Intertwining Economic and Social Determinants Behind the Ongoing Migration of Low-Skilled Migrant Workers in Thailand: Case Studies of the Mon and the Khmer Workers in Thai Seafood Processing Industry

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ABSTRACT

The seafood processing industry is at the forefront of a potential labor shortage in Thailand derived from the escalating demand for low-skilled workers, the shrinking workforce in Thailand, and growing domestic opportunities in Myanmar and Cambodia—the two most important sources of low-skilled workers who have been filling the employment gap in Thailand. The Mon and the Khmer, who represent the majority of workers who come from Myanmar and Cambodia, respectively, were the focal population in this study. Unlike traditionally separated economic studies and sociological studies on migration decision, this study adopts the perspective of economic sociology, incorporating both economic and social determinants and examining the connection between them in order to assemble a broader and deeper understanding of the drives and contexts influencing migration decision. Data collection and analysis were based on mixed methods, with primary reliance on a qualitative approach. The main vehicles for data collection during repeated fieldwork at the origins and destinations in this study were interviews and observations. Results describe how economic gains from migration improved the perception and social status of migrants in sending villages, intensified community leaders' encouragement to migrate, and fostered a sensational image of Thailand within the migrant community. Over time these trends have developed a culture of migration in which spending years as a migrant worker in Thailand has become an integral part of villagers' way of thought, their practices, and their lives. Enhancing these factors, continued migration has transformed the communities at both ends of the migration corridors in a way that has reinforced the tendency for future migration. The cases in this study detail how these components connect and interact, forming circular relations at the core of these connections, which function as a wheel that strengthens and sustains the continual flow of migration through the Mon and Khmer corridors into Thailand.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC ASEAN Economic Community

ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ILO International Labour Organization

IOM International Organization for Migration

MIMU Myanmar Information Management Unit

MOC Ministry of Commerce of Thailand

NELM The New Economics of Labor Migration

NESDB Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand

NSO National Statistical Office of Thailand

OFWA Office of Foreign Worker Administration of Thailand

TDRI Thailand Development Research Institute

TNDC Thailand National Defence College

UN The United Nations

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WHO World Health Organization

NIS National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Over the latter half of the 20th century, migration has become a strong force throughout the world. Economic, political, and social reasons are among the most important factors accelerating migrants' decision to move. However, within the context of evolving interdependence between countries in the global economy, labor migration has become the focal point in modern migration study. From the United States, Australia, Canada, and Western Europe to Southern Europe, the lack of domestic workforce has led to continual flows of immigration into these regions. Further, despite long histories of restricting immigration, countries such as Japan and South Korea formally began to raise their bars in the 1980s and 1990s (Bartram et al., 2014; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2017, pp. 3–4; Chung, 2014).

The destination countries commonly share characteristics of a relatively high level of economic development, a declining birth rate, and aging population, which add up to escalating unfulfilled labor demand. These conditions, more often than not, lead to migration inflow from countries with a lower level of economic development. This process has gradually become an integral part of economies in both the countries of origin and destination (Green & Kadoya, 2015; Massey et al., 1993).

Table 1-1: Size and Average Annual Change of International Migrant Stock, 1990–2020

	International Migrants (millions)				Average Annual Change (%)			
Year	1990	2000	2010	2020	1990–2000	2000–2010	2010–2020	1990–2020
World	152.6	172.7	221.7	280.6	1.3	2.8	2.7	2.1
Developed Regions	82.4	103.4	132.6	157.3	2.5	2.8	1.9	2.3
Developing Regions	70.2	69.3	89.2	123.3	-0.1	2.9	3.8	1.9

Source: The United Nations (UN), 2015, p. 1; International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2019

According to the IOM (2019), 280.6 million international migrants were recorded in 2020, as exhibited in Table 1-1. Of this number, around 56 percent of international migrants resided in developed countries, whereas 44 percent resided in developing countries. However, if countries are categorized by World Bank income group (World Bank, 2018a), high-income countries accounted for 65 percent, middle-income countries 31 percent, and low-income countries only 4 percent of the world's international migrants.

Based on data from the IOM (2019), out of a documented 280.6 million international migrants in 2020, approximately 169.2 million (60.3 percent) of them were migrant workers. Furthermore, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2015) suggested that the growth rate of migrant workers was considerably higher and steadier than those who migrated for other purposes, that is, refugees and asylum seekers, students, and retirees.

To take a closer look, during the past 50 years, apart from the saliency that the United States has always been the country with the largest number of international immigrants, certain significant bilateral migration corridors[1] have sustained themselves over time. The IOM (2017) suggested that a long-term migration corridor implies stronger economic, social,

[1] Bilateral migration corridor refers to the corridor of migration between two particular countries.

and security ties between two countries. In contrast to intermittent bilateral corridors that have fluctuated over this period of time, three corridors were consistently positioned within the top ten largest corridors between 1990 and 2015. These corridors were the United States–Mexico, the United Arab Emirates–India, and Thailand–Myanmar, with the first country being the destination and the second the origin (UN, 2015, pp. 5–7). While the United States and the United Arab Emirates are high-income economies, Thailand is considered a middle-income economy, according to the World Bank (2018a). Moreover, apart from Thailand–Myanmar, another migration corridor with Thailand as the destination is worth mentioning: Thailand–Cambodia. During this same period of time, the throngs of Cambodian immigrants moving to Thailand has occasionally made the Thailand–Cambodia corridor one of the most crowded corridors of international migration. How and why Thailand, as a developing economy, secures an adequate national workforce by employing foreign workers in order to sustain its economic development, as well as the mechanics behind it, may prove to be a useful case study in migration studies.

As one of the leading economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),[2] Thailand employs a large number of foreign workers for its export-oriented economic policy, a policy which the country has successfully implemented since the 1980s. Specifically, Thailand's economic policy focuses on manufacturing industries, one out of two components of the secondary economic sector, with another component being construction industries.[3] These industries depend heavily on low-skilled workers to produce goods at a minimum cost (Diao et al., 2011; Siriprachai, 1998; Bassino & Williamson, 2015).

Nevertheless, due to the declining birth rate and expanded education, Thailand's domestic low-skilled workforce has gradually been shrinking. Simultaneously, a continual flow of immigrants from Thailand's neighboring countries—Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos—has been filling the demand for a low-cost and low-skilled workforce in labor-intensive manufacturing industries. During this time, synchronously with the return migration of previous generations of immigrants, new generations of immigrants have replaced and expanded the size of the immigrant workforce in Thailand, forming a perpetuating cycle of migration between the sending areas and the destination (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2015a; Sanglaoid et al., 2014; Chantavanich & Jayagupta, 2010).

Rapid Growth of Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers and Their Countries of Origin

According to the official data from the Office of Foreign Worker Administration of Thailand [OFWA] (2019) in Table 1-2, by the end of 2019, Thailand had 3,017,416 registered foreign workers.[4] Of these, approximately 92.81 percent of them were low-skilled

[2] The ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organization which aims to promote intergovernmental cooperation in terms of economic, political, security, education, and sociocultural integration among its ten member states: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (ASEAN, 2018a).

[3] Referring to the classical categorization of economic sectors, three main sectors are identified by their economic activities: the primary sector, secondary sector, and tertiary sector. The primary sector involves the retrieval and production of raw materials; the secondary sector, also called the production sector, involves transforming raw or intermediate materials into goods; and the tertiary sector involves supplying and providing services to consumers and businesses (Fisher 1939; Clark 1983).

[4] Thailand's immigrant workforce statistics in this study was principally based on official data published by the OFWA, which did not include undocumented immigrants. However, since 2014, Thai government has continually reformed its immigrant documentation policy. In fact, within a year, from 2013 to 2014, the number of documented low-skilled immigrants rose 129.88 percent, and has been relatively high since. Without substantial changes in the economic or the political conditions in Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia, which profoundly altered the demand and supply in the labor market, these magnifying numbers suggest that a sizable number of formerly undocumented workers had subsequently been documented.

immigrant workers. During the course of ten years, Thailand has witnessed steadily escalating number of foreign workforce, which has significantly been driven by the rapid surge of low-skilled immigrants. Whereas the number of foreign high-skilled workers has slightly increased over the span of ten years, at 18.36 percent; the number of foreign low-skilled workers, on the other hand, more than doubled itself at 139.60 percent increment.

Table 1-2: Total Foreign Workers and Low-Skilled Immigrants in Thailand

Year	Total Foreign Workers	Low-Skilled Immigrants	Ratio (Low-Skilled to Total Foreign Workers)
2010	1,335,155	1,168,824	87.54 %
2013	1,342,097	1,179,434	87.88 %
2016	2,655,519	2,478,581	93.28 %
2019	3,017,416	2,800,455	92.81 %

Source: Office of Foreign Worker Administration of Thailand [OFWA], 2010-2019; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2013

The pervasively rising number of low-skilled immigrants, apart from the regularly growing demand from Thai businesses, has been contributed by the reformation of immigrant documentation policy in Thailand since 2014. This reformation successfully registered a large number of immigrants who were previously undocumented (Chantavanich et al., 2017; Chaichanavichakit, 2016). In terms of their origins, originally, Thai immigration policy permitted the employment of foreign low-skilled workers only from three countries, which were Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos. It was not until 2015 when Thai government attempted a pilot project to legally employ low-skilled workers from Vietnam. However, the number of registered Vietnamese workers was marginal due to unclear direction from the Thai government and the lack of interest from Thai entrepreneurs (OFWA, 2015-2019).

Table 1-3 shows the number of immigrant workers by their countries of origin. In 2019, out of 2,800,455 low-skilled immigrants: 1,825,921 were from Myanmar, 693,191 were from Cambodia, 281,247 were from Laos, and 96 were from Vietnam. Indeed, low-skilled workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam made up 65.20 percent, 24.75 percent, 10.04 percent, and less than 0.01 percent of low-skilled foreign workforce in Thailand respectively.

Table 1-3: Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Countries of Origin

Year	Low-Skilled Immigrants	Country of Origin			
		Myanmar	Cambodia	Laos	Vietnam
2010	1,168,824	940,376	122,490	105,955	
2013	1,179,434	786,549	271,655	121,230	
2016	2,478,581	1,657,631	644,289	175,092	1,569
2019	2,800,455	1,825,921	693,191	281,247	96

Source: Office of Foreign Worker Administration [OFWA], 2010-2019; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2013; Chaichanavichakit, 2016

Intense Dependence on Immigrant Workers under Changing Context

While Thailand has undoubtedly benefited from abundant sources of low-skilled immigrant workers from its neighboring countries, however foreseeable threat has been perceptibly looming. As ASEAN Economic Community [AEC][5] has begun to take its full effect, starting from December 2015; Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam as members of the community evidently benefit from this regional economic integration; particularly Myanmar and Cambodia, the two most important sources of migrant workforce in Thailand. In fact, Myanmar has constantly implemented its nation's political and economic reformations, which has subsequently changed regional economic landscape. Recently, Myanmar has drawn a large number of major foreign investment projects; by 2030, analysts predicted that Myanmar's FDI inflow would exceed $100,000 million. Sequentially, with extensive drive from domestic economic development, labor demand in Myanmar's production industries was expected to rise pervasively to six millions workers, almost tripling the number of 2.3 million in 2016. (Chhor et al., 2013; Umezaki, 2012; Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2016, p. 11).

Similarly to the case of Myanmar, studies also pointed out to Cambodia's strong economic growth influenced by external factors, mainly from FDI and financial aids from China and Japan as well as from ASEAN economic integration. Construction and manufacturing sectors were two driving forces in Cambodian recent economic growth; as this trend continued, experts predicted strong labor demand in the near future (Kuroiwa & Tsubota, 2014; Durdyev, Omarov, & Ismail, 2016).

Moreover, several studies indicated that globalization of economy clearly facilitated international economic migration. This also conformed to the cases of migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia. Recently increasing number of the Burmese and the Cambodian emigrants have found their new destinations in South Korea as well as Taiwan for economic reasons as these two countries widened their migration corridors due to their lowering domestic workforces (Kim 2015; Abella & Ducanes 2009; Ducanes 2013).[6]

For these magnifying reasons, studies predicted severely depleting number of immigrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia in Thailand (Patchanee 2015; Vungsiriphisal et al., 2013; Wailerdsak, 2013). These forecasts showed strong tendency that, in the near future, low-skilled migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia would have better domestic and international work opportunities, while labor shortage in Thailand was inevitably expected.

In 2016, while foreign workers made up merely 6.58 percent of total national workforce in Thailand, certain industries depended intensely on them.[7] In fact, Thai government has legalized only a short number of industries to employ low-skilled migrant workers; most of which have been, indeed, industries in production sector. Estimated data from the OFWA (2016) suggests that, notably, construction industry employed the highest number of

[5] AEC refers to ASEAN Economic Community, one of the three ASEAN pillars beside political-security and socio-cultural communities. AEC is, in fact, the embodiment of the ASEAN's vision of "a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN economic region in which there is a free flow of goods, services, investment and a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities". It aims to implement economic integration initiatives to establish a single market across ASEAN ten member states (ASEAN, 2018b).

[6] The Burmeses refer to the nationals of Myanmar; not to be confused with the Barma, the dominant ethnic group in Myanmar.

[7] Due to data limitation in the years afterward, this study relies on foreign workforce dependency statistics from 2016. In fact, after 2016 data about low-skilled immigrants' jobs were not clearly classified.

immigrant workers, 469,685 individuals. However, the level of dependency on immigrant workers cannot be portrayed by absolute number alone; the proportion of immigrant workers to total workforce in each industry, in other words, relative dependency, is another crucial component to clarify and highlight the significance of immigrant workers in each industry.

Table 1-4: Estimated Foreign Workforce Dependency in Thai Production Sector in 2016, by Industry

Industry	Total Workforce	Thai Workers	Immigrant Workers	Ratio (Immigrant Workers : Total Workforce)
Agricultural Processing	1,204,299	972,807	231,492	19.22 %
Clay processing	185,604	173,323	12,281	6.62 %
Construction Material	245,000	190,603	54,398	22.20 %
Construction	2,821,823	2,352,138	469,685	16.64 %
Electronics	374,785	324,452	50,333	13.43 %
Garment	357,770	221,340	136,430	38.13 %
Livestock Processing	245,637	172,739	72,898	29.68 %
Paper	87,649	65,769	21,881	24.96 %
Plastic	202,863	104,257	98,606	48.61 %
Seafood Processing	193,476	33,142	160,334	82.87 %
Stone Processing	12,607	7,231	5,376	42.64 %
Total Production Sector[8]	5,984,461	4,617,800	1,366,661	22.84 %

Source: Office of Foreign Worker Administration of Thailand [OFWA], 2016; National Statistical Office of Thailand [NSO], 2012; National Statistical Office of Thailand [NSO], 2017; Office of Industrial Economics of Thailand [OIE], 2018; Chaichanavichakit, 2016

Table 1-4 shows estimated rate of dependency on immigrant workers in different Thai industry. While construction industry employed the highest number of immigrants, seafood processing industry remarkably held the sharpest rate of immigrant workers dependency at 82.85 percent. In terms of industry's significance, Thai processed seafood's export value in 2019 was worth $3,775 million, 1.53 percent of Thai total export value. In fact, processed

[8] While OFWA has regularly adjusted the job classification of low-skilled immigrants, such classification does not always conform to job classification from other government agencies. To be precise, in 2016, OFWA classifies low-skilled immigrants employed in production sector into 13 industries. This table excludes recycling and freshwater animal processing for two reasons. Firstly, in order to analyze the level of dependency on immigrant workers, the numbers of Thai and foreign workers in the same industry need to be available; however, NSO, the agency which is responsible for national industrial census and annual labor survey applies different job classification. Consequently, certain industries, which are recycling and freshwater animal processing industries in this case, are not compatible to compare. Secondly, the numbers of immigrant workers in these two industries were not considerably significant; in fact, they represented 2.99 percent and 1 percent of total immigrant workforce in Thai production sector.

seafood has consistently been among Thai top 20 export products (Ministry of Commerce of Thailand [MOC], 2019). Chantavanich et al. (2014) and Vungsiriphisal et al. (2013) firmly posited that, doubtlessly, without migrant workers, Thai seafood processing industry could not sustain its current level of production.

These alarming numbers suggest urgent attention especially among industries with steep immigrant workers dependency. Public concerns over potentially declining labor supply from neighboring countries have been voiced both by scholars and practitioners in Thailand (Vungsiriphisal et al., 2013; Chaichanavichakit, 2016). Such risky circumstance in certain industries, especially seafood processing, calls for accurate understanding about immigrants and how they make their migration decisions.

Whereas a considerable number of studies about the motivation of immigrants in Thailand have been carried out, they have generally been dominated by an economic narrative, which customarily simplified the migration to being the consequence of spatial disequilibrium in labor markets (Martin, 2007; Pholphirul, Kamlai, & Rukumnuaykit, 2010; Chaichanavichakit, 2016). Adding the guidance of modern migration studies to the economic influence over the migration decision, this study proposes a broader perspective that incorporates both economic and social determinants into a complete migration decision canvas. This study, in an attempt to fill the gap in understanding about migration decisions left by the dominant narrative, applies the perspective of economic sociology and approaches the migration decision as a socially oriented economic action in order to investigate intertwining economic and social determinants, their development, and how they influence migration decision (Portes 2010; Granovetter 1990).

Thesis Organization

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 covers problems, objectives, questions, originality, contribution, literature review, and research method—laying the groundwork as well as the conceptual framework in this study. Chapter 2 demonstrates the significance and contribution of low-skilled migrants to Thailand's economy. This chapter also recounts the dynamic of migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia in recent history, the development of Thailand's immigration policy, and the economic sector and industries with particularly high dependency on migrant workers. Finally, the second chapter accentuates the dynamics and the body of workers in the Thai seafood processing industry, as this backbone industry leans heavily on a migrant workforce.

Data and insights from receiving and sending areas are revealed in Chapter 3. This chapter constructs a timeline of emigration in the studied regions, characteristics of migrants and their household members, migration patterns, and the nature and development of their communities. Data presented in this chapter were collected both from the destination and the origin of migrant workers. The final section in this chapter reveals the sequential relations of how the distinct conditions of the two migration corridors led to their different migration patterns and, finally, divergence in their migrants' characteristics.

