landscape." (Van Noy 2003) Thus, the quality of our myth directly determines our physical reality and the integrity of our environment.

In a society such as ours, deeply rooted in the secular myth of rationality and capitalism, where the fierce individual reigns supreme and success is measured by the grandeur of our consumption, it is no wonder that our "hopes and expectations" have so pillaged our natural and social landscapes. Just as it is for the Karen and all peoples, our values and ideals are rendered evident in all that surrounds us: both in the physically tangible and culturally conceived. If, as Edward Tyler famously states, "Culture… is that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" then we, as Americans, have a lot to work on before the discourse of ecology can truly become harmonious with our everyday lives. As Alfed Siewers states, "A kind of imaginative- if contradictory sounding-'real myth' related to environment or ecopoesis becomes essential to self-realization of humans as story-telling creatures as well as to the project of ecological restoration worldwide."(Siewers 2009) If we are to redeem our entire way of being we need a moral environmental myth we can believe in.

. We, in the mainstream U.S., indeed possess cultural imagination and sense of place. Yet, our moral relationship to the land that sustains us is in many ways fragmented. We have lost- or are on the fringe of losing- the essential wisdom and morality that in the past has guided our own local landscapes of the interior. As our food and all else we consume becomes further estranged from our place and our relationships, we lose much of what it means to 'dwell deeply' in the world. We become oblivious to the chasms of experiential memory that have been slipped out from beneath us. Yet, I believe while we still hold some faint whiff of memory, it is not too late to re-inhabit these rich structures of emplacement… to once again dwell within the contours

of the sensuous. It is still possible for us to re-imagine an ideal of personal wellbeing that harmonizes with the wellbeing of the Earth and all others: one embodied within the inseparable geographies of home and self.

Just as notions of salvation can only be understood in the treatment of our neighbor …we can only truly talk of care for the Earth in terms of care for our own situated place. William Cronon, speaks profoundly about our broken relations to place when he asserts:

> Idealizing a distant wilderness too often means not idealizing the environment in which we actually live, the landscape that for better or worse we call home. Most of our most serious environmental problems start right here, at home, and if we are to solve those problems, we need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about using nature as about not using it. (Cronon, 1995)

Much as discourses about "pristine wilderness" have allowed us to deface the landscape that surrounds us each day, so too have moral myths not tied to local places have allowed many westerns to disassociate immediate nature from the divine. The moral narrative of modern ecology also falls short because it's lack of appeal to placed-ness. As any good English professor would advise you to avoid sweeping generalities because they are ultimately meaningless: no broad notion can thrive without existing at the level of detail. In order to truly partake in something we must know it at the level of the personal, the local. We might just begin this project of cultural re-imaging, by gazing on our own land through the eyes of those such as the Karen.

For the Karen people, religion, social bonds, food, identity and "sense of place" seem to exist all bound up together. And these fundamental elements of life are largely related to plants,

acts of gardening and their deep cultural symbolism. Perhaps the message that the Karen have to offer us is that care of the Earth is immediate. It is every day, it is moral, and it is all-encompassing. “The task of making a home in nature is what Wendell Berry has called “the forever unfinished lifework of our species.” “The only thing we have to preserve nature with” he writes, “is culture; the only thing we have to preserve wildness with is domesticity.” (Cronon1995) Through the eyes of the Karen we see that being a successful person is showing generosity towards your neighbor…welcoming them into your home, offering them food furnished by the integrity of your hands. Creation and consumption- two parts to a whole- must go hand in hand, in our places and in our lives. The greatest honor we can have is to cultivate abundance…and then give it away freely. Ultimately, it is the vision we hold which motivate every aspect of our actions-- which colors every facet of our world.

In order to re-inhabit place we must locate ourselves again within the milieu of the senses. We must remember how to dwell within memory: dedicated to the delicate art of telling and re-telling the stories that remind us who we are and where we are going. We must sink our toes into the Earth and find the midnight sense of our own being in the world. By touching, and tasting the same plants our grandparents and great grandparents touched and tasted, by beholding the landscape they beheld… and even when these are not possible, by telling their stories, we enact our emplacement. In so doing, we live out a powerful thread of continuity. We find a deeper bit of our own muddy, fragrant humanity.

Our places must be sensed and our stories must run deep- for we know the world through our spirit-filled bodies and we, body and spirit, are the world. If Sapier and Wharf are to be believed, it is not enough to solely experience the world of the senses. We need stories-a shared language to celebrate and make sense of them- if we are to maintain the capacity for perception.

Our flesh and the flesh of the world, our spirit and the spirit of the world…ultimately there is no boundary between interior and exterior. It is a landscape of elemental immanence.

Truth Serum

We made it from the ground-up corn in the old back pasture.
Pinched a scent of night jasmine billowing off the fence,
popped it right in.
That frog song wanting nothing but echo?
We used that.
Stirred it widely. Noticed the clouds while stirring.
Called upon our ancient great aunts and their long slow eyes
of summer. Dropped in their names.
Added a mint leaf now and then
to hearten the broth. Added a note of cheer and worry.
Orange butterfly between the claps of thunder?
Perfect. And once we had it,
had smelled and tasted the fragrant syrup,
placing the pan on a back burner for keeping,
the sorrow lifted in small ways.
We boiled down the lies in another pan till they disappeared.
We washed that pan.

-Naomi Shihab Nye (Nye,1999)

Conclusions: Naming the unknown fruit

"I think you don't choose between the past and the present, you try to find the connections"- Wallace Stegner (Van Noy, 162)

Perhaps if there is one glimmering bit of understanding to be taken from this study, regarding the nature of interior landscape, it is the value of the 'unknown fruit': those vibrant sensory elements, which bridge the boundary between here and there. The Karen people, like many who live far from their place of origin, are caught between two distinct worlds. Each of these worlds is at once physical and imagined. Like anyone caught in the precarious sphere of leminality, the Karen must be constantly in search of threads of continuity. They hunger for anything which might provide a nod of recognition between the reality at hand and that which persists at the realm of the unseen. Especially for the Karen children, growing up between the cracks of two worlds, there is an ever-present need to 'find the connections'. I would argue that this long sought thread of connectivity is manifested in the flesh of the 'unknown fruit' – known to the Karen, unknown to the U.S, but also tangible… undeniably real.

And, Alas! There it finally is: the 'unknown fruit', ultimate proof of the existence and validity of that alternant universe, which has throbbed for too long solely within the interior. Like Seremetakis' Rodathkino peach, the 'missing fruit', whose existence moved in the opposing direction, the 'unknown fruit' is a physical encapsulation and resurrection of cultural memory. I am lead to this belief, largely by the intense fervor with which the Karen, especially the children,

introduced me to those food plants which they knew intimately, but which I did not know. Such enthusiasm, over a *plant* of all things surely had to be telling in some deep regard. Presentation of the cultural artifact of the unknown fruit was as if to say triumphantly to me and to themselves alike, "see, this U.S. world can't be everything, because it doesn't know long bean- but it exists, and it is tasty!"

The unknown fruit stands as a testament to the unheard voice of the marginalized and misunderstood; that which wishes to cry, "I have regions of my interior that I can't talk about, because you do not have words for them- but they are there none the less, and they burn in their silence". When seen in this light, biodiversity which encapsulates memory can no more be trivialized as shallowly sentimental. It is, rather, a powerful icon and embodied experience that encodes memory, identity, and truth. Gardening is more than a means to survival. The familiar is more than convenient.

As seen through the lives of the Karen in Georgia, plants and landscapes stand as portable alters. Quietly, powerfully they validate the 'alternant truth' of home. In so doing the remembered reality become wed to the immediate. Distinct rivers of place and imagination mingle. Here, in the muddy terrain of the transnational the, internal/external, real/ imagined, present/ past congeal. In so doing, they form an altogether new means of perception…a creative current with the power to transform. This perception, as real as embodiment and ephemeral as memory, is woven from the silken hairs of the softest fruit.

Works Cited

Anderson, Edward F. 1993. *Plants and people of the golden triangle: Ethnobotany of the hill tribes of northern thailand*Dioscorides Press.

Appaduri, Arjun. 1991. *Global ethnoscapes: Notes and queries for a transnational anthropology*. Recapturing anthropology: Working in the present. Santafe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Cronon, William ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995, 69-90

Drum Publication Group: Promoting Education, Preserving Culture, "Drum Publication Group Website." Accessed September, 12, 2012. http://www.drumpublications.org/index.html.

Feld, Steven, and Keith H. Basso. c1996. *Senses of place /*. School of American research advanced seminar series. 1st ed. ed. Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press;

Gustafson, P. 2001. "Meaning of Place: Everyday Experience and Theoretical Conceptulizations." *Journal of Environmental Psychology,* 21: 5-16

Kress, John W. *The Weeping Goldsmith: Discoveries in the Secret Land of Myanmar*. Abbeville Press, 2009.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Mo Paw, (Gardening Interview), interview by Terese Gagnon, Athens, Ga03 2012.

Nazarea, Virginia. c1998. *Cultural memory and biodiversity /*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Nazarea, Virginia D. c2005. *Heirloom seeds and their keepers: Marginality and memory in the conservation of biological diversity*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Nye, Naomi Shihab, and Michael Nye. 1999. *What have you lost? / Poems selected by Naomi Shihab Nye; photographs by Michael N ye* New York: Greenwillow Books, c1999; 1st Ed

Ray, Krishnendu. c2004. *The migrant's table: Meals and memories in bengali-american households*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Sahlins, Marshall David. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Saw Wah, David. *The CAN Handbook*. Thailand: Wanida Press, 2007.

Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press, 2008.

Seremetakis, C. Nadia. 1996. *The senses still: Perception and memory as material culture in modernity*. University of Chicago Press ed. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Siewers, Alfred K. *Strange beauty: ecocritical approaches to early medieval landscape*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Silko, Lesli Marmon. *Landscape, History and the Pubelo Imagination*. *The Norton Book of Nature Writing*. Edited by Jobert Finch, John Elder. New York, NY: Norton & Company, 1990.

Stoller, Paul. 2009. *The power of the between: An anthropological odyssey*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sutton, David. 2001. *Remembrance of repasts: An anthropology of food and memory*. Materializing culture. Oxford; Berg.

Ta Hay, (Gardening Interview), interview by Terese Gagnon, Athens, Ga 03 2012.

Tobin, Beth. "And there raise yams: Slaves' Gardens in the Writings of West Indian Plantocrats." *Eighteenth-Century Life* . 23. no. 2 (1999).

Tomforde, Maren. 2003. The global in the local: Contested resource-use systems of the Karen and Hmong in northern Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (2) (Jun.): pp. 347-360.

Van Noy, Rick. c2003. *Surveying the interior: Literary cartographers and the sense of place*. Environmental arts and humanities series. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Bibliography

On the run: In Burma's jungle hell. 2010. *World Policy Journal* 27 (1) (Spring2010): 57.

Airriess, Christopher A., and David L. Clawson. 1994. Vietnamese market gardens in New Orleans. *Geographical Review* 84 (1) (Jan.): pp. 16-31.