Chapter 4 describes intertwining economic and social determinants behind migration decision and their connection with migrants' social contexts. Drawing on data both from the origin and the destination, this chapter describes migrants' individual end rationality–led, value rationality–led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives to migrate, all of which were imbued within these intertwining economic and social determinants. Further, this chapter shows how these four drives connected and interacted with each other, as well as how they upheld and sustained the continual flow of migration through the Mon and Khmer corridors

into Thailand. Finally, Chapter 5 comprises conclusions, highlights of the findings, and discussion.

1.1 Research Objectives

1. To develop an understanding of the modern-day migration decisions of the Burmese and the Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand.
2. To supply accurate information about the determinants which influence migration decisions of the Burmese and Cambodian migrant workers for relevant public and private sectors in Thailand.
3. To lay the groundwork for future empirical studies about migration decision as well as for constructing a more accurate and comprehensive theory of international migration.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the key social determinants of migration decision for the Burmese and Cambodian workers in the Thai seafood processing industry?
2. How have these social determinants been developed?
3. What are the connections between economic and social determinants of migration decision?

1.3 Originality

While several previous studies about the motivation of immigrant workers in Thailand have been carried out, the spotlight was usually shined on an economic narrative, which commonly simplified the migration to being the consequence of spatial disequilibrium in labor markets. Social determinants were only occasionally mentioned as an auxiliary part of foreign workers' migration decisions. Adding the guidance of modern migration studies, which propose the different natures of economic and social determinants of the migration decision and the interrelations between them, this study attempts to fill the gap in understanding about migration decisions left by the dominant narrative by incorporating both economic and social determinants into a complete migration decision canvas.

Unlike economic determinants which have constantly been influential to migration decisions from the beginning, social determinants, by nature, tarried. In fact, it took time for social determinants to be developed and to gradually expand their influence to migration decisions. At its heart, this study explores the development of social determinants as well as the connections between economic and social determinants in the case of the Burmese and the Cambodian workers in Thailand. By applying the perspective of economic sociology, this study approaches the migration decision as a socially oriented economic action—an action resulting from interwoven economic and social determinants—in order to investigate the development of immigrants' social context, how it influences their migration decisions, and how economic and social determinants interact.

With those ends in mind, field research was the primary vehicle in this study. Repeated fieldwork both at the destination and the origin of immigrant workers revealed the development of social context, the interaction between economic and social determinants, and also between social determinants themselves. At the end, this study proposes a broader

perspective, which incorporates both economic and social determinants, into a complete migration decision canvas.

1.4 Contribution

As this research aims to expand the existing body of knowledge about immigrant workers in Thailand, the results from this study are expectedly useful not only for the body of knowledge in the field of migration studies, but also for practitioners in relevant public and private sectors. Academically, this research is expected to expand the body of knowledge about migration decision—especially on bridging the connection between economic and social determinants. It also hopes to provide a sound basis for future empirical studies about migration decision as well as lays the groundwork to construct a more accurate and comprehensive theory of international migration. Practically, the findings can be implemented by practitioners both in public and private sectors in order to formulate effective public policy or business strategy to administer migrant workers. Beyond Thailand, data from this case study can benefit comparable countries where a large number of migrant workers are employed, as these destinations commonly share similar characteristics of intense labor demands, an aging population, and a declining birth rate, while the countries' workforces are gradually filled by migrant workers from sending countries which generally have a lower level of economic development and excess labor supply.

1.5 Literature Review

International migration is not new; in fact, it emerged as a global phenomenon over 50 years ago. Economic, social, and political reasons have been regularly cited as the most influential factors expediting a migrant's migration decision. Within the context of flourishing interdependence between countries in the global economy in recent decades, however, labor migration has been the focus of attention in modern migration studies. In an attempt to cope with this phenomenon, scholars have developed a variety of theoretical models and concepts to explain why and how people migrate. Despite their intention to achieve the same goal, they have employed deviating fundamental assumptions as well as frames of reference (Massey et al., 1993; Chung, 2014; Bartram et al., 2014).

This section goes through the development of major theories and concepts on migration decision in order to examine the current body of theoretical knowledge. Together with these theories and concepts, significant empirical evidence is incorporated to justify their real-world applicability. Thereafter, the current body of knowledge about migration studies in the case of immigrants in Thailand is extensively investigated. Existing migration studies in Thailand that address the issue of migration decision can be generally classified into three dominant perspectives: economics, political science, and sociology and anthropology.

1.5.1 Existing Studies on Immigrants' Migration Decision in Thailand

A large number of studies about low-skilled immigrants in Thailand have been carried out to serve different purposes and research objectives. They can be categorized into three general perspectives: economics, political science, and sociology and anthropology. Firstly, economic perspective, while economists, in principal, attempt to analyze migration trend and its sequential economic effects; their explanations on migration decision of immigrants in Thailand often base on either neoclassical economic theory or the new economic of labor migration. Secondly, the next perspective comes from political science approach which

primarily focuses on immigration policy and national security issue. Finally, sociological and anthropological studies which prevalently concerns with the integration and well-being of foreign community in Thailand.

Whereas migration studies in Thailand have been carried out from different approaches to fulfill different research objectives and focuses; in terms of migration decision, however, immigrant motivation has been largely dominated by economic narrative. To be precise, a vast majority of studies from political science as well as sociological and anthropological perspectives rely on explanation from economic perspective regarding migration decision which presses on disequilibrium in the international labor markets as the cause for migration decision.

In terms of immigrant group, Burmese immigrants have been the focal point of study in the case of migration studies in Thailand as low-skilled immigrants in the country have constantly been dominated by the Burmese nationals. Hence, more literatures about Burmese immigrants are available compared to their Cambodian counterpart; which also means that grounding information about Cambodian immigrants in Thailand is fewer than the Burmese.

1.5.1.1 Economic Perspective

In Thailand, existing literatures about immigrants' migration decision have been largely dominated by economic narrative. Economic scholars, in general, attempt to calculate economic contribution, determine economic effects, and predict immigration movement of low-skilled immigrants in Thailand. Relying on neoclassical and NELM economic migration models, these works referred to migration as a consequence of spatial disequilibrium in labor markets and emphasized on migrants' financial calculation of their expected return.

According to Pholphirul's (2012) study, Thailand was able to attract immigrants from its neighboring countries as the country offers better financial return to their labor supply. With additional source of low-cost labor supply, Thailand was able to maintain price and cost competitiveness of its manufacturing products in global market. Furthermore, low-wage immigrant workers enabled Thailand to attract investment from labor-intensive foreign firms. These findings conformed to Srihuang's (2012) study which cited financial benefits as the main reason behind migration movement from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos to Thailand. For this reason, nationals from these three countries have fulfilled the employment gap in Thai labor market in various industries including agriculture, domestic work, construction, as well as numerous manufacturing industries.

Sussangkarn (1996) estimated that 750,000 registered low-skilled immigrants in 1995 accounted for 0.55 percent of national GDP, or $839 million. A decade later, Martin (2007) expected that registered low-skilled immigrants in 2005, approximately 850,000 individuals, made up to 1.25 percent of national GDP, or $2 billion. These two studies also assumed wage differentials as the dominant reason behind migration movement from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos to Thailand. In their empirical research, Sanglaoid, Santipolvut, and Thamma-Apiroam (2014) found strong correlation between the GDP gaps, between Thailand and migrant countries, and their migration behavior. According to the results, employment opportunity is the most important determinant which accounts for the rising number of ASEAN migration workers to Thailand.

Following two field studies in migrants' origin areas in Cambodia and Myanmar suggest that farmer households has utilized emigration as a risk diversification strategy from singular dependence on agricultural sector in their local areas. Bylander (2013) found that farmer households in Cambodian rural areas have increasingly perceived agriculture-based livelihood strategies as unwise and risky. They, in fact, adopted emigration as alternative to

guarantee their local livelihood, instead of sole reliance on traditional agricultural activities which associated with uncontrollable uncertainties, such as flood, drought, or crop lost. Similar function of emigration was found in the case of Burmese farmer households as well. Attempting to identify the impact of remittances on households which migrants left behind, Khine's (2007) work revealed that remittances did not only fulfill households' daily needs, they are also meant for an insurance or emergency supply in the case of local economic instability. Migrants with stable income serve as the last resorts for their families in origin areas in the case that emergency needs arise. Risk diversification is one of the functions migration renders through the remittances. Diversified income sources among family members, indeed, strengthen household financial stability.

While immigration of low-skilled workers may pose numerous benefits as described above, Paitoonpong and Chalamwong (2012) countered that employment of low-skilled immigrant workers slows down the innovation development both at the firm and national levels of the country. This work mentions that continuous flow of low-skilled workers from Thai neighboring countries is originated and sustained by wage differentials between immigrants' home countries and Thailand. Nevertheless, in Kulkolkarn's (2010) study on Thai garment industry, no statistical significance was observed when factories which employed immigrants and factories which did not employ immigrants were compared for their economic competitiveness. This work, however, suggests that at a macro level, Burmese, Cambodian, and Lao governments encourage migration of their nationals to Thailand as a counter measurement for their domestic poverty and unemployment problems.

Recent literatures on immigration movement in Thailand largely concern with how ASEAN Economic Community [AEC], regional economic cooperation within the Southeast Asian countries which include Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, will reshape migration movement within the region. Wailerdsak (2013) predicted strong impact on Thai labor supply from expected free movement of human capital as a part of AEC future plan. This regional level policy aims to facilitate the movement of human capital within member countries of AEC. Burmese, Cambodian, and Lao workers are expected to have broader and better opportunities from such policy; as a result Thailand will be in a difficult situation trying to compete with other regional immigration countries, namely Singapore and Malaysia.

Patchanee (2015) explicitly forecasted dramatically depleting number of low-skilled immigrants in Thailand as immigrants from Myanmar, the most important source of foreign workers in Thailand, will soon have alternate domestic opportunity. As a result of recently ongoing economic and political reformations, Myanmar has been a strong force changing regional economic landscape. In the past few years, Myanmar has successfully secured a large amount of foreign investments and aids from the United States, Japan, the European Union, and India, which have tremendously boosted local infrastructures as well as economic development. For these reasons, a massive return migration from Thailand is expected in the near future. Both Wailerdsak's and Patchanee's studies signified economic incentive as the pinnacle among factors influencing migration decision.

1.5.1.2 Political Science Perspective

In Thailand, migration studies from political science perspective are often examined through immigration policy. And while immigration policy, in principal, concerns with four major aspects of a nation state: national identity and cultural self-definition, economic development and labor market, national and public security, and foreign policy and human rights (Chiavacci, 2018; Chiavacci, 2012; Brettell & Hollifield, 2015); Thai immigration policy has consistently placed national security as its top priority in its agenda (Archavanitkul & Hall, 2011; Taotawin, 2010). This approach looks at low-skilled migrant workers from

national security lens. As a result, a large number of immigration policy studies in Thailand, generally funded by governmental agencies, put most emphasis on national security issue.

Studies from the lens of national security stress on social and economic issues, such as job loss, land ownership, economic power, national identity in certain areas with dense immigrants population, crimes, and shared benefits of education and healthcare systems problems, which have gradually risen, as more foreign workers exist in Thailand. The rest of existing studies from this perspective offered more balance approach assessing Thai immigration policy. Some works, however, often funded by international organization, focused primarily on human rights aspect of the policy. The works from political science perspective in Thailand, regardless of their emphasized aspect of the policy, commonly adopted economic narrative to explain migration decision.

Much of immigration policy studies in Thailand can be classified as policy evaluation studies. Funded by the Secretariat of the Senate of Thailand, Chantavanich's (2008) study aimed to evaluate the impacts of immigrant workers in Thailand focusing on communities with dense immigrant population. The main objective of this mixed methods research was to determine Thai community security after a massive inflow of immigrant workers. Five aspects of impacts on community securities were classified: economy, society, culture, politics and laws, and public health and environment. Economically, immigrants prove be beneficial to Thai communities both in terms of source of lacked labor supply and Thai product consumer. Immigrants tend to be socially exclusive within their own ethnic groups, with minimal communication with Thai people. Most of immigrants in studied areas were Buddhist, as a result they were reported to blend in with local culture, which was dominated by Buddhism, harmoniously.

In terms of politics and laws, Chantavanich suggests that government should establish long-term strategy and consistent immigrant registration to prevent confusion as well as illegal agencies which may take advantage of policy ambiguity. This study, however, raises immediate attention to communities with dense population of immigrants regarding public health and environment issue as cursory deteriorations were observable. Immigrants, in general, are lack of proper knowledge about health care; furthermore health education is not adequately supported from both immigrants' landlords and relevant governmental agencies. Noteworthy, this work repeatedly cites financial benefits as the prime factor attracting neighboring nationals to migrate to Thailand.

In their large-scale field research in ten major provinces in Thailand, Planning and Information Division of Thailand (2012) attempted to assess impacts in various aspects from immigrants in Thailand, namely employment of Thai workers, Thai communities, and employers. Data was collected from employers, Thai workers, and community members involved in employment of immigrants in various industries including seafood processing industry. Results reveal that employment of immigrant workers do not hinder employment of Thai workers in a micro level. In general, Thai communities welcomed immigrant workers, although certain problems were mentioned, such as communication and public health. In terms of employers, this study concluded that whereas in the short-term dependence on immigrant worker might enable employers to gain advantage from price strategy; however, in the long-run these enterprises might fall behind in terms of technology and innovation development. It is worth mentioning that this study cited language barrier as the main cause which consequently led to many other problems. Furthermore, this study explicitly assumed employment opportunity to be the most important factor pulling immigrants into Thailand.

In order to access social security of Thai communities where immigrants resided, Sattayopat (2016), funded by National Research Council of Thailand, attempted to observe

how immigrants adapt to life in Thai communities. Data was collected mainly from immigrants through interviews and questionnaires with Shan immigrants in Chiang Mai province.[9] This work argued that should immigrants successfully adapt to new communities, immigrants and the locals can harmoniously coexist; however, should immigrants cannot fit themselves in receiving communities, coexistence can be chaotic and hostile. Results revealed that Shan immigrants successfully integrated themselves in Thai society with moderate sense of social security, eight major aspects of social integration in this study's framework are work and income, family, personal security, social support, social and culture, education, residence and environment, and public health. As a result, this study concluded that Thai communities hosting Shan immigrants were likely to peacefully maintain their social security. In terms of immigrants' motivation, this work blatantly assumed that wage differentials were the most important reason for the migration movement of Shan immigrants to Thailand.

Thailand National Defence College [TNDC][10] also hosted a number of studies related to low-skilled immigrants and national security producing from its students. While less academically rigorous compared to traditional education institute, the fact that TNDC's students are composed of leaders from government and business sectors show their keen interest in the relations between the growing number of immigrants and national security. These works, in principal, elaborate the movement of low-skilled immigration as the pursuit of better economic opportunity (Phrikphatnarak, 2014; Anantasan, 2015; Dararattanarojna, 2014).

From public health aspect, several researches evaluated impacts from immigrant patients in hospitals along the borders between Thailand and neighbor countries as well as the areas with dense immigrant population. Furthermore, several studies were conducted to assess public health conditions of communities with a large number of immigrants. Results reveal heavier work loads of public health officials in those areas, slower services for patients, and budget management. Moreover, deteriorated health conditions in communities with crowded immigrants were observed. Researches suggest systematic public health management for immigrant workers starting from reliable registration process, health education program, budget and human resources management, and an integrated body of governmental agency. While migration decision was not primarily concerned in these works, all of them mentioned wage differentials and employment prospects as the prime motivation driving these immigrants into Thailand (Tharathep, Thamroj, & Jaritake, 2011;[11] Haritavorn & Sukkasem, 2018;[12] Kosit, 2015)[13].

Funded by the Department of Employment of Thailand, Sontisakyothin and Muangchan (2007) found several gaps on policy implementation of low-skilled immigration

[9] Chiang Mai, a border province to Myanmar in the North, is the largest province out of nine provinces in the North region of Thailand, both in terms of population and economy (NSO, 2015b; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand [NESDB], 2016). According to OFWA (2016), Chiang Mai has hosted approximately half of low-skilled immigrants employed in Thai Northern region.

[10] Thailand National Defence College [TNDC] is a specialized education institution with the focus to cultivate national defense education to senior government officials, leaders in business sector, and politicians (TNDC, 2018).

[11] Funded by Health Systems Research Institute of Thailand [HSRI]. HSRI is an autonomous state agency; its main goal is to achieve effective knowledge management in the service of the health system (HSRI, 2018).

[12] Funded by HSRI.

[13] Funded by the Thailand Research Fund [TRF]. TRF is an autonomous state agency; its main objective is to assist in the development of researchers and research-based knowledge through grants and research management support [TRF, 2018].

registration in 2007. Major obstacles in registration process included unclear information distributed from government side, inconsistent immigrant registration methods, the lack of standardized procedure manual, and limited daily capacity. This conforms with Rattanabanpot's (2003) work which was funded by the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour of Thailand with main objective to find solution for arising social problems from immigrant inflow. This study concluded that the first task that Thai government should do in order to ensure effective control over immigrant workers is to integrate currently scattered agencies which were responsible for immigrant workers management. Agencies from different departments and ministries should work closely together for uniformity in both policy formulation and implementation. Along the same line, Huguet and Punpuing (2005), funded by IOM, also found inconsistencies of Thai immigration policy as well as the lack of cooperation among governmental agencies related to immigrant management to be the source of consequent problems, such as human trafficking, illegal immigration, and immigrant worker abuse. These three works, while focusing on the gap of policy implementation, fully assumed that neighboring countries' workers migrated to Thailand to pursue better economic opportunity.

Rukumnuaykit's (2009) work, funded by ILO, offered a comprehensive review on existing studies related to Thai immigration policy of low-skilled foreign workers. Regarding to push and pull factors which attract immigrants to Thailand, this study concluded that major pull factors comprise wage differentials, diversified economic risks, dual economy in Thailand, demographic trend, and social networks and migration-related institutions, ordered by importance. Referring to push factors, this study cited the lack of economic opportunity and internal political strife to be two main determinants driving immigrants out of their countries.

In terms of policy formulation, major actors in policy formulation process were examined for their influences and how they shape Thai low-skilled immigration policy; major actors included government officials, business owners, international organizations, and community leaders. In their massive-scale countrywide research, Chalamwong et al. (2007)[14] included 46,780 employers in their target respondents in order to supply accurate data regarding labor demand in especially labor-lacking industries for future Thai immigration policy formation; these industries include agriculture, fisheries, seafood processing, and construction. Results showed that immigrant workers were essential to these labor-intensive industries, and that actual demand for immigrant workers highly exceeded the number of immigrants currently employed. This study suggests that government, apart from consolidating immigrant registration and administration processes among relevant agencies, should apply different regulations to immigrant workers in these four diverse industries as their nature of work conditions are different; this categorization is expected to enhance government administration and control over immigrant workers. This work, as well, assumed better economic opportunity to be the most influential factor transferring low-skilled foreign workforce to Thailand.

Addressing low-skilled immigrant registration administration and process, a number of studies was supported by relevant government agencies. Vejvimol (2004)[15] argued that levy system was appropriate and beneficial for Thai low-skilled immigration policy as it balanced out the cost of hiring between foreign and national workers. This study reasoned that lowering the labor cost in the country by hiring foreign workers might negatively affect

[14] Funded by the Office of Foreign Workers Administration, Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour of Thailand.

[15] Funded by the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour of Thailand.

wages and domestic employment. Furthermore, recurring use of unskilled and cheap labor potentially prolonged investors from necessary technology development. Stakeholders such as employers, government officials, communities, and immigrants were studied to formulate optimized registration and administration methods (Jariyapan, 2015).[16] These works, however, based their analysis on the ground that immigrant workers came to Thailand for their financial motives.

While acknowledging government's attempt to solve problems derived from nation's immigration policy toward low-skilled foreign worker, Paitoonpong (2011), a senior researcher from Thailand Development Research Institute,[17] unveiled that inconsistent immigration policy, in fact, came from government's pro-employers stance. Instead of government's best effort to establish and solidify MOU or levy system,[18] which could stabilize low-skilled immigrants registration in the long run, Thai government opted to endless rounds of temporary registration method in order not to raise the cost of business operation for employers. Such circumstance does not promote good climate for regularization of immigrant workers. This work points out that immigrants from Thai neighboring countries are attracted to Thailand for wage differentials, followed by better living standard.

Furthermore, a number of existing policy studies focused specifically on human rights issues. This group of studies aimed to promote human equality regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion and language, and eliminates all forms of discriminations. Studies focused on violation of migrant's rights and development of migrant's quality of living in Thailand. They pushed for parity between migrant workers and local workers.

Primarily concern with the issues related to migration flows and the rights and the protection of migrant workers derived from policy framework in which the government operates; Chantavanich, Vungsiripaisal, and Laodumrongchai (2007)[19] identified several factors both external and internal which crucially shape Thai low-skilled immigration policy. Whereas major external factors were political unrest and economic stalemate in Myanmar as well as international legal framework and pressures; major internal factors were political contexts and the private sector. This study argued that human trafficking and immigrant abuse issues, in fact, were stemmed from the failure of Thai government to establish stabilized immigrant registration. Furthermore, inconsistencies in immigration policy derived from political contexts and pressures from private sector in Thailand created the vacuum of authority which was prone to official corruption and deception from fraudulent broker. Unlike other works which generally cited economically pull factors from Thai side, this work alternatively cited the lack of employment opportunity in their origin countries as well as

[16] Funded by the Social Security Office, Ministry of Labour of Thailand.

[17] The Thailand Development Research Institute [TDRI] was established as a public policy research institute in 1984. At that time, the Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board of Thailand suggested that Thailand should have public policy research institute unrestrained from political influence. With the legal form as a private non-profit foundation, TDRI's mission is to provide technical analysis, mostly but not entirely in economic areas, to various public agencies to assist policy formulation for long-term economic and social development in Thailand (TDRI, 2018).

[18] Both MOU and levy systems have been proposed by Thai scholars and practitioners in order to monitor and stabilize low-skilled immigrant registration in Thailand; both methods, however, impose certain amount of money per immigrant employed to the employers. These expenses are expected to budget low-skilled immigrants' registration process, management, and welfare as well as to provide certain safeguard to Thai low-skilled workers as their costs of employment exclude these additional expenses.

[19] Funded by the World Bank.

political regime, especially in the case of Myanmar, to be the most important reasons why immigrants left their countries.

In order to develop insights which might lead to vulnerabilities of Burmese migrants in Thailand, Munstermann (2018)[20] conducted research with 3,765 Burmese migrant workers in Tak province, including both incoming and return immigrants. This study argued that Thai language ability, legal status, work and contract conditions potentially lead to immigrant's vulnerabilities. Interestingly, this work also dedicated certain sections to immigrants' drivers of migration. While other literatures focused on push and pull factors, this study posited that the theory of push-and pull factors was inadequate in today's migration studies as it did not take into account the complex nature of migration. In most cases, people made migration decision based on diverse, often complex and interrelated, reasons. To reflect reality, migration should not be perceived as an either-or decision, but as a continuous context. Moreover, determinants in both sides of push and pull factors were multilayered which included factors from micro, meso, and macro levels; in fact, individual's migration decision often reflected the combination of reasons from different levels (Ndegwa, 2016; Ma, 2017).

Addressing international pressures on human trafficking, from the United States, and on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, from the European Union, in Thai fisheries and seafood processing industries; Chantavanich et al. (2017)[21] and Kmonpetch et al. (2018)[22] assessed current conditions and offered recommendations for policy development for these industries. While these studies found positive development of employment conditions according to international standard, they proposed procedures to ensure sustainable practices that are safe, legal and ethical. Proposed procedures included tracking system for commercial fishing boats, marine catch verification documentation, registration of deep-sea fishing boats, improved filing grievances and channels of appeal for migrant workers, legal assistance and coordination for legal cases, and provision of education for accompanying children of migrant workers. These works explained that Burmese, the majority of workforce in Thai fisheries and seafood processing industries, migrated to Thailand because of wage differentials and civil unrest in their home country.

1.5.1.3 Sociological and Anthropological Perspective

Much of migration studies from sociological and anthropological perspective in Thailand focused on adaptability and well-being of foreign communities in Thailand; hence foreign communities were the focal point of analysis in these studies. These researches' starting point commonly was set after migration decision process; as a result, these works—when mentioning immigrants' motivation—instead of including the investigation of the cause for migration in their works, often relied on existing literatures that pointed out to wage differentials and internal political unrest in immigrants' countries of origin. A number of works, instead of current generation of immigrants, was centralized on the communities of previous generations of immigrants who permanently settled down in Thailand; some extended their studies on the livelihood of their second or third generation offspring, who were born in Thailand.

Recent studies, however, considered the changing dynamics of low-skilled worker immigration as well as extend the framework of migration studies on low-skilled foreign workers beyond the border of Thailand. These studies attempted to provide encyclopedic groundwork from empirical data regarding low-skilled immigrants—their motivation, their

[20] Funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population.

[21] Funded by the National Research Council of Thailand and Chulalongkorn University.

[22] Funded by the Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

liveliness, their communities both in Thailand and their areas of origin, their expected return, and their living anticipation upon their return; all of which went through dynamical economic and social contexts over the course of time. Instead of centralizing only on their lives and communities in Thailand, these studies began to assess in-depth information about immigrants' lives and communities back in their hometowns both before and after their emigration to Thailand; this was to draw a more comprehensive picture of immigrants' lives and their surrounding contexts. With such information, factors relevant to their migration decision could be identified and analyzed with more precision.

Probably the most recent study which provided the most comprehensive overview of Burmese low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand, in their mixed-methods massive fieldworks, Vungsiriphisal et al. (2013) assessed potential changes in migration patterns of the Burmese immigrants as well as their economic impacts on Thailand. Fieldworks were carried out in seven target provinces in Thailand, in proportion with the total registered immigrants in the nation, with the sample size of 5,027 individuals; these samples covered workers in a wide range of industries including seafood processing industry. While findings suggest that there are still numerous uncertainties in terms of how soon and at what speed the changes in migration patterns of Burmese migrants will occur and how they will affect Thai economy; from the surveys, they found that economic reasons, such as higher income and better employment opportunities, were undoubtedly the primary reason for the Burmese immigrants to migrate to Thailand. This was followed by personal reasons, such as the desire to follow family and friends and the desire for personal experience and exposure, and security and safety reasons accordingly. This study noted that certain industries in Thailand with sharp dependency on immigrant workers will be deeply troubled once the immigrants decide to return; this is especially alarming for seafood processing industry as the industry holds the highest rate of immigrant worker dependency. This statement was also supported by Chantavanich et al. (2014) in their study about immigrant workers in seafood processing industry.

In terms of immigrants' origin areas, this research found that most of the respondents came from Mon State, following by Shan State and Thanintharyi Region. Mon State is, precisely, one of 15 first-level political entities in Myanmar with ethnic Mon as dominant population in the state. As predicted, the majority, approximately two third, of Burmese immigrants in Thailand came from rural area; besides, most of Burmese immigrants were farmers back in their hometowns. It is worth mentioning that around one fifth of them were unemployed before they migrated. Interestingly, 79.9 percent of surveyed immigrants expressed their willingness to return to Myanmar some time in the future; the number of expected returnees with specific return timeframe and the number of expected returnees without specific return timeframe were divided roughly by half.

Primary reasons, cited by 77.9 percent of expected returnees, for their returns were personal reasons which included the desire to reunite with families and friends, having stay long enough in Thailand, and having save enough money. Only 11.5 percent of them emphasized on changes in Myanmar, in other words push factors, related to political and economic reforms in Myanmar; even a smaller number of expected returnees, 10.6 percent of them, indicated that conditions in Thailand. To be precise, pull factors—with family ties as the most common reason—were the most important driving factors for their return. Upon return, the vast majority of immigrants, 91.2 percent of expected returnees, planned to go back to their hometowns or reconnected with their families and friends; only 2.7 percent of them expressed their willingness to where jobs are available or big cities. Moreover, most of expected returnees saw themselves as farmers once they return to Myanmar. To conclude, the majority of expected returnees wanted to reunite with their families and community members

regardless of job availability in their hometowns (McDougall, Pattanatabud, & Vungsiriphisal, 2015)[23].

Previous study by Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal (2012) also supported much of these findings. From a survey of 204 Burmese workers in Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, and Tak provinces; they found that the majority of their samples come from Mon State, following by Yangon Region and Karen State. Almost the same percentage with expected returnees surveyed by Vungsiripaisal et al.'s (2013), 78.9 percent of Burmese immigrants expressed their desire to go back to Myanmar; of these, 65.2 percent of them had specific timeframe of return. Building on these, Munstermann (2018), from 3,765 samples, confirmed that most of Burmese immigrants did intend to return to Myanmar. However, interestingly, this study further found that Burmese immigrants generally did not migrate to Thailand only once, to be precise approximately 70 percent of surveyed incoming immigrants have migrated to Thailand several times during their lives.

In 2016, IOM published an assessment report on the profile of returned Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand (Koenig, 2016); data from 189,192 returnees were used to identify migrant workers' hometowns, while 667 returnees were selected for further interviews. Respondents covered returnees from diverse industries in Thailand including manufacturing industries. Results revealed that the majority of Cambodian immigrants came from Banteay Meanchey province, Siem Reap province, and Battambang province accordingly. In its interview question which allowed multiple answers, immigrants cited domestic unemployment, better economic opportunity in Thailand, financial debts, and family expenses, all of which were economic reasons, as their most influential reasons for their migration decisions; followed by accompanying families and friends, the answer which came in the fifth. It is worth mentioning that this study was conducted in response to the massive return of Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand during 2014 when political conditions in Thailand were unstable, as a result a large number of Cambodian immigrants decided to return to their hometowns at that time due to perceived uncertainties on policies toward low-skilled immigrants. For this reason, this work did not study migration aspects involved with voluntary return migration, such as expected return timeframe and determinants for their return decision.

On a smaller scale, Chantavanich et al. (2016) collected data from 306 Burmeses and 241 Cambodians in Thai fisheries industry. They found that demographic changes along with rising education levels among Thai people created the gap of employment which were fulfilled by migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia. They also predicted that such condition would continue and Thai fisheries industry would remain reliant on migrant workers for a long time into the future. As for their motivation, wage was cited as the most influential factor attracting immigrants to their current jobs, following by work conditions and friends or relatives working in the same industry accordingly.

Adopting Lee's (1966) push-pull theory, Pichan and Hong-ngam (2016) studied 122 Burmese immigrants in Khon Kaen province[24] and found that factors building up to decision to migrate comprise several push and pull factors. In this mixed methods research, results reveal that push factors include political instability, social value in origin area, poverty, and low wage; whereas pull factors include relatively higher wage, families and friends in

[23] This work was a supplementary report for "Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand" (Vungsiriphisal et al., 2013).

[24] Khon Kaen Province is one of major provinces in the Northeast region of Thailand; to be precise it ranks the third in terms of population and the second in terms of economy out of 20 provinces (NSO, 2015b; NESDB, 2016).

Thailand, and stable employment. However, comparing between push and pull factors, pull factors were more statistically influential; in fact, the most significant factors were relatively higher wage in Thailand, immigrants' families and friends in Thailand, and political unrest in Myanmar. These results conformed with Thuannadee's (2018) quantitative study of Cambodian immigrants in Chonburi province,[25] which concluded that economic reasons especially wage differentials and differing economic climates in home and host countries are the main reasons for their migration movement.

Sukantha (2014) similarly applied the concept of Lee's push-pull factors to describe Burmese immigrants' motivation in the Upper Northern Thailand.[26] Findings relied on 20 in-depth interviews with Burmese immigrants as well as five migration agencies. This study concluded that the first three important factors driving immigrants out of Myanmar were the lack of stable employment opportunity, political unrest, and the lack of occupational alternative.[27] In terms of pull factors, the first three important factors were abundant occupational opportunity, wage differentials, and existing families and friends in Thailand. Besides, this work suggests that migration decision, in fact, is the combination of several reasons from different levels of both push and pull sides. Furthermore, while this was not included as one of the most influential push or pull factors, results revealed that most of Burmese immigrants had fairly good to very good perception of Thailand as they had experienced the upward economic mobility of households with immigrant members in Thailand back in their hometowns. Finally, respondents explained that, prior to their migration, they gained information from their neighbors who worked in Thailand before in order to comprehend and compare their alternatives before their final decision.

With regard to influences from household and community members in migration decision, a number of works also suggest that migrant networks as well as relevant agencies play important roles facilitating immigration movement. Singhanetra-Renard (1992) revealed the significance of networks of immigrants in Thailand in the form of informal links. This study argued that these informal links facilitated labor movements and expanded the functions and forms of social networks over time. The analysis indicated that neither receiving nor sending countries were able to stop networks of families and agents from mobilizing and sustaining international labor flows.

Chaisingkananont (2016) stressed on the interrelations of immigrants' communities back in their hometowns and in their destinations. This study subsequently implied that strong migrant networks potentially led to favorable migration decision of later migrants from the same origin as migrant networks significantly lower the costs and risks for future migration. Migrant networks served as a bridge between current immigrants in the destination and potential immigrants in the origin; apart from lowering costs and risks, the concept of social mobility and information about industrialized lifestyle have also been transmitted over the bridge. This statement was supported by several studies on social networks of immigrants from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos in Thailand, which described the characteristics, operations, and functions of these migrant networks in their respective

[25] Chonburi Province is the largest province out of seven provinces in the East region of Thailand, both in terms of population and economy (NSO, 2015b; NESDB, 2016).

[26] Upper Northern Thailand specifically refers to nine provinces in the North region of Thailand classified by six-region system, in contrast to four-region system which groups eight additional upper-region provinces making the North region comprise 17 provinces. In six-region system, provinces in the North region consists of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Nan, Phayao, Phrae, and Uttaradit (Office of the Royal Society of Thailand, 2018).

[27] Most of immigrants were from rural area, where few alternate occupations were available beside farmers.

research sites (Thongyou & Ayuwat, 2005;[28] Sativaro, Hongthong, Boonmaya, Warinto, & Sae-Eab, 2018;[29] Chaisuparakul, 2015;[30] Vanhnahong & Chamaratana, 2018[31]).

Beside personal networks, a number of studies examined structural networks, in other words, migration institution. Sakaew and Tangpratchakoon's (2009) work offered an in-depth and exhaustive picture of immigration institution in Thailand. Their work classified and elaborated different types of institution based on organization purposes, for-profit or non-profit, and functions which ranged from work permit registration, job placement, transportation, relocation, translation, legal consult, to overseas money transfer. They found that these organizations, while at times potentially exploiting and abusive, were significant driving force for continual inflow of migration to Thailand. Evidently, a large portion of immigrants in Thailand was reported reliant on agencies during their relocation. Furthermore, rising number of immigrants apparently led to rising number of agencies and vice versa (Vungsiriphisal et al., 2010; Ketsomrong & Dhiravisit, 2013).

Apart from these, as mentioned above, the majority of sociological and anthropological works on immigrants in Thailand emphasized on the adaptability and liveliness of foreign communities in Thailand. As the process of migration decision was commenced before the focal point in their studies; these works, in general, relied on existing literatures regarding migration decision when they described immigrants' motivation. The reasons often cited were derived from mainstream narrative which underlined wage differentials and unstable political conditions in immigrants' home countries.

According to a large-scale study in 11 major provinces of Thailand[32] from Chamratrithirong, Holumyong, and Aphipornchaisakul (2011) in which they included immigrants from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos; in their attempt to study the livelihood of migrant workers in Thailand, they found that the level of happiness and security among immigrants varied greatly by their geographical settlements. This was fueled by the diversity of livelihood, work conditions, residence, child's education, and human rights protection which differed according to different lines of occupation as well as regional immigration agencies which might employ disparate regulations. In terms of existing compatriot relatives in Thailand, reports revealed that 79.2 percent of Burmese immigrants had relatives in Thailand before they migrated, following by Cambodian, 76.7 percent, and Lao, 44.7 percent. Noteworthy, Burmese immigrants in Samut Sakhon recorded the sharpest number of immigrants with existing compatriot relatives in Thailand prior to their migration, approximately 90 percent.

Furthermore, this study reported that social and cultural integration of Burmese immigrants were generally lower than their Cambodian and Lao counterparts, reflected from the much lower rate of Thai language acquisition and participation in social and cultural gatherings with Thai people, such as religious ceremony, traditional ceremony, and new year celebration. On the other hand, Burmese immigrants maintained more frequent contact with their families and friends in their hometowns compared to Cambodian immigrants, albeit less frequent that Lao immigrants. Finally, generally low desire to permanently stay in Thailand

[28] This study investigated Lao immigrants in five provinces: Nong Khai, Ubon Ratchathani, Chonburi, Khon Kaen, and Surin.