Anderson, Edward F. 1993. *Plants and people of the golden triangle: Ethnobotany of the hill tribes of northern thailand*Dioscorides Press.

Appaduri, Arjun. 1991. *Global ethnoscapes: Notes and queries for a transnational anthropology*. Recapturing anthropology: Working in the present. Santafe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Baker, Lauren E. 2004. Tending cultural landscapes and food citizenship in Toronto's community gardens. *Geographical Review* 94 (3) (07): 305-25.

Benjamin, David N., David Stea, and Eje Arén. 1995. *The home: Words, interpretations, meanings and environments*. Ethnoscapes (unnumbered). Aldershot: Avebury.

Berry, Wendell. 2010. *Imagination in place: Essays / Wendell berry* Berkeley: Counterpoint: Distributed by Publishers Group West, c2010.

Brussell, David E. 1997. *Potions, poisons, and panaceas: An ethnobotanical study of Montserrat* Southern Illinois University Press.

Bryant, Raymond L. 1996. Romancing colonial forestry: The discourse of 'forestry as progress' in British Burma. *The Geographical Journal* 162 (2) (Jul.): pp. 169-178.

Bryce, J. Annan. 1886. Burma: The country and people. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 8 (8) (Aug.): pp. 481-501.

Buff, Rachel Ida. 2005. Transnational visions: Reinventing immigration studies. *American Quarterly* 57 (4) (Dec.): pp. 1263-1272.

Busch, Akiko. c1999. *Geography of home: Writings on where we live*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Cándida Smith, Richard. 2002. *Art and the performance of memory: Sounds and gestures of recollection*. Routledge studies in memory and narrative; London; Routledge.

Chavez, Leo R. 1994. The power of the imagined community: The settlement of undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States. *American Anthropologist* 96 (1) (Mar.): pp. 52-73.

Christie, Maria Elisa. 2004. Kitchen space, fiestas, and cultural reproduction in Mexican house-lot gardens. *Geographical Review* 94 (3, People, Places, & Gardens) (Jul.): pp. 368-390.

Cisneros, Sandra. 1994. *The house on mango street / Sandra Cisneros* New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1994; 1st hardcover Ed.

Comida y Cultura, "Food as a Weapon of War?!." Last modified Novemebr 25, 2009 . Accessed November 12, 2012.

Corlett, Jan L., Ellen A. Dean, and Louis E. Grivetti. 2003. Hmong gardens: Botanical diversity in an urban setting. *Economic Botany* 57 (3) (autumn): pp. 365-379.

Cronon, William ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995, 69-90

Daniel, Yvonne. c2005. *Dancing wisdom: Embodied knowledge in Haitian vodou, Cuban yoruba, and bahian candomblé*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Desbarats, Jacqueline. 1985. Indochinese resettlement in the United States. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 75 (4) (Dec.): pp. 522-538.

Drum Publication Group: Promoting Education, Preserving Culture, "Drum Publication Group Website." Accessed September, 12, 2012. http://www.drumpublications.org/index.html.

Feld, Steven, and Keith H. Basso. c1996. *Senses of place /*. School of American research advanced seminar series. 1st ed. ed. Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press;

Foley, Neil. 1999. We met in spinach, fell in love in peaches, and married in tomatoes. *Reviews in American History* 27 (2) (Jun.): pp. 282-288.

FUERTES, A. L. 2010. Birds inside a cage: Metaphor for Karen refugees. *Social Alternatives* 29 (1) (2010): 20.

Haines, David W. 1982. Southeast Asian refugees in the United States: The interaction of kinship and public policy. *Anthropological Quarterly* 55 (3, Southeast Asian Refugees in the U.S.A.: Case Studies of Adjustment and Policy Implications) (Jul.): pp. 170-181.

Harmon, Katharine A. c2004. *You are here: Personal geographies and other maps of the imagination*. 1st ed. Ed. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Hayami, Yoko. 1996. Karen tradition according to Christ or Buddha: The implications of multiple reinterpretations for a minority ethnic group in Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27 (2) (Sep.): pp. 334-349.

Hoffman, Arnold Roy,. 1970. *The sense of place: Peter de vries, J. F. powers, and Flannery O'Connor*.

Hooks, Bell. 2008. *Belonging: A culture of place*. New York: Routledge.

Huyck, Earl E., and Leon F. Bouvier. 1983. The demography of refugees. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 467 (, The Global Refugee Problem: U. S. and World Response) (May): pp. 39-61.

Jha, S., and K. S. Bawa. 2006. Population growth, human development, and deforestation in biodiversity hotspots. *Conservation Biology* 20 (3) (Jun.): pp. 906-912.

Keck, Stephen L. 2004. Picturesque Burma: British travel writing 1890-1914. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35 (3) (Oct.): pp. 387-414.

KENNY, PAUL, and KATE LOCKWOOD-KENNY. 2011. A mixed blessing: Karen resettlement to the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24 (2) (06): 217-38.

Khin, U. S. Some medicinal and useful plants, both indigenous and exotic, of Burma [1st Ed. In Rangoon, Student Press 1970].

Kimber, Clarissa T. 2004. Gardens and dwelling: People in vernacular gardens. *Geographical Review* 94 (3, People, Places, & Gardens) (Jul.): pp. 263-283.