[29] This study investigated Burmese immigrants in Samut Sakhon Province.

[30] This study investigated Cambodian immigrants in Bangkok and neighboring provinces.

[31] This study investigated Lao immigrants in Udon Thani Province

[32] This study collected data from approximately 400 immigrants in each surveyed province. Surveyed provinces comprised Tak, Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Samut Prakan, Rayong, Trat, Ubon Ratchathani, Nong Khai, Khon Kaen, Ranong, and Surat Thani.

was observed among Burmese and Cambodian immigrants, 14.3 percent and 15.3 percent respectively; while approximately half of Lao immigrants expressed their willingness to permanently settle down in Thailand.

Pimonratnakan and Sungrugsa (2017) conducted micro-scale in-depth interviews with Burmese immigrants in Bangkok to assess their livelihood and adaptability. Findings showed that immigrants achieved better standard of living after they moved to Thailand resulted from financial stability, fine accommodation, and accessible medical cares. However, major obstacles faced by immigrants included language barrier, treatment bias against immigrants, and the lack of human rights awareness among immigrants. In an attempt to conceptualize occupational and social contexts surrounding Cambodian immigrants in the Thai fishing industry, Derks (2010) underlined wage differentials to be the main reason why Cambodian workers came to work on Thai boats. From different angle, Thatsanai (2018) tackled the issue of immigrant's integration by assessing the perception of Thai people. This research studied 400 members of communities in Pathum Thani province[33] where a large number of immigrants located. Results revealed that religious proximity as well as immigrant participation in local gatherings were two significant keys which potentially led to firmer integration of immigrants to Thai local communities. Therefore, as most of immigrants in this area were Bhuddhist, identical to the majority of Thai people; this study suggests that the inclusion of immigrants in local religious ceremony is likely to be an important initial step leading to stronger bond between immigrants and local people.

A large number of theses in Thailand examined immigrant communities in different parts of Thailand; major provinces where immigrants were largely employed were the main research sites of these studies. These works focused on the livelihood, social adaptability, migrant protection, and other social context of immigrant communities in major provinces, such as the Burmese in Chiang Mai province (Chaikaew, 2004), the Cambodian in Sa Kaeo province[34] (Chhor, 2014), the Burmese in Chonburi province (Punyadee, 2014), and the Mon Burmese in Surathani province[35] (Petchkeaw, 2006).

Beyond the current flow of immigrants, a number of studies focused or included the well-settled Mon communities resulted from historical migration movements, hereafter referred to as the Old Mon[36] in contrast to the New Mon,[37] in their researches. Historically, the ethnic Thai and Mon, whose ancient kingdom is now currently a part of present day Myanmar, had established close ties with each other especially after Mon kingdom was conquered for the second time by the Bamar[38] in the mid16th century. Since then, several waves of Mon immigrants had moved to Thailand over the next 250 years due to political

[33] Pathum Thani Province is one of major provinces in the Central region of Thailand; to be precise it ranks the fourth in terms of population and the fifth in terms of economy out of 22 provinces (NSO, 2015b; NESDB, 2016).

[34] Sa Kaeo, a border province to Cambodia in the East, is a provinces in the East region of Thailand; to be precise it ranks the fifth in terms of population and the sixth in terms of economy out of seven provinces (NSO, 2015b; NESDB, 2016).

[35] Surathani Province is one of major provinces in the South region of Thailand; to be precise it ranks the third in terms of population and the second in terms of economy out of 14 provinces (NSO, 2015b; NESDB, 2016).

[36] The Old Mon refers to Mon immigrants who moved to and permanently settled down in Thailand. This group of Mon immigrants primarily comprises those Mon who had migrated to Thailand between the 16th and 19th century and their descendants. They are, in fact, legally Thai citizen.

[37] The New Mon refers to modern day Mon immigrants who migrate to Thailand primarily due to economic, political, or social reasons. They are legally citizen of Myanmar.

[38] Bamar refers to people of Bamar ethnic, currently the dominant population in modern day Myanmar.

hardship, ongoing conflict with the Bamar, ease of travel, and similar geographic conditions and cultural proximity (Ocharoen, 2009).

Focusing specifically on the Old Mon, Plianroong (2010) found that the identity of Mon communities in Thailand has largely been shaped by the historical context of each community, such as three large Old Mon communities in Thailand: high class Mon of Phra Pradaeng,[39] Mon traders in Ko Kret,[40] and Mon fishermen in Bang Kradi;[41] all of whose identities are derived from the characteristics of early generations of Mon migrants in those areas.

In order to examine the dynamic of multi-ethnic nature of communities in Ranong province,[42] Pocapanishwong (2016) asserted that Burmese immigrants have been adapting themselves to the cultural milieu of the area via practices in the religious sphere. These cultural practices included organization of various Buddhist ceremonies and festivals, building of the Burmese-style pagodas, promoting learning of the Burmese culture for their second and third generation, and providing social welfare for funerals. This study argued that under strict monitor from Thai authorities, religious space was the only social space available for them to freely express and maintain their national identity. This was because most of Burmese immigrants were also Buddhists similar to the majority of Thai people, as a result the authorities as well as the locals did not perceive their religious gathering as a threat to Thai national security. Apart from an attempt to connect scattered Burmese immigrant communities in Ranong, such religious gatherings reminded them of their identities back in their hometowns. In other words, their communities in Thailand were connected to their hometown communities in their mind through these religious spaces.

According to Baonoed's (2006) study on Mon immigrants, comprising both Old Mon and New Mon, in Samut Sakhon province, Mon immigrants' attempt to differentiate their Mon identity from the Bamar, the dominant ethnic group in Myanmar, was observed. Through repetitive political conflict dated back to the 11th century between the Mon and the Bamar, tension between these two ethnicities has long been established and still existed until today. This study suggests that the identity formation of Mon migrants in Samut Sakhon involved collective consciousness to maintain their ethnic boundaries and differentiated themselves from Bamar identity. Baonoed argued that Mon identity has been preserved in the form of language, literature, and culture. Finally, this study concluded that Mon migrants could be seen as the agents who formulated transnational social relations between Mon in Myanmar, Mon in Thailand, and overseas Mon through political, economic, and cultural activities. Indeed, Mon migrants' identity was with their Mon homeland or Mon land, not as citizens of Myanmar.

Current findings from the perspectives of sociology and anthropology about migration decision of migrant workers in Thailand may be best summed up by Chantavanich, Ito, Middleton, Chutikul, and Thatun's (2013). They concluded that the reasons why people migrate are many and are, most of the time, interrelated, with poverty alone not the only cause. What are commonly perceived as push factors may include the lack of employment

[39] Phra Pradaeng is a district in Samut Prakan Province, Thailand.

[40] Ko Kret is a district in Nonthaburi Province, Thailand.

[41] Bang Kradi is a district in Bangkok Province, Thailand.

[42] Ranong, a border province to Myanmar in the West, is the province with the fewest number of population in Thailand. Located in the South region of Thailand, Ranong has the smallest economy out of 14 provinces in the same region (NSO, 2015b; NESDB, 2016). According to Pocapanishwong, Ranong's culture has been influenced by the locals, Chinese settlers, and Burmese settlers; resulted in a multi-ethnic culture of communities in Ranong.

opportunity, under-compensation, the lack of livelihood security, environmental insecurity, high cost of living, or other forms of political, social, or physical insecurities. Simultaneously, pull factors may include the demand for workers, more and better occupational opportunity, better quality of life, and relatively higher levels of environmental, political, or social security. This study argued that while some of migrants' migration decision may be clearly influenced by certain push or pull factors; more often than not, migration decision reflects the combination of both. Furthermore, it is strongly advised that both the push and pull factors operate at multiple, and interrelated, levels, which include individual, family, household, community, national, regional, and global levels; and migration decision, indeed, is the result of a combination of myriad of factors from different levels.

In traditional theories of migration, migration is usually classified according to various typologies, such as: voluntary or involuntary in terms of willingness; circular, seasonal, or permanent in terms of mobility; and economic or non-economic in terms of motivation (Elliott, Mayadas, & Segal, 2010). Such typologies lead to migrants labeling; for example, displaced persons, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, trafficked persons, smuggled persons, or refugees. Chantavanich, Ito, Middleton, Chutikul, and Thatun argued that while given typologies or labeling might be useful for policy makers under certain circumstances, they appear increasingly inadequate to fully understand the complexity of migration in present day context. Their study asserted that migrants in each category are not fixed but fluid, as no one person necessarily remains permanent in one specific category.

Finally, this study posited that complexity in present day migration raises theoretical challenges in terms of sufficient explanation toward migration phenomenon; traditional typologies and concept of push and pull factors seem inadequate even as on the surface they may provide useful initial assessment. Chantavanich, Ito, Middleton, Chutikul, and Thatun also called for close attention to the fact that migrations which occur between the countries of the South as both origin and destination, as occurred in the case of Burmese and Cambodian immigrants in Thailand; due to diverse economic, social, and political contexts, have significant different characteristics from migrations which have countries in the South as the origin and countries in the North as the destination, from which a vast portion of migration theories are originated (Castles & Miller, 2009). Hence this study suggests that more and exclusive theoretical framework should be initiated to address specific migration phenomenon within each specific area.

1.5.2 Theories and Concepts in International Migration

Early studies about migration had centralized around an economic perspective. Classical works from Adam Smith (1776), who defined migration as a reflection of spatial disequilibrium in labor markets, Ravenstein's (1885) laws of migration, Zipf's (1946) gravity model, and Lee's (1966) push-pull theory are among the most important pioneering works in migration studies. Together they share conceptual uniformity that migration is, in principle, driven by one's desire to maximize one's return on human capital investment.

Perhaps the earliest and most widespread theory of international migration, neoclassical economic theory, was developed from this conceptual foundation. In the mid-twentieth century, migration theories started to develop into maturity by evolving from mechanical models into more multifaceted models. Neoclassical economic theory, at a macro level, suggests that labor migration is a part of economic development. This theory emphasizes differentials in wage and employment conditions between countries as well as migration costs. It generalizes migration as a result of differences in the supply and demand of workers between more and less developed regions (Lewis, 1954; Borjas, 1990; Sjaastad, 1962). While the macroeconomic model explains movement of people as a process of large-

scale economic interaction, the microeconomic model attempts to explain migration from an individual point of view. At a micro level, neoclassical economists posit that international migration occurs when an individual expects a positive net return from a move—the positive wage differential is higher than associated costs to migrate (Todaro, 1969; Todaro & Maruszko, 1987; Wolpert, 1965).

This narrative, however, has been critiqued and countered by scholars both from the same and other fields due to its failure to consider many aspects of economic life (Massey et al., 1993). From the field of economics, the *new economics of labor migration* (NELM) model attempts to deepen the understanding about migration decision by widening the decision-making framework, which incorporates a different unit of analysis, and introducing migrants' efforts for risk diversification.

First, NELM points to a different unit of analysis. Earlier migration models focus either on aggregate migration movement or individuals' migration decision, both of which imply independent individual migration decision. However, NELM proposes that migration decision, in fact, is not made by isolated individuals but by a larger unit which includes a circle of people around each individual; generally, such units are households or families. Second, unlike neoclassical models which focus solely on labor markets, NELM takes into consideration other economic markets related to households' financial stability, namely insurance markets, futures markets, and capital markets. While neoclassical economic models point out that international movement will be stopped when wage differentials and employment opportunities across borders are neutralized, NELM asserts migration may still continue under such circumstances, should failures in relevant markets exist in sending countries (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Taylor, 1984; Stark, 1991).

Whereas NELM successfully incorporates additional actors and markets influential to migration decision, it still leans solely on spatial economic disequilibrium. Approaching the end of the 20th century, a number of studies started to adopt alternative perspectives to study migration decision. During this time, the sociological perspective on migration was developed and successfully added another piece of the puzzle to the migration decision canvas by emphasizing the roles of social factors.

By far, network theory is the most widely acknowledged explanation from the field of sociology. According to Hugo (1981) and Massey (1990), migrant networks are the bundles of interpersonal bonds which connect migrants, returnees, and non-migrants in both the origin and the destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin. Unlike the first batch of migrants who move to a new destination with no one they can rely on, the ones who follow in their footsteps are welcomed by the first movers. With supports and helps such as information sharing, accommodations, and daily life assistance from the earlier group of migrants, the relocation of the later batches of migrants becomes easier and faster. Such activities in migrant networks, as a result, increase the tendency of international movement. Over time, migrant networks expand and include a larger number of people; this, in turn, extends networks' benefits for their members (Massey, 1990).

While international movement is described as a result of spatial economic disequilibrium from an economic perspective, and while sociologists emphasize how migrant networks reinforce migration decision, Granovetter (1990) and later Portes (2010) proposed what is called *economic sociology*, an approach which implements a sociological perspective to improve the understanding of economic phenomena. Instead of separating economic studies and sociological studies on migration decision, economic sociologists incorporate both economic and social determinants and examine the connection between them in order to draw a complete migration decision canvas. In fact, from the perspective of economic

sociology, the migration decision is made under a dense social context, within which economic and social determinants are intertwined. The concept of *translocality* complements the perspective of economic sociology by laying a broader conceptual framework about migrants' social context, which connects migrants and non-migrants both at the origin and the destination despite distance and physical boundaries.

1.5.2.1 Economic Sociology

The starting point of economic sociology is that individuals are, indeed, linked with and influential to one another. Economic sociologists generally refer to the individual as a socially constructed entity or as individual-in-society; social phenomena are commonly analyzed at the group and social-structural levels. Migration, as an economic action, is perceived as a group rather than an individual process because a migration decision is commonly made within a collective social context that includes the family and local community (Granovetter, 1985; Smelser & Swedberg, 2005).

Migration decision is made under a dense social context—socially embedded—within which economic and social determinants are interlinked. Economic sociology proposes a study approach that incorporates both economic and social determinants and sheds light on the interrelation between them in order to assemble a complete migration decision canvas (Portes, 2010). Examining migration decision, economic sociologists look at migration decision as an economic action which is driven by individual end rationality, value rationality, affection, and tradition. Like any other economic action, migration decision is guided by a mixture of these four drives. A rationality-led economic action refers to an economic action which one takes based on one's anticipation to achieve a certain considered end—this is divided into an individual end and transcendental value. Whereas an individual end rationality–led economic action is taken based on individual economic gains, a value rationality–led economic action is taken out of self-conscious conviction that the action has certain intrinsic value. An affection-led economic action refers to one taken based on emotion: a feeling of fondness or tenderness for a person or thing. Finally, a tradition-led economic action is taken out of customary manner or practice, that is, rule of thumb or habit (Weber, 1978; Portes, 1998).

From the perspective of economic sociology, the traditional narrative, which simplifies the migration decision to a result of spatial economic disequilibrium, addresses only one drive—individual end rationality, primarily fulfilling economic motives—while three other drives are missing (Portes 1998; Coates, 2018). According to economic sociology, to draw a complete picture of one's migration decision, value rationality–led, affection-led and tradition-led drives—all of which lean broadly on social determinants—are indispensable. To holistically develop the big picture, one's social context, constituting all four drives, must be addressed in order to explore the interweaving economic and social determinants within it. An individual's social context refers to one's social connectivity, generally comprising personal interaction, groups, social structure, and social control. All of these powerfully impact one's migration decision. This narrative was supported by several empirical studies, which included cases of Mexican immigrants in the United States, Chinese immigrants in Thailand, Moroccan immigrants in Western Europe, Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom, and Burmese immigrants in Thailand. Findings highlighted the strong influence of social connectivity—namely social value, sentiment, and migrant networks—on migration decision (Portes & Bach, 1985; Massey et al., 1987; Heering et al., 2004; Lertpusit, 2018; Datta, 2011; Chaichanavichakit, 2018).

In these studies, community value, collective sentiment, and practice for emigration in the sending regions strengthened community members' desire to migrate. While earlier

groups of migrants might have emigrated from the villages primarily out of local economic hardship, later groups of migrants confronted different economic and social contexts that guided their migration decisions. After the earlier batches of villagers emigrated, the sending community became more familiar with emigration as well as realized the superior well-being of households with emigrants through lopsided income distribution. As a result, over time, the community value, collective sentiment, and practice were changed in a way that reinforced the tendency for future emigration.

Migrant networks are acknowledged by economic sociologists as an integral part of migrants' social context. A migrant network is an assortment of ongoing relations between migrants and affiliated groups through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin. Granovetter's (1990) "The old and the new economic sociology: A history and an agenda" elaborated that two types of social networks can be distinguished: a relational network, which refers to individuals' personal relations with one another, and a structural network, which refers to the broader networks of social relations to which these individuals belong. In Boyd's (1989) words, a relational network may be called a migrant's personal network, while a structural network is a migrant's personal network that has congealed and developed into migratory institutions—brokers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The aforementioned studies showed that, following persistent migration over the course of time, both types of networks were expanded and strengthened. These networks played an important part in facilitating the migration process by assisting new-coming migrants with job information, transportation, accommodations, and legal advice. Massey et al. (1993) figured an important function of the migrant network: it reduces the costs and risks associated with migration. Furthermore, they found a circular relation between the migrant network and the volume of emigrants. In other words, as the number of emigrants rises, the migrant network becomes larger and stronger; simultaneously, as the migrant network becomes larger and stronger, more emigrants are recruited to the network.

From these empirical studies, two noteworthy conclusions can be drawn: first, there was a connection between economic and social determinants, and second, while social determinants might have stemmed from foregoing economic determinants, they later became a strong force for migration decisions together with economic determinants. The superior well-being of households with emigrants—derived from the emigrants' higher income in the foreign country—which built up community value and sentiment that strengthened community members' desire to migrate clearly revealed the linkage between the economic and social determinants of migration decision. Furthermore, it also depicted how economic determinants, which were influential to migration decision from the beginning, led to the later-constructed social determinants, reinforcing the desire to migrate among the locals.

To conclude, economic sociology asserts that migration decisions are made within a collective social context. In order to conceptualize migration decision, a migrant's social context needs to be understood. At the heart of this social context, economic and social determinants are commingled and constitute four influential drives for migration: those led by the rationality of individual end, value rationality, affection, and tradition. Understanding these drives, how they influence migration decision, and the connections between them enable the assembly of a complete migration decision canvas.