Klindienst, Patricia. c2006. *The earth knows my name: Food, culture, and sustainability in the gardens of ethnic Americans*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Knopp, Lisa,. 2002. *The nature of home /*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Kress, W. J., and J. H. Lace. 2003. *A checklist of the trees, shrubs, herbs, and climbers of Myanmar : (revised from the original works by J.H. lace ... [et al.] on the list of trees, shrubs, herbs and principal climbers, etc., recorded from Burma)*Washington, D.C. : Dept. of Systematic Biology--Botany, National Museum of National History, 2003.

Kuebel, K. R., and Arthur O. Tucker. 1988. Vietnamese culinary herbs in the United States. *Economic Botany* 42 (3) (Jul. - Sep.): pp. 413-419.

Kuroiwa, Yoko, and Maykel Verkuyten. 2008. Narratives and the constitution of a common identity: The Karen in Burma. *Identities* 15 (4) (Jul): 391-412.

Mels, Tom, and Gunhild Setten. 2007. Romance, practice and substantiveness: What do landscapes do? *Geografiska Annaler.Series B, Human Geography* 89 (3): pp. 197-202.

Mendoza, Cristóbal. 2006. Transnational spaces through local places: Mexican immigrants in Albuquerque (New Mexico). *Journal of Anthropological Research* 62 (4) (Winter): pp. 539-561.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Mortland, Carol A., and Judy Ledgerwood. 1987. Secondary migration among Southeast Asian refugees in the United States. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 16 (3/4, Southeast Asian Refugees in the United Sates) (FALL-WINTER): pp. 291-326.

Nazarea, Virginia D. c2005. *Heirloom seeds and their keepers: Marginality and memory in the conservation of biological diversity*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

———. c1999. *Ethnoecology: Situated knowledge located lives*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

———. c1998. *Cultural memory and biodiversity /*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

———. c1997. *Yesterday's ways, tomorrow's treasures: Heirloom plants and memory banking*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub.

———. 2003. *Costumbres del ayer, tesoros del mañana: Plantas de herencia, conocimientos ancestrales y bancos de memoria*. 1. ed. ed. Quito, Ecuador: Abya-Yala.

———. [2003]. *Recolección de plantas y conocimientos ancestrales: Un programa de enseñanza y capacitación*. 1. ed. ed. Quito, Ecuador: Ediciones ABYA-YALA.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. 2011. When one is so far from home, life is a mix of fact & fiction. *Midwest Quarterly* 52 (3) (Spring2011): 279-.

———. 1995. *Words under the words: Selected poems / Naomi shih Nye* Portland, or. : Eighth Mountain Press; [St. Paul, Minn.]: Distributed to the trade by Consortium Book Sales & Distribution, 1995; 1st Ed.

Nye, Naomi Shihab, and Michael Nye. 1999. *What have you lost? / Poems selected by Naomi Shihab Nye; photographs by Michael Nye* New York: Greenwillow Books, c1999; 1st Ed.

Park, Keumjae. 2007. Constructing transnational identities without leaving home: Korean immigrant women's cognitive border-crossing. *Sociological Forum* 22 (2) (Jun.): pp. 200-218.

Piniero, Maricel Castillo,. 2002. *Biodiversity and marginality dilemma of economic development*.

Porcello, Thomas, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and David W. Samuels. 2010. The reorganization of the sensory world. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 : pp. 51-66.

Pritchard, James. 2006. [Untitled]. *The Western Historical Quarterly* 37 (2) (Summer): pp. 221-222.

Ray, Krishnendu. c2004. *The migrant's table: Meals and memories in bengali-american households*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Sahlins, Marshall David. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Saw Wah, David. *The CAN Handbook*. Thailand: Wanida Press, 2007.

Scholliers, Peter. 2001. *Food, drink and identity: Cooking, eating and drinking in Europe since the middle ages*. Oxford; Berg.

Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press, 2008.

Seremetakis, C. Nadia. 1996. *The senses still: Perception and memory as material culture in modernity*. University of Chicago Press ed. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Siewers, Alfred K. *Strange beauty: ecocritical approaches to early medieval landscape*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Stoller, Paul. 2009. *The power of the between: An anthropological odyssey*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sutton, David E. 2010. Food and the senses. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: pp. 209-223.

———. 2001. *Remembrance of repasts: anthropology of food and memory*. Materializing culture. Oxford; Berg.

Teather, Elizabeth K. 1999. *Embodied geographies: Spaces, bodies and rites of passage*. Critical geographies; London; Routledge.

Thomson, Curtis N. 1995. Political stability and minority groups in Burma. *Geographical Review* 85 (3) (Jul.): pp. 269-285.

Tomforde, Maren. 2003. The global in the local: Contested resource-use systems of the Karen and Hmong in northern Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (2) (Jun.): pp. 347-360.