Focusing on migrants' social contexts, the concept of translocality presented below describes the relations between actors in migrant networks and how, together, they create translocal relations that connect and influence different localities and people at the same time. This concept complements the perspective of economic sociology by laying a broadened conceptual framework about migrants' social contexts, which connect migrants and non-

migrants both at the origin and the destination despite distance and physical boundaries. Translocality explains that migrant actually remains exist at the origin; that is, even when physically abroad, migrants maintain some degree of situatedness at home. Altered events or conditions at one place result in a simultaneous impact in other connected places (Greiner et al., 2014; Brickell & Datta, 2010).

1.5.2.2 Translocality

Building on insights from the longer-established research approach of transnationalism, translocality was introduced to overcome transnationalism's limited focus on the nation state. While transnationalism describes the connection between migrant's community at the origin and at the destination as a unique form of social embeddedness that circulates family and cultural ties, which pass through the barriers of space and boundaries; translocality argues that migrant's community at the origin and at the destination are, in fact, a single entity. Instead of the separation of communities—one at the origin and one at the destination—migrant's community at the destination can be viewed as the extension of the village where migrant comes from. Despite physical distance, migrant maintains some degree of situatedness at home and that altered events or conditions at either the origin or the destination simultaneous affect in another place (Greiner, Peth, & Sakdapolrak, 2014; Brickell & Datta, 2010).

Peth (2014) used an example of a village to illustrate the term translocality. He posits that a village is not only a settlement area, physical buildings, and residing villagers. Today remote and rural villages are gradually integrated by global dynamics. Transportations, information technologies, goods, and people moving from one place to another formulate abundant interrelations, connections, and flows which extend a village beyond its original locality. Peth further suggests that places, in contemporary setting, cannot be understood as their mere original territories, isolated and disconnected from each other; instead places have expanded themselves across spaces and include localities connected to their origin areas.

Empirical application of translocality has been employed by numerous scholars to enhance the understanding of various phenomena related to the production and reproduction of socio-spatial configurations stemmed from international migration. Hatfield (2011) found a translocal connection in various socioeconomic forms of British families in Singapore between their homes back in the United Kingdom and their temporal homes in Singapore; while Datta (2011) observed experiences of multi localities of Polish migrants in London. Moreover, Oakes and Schein (2006) explicitly revealed that domestic-migrating Chinese and migratory institutions have become translocal in the recent era of rapid socioeconomic transformation.

These studies revealed that migrants do not separate their communities at the destination from their communities back home. In fact, they referred to their communities at the destination as the annex to their home towns. Even when they were physically abroad, they retained their presences in their families as well as in their communities where they came from, and vice versa. Family members were still largely involved with their important decisions in life such as job, education, marriage, and—definitely—migration decision. Their family members had immense effect to their migration decision—not only before they migrated, but also during their migration—such as when they should return, how much money should they save before they return, and what they should do after they return. At the same time, migrants were also influential to matters in their families back home, which also included migration decision of other family members. Furthermore, altered conditions at their home communities also affect migrants' movement, for example, the dwindling image of the jobs that migrants were taking among home community members might force them a career

change. The dwindling image of the receiving country that migrants were residing among home community members might also force them to relocate. On the other hand, migrants were observably active in spreading the lifestyle and value embedded at the destination back to their home towns. Perhaps the most important dimension of this phenomenon is the dimension of time; migrants, their communities at the destination, and their communities back home are linked together at a real-time basis. It is worth mentioning that the advancement of telecommunication and transportation in recent years played crucial roles connecting migrants' both communities together.

By connecting mobility and places with networks, translocality draws attention to the transformative character of local mobility and tries to capture the interconnectedness and processes that happen in and between different localities. Migration cannot be seen as a separation of migrants and their homelands; on the other hand, translocality proposes an alternate perspective to conceptualize migration as a process that connects places and people at different localities beyond geographical spaces and political borders (Greiner & Sakpolrak, 2013).

1.5.3 Rationale for the Study and Conceptual Framework

On a global scale, economic scholars were among the first movers in modern migration studies. Until today, the general perception of migration decision has been derived from the economic narrative, which simplified migration to being a consequence of spatial disequilibrium in labor markets. Today, however, such explanation has received pushback from scholars both from the same and other fields due to its disregard for features of economic life beyond economic rationality. Supplemented by the guidance of modern migration studies, which suggest the interrelations and differences between economic and social determinants over the migration decision, this study attempts to fill the gap in understanding about migration decisions left by the dominant narrative by weaving both economic and social determinants into a complete migration decision canvas.

Instead of separating economic studies and sociological studies on migration decision, this study adopts the perspective of economic sociology and approaches migration decision as a socially oriented economic action in order to investigate both economic and social determinants and, more importantly, examine the connection between them. According to economic sociology, migration decision is made under a dense social context, within which economic and social determinants are intertwined. Examining these determinants, economic sociologists look at migration decision as an economic action which is driven by individual end rationality, value rationality, affection, and tradition. Like any other economic action, migration decision is guided by a mixture of these four drives. A rationality-led economic action refers to an economic action which one takes based on one's anticipation to achieve a certain considered end—this is divided into individual end and transcendental value. Whereas individual end rationality–led economic action is taken based on individual economic gains, value rationality–led economic action is taken out of self-conscious conviction that the action has certain intrinsic value. An affection-led economic action refers to one taken based on emotion—a feeling of fondness or tenderness for a person or thing. Finally, a tradition-led economic action is taken out of customary manner or practice, that is, rule of thumb or habit.

From the perspective of economic sociology, the traditional narrative, which simplifies the migration decision as a result of spatial economic disequilibrium, addresses only one drive—individual end rationality, primarily fulfilling economic motives—while neglecting the three other drives. To assemble a complete migration decision canvas, all four drives must be addressed in one's social context in order to explore the interweaving economic and social determinants within it. According to economic sociologists, an

individual's social context refers to one's social connectivity, generally comprising personal interactions, groups, social structure, and social control. All of these strongly impact one's migration decision.

Focusing on migrants' social context, this study applies the concept of translocality to examine the relations between actors in migrant networks and how, together, they create translocal relations that connect and influence different localities and people at the same time, enhancing the four drives for choosing to migrate. This concept complements the perspective of economic sociology by laying a broadened conceptual framework about migrants' social context, which connects migrants and non-migrants both at the origin and the destination despite distance and physical boundaries. According to translocality, migrant communities—one at the origin and one at the destination—are not separated entities. In fact, migrants' communities at the destination can also be viewed as the annex to their community back home. Even when they were physically abroad, they retained their presences in their families as well as in their communities where they came from, and vice versa. Therefore, altered events or conditions at one place result in simultaneous impacts in other connected places. As this study examines the connection between economic and social determinants of migration decision, the concept of translocality envisions the relations between actors in migrant networks and the connection between economic and social determinants from a different angle. With such an approach, this study expects to shed a brighter light on present-day immigrants' migration decision.

As the Burmese and the Cambodians have long been the important workforce in Thailand, a large number of studies about these groups of workers has been carried out. However, in these studies, migration decision was usually portrayed as a consequence of spatial disequilibrium in labor markets, derived from the economic narrative. Although several works focused on the social aspect of migration, such as the well-being of migrant communities and the integration of migrant communities in Thai society, migration decision was not their main question. In fact, even these works often relied on the economic explanation of immigrants' motivations. A few recent studies, however, started to emphasize social determinants that affected the migration decision of immigrants in Thailand. These works centered around migrant networks and how they eased and facilitated the migration.

Against this backdrop, this study proposes a broader perspective which incorporates both economic and social determinants into a complete migration decision canvas. Instead of separating economic studies and sociological studies on migration decision, by adopting the perspective of economic sociology, this study simultaneously explores these interwoven economic and social determinants of migration decision. With these in mind, this study relies primarily on field research to reveal the development of these determinants, how they influence migration decision, and the connection between them.

1.6 Research Method

This study employed mixed research method, with primary reliance on qualitative approach. The majority of data was collected during three main fieldworks, both in destination area, Thailand, and origin areas, Myanmar and Cambodia, between 2016 and 2018. Interviews and observations were the main vehicles of this study's data collection. Apart from qualitative data, quantitative data was also collected from interviews in order to verify qualitative data's validity. Beside primary data from field research, this study relies on secondary data from journal articles, academic books, and reports from public and private sectors for grounding information as well as for data verification.

1.6.1 Scope of Study

This section addresses the scope of study of this research in three interrelated major aspects: theoretical framework, study cases, and research sites. The first aspect, with the focal point on the interweaving economic and social determinants on migration decision, this study adopts the perspective of economic sociology—as justified in section 1.5.3, "Rationale for the Study and Conceptual Framework"—to explore the development of these determinants, how they influence migration decision, and the connection between them. Such framework, however, relies largely on primary data from field research; in fact, this study implements case study approach in order to collect in-depth information.

By the nature of case study research, results cannot be generalized. This study, however, proposes a broader perspective to migration decision, in which both economic and social determinants are incorporated. The results from this study—while not generalizable—shed light from different angle and expand the understanding about migration decision of foreign workers in Thailand. Such findings are expected to lay the groundwork for future empirical studies about migration decision as well as for future construction of furthermore accurate and comprehensive theory of international migration. The case study approach employed, however, leads to the second and the third aspects of this research's scope of study.

The second aspect, this study primarily focuses on two groups of immigrants: the registered Burmese migrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry and the registered Cambodian migrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry; they are, in fact, two cases of study in this research.[43] Study cases were framed by three significant characteristics of immigrants: their employing industry, their origins, and their legal status. First, their employing industry, as described in "Intense Dependence on Immigrant Workers under Changing Context", Thailand's economic policy has focused on secondary economic sector which comprises manufacturing and construction industries. While the strong demand of workers in these industries led to intensified recruitment of low-skilled workers from Thai neighboring countries who increasingly multiplied and replaced Thai workers in these labor-intensive industries, different industries held different degrees of dependency on migrant workers. Seafood processing industry stood out as the most compelling case study for its overwhelming dependency on immigrant workforce both by absolute number and, especially, relative dependency.

Moreover, according to a large-scale study in 11 major provinces of Thailand from Chamratrithirong, Holumyong, and Aphipornchaisakul (2011) on immigrants from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos; out of all surveyed immigrant communities, they found that Burmese immigrants in Samut Sakhon—the majority of whom were employed in seafood processing industry—recorded the sharpest number of immigrants with existing relatives in Thailand prior to their migration, approximately 90 percent. As the focal point in this study is largely at the community level, the case of Burmese immigrant workers in seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon proved to provide an appealing condition suitable for this study. And since Chamratrithirong, Holumyong, and Aphipornchaisakul's study did not reveal significant ties between Cambodian migrants and their relatives prior to their migration in any particular industry, Cambodian workers in Thai seafood processing industry was chosen to parallel the Burmese in the same industry.

Second, in terms of immigrants' origins, while current low-skilled immigrants in Thailand comprised nationals from four countries which are Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam; this foreign low-skilled workforce has been dominated by workers from Myanmar

[43] Specific research sites and target population are fully addressed in section 1.6.4, "Case Selection".

and Cambodia—as shown in Table 1-3. As a result, low-skilled immigrants from these two countries are the focal points in this study. The particular groups of the Burmese and the Cambodian which were studied as well as the justification of selection are fully elaborated in section 1.6.4, "Case Selection".

Third, immigrants' legal status, this study focuses primarily on legal migrant workers for three reasons: data availability and accessibility, expected lowering number of illegal immigrant workers, and research objective. Firstly, data availability and accessibility, while statistical data regarding registered immigrant workers are fairly available, albeit neither complete nor systematically organized; statistical data regarding illegal immigrant workers are obscure. The lack of grounding information makes it problematic to frame the research. More importantly, during pilot study, it was found that immigrant workers with illegal status were not likely to participate in the study; even those who did, they did so in cursory and perfunctory manner.

Secondly, expected lowering number of illegal immigrant workers; conforming with existing literature (Chaichanavichakit, 2016), this work's pilot study as well as later interviews with key and non-key informants suggest that the phenomenally high growth of registered low-skilled immigrant workers since 2014—as exhibited in Table 1-2— has been the result of the Thai government's attempt to resolve labor shortages as well as the human trafficking problems. This up-surging number of registered low-skilled immigrants was expectedly and largely due to the change in legal status of previously illegal workers. In fact, under Prime Minister Prayuth Chanocha, the Ministry of Labour has been remarkably active in facilitating the low-skilled immigrant worker documentation process (Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2014). One of the strongest influences behind this attempt was the international pressure especially from the unfavorable evaluation by the US's trafficking in persons report as well as by the EU's illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing report [IUU]—which severely affected Thai export performance, especially in the seafood processing business (Chantavanich et al. 2014). Without other substantial changes in economic or political conditions within the region, facilitation of registration process by Thai government since 2014 has likely been the major force turning illegal workers into registered workers.

Thirdly, research objective, currently Thai government simultaneously employs three low-skilled immigrant registration methods; while still lacking in terms of data compatibility, Thai government aims to eventually develop a unified registration method that is reliable and practical. With such registration method, Thailand can systematically manage the volume of low-skilled immigrants according to national strategy and its labor market (Sontisakyothin & Muangchan, 2007; Chantavanich, 2008; Paitoonpong, 2011). Evidently, as mentioned above, government's deliberate efforts have been able to include a large number of workers who were once illegal into the formal system. Hence, while several works focused on how to integrate more illegal workers into the formal system or to provide better humanitarian efforts for illegal immigrants; with its objective to supply constructive information for relevant public and private sectors in Thailand, this study—instead of illegal immigrant workers—emphasizes on the legal immigrant workers, the group of workers which conforms to Thai government's strategic move.

The third aspect—similarly to the second aspect of the scope of study—as case study approach is employed in this research; research sites were methodically identified not for generalization, but to expand the current body of knowledge about migration decision of low-skilled immigrants in Thailand. Field research in Thailand were conducted within immigrant communities in Samut Sakhon Province and Rayong Province; field research in Myanmar's Mon State were conducted in five villages; and field research in Cambodia's Banteay

Meanchey Province were conducted in four villages. These research sites as well as target population are fully elaborated and justified in section 1.6.4, "Case Selection".

1.6.2 Limitation

Apart from data limitation which was addressed above in the case of undocumented immigrant workers in Thailand; other limitations in this study are incoherent collection of registered low-skilled immigrant data in Thailand across years and agencies, the unavailability of official or reliable population data in villages in Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province, language proficiency, and the employment of research assistants.

Puzzling Characteristics of Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers Data Collection in Thailand

While Thailand, mainly by OFWA and NSO, has supplied decent amount of information about national workforce as well as skilled immigrant workers, data related to unskilled immigrant workers has been incoherent. The main reasons, however, were the constantly changing low-skilled immigrant workers registration system as well as the simultaneously use of three low-skilled immigrant workers registration methods, which perplexed data aggregation of related governmental agencies.[44][45] Currently, Thai government uses three different methods for low-skilled immigrant worker registration: temporary registration, nationality verification, and MOU.

First, temporary registration, since 1992 temporary registration has been implemented to register immigrant workers in low-skilled sector who already reside in Thailand. Second, nationality verification, in 2006 Thai government started implementing this registration method, targeting migrants with temporary permit; this registration method aims for improved documentation and data accuracy.[46] Third, also since 2006, MOU, this method has been applied to systematically transfer low-skilled migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar to Thailand[47] (Archavanitkul, 2012).

Since 2006 until now, Thai government has implemented all of these three registration methods simultaneously every year. The problems, however, are derived from inconsistency of data collection from related governmental agencies. Two major inconsistencies include unclassified workers by employing industry under certain registration methods in certain years, and unclassified workers by country of origin under certain registration methods in certain years. To be precise, registered immigrants were not classified by employing industry under nationality verification method and MOU method between 2007 and 2014; and they were not classified by employing industry under temporary registration method between 2013 and 2016. This study alternatively relies on data from Department of Employment of Thailand's (2008) website in this regard. In addition, detailed immigrant data in provincial level is not available in most provinces, including Samut Sakhon Province and Rayong Province. In fact, only the total number of immigrant workers

[44] Supplementary interviews with two OFWA officials confirmed the incoherence of low-skilled immigrant workers data collection and the causes of the problem.

[45] Interviews with OFWA Official A and B by author, February 25, 2016. The names of interviewees are kept confidential by agreement.

[46] Thailand has cooperated with Cambodian, Lao and Myanmar governments to implement nationality verification registration method; however, while cooperation with Cambodia and Laos were effectively since 2006, Burmese workers nationality verification was started in 2009 due to lengthy negotiation between Thailand and Myanmar governments.

[47] Similar to national verification cooperation, while cooperation with Cambodia and Laos were effectively since 2006, the MOU agreement between Thailand and Myanmar governments was delayed and the first registration started in 2010 due to lengthy negotiation between Thailand and Myanmar governments.

in each province is presented in OFWA publication; they are not classified either by employing industry or country of origin.

While these glitches hinder flawless accuracy in this study, this study supplements these imperfect data by extensive data collection and validation from alternative sources of information such as relevant governmental agencies and international organizations. This research has made use of currently available data to the fullest extent to estimate and realize the most accurate analysis despite these limitations. Throughout this paper, footnotes are inserted where the most accurate information might be missing.

The Unavailability of Official or Reliable Population Data of Villages in Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province

In the case of Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province; while official data were available at the higher level of administrative unit, such as state level and provincial level; general population data at the village level were not methodically supplied. More importantly, emigrant data at the village level both in Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province are unavailable. In fact, for population data—emigrants included—of surveyed villages, this study relies on data from the village chief from each surveyed village, key informants, and villagers.

Probability of Sampling Bias

Even though probabilistic sampling in this research was not applicable due to the absence of reliable population data, this study put up its best effort for the optimization of proper randomization as much as available data allowed. Nevertheless, probability of sampling bias arose from certain collective characteristic of target population. In general, female informants were commonly more cooperative for data collection, on the contrary to a large portion of their male counterpart who were, many times, unwilling and evasive. Hence, this error may distort the associated results, especially aggregate data on respondents' gender.

Language Limitation

As researcher is not fluent in Burmese, Mon, and Khmer languages, communication with immigrants and, especially, community members in origin areas was often assisted by interpreters. However, each translator employed was carefully selected, all of them had interpretation experience as well as exceptional fluency in Thai and Burmese, Mon, or Khmer.

Employment of Research Assistants

Since this study employed oral survey—instead of written survey—large sample size required help from assistants. As a result, to a certain degree, data collection processes might partially be incoherent. However, two remedial counteractions were executed; first, trainings were provided before every actual field research and, second, the assistants were accompanied by the researcher at least for their first field data collection. After each round of data collection, meeting between assistants and researcher was held for data clarification, analysis, and validation.