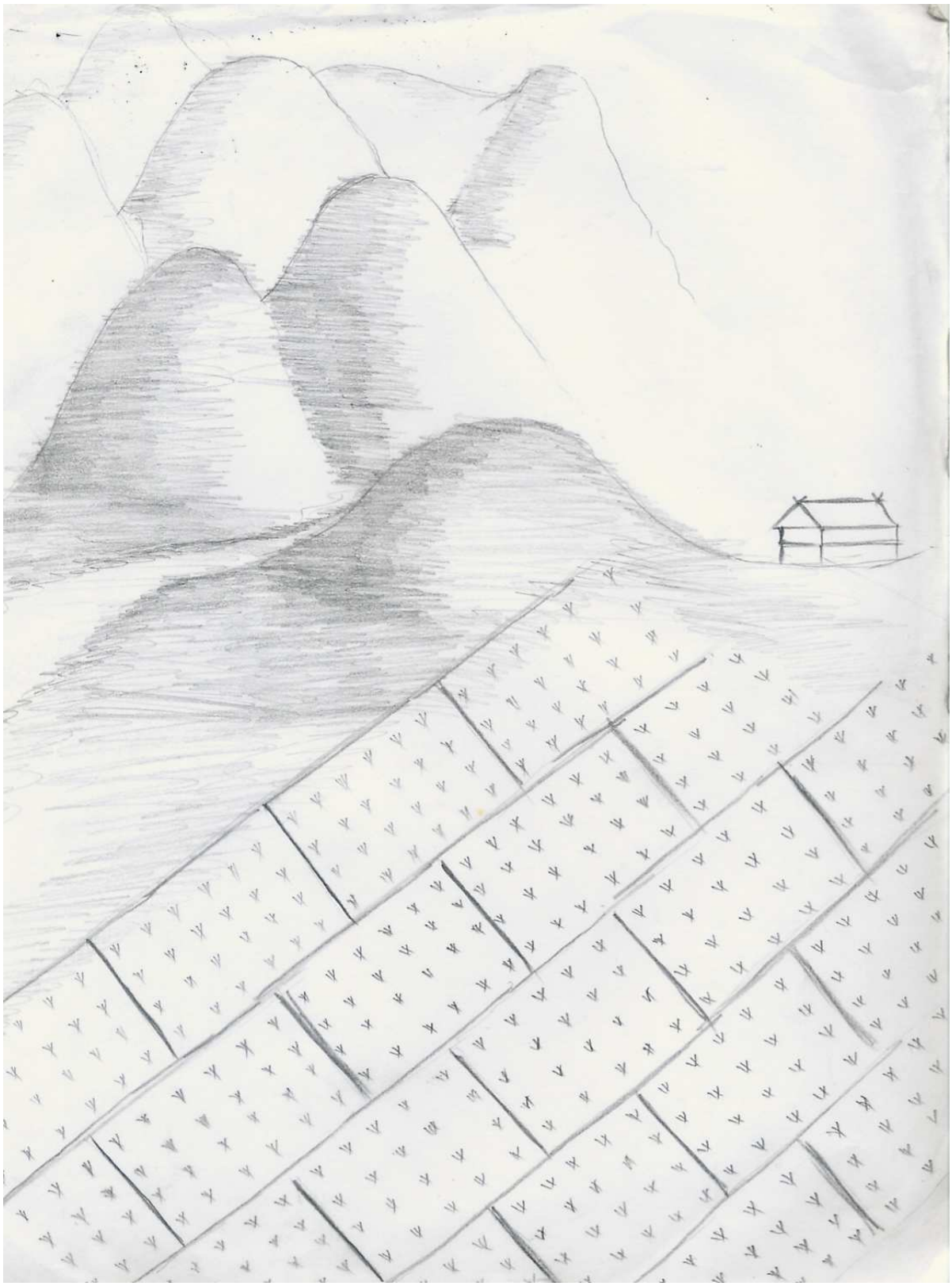
Van Noy, Rick. c2003. *Surveying the interior: Literary cartographers and the sense of place*. Environmental arts and humanities series. Reno: University of Nevada Press

Memory Maps:

Drawn depictions of Interior Landscapes

Karen Village,

Memory drawing of home by Ta Hay Than



Rice Fields,

Memory drawing by Ta Hay Than

Homes in the United States,

Depiction by Ta Hay Than

Karen Plant Compendium

Species grown by Karen gardeners in Georgia: their cultivation, uses and associations

Bottle Gourd

-Ti Lu Tha

-Grows best on trellices or fences, where the stem can grow outward and the fruit can hang down

-Leaves and young fruit eatten by the Karen : “The young leaf we fry and eat. We fry it with flour and eat it. It’s really fantastic!”

“Atha Bwa” = too mature

“Atha Bow”= too young

(these terms used for plants in general)

- Traditionally dried and used to make dipping gourds: “In Burma when it gets really old we take out the inside part and use it to hold water”

- A Bottle Gourd Memory: We are out at the University of Gergia U-garden, Moo Paw and I, where we tend a little plot. We are about to drive away and when Moo Paw sees the huge amount of gourds growing on one of the fences. Getting very excited, she asks if we can take some. “Of course!”, I say. She is especially excited to take the leaves to eat. She will boil or saute them as she would pumpkin, watermelon or bitter melon leaves. She takes many, along with some of the young gourds, filling up the remaining room in the back of the car trunk. She is very happy. She sings while she cuts the leaves from the vine and loads them into her big black trash bag. She wants to make sure that I tell “ the people” of the garden that she says “thank you so much!”

Roselle

- Beh Chee Daw
- Very important in Karen cooking. Used in many ways
- Sweet and sour, tangy lemoney taste- very strong lemon flavor that sets in after a moment of being consumed
- Cooked in soups and other dishes to add falvor (for example: in ‘Thai Style’ eggplant and coconut milk soup)
- Used fresh as a garnish for many foods
- Gorwn in great abundance in the garden of almost every Karen person
- Very hardy. Well suited to Gerogia climate and soil.
- Oftentimes when nothing else in a garden is doing well, the Roselle is big and healthy
- Can be picked by the stalk so that many leaves are harvested at once
- Can be used to make spicy food, ‘Muy Tho’
- Will thrive almost anywhere

Eggplant

- Tha Gaw Tha

- Used for cooking in many Karen dishes, used to make spicy dishes: “after you fry it in a pan, when the skin turns dark you can take off the skin and use it to make the spicy stuff, the Muy Tho”

- Sometimes eatten fried with flour, to make: cut into thin strips, cover in flour, fry in hot oil and eat with ‘Karen Ketchup’, an all-purpose condiment made with chooped scallion, garlic, salt- all ground with the Chat U, (the Karen mortar and pestal) so that it becomes soft, so that you can scoop it.