1.6.3 Research Framework

This study adopts the perspective of economic sociology and approaches migration decision as a socially oriented economic action in order to investigate both economic and social determinants—instead of separating economic studies and sociological studies on migration decision—and, more importantly, examine the connection between them. According to economic sociology, migration decision is made under a dense social context,

within which economic and social determinants are intertwined. Examining these determinants, this study looks at migration decision as an economic action which is driven by individual end rationality, value rationality, affection, and tradition. Like any other economic action, migration decision is guided by a mixture of these four drives. To assemble a complete migration decision canvas, one's social context, which directly constitutes one's individual end rationality-led, value rationality-led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives, must be addressed in order to explore the interweaving economic and social determinants within it.

Focusing on migrant's social context, this study applies the concept of translocality to examine the relations between actors in migrant network and how, together, they create translocal relations that connect and influence different localities and people at the same time. This concept complements the perspective of economic by laying a broadened conceptual framework about migrant's social context, which connects migrants and non-migrants both at the origin and the destination despite distance and physical boundaries.

With aforementioned theoretical framework, this study is designed to simultaneously explore these intertwining economic and social determinants to migration decision through repeated fieldworks both at the destination and the origin of immigrant workers. This study relies primarily on interviews and observation—complemented by documentary research for grounding information as well as for data verification—to reveal the development of economic and social determinants, how they influence migration decision, and the connection between them.

1.6.4 Case Selection

Migration corridor between Thailand and Myanmar has proved to be one of the most consistent migration corridors in the past 30 years,[48] with the other two being the United States - Mexico and the United Arab Emirates - India (UN, 2015). Whereas both the United States and the United Arab Emirates have been long-standing figures of high-income economy, Thailand, on the contrary, has constantly been classified as middle-income economy (World Bank, 2018a). How and why Thailand, despite less than stellar economic incentive and living standard, has been able to sustain a high number of immigrant workers over decades may prove to be a useful case study for scholars and practitioners in migration studies.

Apart from Burmese immigrants, who have made up the majority of immigrant worker body; with Thailand as destination area in this study, Cambodian immigrants have been incorporated into this study as they have consistently been the second largest group of immigrant workers in the country. Moreover, extraordinarily, during the past ten years, the number of Cambodian immigrants has expanded pervasively with the growth rate of 566 percent (OFWA, 2010-2019).[49]

As Thai economy relied significantly on production sector—to be precise it made up more than one third of national GDP (World Bank, 2016)—and as the majority of immigrant workers are employed in this sector,[50] this study—from the start—pinpointed immigrants in production industries. Afterward, by taking a closer look at production sector, seafood processing industry stood out as the most compelling case study for its overwhelming

[48] The United Nations published data regarding the volume of migrants along specific migration corridor from as early as 1990.

[49] Please refer to Table 1-3.

[50] This will be further elaborated in Chapter 2, section 2.1, "Immigrant Workers and Their Economic Contribution to Thailand".

dependency on immigrant workforce both by absolute number and, especially, relative dependency (OFWA 2010-2019).[51] Moreover, seafood processing industry has been one of the core manufacturing industries for Thailand's export-oriented economic policy and processed seafood has been, in fact, one of the most significant export products of the nation (MOC, 2019).[52]

In seafood processing industry, similarly to the structure of immigrant workers in Thailand, Burmese and Cambodian immigrants were the two largest groups of foreign workers (OFWA, 2010-2019). Nevertheless, compared with 67.06 percent of Burmese and 25.79 percent of Cambodian workers to total low-skilled immigrants in Thailand in 2016; seafood processing industry has been largely dominated by the Burmese as approximately 89.52 percent of foreign workers were from Myanmar, 7.68 percent were from Cambodia, and 2.80 percent are from Laos. As this study aims to supply accurate understanding about migration decision of immigrant workers, within the context of unstable labor supply from Myanmar and Cambodia, Burmese and Cambodian immigrants in the industry at the forefront of this potential labor shortage crisis—seafood processing industry—were selected as units of analysis.

Furthermore, conforming to existing literatures (Vungsiriphisal et al., 2013; Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012; Chantavanich & Jayagupta, 2010), which revealed that the majority of Burmese workers in Thailand—as well as in seafood processing industry—were the Mon Burmese, this work's pilot study[53] found that Burmese workers in Thai seafood processing industry were commonly the Mon Burmese who came from Mon State.[54] For Cambodian workers, Banteay Meanchey was found to be the most common origin province and nearly all of Cambodian immigrants were Khmer[55]—both the overall Cambodian workforce in Thailand and the Cambodian workforce in seafood processing industry—these data as well conformed to existing literatures (Koenig, 2016; Sophal & Sovannarith, 1999).[56] For these reasons, the Mon and the Khmer were chosen as case studies in this research.

1.6.5 Data Collection

Data collection in this study comprised three phrases: literature review, pilot study, and field research. Firstly, existing literatures, both theoretical and case-specific studies relevant to migration decision, have been thoroughly examined, as fully addressed in the previous section, in order to assess the current body of knowledge about migration decision. Moreover, existing literatures were continuously reviewed as empirical data were later collected; this was for data validation purpose. Secondly, before the main field research was carried out, pilot study was implemented to validate certain grounding information from the

[51] Please refer to Table 1-4.

[52] See Appendix 1-A: Thailand's Major Export Products 2008-2017.

[53] Pilot study was conducted between February and March 2016. It comprised interviews with scholars, NGOs, government officials, an entrepreneur, community leaders, and immigrants from Myanmar and Cambodia. This is further elaborated below in section 1.6.5, "Data Collection".

[54] Further investigation from expand stage revealed conforming demographic data of the Burmese workers. This will be presented in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2, "The Body of Low-Skilled Workers in Thai Seafood Processing Industry".

[55] Further investigation from expand stage revealed conforming demographic data of the Cambodian workers. This will be presented in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2, "The Body of Low-Skilled Workers in Thai Seafood Processing Industry".

[56] These data were confirmed again in later stage of this study, further elaborated in Chapter 2, section 2.2.3, "Immigrant Worker: A Significant Ingredient Behind Thai Economy".

existing literatures; pilot study also served as a feasibility study for later field research. Research sites and target interviewees in later phrase of data collection were also built on from data from pilot study. Finally, this study relies on empirical data, by the means of interviews and observations, from repeating fieldworks both in destination and origin areas.

1.6.5.1 Pilot Study

After existing literatures had been reviewed, pilot study was conducted for two primary purposes; firstly, to validate grounding information and, secondly, to evaluate research feasibility. Pilot study was conducted between February and March 2016, it comprised interviews with key informants: scholars, government officials, NGO officers, entrepreneurs, and community leaders as well as interviews with immigrants from Myanmar and Cambodia, all of which were unstructured interviews. Key informants were selected by expert sampling, while immigrants were selected by convenient sampling (Palinkas et al., 2013; Palys, 2008). Moreover, their communities, how they lived, and work conditions in Samut Sakhon and Rayong were observed.

Firstly, grounding information validation; in fact, all of the interviews, with both key informants and immigrants, during pilot study aimed to validate the accuracy of data collected from existing literatures. Results revealed decent data accuracy of grounding information, such as immigrant workforce's ethnicity proportion, areas of origin, motivation, and community contexts both in their origin and destination areas. Data gathered supports existing literatures which stated that the Mon Burmese predominated immigrant workforce in Thai seafood processing industry both in Samut Sakhon and elsewhere, and that their most common area of origin was Mon State. In Rayong, investigation revealed that most of the foreign workers in seafood processing industry were Khmer Cambodian, and that Banteay Meanchey was the most common of origin.

Interviews with key informants and immigrants further revealed that immigrants' migration decisions, both from Myanmar and Cambodia, have been largely fueled by economic reasons. Influences from other socioeconomic factors such as perception, social status, and family community were also noticeable as secondary reasons. In terms of community contexts, conforming to existing literatures, most of the immigrants came from the rural area with agriculture as the primary economic activity. Immigrants generally relied on personal networks and migratory agencies during their migrations. Furthermore, data revealed that immigrants often communicated within their own immigrant groups with minimal communication with Thai people or immigrants from different countries.

Secondly, feasibility evaluation, two scholars whose expertise lied in low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand were reached out in order to consult and validate theoretical framework as well as existing academic findings about Burmese and Cambodian immigrants in Thailand. Interviews with two governmental officials from the Ministry of Labour of Thailand were conducted to validate data accuracy of official publication about foreign workers statistics; these interviews also confirmed the limitation of data supplied by OFWA.[57]

Interviews with NGO officers, Burmese community immigrant leader in Samut Sakhon, Cambodian teacher in Cambodian immigrant community learning center in Rayong, entrepreneurs who employed Burmese and Cambodian workers, as well as Burmese immigrants in Samut Sakhon and Cambodian immigrants in Rayong, together with area observations, were organized to assess fieldwork feasibility in Samut Sakhon and Rayong. At

[57] This is further elaborated in section 1.6.2, "Limitation".

the end of pilot study, research sites and target interviewees were identified for field research in subsequent phrase.

Table 1-5: Overview of Pilot Study

Interviewees	Research sites	Interviewee specification (number of cases)	Interview methods
Key informants	Samut Sakhon, Rayong, and Bangkok	• Scholars (2) • Government officials from the Ministry of Labour of Thailand (2) • Migration NGO officer in Samut Sakhon (1) • Migration NGO officer in Rayong (1) • Entrepreneur (Immigrant workers employer) in Samut Sakhon (1) • Entrepreneur (Immigrant workers employer) in Rayong (1) • Burmese immigrant community leader in Samut Sakhon (1) • Cambodian teacher in Cambodian immigrant community learning center in Rayong (1)	Unstructured
Immigrants workers in seafood processing industry	Samut Sakhon	• Burmese immigrant workers (10)	Unstructured
	Rayong	• Cambodian immigrant workers (10)	Unstructured

1.6.5.2 Field Research

Interviews and observations were the main vehicles of data collection during repeating fieldworks, both in destination and origin areas—from 2016 to 2018. The course of field research comprised two fieldworks in Myanmar's Mon State, two fieldworks in Cambodia's Banteay Meanchey Province, three fieldworks in Thailand's Samut Sakhon, and three fieldworks in Rayong.[58] In fact, field research in this study was separated into three stages: primary, expand, and follow-up, as elaborated in Table 1-6. In the same table, the overview of interviewee profiles as well as interview methods in each stage are elaborated.

Table 1-6: Field Research in Three Stages

Stage		Research sites	Interviewees (number of cases)	Interview methods
Primary	Thailand	Samut Sakhon	Key informants[59] (9) • *Migration NGO officer (2)* • *Mon immigrant community leader (2)* • *Mon monk (2)* • *Thai monk (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Entrepreneur (1)*	Unstructured

[58] See section 1.6.5.3, "Research Sites", for detailed information about research sites and research sites selection.

[59] In principal, the same key informants were interviewed in primary, expand, and follow-up stages.

			Migrant workers (22)	Semi-structured
		Rayong	Key informants (9) • *Migration NGO officer (2)* • *Khmer immigrant community leader (2)* • *Thai monk (2)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Cambodian teacher in Cambodian immigrant community learning center (1)* • *Entrepreneur (1)*	Unstructured
			Migrant workers (18)	Semi-structured
		Bangkok	Key informants (2) • Scholar (2)	Unstructured
	Mon State	More Village	Key informants (6) • *Community leader (1)* • *Doctor (1)* • *Monk (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Returnee (2)*	Unstructured
			Migrant workers' household members (10)	Semi-structured
		Bar Village	Key informants (4) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (2)* • *Returnee (1)*	Unstructured
			Migrant workers' household members (10)	Semi-structured
	Banteay Meanchey Province	Moy Village	Key informants (6) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (2)* • *Teacher (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Returnee (1)*	Unstructured
			Migrant workers' household members (10)	Semi-structured
		Pii Village	Key informants (6) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (2)*	Unstructured

			• *Teacher (1)* • *Returnee (2)* Migrant workers' household members (10)	Semi-structured
Expand	Thailand	Samut Sakhon	Key informants (9) • *Migration NGO officer (2)* • *Burmese immigrant community leader (2)* • *Mon monk (2)* • *Thai monk (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Entrepreneur (1)*	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers (407)	Structured
		Rayong	Key informants (9) • *Migration NGO officer (2)* • *Khmer immigrant community leader (2)* • *Thai monk (2)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Cambodian teacher in Cambodian immigrant community learning center (1)* • *Entrepreneur (1)*	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers (404)	Structured
		Bangkok	Key informants (2) • *Scholar (2)*	Semi-structured
	Mon State	More Village	Key informants (6) • *Community leader (1)* • *Doctor (1)* • *Monk (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Returnee (2)*	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers' household members (5)	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers' household members (106)	Structured
		Bar Village	Key informants (4) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (2)* • *Returnee (1)*	Semi-structured

			Migrant workers' household members (5) Migrant workers' household members (104)	Semi-structured Structured
		Buoy Village	Key informants (3) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (1)* • *Returnee (1)* Migrant workers' household members (10) Migrant workers' household members (113)	Unstructured Semi-structured Structured
		Mazzone Village	Key informants (5) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (1)* • *Teacher (1)* • *Returnee (2)* Migrant workers' household members (10) Migrant workers' household members (102)	Unstructured Semi-structured Structured
	Banteay Meanchey province	Moy Village	Key informants (6) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (2)* • *Teacher (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Returnee (1)* Migrant workers' household members (5) Migrant workers' household members (109)	Semi-structured Semi-structured Structured
		Pii Village	Key informants (6) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (2)* • *Teacher (1)* • *Returnee (2)* Migrant workers' household members (5) Migrant workers' household members (104)	Semi-structured Semi-structured Structured
		Bay Village	Key informants (3) • *Community leader (1)*	Unstructured

			• *Monk (1)* • *Teacher (1)*	
			Migrant workers' household members (6)	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers' household members (106)	Structured
		Buan Village	Key informants (5) • *Community leader (1)* • *Monk (1)* • *Casino worker (1)* • *Teacher (1)* • *Returnee (1)*	Unstructured
			Migrant workers' household members (10)	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers' household members (93)	Structured
Follow-up	Thailand	Samut Sakhon	Key informants (8) • *Migration NGO officer (2)* • *Mon immigrant community leader (2)* • *Mon monk (2)* • *Thai monk (1)* • *Migration agency officer (1)*	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers (10) • *Migrant workers from More Village (5)* • *Migrant workers from Bar Village (5)*	Semi-structured
		Rayong	Key informants (8) • *Migration NGO officer (2)* • *Khmer immigrant community leader (2)* • *Thai monk (2)* • *Migration agency officer (1)* • *Cambodian teacher in Cambodian immigrant community learning center (1)*	Semi-structured
			Migrant workers (10) • *Migrant workers from Moy Village (5)* • *Migrant workers from Pii Village (5)*	Semi-structured

Primary stage was conducted between August and November 2016. Starting in Thailand, the destination area, unstructured interviews with key informants were carried out to gather broad information about migration decision. Key informants included scholars, migration NGO officers, immigrant community leaders, monks, migration agency officers, and Thai entrepreneurs in Bangkok Province, Samut Sakhon Province, and Rayong Province.

In the origin areas, key informants included community leaders, monks, migration agency officers, doctor, teachers, and returnees in Myanmar's Mon State and Cambodia's Banteay Meanchey Province.

Migrant workers in Samut Sakhon and Rayong as well as migrant workers' households in Mon and Banteay Meanchey were selected by purposive sampling as official and reliable population data was not available (Palinkas et al., 2013; Palys, 2008).[60] While unstructured interview method was employed in the case of Mon and Khmer workers in Thailand during pilot study in order to encourage free flow of information and discussion which included description of various influential factors on migration decision; semi-structured interview method was employed in the case of current Mon and Khmer workers during primary stage as well as their household members.[61] Semi-structured interview questionnaires in this stage were developed from prior data collection including data from unstructured interviews during pilot study and primary stage. As general understanding about migration decision in these case studies had been developed, the aim of interviews with current migrant workers and migrant workers' household members in primary stage were to focus on influential factors suggested by prior unstructured interviews. At the same time, semi-structured interview left enough space for interviewer to follow meaningful topical trajectories, brought up by interviewee, in the conversation that may stray from the interview outline.

Expand stage started in June 2017 and finished in September, the same year. Building on data from primary stage, expand stage aimed to expand, explain, and justify certain significant initial findings. Field research in origin area was largely expanded; in the case of Mon State, two more villages were included—Buoy Village and Mazzone Village. In the case of Banteay Meanchey Province, additional two villages were included: Bay Village and Buan Village. More villages in both Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province were added to cover more samples and expand the study.

In this stage, regarding key informants, semi-structured interview method was employed in the case of key informants in Thailand and previously surveyed villages in the origin areas, while unstructured interview method was employed in the case of key informants in newly surveyed villages and group. In both previously surveyed and newly surveyed villages, semi-structured interview method was also implemented with selected target interviewees in order to verify certain information and to properly develop the structured questionnaires. Structured interview method was employed during this expand stage for non-key informants—both in destination and origin areas—with its main purpose to justify certain significant findings with quantitative data. Interviewee selection method was similar to primary stage; however, as sample size was considerably larger, local assistants were employed to facilitate data collection from target interviewees.

Follow-up stage was conducted from January to February 2018. Observations and interviews in Samut Sakhon and Rayong were carried out to follow up on data collected from the expand stage which suggests that several key influences over migration decision lied in the linkage between their community in origin and destination areas.