-Commonly found in the gardens of the Karen in Georgia

-Used often in soups

- Kare people, in general, grow and enjoy the long, thin Asian eggplant aswell as the large round globe eggplants, and also white eggplant. All of these varieties are familiar to the Karen from Burma.

Cucumber

- Dee Tha

- Karen people really like Dee Tha: “one of Karen people’s favorite fruits- very usual”

- “You can make a lot of stuff with Dee Tha: you can eat it raw, you can use it in soup, you can peel the skin and make ‘la pa thow’”, to make: cut the cucumber into very small pieces, mix with powdered peanut and chopped fried garlic. Mix all of these in a big pot and serve cold.

- Served with almost everything

- Often found in soups or sliced raw and served alongside rice dishes

- “When people eat spicy stuff they eat cucumber with it to cool down the mouth”

- “To grow cucumbers- you get the cucumber seed and put it on the ground, when they start to come up you separate them and plant them back in the ground”

- “Some grow on the ground, some you have to make a fence or trellece for them to grow on.”

- Grown in the gardens of almost all Karen in Georgia

Amarenth

- Tee Mee Law Do

- Tall leafy plant often considered to be a weed by many Americans

- Commonly eaten by the Karen

- "Sometimes people put it in vinegear so that tastes like a pickle. After you chop it you put it with vinegar (the stalk) and keep it for a long time."

- Always it is eaten with Karen food like rice, meat, curry, soup, spicy food, etc.

- "When you plant it the first year, you don't have to plant it again, it is a good volunteer plant – the wind blows the seeds and new plants grow by themselves."

- "Eat the top part when they are young- when they are young you can eat all the parts, but when it turns old it is hard to eat."

- "In our country you might see this plant in every single garden, because it is volunteer plant, it grows everywhere in our country. It grows a lot in the fields."

- "Cows and goats eat this plant a lot."

Watermelon

- Tetaw Tha

-Very much enjoyed by the Karen

-Eatten in great bounty in the summer time when it is available

- Sliced open with big machete-like, flat knife

-“Sometimes we take the inside part and put it on a big plate and mix it with sugar and chopped up onion, stir it together and eat it. People can use their spoon to take some from the big plate, you can take a lot or a little.”

- “In Karen state, in our country, when people are really hot and tired, eating the watermelon cools you down and is really refreshing”

-“The watermelon in our country is really really sweet and smooth!”

-“In our country they have red and yellow watermelon”

-“Sometimes we make the watermelon smoothie, to do this: take the inside part and mash it up and put sugar, and yogurt from the cow or goat. Then you drink it. Most of the people in my country are farmers and they drink this when they have break time.”

- grown abundantley in the gardens of Karen people in Georgia

Tomato

-Tha Gaw Chee Tha

-Used in many Karen dishes. A very important part of Karen foodways.

- Karen people familiar with a great variety of tomatoes- in all shapes, sizes and colors.

-“You can cook it in many ways- you can eat it raw”

- Can be used ot make spicy rice dishes, Muy Tho

-Can be cooked with egg (fried egg, scrambled egg. Somethimes served with rice or noodles)

-Can be cooked with fish paste or spicy chillies

- grown on the ground

-“Also you can put in vinegar and make a ‘pickle’ out of the tomate- we normaly chose the little ones for this”

- Tomatoe Memory- Many Karen children are taking part in a summer gardening camp, including some who have just arrived to the United States a few days prior. Everything is still very new to them. A local grocery store has kindely donated snacks for the garden camp. When the newly arrived children receive their american snacks of easy mac and baged cookies they are very dismayed. One of the litteles children looks like he is on the verge of tears and quitely says, “ I want egg and tomatoe” (typical Karen, kid comfort food) He returns his bowl of easy mac after a few very dissapoiting bites.

-Tomato is used in many, almost all, Karen dishes such as the popular dish of fried eggs with tomatoes, tumerica and onion.

-Another very common Karen dish is white rice served with stewed tomatoes and fishpaste (and crushed red pepper if you like spicy!)

Okra

- Glaw Nuh Tha (old word, not used much presently) or Bloh Blay Tha (currnet,common word)

- Used in soups, such as soup with shrimp, onion and salt.

- Used with vinegar to make pickles

- "Karen people fry it with flour to make fried okra- you have to chop it piece by piece- sometime it is eatten with rice. The fried okra is sometimes eatten with Karen ketchup."

- When it has gotten away from you and grown way too big and hard- then it isn't very good to eat, but can be used for seed.

- When the skin turns old it starts breaking apart and you don't want to eat it, it is 'Atha Bwa' (too mature)

- Frequently paired with the Karen herb roselle. You can make the spicy dish with okra and roselle- "a little sour. a little spicy. It tastes really fantastic!"

Pumpkin

- Lu Kay Tha
- The Karen people know many types of 'Lu Kay Tha' (Including that which the English word 'pumkin' refers to, as well as a broader group of related species.)
- "In Burma we grow lots of types of Lu Kay Tha. Some are long and wide , sort of flat , some are very round. Sometimes they are orange, sometimes green…there are too many types! "
- Some version of Lu Kay Tha cultivitated in almost every Karen garden visited in Georgia
- "The Lu Kay Tha have very big vines. They take up a lot of space. The farther the vine goes, the more they reproduce."
- Karen people like to eat the young leaf of the plant, as well as the fruit.
- One common way to prepare pumpkin leaf is to mix flour and water, coat the leaf with this mixture, and then fry it.
- "We make curry with the [pumpkin] leaf, normally Chicken or pork curry. Sometimes we make it spicy."
- "Sometimes we make soup with pumpkin- both the leaf and the fruit together. It works. Karen people eat everthing!"
- "Sometimes in our country we make the thing [trellis] with holes at the top that the fruit hangs through, for the pumpkin to grow on."
- In Gergia, as well many Karen construct bamboo trellises in their gardens for pumkin vines to grow up. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes the vines are simply allowed to grow on the ground.