1.6.5.3 Research Sites

In terms of research sites in Thailand, Samut Sakhon was chosen as research site for the Mon Burmese immigrants for two prominent reasons, the size of the Mon Burmese

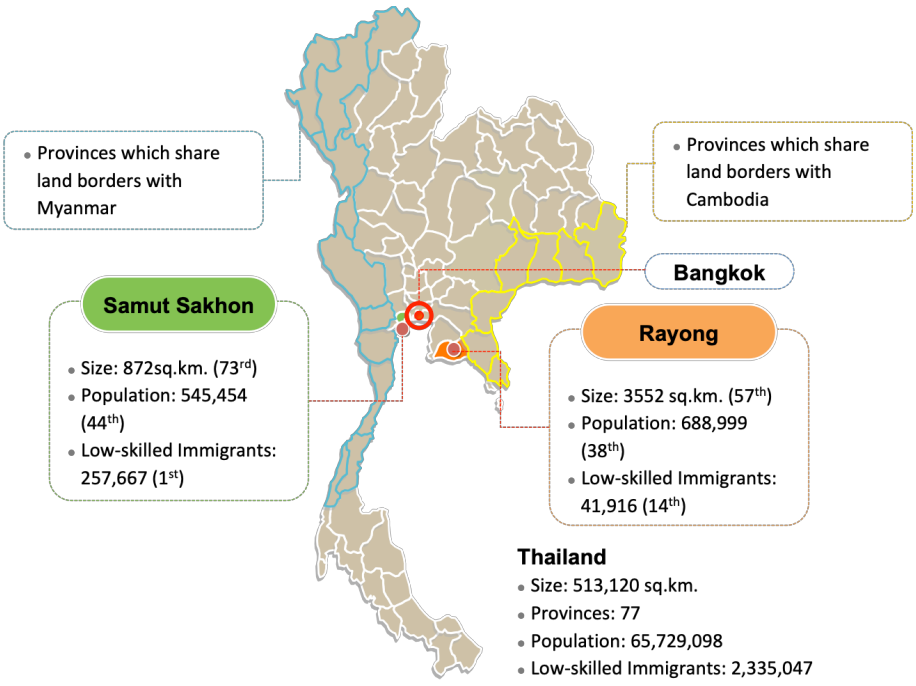
[60] Sampling method is further elaborated in section 1.6.5.4, "Sampling".

[61] In this study, household members refer to family members who share the same house.

immigrants in seafood processing industry and the strength of their community ties. Firstly, Samut Sakhon, a province in Thailand, known as national hub of seafood processing industry, located the biggest seafood processing business in the country, as shown in Table 1-7. In fact, the majority of Burmese immigrant workers in seafood processing industry were employed here, as shown in Table 1-8. Secondly, according to existing literature (Chamratrithirong, Holumyong, & Aphipornchaisakul, 2011), Burmese immigrants in Samut Sakhon, the majority of whom were employed in seafood processing industry, recorded the sharpest number of immigrants with existing compatriot relatives in Thailand prior to their migration. As the focal point in this study is largely at the community level, the case of Burmese immigrant workers in seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon proved to provide an appealing condition suitable for this study.

In the case of research site for current Cambodian Khmer immigrants in Thailand; however, the size of Cambodian workforce was small in Samut Sakhon. Instead, Rayong Province was selected as the main research site for fieldworks related to Cambodian immigrants in this study. Considering 10 major provinces with the largest seafood processing industry—although Rayong ranked the third in terms of Cambodian immigrants employed by absolute number, after Bangkok and Samut Prakan—however, Rayong had a distinct characteristic as Rayong was the only province which employed more Cambodian than Burmese immigrants. Such circumstance, being the largest immigrant group, which was paralleled to the Burmese in other areas, was expected to bring a distinct picture of the Cambodian immigrant community (OFWA, 2010-2019: Department of Fisheries of Thailand, 2017; Chantavanich et al., 2014).

Figure 1-1: Map of Thailand Highlighting Samut Sakhon, Rayong, and Land Border Provinces to Myanmar and Cambodia[62]



Source: Department of Provincial Administration of Thailand, 2018; OFWA, 2015
Graphic credit: yourfreetemplates.com (self-modified) under Creative Commons' license CC BY-ND 4.0

[62] Population and low-skilled immigrant workers data are based on information from 2015.

Table 1-7: Disposition of Marine Catch in Thailand in 2015, by Province[63]

Province	Processed Marine Catch
Samut Sakhon	910,297
Samut Prakan	459,852
Songkhla	286,963
Pattani	189,979
Ranong	140,836
Rayong	118,380
Chumphon	117,259
Bangkok	108,420
Trang	76,481
Nakhon Si Thammarat	58,849

Source: Department of Fisheries of Thailand, 2017

Table 1-8: Estimated Immigrant Workers in Selected Provinces in Thailand in 2015[64]

Province	Total	Burmese Workers		Cambodian Workers	
		Total	%	Total	%
Samut Sakhon	265,496	248,474	93.59	9,193	3.46
Samut Prakan	94,498	59,048	62.49	30,422	32.19
Songkhla	92,888	70,882	76.31	18,658	20.09
Pattani	7,708	6,516	84.53	1,120	14.54
Ranong	88,980	88,942	99.96	15	0.02
Rayong	43,906	17,871	40.70	24,045	54.77
Chumphon	42,289	40,908	96.73	259	0.61
Bangkok	209,191	147,394	70.46	44,388	21.22
Trang	17,834	14,583	81.77	2,021	11.33
Nakhon Si Thammarat	37,244	34,073	91.49	1,363	3.66

Source: OFWA, 2015

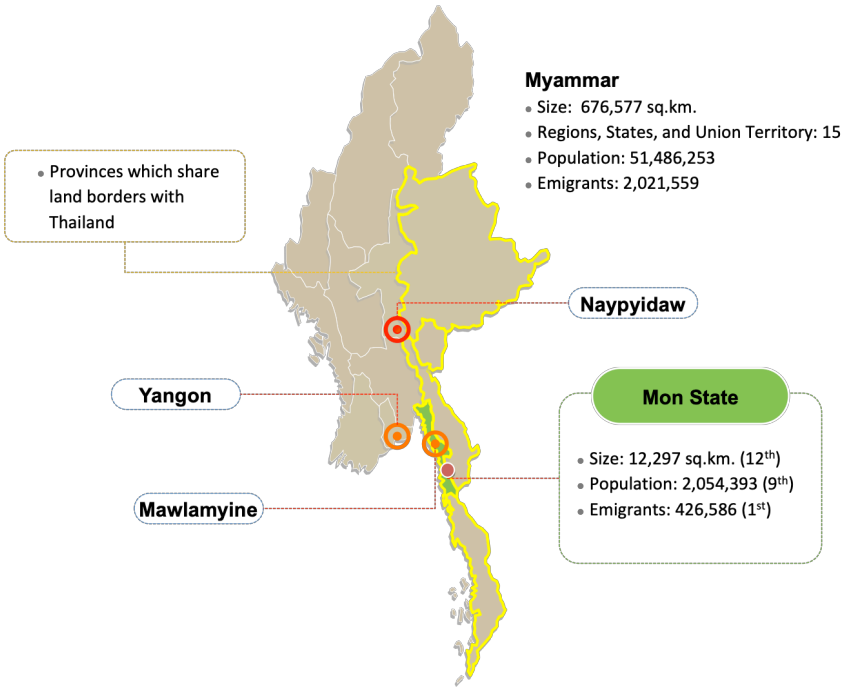
For research sites in origin areas, literature review revealed that the vast majority of Burmese workers in Thai seafood industry come from Mon State, which conformed to this work's pilot study. Afterwards, data from this study's primary stage of field research in

[63] As provincial productivity output of seafood processing industry is not available, disposition of marine catch data is alternately employed.

[64] Due to data limitation, the number of low-skilled immigrants employed in seafood processing industry in each province was estimated. As OFWA does not supply data of immigrant workers classified by industry in provincial level, this study's research sites justification is based on two assumptions. First, larger provincial production of seafood processing industry leads to larger provincial employment of immigrant workers in seafood processing industry. Second, provincial distribution of immigrants in seafood processing industry is proportional to provincial distribution of immigrant worker population and provincial productivity of seafood processing industry.

Samut Sakhon further unveiled that the majority of people in work age from immigrants' hometowns—mainly rural area—in Mon State, as well as most of the parts of Myanmar, migrated to work in Thailand. This information also conformed to existing literature (Vungsiripaisal et al., 2013; Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012; Chantavanich & Jayagupta, 2010). Hence, two villages in Mon State were selected to represent typical migrant sending hometowns in rural setting during fieldwork at the origin area in the primary stage. These two villages, More Village and Bar Village, were also hometowns to a large number of respondents in Samut Sakhon. Later, Buoy Village and Mazzone Village were added to the field research during the expand stage to expand the study.[65][66]

Figure 1-2: Map of Myanmar Highlighting Mon State and Land Border States and Regions to Thailand[67][68]



Source: Department of Population of Myanmar, 2017a; Ndegwa, 2016
Graphic credit: yourfreetemplates.com (self-modified) under Creative Commons' license CC BY-ND 4.0

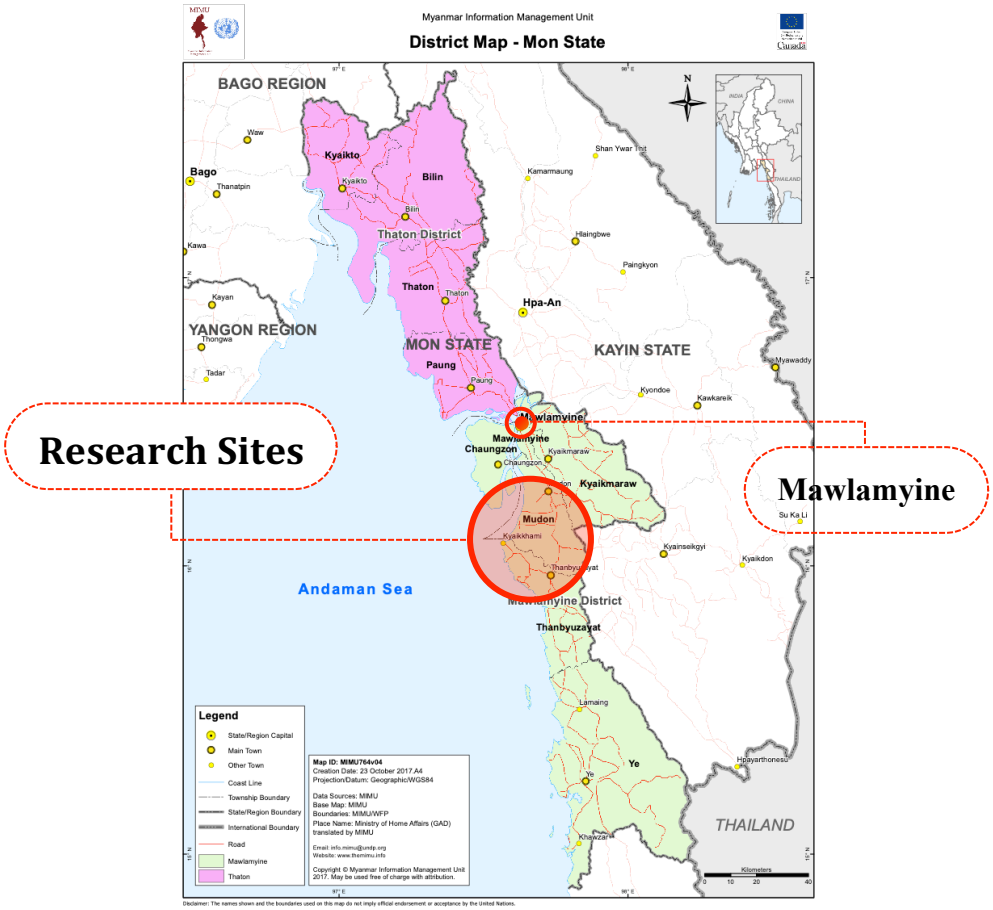
[65] All villages' and interviewees' names in this thesis are concealed by pseudonyms for confidential purpose.

[66] More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone were located geographically close to each other, within 20 kilometers. They situated to the south, approximately 30 kilometers distance, of Mawlamyine, the capital city of Mon State.

[67] Population and emigrant data are based on information from 2014.

[68] Emigrant data represents both voluntary and involuntary emigrants.

Figure 1-3: Map of Mon State Highlighting Research Sites



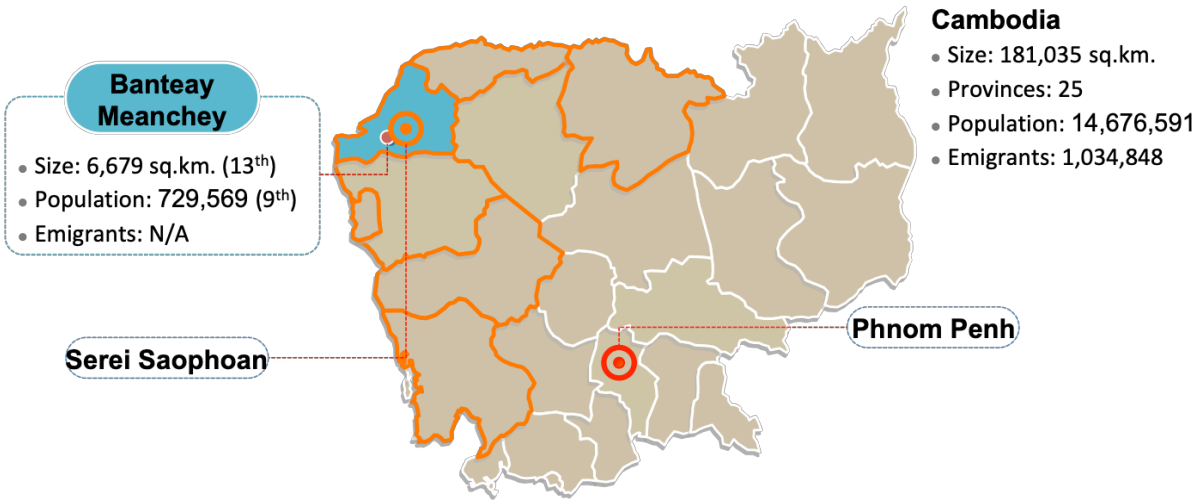
Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit [MIMU], 2017[69]

In the case of origin areas in Cambodia, literature review indicated that the majority of Cambodian workers in Thai seafood industry come from Banteay Meanchey, which conformed to this work's pilot study. Afterwards, data from this study's primary stage of field research in Rayong further unveiled that the majority of people in work age from immigrants' hometowns—mainly rural area—in Banteay Meanchey, as well as most of other parts of Cambodia, migrated to work in Thailand. This information also conformed to existing literature (Koenig, 2016; Sophal & Sovannarith, 1999). Hence, two villages in Banteay Meanchey were selected to represent typical migrant sending hometowns in rural setting during fieldwork in the primary stage. These two villages, Moy Village and Pii Village, were also hometowns to a large number of respondents. Later, Bay Village and Buan Village have been added during the expand stage to expand the study.[70]

[69] Myanmar Information Management Unit [MIMU] is a service to the UN Country Team and Humanitarian Country Team, under the management of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.

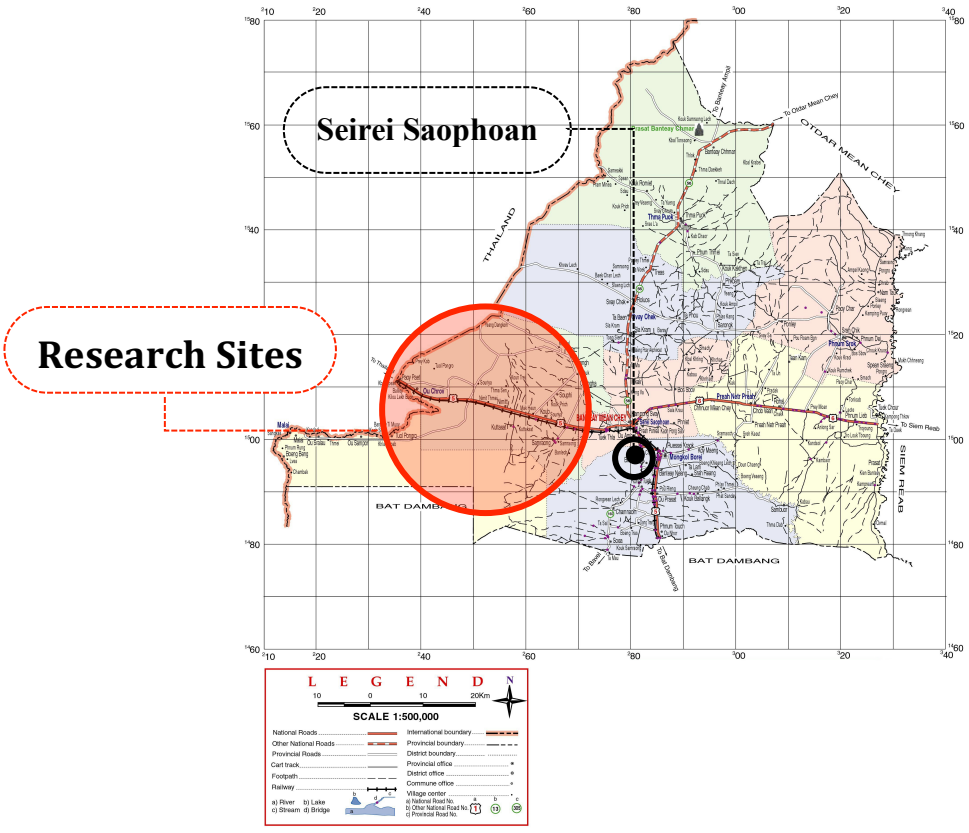
[70] Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village were located geographically close to each other, within 30 kilometers. They situated to the west, approximately 50 kilometers distance, of Seirei Saophoan, the capital city of Banteay Meanchey Province.

Figure 1-4: Map of Cambodia Highlighting Banteay Meanchey Province and Land Border Provinces to Thailand[71]



Source: National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia, 2013; Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2013; United Nations, 2017
Graphic credit: yourfreetemplates.com (self-modified) under Creative Commons' license CC BY-ND 4.0

Figure 1-5: Map of Banteay Meanchey Province Highlighting Research Sites



Source: Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2013

[71] The National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia and the Council for the Development of Cambodia supplied population and land area data, which were from 2013. National emigration data was supplied by the United Nations; this data represented Cambodian emigration in 2015. However, emigration data at provincial level was not available.

1.6.5.4 Sampling

Data limitation in this study—fully described in section 1.6.2, "Limitation"—includes the unavailability of official or reliable population data of immigrants in Samut Sakhon, Rayong, as well as villages in Mon and Banteay Meanchey. As a result, probability sampling was not possible. Instead, two purposive sampling methods were implemented in this study; typical case sampling was implemented with an aim to study the phenomenon and trend resulted from typicality of cases in surveyed units, while deviant case sampling were employed to study the outlying cases which diverge from the norm as regards a particular phenomenon, issue, or trend (Palinkas et al., 2013; Palys, 2008). All samplings in this study were, nevertheless, assisted by local scholars and people who have been familiar with the areas: Thai scholars, Burmese scholars, Mon scholars, Cambodian government officials, migratory NGO officers, migration agency officers, and community leaders.