Sweet Potato

- Hoo Ka Lah Tee
- Grown in the gardens of many Karen in Gergia. Fondly remembered as an abundant, commonly grown plant in Burma.
- “You can cook [sweet potato] with many things. You can burn it, before you eat it…it is good that way. You can fry. Karen people normally boil it, put salt and oil on it and eat it whole.”
- Karen people eat the leaves of the plant as well as the sweet potatoes themselves.
- Sometimes the leaves are eatten raw.
- Sometimes the leaves are boiled and eaten as a vegeatable side to accompany rice.
- “In Burma we grow it on the sand beside the river- the soft ground.”
- “When you plant one plant ther are many vines and many roots.”
- “When it is ready [to harvest] the vine starts turning brown or dry.”
- “[In Burma] there are many types of sweet potatoes…too many. Some have green leaves, some have purple leaves. Some have swwet potatoes that are long and thin, some are round. There are many incredibly different tastes!”
- “Plant it wherever- as long as there is good dirt…it will grow!”

Lemon Basil

- Naw Waw thay
- Used in flavoring dishes, such as soups
- Used to cook curry, especilly with chicken
- Used fresh as a garnish
- Grown in the gardens of many karen people
- Very fragrant and beautiful in a garden- has lovely purple flowers and attracts many bees and butterflies
- “Most of the people in our country use this for everything they cook”
- The insects really like it- it is good for a garden
- “It smells really good- the smell is very important for our people: When the Karen people go to the store, anytime they smell this they miss their country”
- “In Karen state there are lots beautiful places to go- like the forest or the waterfall or the rive- we go with groups to do a picnic- everyone brings food and then we share the food together- always there is basil.”

Opo Squash

-Htee Loot Tha (Htee means water- so they use a lot of water)

- Club-like vegetable that can grow to be very large. The fruit is light yellow-green in color.

-Greens of plant also eatten. The leaf can be fried with flour

-Can be used ot make soup with garlic, onion and salt. Soup can be made with the leaves of the plant or the fruit, or with both.

-“sometimes we fry the fruit too, with flour”

- “when you plant it once it really spreads out. Just one seed will grow and spread out to about 20 feet or more.”

- “In my country sometimes they are so big you can’t put your arms around it. Some people plant them in the river so that the roots go into the water- because they drink so much- when they grow next to the river they grow incredibly big. In our countyr the vines spread out incredibly far!”

- in our country sometimes we grow it on the bamboo (like a platform for it to grow up), sometimes not.

- “These plants need a lot of water, to have a good fruit you have to give it a lot a lot of water!”

- Opo Squash story: One day a friend was using, what looked to me to be an imense Opo squash to cook a veggetable lasagna. The squash was probably three feet long and very wide, like an oversized caveman club. I commented on the impressiveness of its size and he told me that our friend Moo Paw had given it to him and had applogized for how small it was. This made me laugh.

Ivy

- La Cha

-Poisinous , can Not be eatten

- “just a weed”

-grows by itself

-“Most of the time when we see this we try to dig it up the best that we can so that it won’t hurt the children or something”

-“Touching this plant can give you a rash. It can make your skin red and irritated.”

- “Even the animals do not eat this plant at all.”

- “This plant grows really, faster than the plants that we eat.”

- “You have to be really careful when you dig this up, to be sure that it dosen’t touch you.”

- Can be easily identified by the fuzzy hair on the leaves

Hyacinth Bean

- Bo Ba Tha
- A fast growing vine, producing fragrant purple flowers and striking deep purple seed pods or ‘beans’.
- “Sometimes there can be different colors of the fruit: some have green beans and some have purple beans.”
- Karen people cook it, often it is fried.
- “Most of the time people make soup with it- to do this they take the bean out of the shell.”
- “Let it grow up a piece of wood or a bamboo - the more space they have the better fruit they have.”
- Bees and butterflies are very attracted to the flowers of this plant
- “Most of the time people grow this in their garden, in Burma”
- “You can just cook the seed”
- Karen people make a sweet bean ice cream out of the seed of this plant

Corn

- Bu Kay Tha
- Karen People eat it raw when it is young: “When you are working in the filed you can eat it raw off the plant.”
- “When it is older you can boil it in water.”
- “When it turns old you can make popcorn with it, with sugar. Also, you can make the popcorn ball: warm up the sugar in a pan, add the popcorn and make it sticky. Then form the popcorn ball. It tastes really good!”
- “Sometimes we take the seeds and cook them so they are soft- put in oil and salt.”
- “People normally grow a lot of corn, in a very big field.”
- “The cow eats the plant that is left. “
- “Sometimes when it gets old and dry people make the fire with this so we can cook. People in Karen State cook outside all the time- people use three stones in a circle and make the fire inside – they put a big pot on top of the fire and cook the food. Corn stalk is good for making fire because with them the fire startes really fast.”
- “When the corn is harvested there is a lot, so people save it and eat it year round. People make a special barn to store it in. If you put it in a really good place and organize it right it stays fresh for a long time.”

Peppers

- Mu Ghe Tha

- Spicy

-“Every spicy dish you make needs to have this or chillies, to make it spicy.”

- Karen people also put these in vinegar to make ‘spicy pickles’- “eat them with rice and curry.”

- “When it is old, people try to dry the chillies- they lay it out in a pan and when it is really dry people use the chat u (the Karen mortal and pestal) to make the chilly powder”

Spicy Thai Peppers

-Mu Heh Tha

- called “looking at the sun peppers”, because of way that they face upward.

- “These are incrdibly spicy… the hottest pepper!”

- Karen people make the spicy ‘Muy Tho’ dish with this pepper.

-“When people make the rows this plant grows well, you get more that way- when you plant it messy it is not as good.”

-“This plant needs a lot of water- sometimes people plant it by the water, by the river or lake.”

-Used to make a spicy curry- with fish paste and other ingrediencts such as onion, garlic, shallots and lemon grass. This paste is set in a bowl on the floor in the middle of the circle at mealtime and mixed or ‘kneeded’ with the fingers into heaping portions of white rice, set in individual bowls, to create a main dish.

Long Bean

-Pa Tha Ba U / Pa To Pa Taw Tha

-Described by the Karen as a very long variety of 'green bean'

- Loved by the Karen. Grown in almost every Karen garden

-Grown on bamboo trellises or poles made out of small tree branches

- "Karen people like the long bean very much- they can cook it in many ways. You can eat it fried, it can be cooked with soup, it can be eatten with curry, you can boil it, also you can mash it up with garlic and onion salt and spicy pepper, then crush it all together in the Chat U and eat it over rice… incredibly spicy, incredibly good!"

- The beans of the plant can be purple or green

- Long bean is also commonly fried with egg. To do this: chop it up into pieces, fry it until it is crispy and then add the egg and scramble it.

-" This plant grows up one piece of wood or bamboo- it goes up straight- the taller the wood the higher the vine can go up. It can go up really high and produce a lot of fruit."

-Long Bean Memory: before I had ever actaully seen a long bean or a long bean plant, I had it descrbed to me excitedly by Moo Paw's children, especially her ten year old son, his eyes getting big and his arms stretching as far as they could to show me how long- "How long?...this long?"…. " No *really* long!!"

- Karen people have a special way of picking long bean, holding it all toghether at the top and letting it hang downward so that it looks like a thick horse's main. This keeps it neat and easy to hold.

Sunflower

- Ne Ja Cee (actually the Burmese word, but Karen people use this name most frequently)

- Karen people eat the seeds of the sunflower

- “The flowers follow the sun all the time- when the sun comes up they look at it. When it is high in the sky they look at it. Also they follow the sun when it goes down.”

- “These are seen a LOT in Burma- sometimes the whole field is full of sunflowers. People can eat the seeds and sell the seeds. Also it looks really fantastic!”

- “ In our country when the flower starts to expand and the petals fall off you fry the middle part and all the seeds fall out. Then you can eat them.”

Banana Tree

-To Que Too

- Kareen people eat the banana fruit and the stem.

-The stem is choped up the stem to make noodles, used for noodle soup: chop it with a knife to make it really thin and cook it with water, salt and fish, to give it flavor- use the young stalk to do this.

-Bannan trees produce a lot of new plants. “When you plant one, the baby trees come out by the roots- even in one year or 6 month’s time”

- The fruit is sometimes fried green and eatten

-“sometime people wait until it is yellow, so that you know it is read and then they eat it raw”

-“The banan leaf can be useas as a wrapper to wrap up the sticky rice- then you use it like a plate. Tie it with a rubber band, or you can just fold the leaf and it stays in place, you can do this anytime, but it is also very traditional, it is a very special tradition for the Karne people.”

-The Banana tree is very much known and loved by the Karen in Burma. There is sadness that it is not easily grown in the Georgia climate, though many Karen people still try. Some have succeded in getting them to produce fruit in Georgia by vigilantly moving them between inside and outside, to keep them warm during winter months.

Daikon Raddish

- Ta Ba Daw (word used by the Karen to refer to every type of raddish)
- White raddish
- Grows underground
- Described in English by some Karen as “the white carrot”
- “Sometimes we boil it, sometimes we fry it with scrambled egg.”
- The root can be put with vinegar to make a pickle
- Not a hard plant to grow. Can live throuhg the winter time in Georgia.
- “ They can be all different sizes, depending on how you plant them, some are small and some are very large.”

Peanut

-Me Pe Tha

- Sometimes Karen people boil it in the shell with salt, to make ‘boiled peanuts’

-“Also you can fry it and burn it over the wood, so that it tastes smokey. Then you open up the shell and eat the inside.”

-“Sometimes when the plant is old you can just open the shell and get the nut and fry it, and after that you mash it up in the Chat U and make either peanut powder or peanut butter. You can put these with any dish- whatever you like!”

Bitter Melon

-Thaw Katha

-Liked very much by the Karen

-Karen people eat both the fruit and the leaves of the plant

-Fruit eatten by sauteeing it, frying it or putting it in soup

- “Chop up the bitter melon piece by piece and fry with scrambled egg.”

- “In our country we grow it on the bamaboo, but here there is no bamboo so we just say “go wherever you want to go”, but if you put it on the bamboo it will produce a lot!”

-The greens can be boiled or stir-fryed for just a few moments and then eatten

- Bitter melon memory: I have never tasted bitter melon before. I ask my friend San Nie what it tastes like. She smiles, “very bitter” she says and laughs. Later I cook it. I find out she is *right*.