1.6.5.5 The Structure of Interview Questionnaires

As interview is one of the major data collection vehicles, along with observation; interview questionnaires were developed based on above elaborated socioeconomic framework. Validation method of interview questions in this study was adapted from the method of content validity, "Index of Item-Objective Congruence" (Rovinelli & Hambleton 1977). Expert panel—responsible for reviewing and evaluating questionnaires—comprised Thai scholars specializing in low-skilled immigrants in Thailand, migration NGO officers, Burmese scholars, Cambodian government officials, and a Thai business owner who employed Mon and Khmer workers.[72] Questionnaires were tested and revised before actual data collection. In this section, the detailed construction of interview questionnaire in each stage is elaborated.

Whereas interview methods varied in different stages of field research, the organizations of research questionnaires were parallel. In general, questionnaires for field research in Thailand comprised five parts: general information (age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, hometown, and types of work permit), earning and remittance, actors and roles in migration decision, social context, and return decision. Questionnaires for field research in origin area comprised four parts: general information (age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, job, household income, and household members' migratory status), actors and roles in migration decision, social context, and remittance. Each interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes.[73]

[72] Please see Appendix 1-B for expert panel members' profiles.

[73] Please see Appendix 1-C for an example of questionnaires for semi-structured interview for migrant's household members in origin area and Appendix 1-D for an example of questionnaires for structured interview for immigrant workers in Thailand. Whereas questionnaires for semi-structured interview and structured interview for different group of respondents varied, they followed the same patterns and the difference was modest.

CHAPTER 2

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND THE DYNAMIC OF LOW-SKILLED IMMIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND

In order to supply sufficient workforce for its export-driven economic policy, Thailand has employed a large number of low-skilled workers from its neighboring countries. Since the 1980s, Thailand has especially focused on manufacturing industry as a backbone for the nation's export strategy; the strategy which centralizes on cost leadership in the international market. This cost leadership strategy, while successfully implemented, has constantly called for a high volume of low cost and low-skilled workers to sustain its cost leadership in the international market (Bassino & Williamson, 2015; Siriprachai, 1998).

During the latter decades, Thai domestic workforce has suffered from the lowering birth rate; falling from 3.39 newborns per woman in 1980 to 1.51 newborns per woman in 2019, placing Thailand among the 30 countries with the lowest birth rate in the world (World Bank, 2020).[74] Furthermore, expanded education came with better occupational opportunities for Thai nationals; with higher level of education, Thai workers tended to move up the occupational hierarchy to semi-skilled and high-skilled positions. The development of these phenomena has left numerous occupational vacancies in manufacturing sector. As a result, immigrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos have been filling the gap of employment in these labor-intensive manufacturing industries (NSO, 2015b; Sanglaoid, Santipolvut, & Phuwanich, 2014; Chantavanich & Jayagupta, 2010). In fact, low-skilled workers from these three neighboring countries of Thailand, 2,800,455 individuals, accounted for more than 92 percent of the nation's total foreign workers[75] in 2019 (OFWA, 2019).[76]

Thai government became aware of significant economic contribution from low-skilled immigrant workforce and enacted distinct regulations concerning the employment of low-skilled workers since 1992 (Martin, 2004). Originally, Thai immigration policy permitted nationals only from three countries to work in designated low-skilled industries,[77] all of which were Thailand's immediate neighboring countries: Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia. It was not until 2015 when Thai government attempted an initiate project to employ low-skilled workers from Vietnam. Nevertheless, the number of registered Vietnamese workers was marginal, to be precise 1,569 individuals. After one-time registration in 2015, Thai government has not revealed a clear direction regarding low-skilled immigrants from Vietnam. Including Vietnam, currently, Thai immigration policy permits employers to recruit low-skilled workers only from these four countries (OFWA, 2015).

In order to comprehend the significance and the dynamic of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand, especially in the seafood processing industry, this chapter is divided into four sections: immigrant workers and their economic contribution to Thailand, the dynamic of low-skilled immigrants in Thailand, immigrant workers and Thai seafood processing industry, and the growing importance and dependency on low-skilled immigrant

[74] In comparison, in 2016, the world fertility rate was 2.40; the fertility rates of Japan, the United States, and the European Union were 1.36, 1.71, and 1.52 accordingly.

[75] "Total foreign workers" here means the total number of registered foreign workers in Thailand, including both skilled and unskilled workers.

[76] Please refer to Table 1-2 "Total Foreign Workers and Low-Skilled Immigrants in Thailand" and Table 1-3 "Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Countries of Origin" in Chapter 1.

[77] This will be further elaborated in section 2.2.4, "Immigrant Workers in Manufacturing Sector: Ascending Dependency on Immigrant Workforce".

workers in Thai seafood processing industry. In the first section, immigrant workers and their economic contribution to Thailand, the economic contribution of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand will be evaluated and discussed. The second section, the dynamic of low-skilled immigrants in Thailand, will reveal the development of low-skilled immigrant worker registration system in Thailand, the rapid growth of immigrant workers resulted from the lack of domestic workforce in certain industries, and the gradually changing demographical landscape of immigrants' countries of origin. Thirdly, immigrant workers and Thai seafood processing industry; this section will be centralized around the dynamic of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry—the extraordinary high rate of foreign worker dependency and the details of the industry's body of workforce. Finally—the growing importance and dependency on low-skilled immigrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry—this section serves as a conclusion of this chapter.

2.1 Immigrant Workers and Their Economic Contribution to Thailand

Evidently, immigrant workers had positive influence toward Thai overall economy. Several economic studies attempted to calculate costs and benefits of immigrant workers, especially in the low-skilled worker sector, inflow to the country. Two major favorable aspects have been found: steady labor supply and continual competitive strategy.

The first aspect, immigrant workers supplied workforce for Thai economy, especially in occupations which have gradually been considered undesirable by Thai natives. Derived from Japanese original concept of 3Ks, jobs in this category possess one, two, or all characteristics of being *Kitanai* or Dirty, *Kiken* or Dangerous, and *Kitsui* or Demanding; or 3Ds job characteristics in American neologism (Connell, 1993). In Thailand, low-skilled positions in these various economic sectors including agriculture, domestic work, construction, and a number of manufacturing industries have been gradually fulfilled by immigrant workers (Pholphirul, 2012; Martin, 2007).

Regarding this aspect, economists agreed that immigrants positively enhanced national real GDP; however the strength of the influence estimated varied depending on technics applied as well as different annual data. In 1995, Sussangkarn (1996) assessed that 750,000 low-skilled immigrants, equaled to 2.2 percent of national workforce, contributed to approximately 0.55 percent of national GDP, or $839 million of Thai $168 billion GDP during that year. Ten years later, Martin (2007) applied the same model with data from 2005, when 5 percent of Thai national workforce were low-skilled immigrant workers. The result showed that low-skilled immigrant workers made up 1.25 percent of national GDP increment; this number would make up approximately $2 billion out of then $189 billion GDP. In 2016, Chaichanavichakit (2016) employed the same model and estimated that low-skilled immigrant workers, who made up 6.51 percent of national workforce, contributed around 1.63 percent of Thai GDP in 2015; this equaled $6.43 billion out of $395 billion GDP during that year. Study from the World Bank also confirmed immigrant worker's economic contribution to Thailand was around 0.75 to 1 percent of national GDP during 1990-2008, with rising trend (Pholphirul, Kamlai, & Rukumnuaykit, 2010).

The second favorable aspect of immigrant workers was that the low-skilled workers from Thai neighboring countries enabled Thai firms to maintain price and cost competitiveness in the global market. Furthermore, relatively low-wage immigrant workers also gave Thailand an advantage in attracting investment from foreign firms (Pholphirul, 2012). Even though minimum wage in Thailand exceeded those of other in-land ASEAN countries, better infrastructure, location advantage, and ease of doing business still attracted

investment from foreign corporations, considering current level of labor cost (Taguchi, Matsushima, & Hayakawa, 2014; World Bank, 2018b). Both of these, in turn, further promoted employment in the country and national economic growth.

However, contrasting to those benefits, notable negative impacts were also found. Drawbacks from low-skilled immigrant employment included decelerated innovation development and the lack of skill training for Thai workers. Study found that every 10 percent increase of low-skilled immigrant workers resulted in a reduction of firms' probability of research and development investment by approximately four percent. The same increment of 10 percent also resulted in three percent lower probability of a firm to invest in worker's skill training (Paitoonpong & Chalamwong, 2012; Pholphirul, 2012).

2.2 The Dynamic of Low-Skilled Immigrants in Thailand

This section addresses three main questions regarding low-skilled immigrants in Thailand. Firstly, why did Thailand simultaneously employ three different low-skilled immigrant worker registration methods at the same time? Secondly, what have been the forces behind the rapid growth of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand? And thirdly, where did the immigrant workers come from?

These three questions, however, are addressed in five sub-sections. The first sub-section, immigrant workers under low-skilled immigrants employment scheme, discusses the simultaneously use of three immigrant worker registration methods. The forces behind extraordinary growth of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand are fully elaborated in the second to the fourth sub-sections: the rapid growth of low-skilled immigrant workers, immigrant worker: a significant ingredient behind Thai economy, and immigrant workers in manufacturing sector: ascending dependency on immigrant workforce. The final sub-section, immigrant workers' countries of origin, focuses on the dynamic and trend of immigrant workers regarding their countries of origin.

2.2.1 Immigrant Workers Under Low-Skilled Immigrant Employment Scheme

Historically, Thailand had never systematically documented low-skilled immigrant workers; not until 1992 when, as a consequence from its export-driven economic policy, Thai labor-intensive industries called for external source of workforce, due to deficient number of domestic workers in low-skilled worker sector. As Thai government became aware of significant contribution from immigrant workforce, special low-skilled immigrant worker employment scheme was established to facilitate the inflow of immigrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos to fulfill the gap of labor supply and demand in Thai labor market. Currently, Thailand simultaneously employs three different registration methods for low-skilled immigrants: firstly, temporary registration which began in 1992; secondly, national verification which began in 2006; and thirdly, MOU which also began in 2006.

Temporary registration method was the first registration method implemented by Thai government. It aims to document immigrant workers who already reside in Thailand; temporary registration, to be precise, is an ad-hoc approach by Thai government to document and manage immigrant workers who enter the country illegally. Temporary permits granted for immigrant workers are often valid for one to two years; immigrants are required to renew the permits should they wish to extend their stay in the country. However, as an ad-hoc method, there has been no specific timeframe for each round of temporary registration; government often makes impromptu calls for registration of immigrant workers as they deem necessary. The calls are usually announced approximately a few months before registration

dates. Moreover, each round of registration does not necessarily require the same set of documents as well as associated fees.

It was not until 2006 when Thai government attempted to systematically document immigrant workers; national verification and MOU methods were introduced. These two methods were expected to replace cluttered and volatile temporary registration. National verification, in fact, is another ad-hoc registration method which aims to improve documentation and data accuracy of low-skilled immigrant workforce in the country. By this method, immigrant workers who already reside in Thailand, with or without temporary permit, upon fulfilling nationality verification requirement from their respective government agencies, will be granted proof of identification which allows them to work in Thailand for two years. This permit, however, can be renewed only once; which means that an immigrant worker can work in Thailand consecutively only for four years. Should immigrant workers wish to continue working in Thailand, they have to leave the country for at least three years before entering the country again. The schedule for each round of registration as well as required documents and associated fees, while not identical, were considerably consistent year by year.

While temporary registration and national verification's primary purpose is to legalize and regulate immigrant workers who already reside in Thailand; MOU method takes different approach in terms of immigration management. Employment of immigrant workers through MOU method starts from the application from Thai employers to the Department of Employment of Thailand stating their demands for immigrant workers. After reviewing process, the Department of Employment of Thailand will then forward the requests to government of partner countries: Myanmar, Cambodia, or Laos, through their respective embassies in Thailand. Partner governments will, thereafter, recruit and screen workers from their countries; the final list of candidates will be sent to employers in Thailand. Thai employers are, then, responsible for the registration of prospective workers prior to their arrival in Thailand.

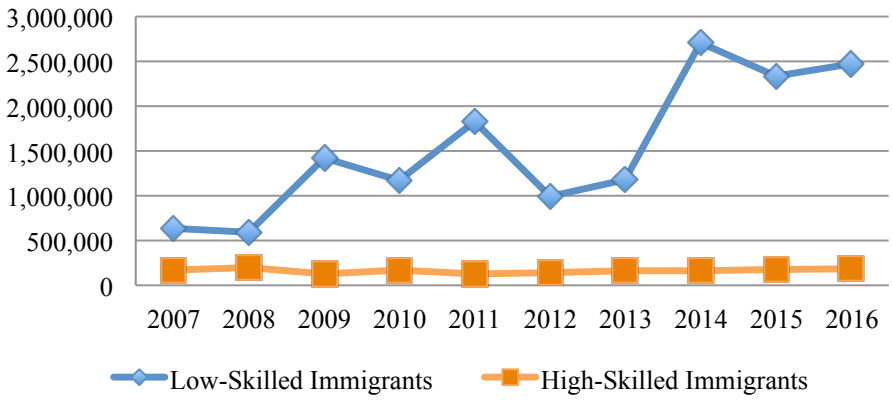
Finally, after the completion of registration process, prospective immigrant workers can legally enter and work in Thailand. Similarly to nationality verification method, immigrant workers via MOU method are allowed to work in Thailand for two years with permission for one-time renewal. Should immigrant workers wish to continue working, they have to leave Thailand for at least three years before entering the country again. Employers can submit applications for the employment of immigrant workers on a rolling basis; required documents and associated fees are constant and clearly stated. Immigrant worker registration by MOU method is, indeed, Thai government's most desirable registration method (Archavanitkul, 2012; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2018; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2006a).

Since 2006, these three registration methods have been simultaneously implemented. MOU has been carried out for planned registration, while—on the other end of the spectrum—temporary registration has been used for ad hoc workforce deficiency. Nationality verification has usually been used for workers who were documented through temporary registration from the previous year. Whereas MOU and nationality verification were introduced in 2006, the number of workers under these registration methods remained low until 2010—when workers under these two registration methods rose above 20 percent of total low-skilled immigrant workers, as shown in Table 2-1. In 2014, the combined number of workers under these two registration methods exceeded half of total low-skilled immigrant workforce.

2.2.2 The Rapid Growth of Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers

By the end of 2016, Thailand had 2,655,519 registered foreign workers (OFWA 2016). Approximately 93 percent of them were under low-skilled immigrant worker employment scheme. Out of 2,469,255 migrants under low-skilled immigrants employment scheme: 1,657,190 were from Myanmar, 637,374 were from Cambodia, 175,092 were from Laos, and 1,569 were from Vietnam. In fact, low-skilled workers from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam made up for 67.06 percent, 25.79 percent, 7.09 percent, and 0.06 percent of low-skilled foreign workforce in Thailand respectively.[78]

Figure 2-1: The Increment of Foreign Workers in Thailand 2007-2016



Source: OFWA, 2007-2016

According to data from OFWA (2007-2016) and the Ministry of Labour of Thailand (2013), Thailand has witnessed steadily rising number of foreign workforce, which has been significantly driven by the rapid surge of low-skilled immigrants under special immigrant worker employment scheme. While the number of foreign high-skilled workers has slightly increased over the last decade, at 7.52 percent; the number of foreign low-skilled workers has nearly tripled itself with an increment of 290.38 percent.

Despite strong growth in recent years, the number of low-skilled immigrant workers faced two major turbulences; one during 2007-2008 and another during 2012, as consequences of sub-prime crisis originated in the US and the major flood in Thailand respectively. The sub-prime crisis, while did not directly affect Thai financial sector, impaired the country's stock market as well as export performance. The latter effect led to lower employment in export-related businesses (Sussangkarn & Jitsuchon 2009; Cheewatrakoolpong & Manprasert 2012).

Between 2009 and 2011, the number of low-skilled immigrants had recovered due to more stabilized global economy as well as strategically loosened immigration policy by the Prime Minister Vejjajiva's government at that time (The Secretariat of the Prime Minister of Thailand, 2012). However, major flood by the end of 2011 extensively damaged national economy. The World Bank (2011) estimated $45.7 billion in economic damages and losses due to flooding. During such natural disaster, manufacturing sector took the strongest damage as seven major industrial estates were submerged under the water; to be precise, Poapongsakorn and Meethom (2012) estimated $32.87 billion damages and losses of Thai manufacturing industries. Furthermore, the recovery of these industrial estates took longer time than other factors of production, additionally hindering the performance of

[78] Please refer to Table 1-3 in Chapter 1.

manufacturing sector in following years. As a consequence, the demand of labor significantly dropped during 2012, before slowly rebounded in 2013 as domestic industries gradually recovered.

Phenomenally high growth of registered low-skilled immigrant workers in 2014-2016 had been the result of Thai government's attempt to resolve labor shortage as well as human trafficking problems. Under current Prime Minister Chanocha, the Ministry of Labour of Thailand has been remarkably active in facilitating low-skilled immigrant worker documentation process as well as generating public awareness about immigrants in low-skilled sectors (Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2014). One of the strongest influences behind this attempt was the international pressure from unfavorable evaluations by the US's trafficking in persons report as well as by the EU's illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing report [IUU], which severely affected Thai export performance, especially in the seafood processing businesses.

Since the demotion to the bottom tier of the US's trafficking in persons report in 2014, which was followed by the formal warning from the EU's illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing report in 2015; Thai authorities have been utterly active to amend these evaluations. Consequently, Thailand has been lifted from the bottom tier to normal tier of the US's trafficking in persons report in 2016; however, reevaluation of the EU's illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing report has still been in the progress. Once both unfavorable evaluations are lifted, the performance of Thai manufacturing sector, especially the seafood processing industry, is expected to recover and progressively grow (Chantavanich et al., 2014; Kmonpetch et al., 2018).

The Growing Shares of Registrants Under Nationality Verification and MOU Methods

While three different low-skilled immigrant worker registration methods have been simultaneously implemented, available statistics revealed that Thai government has successfully implemented nationality verification and MOU registration methods. Since their inaugurations in 2006, the portions of registered immigrant workers under both methods have constantly been on the rise. With less than eight percent in 2006; a decade later, registered immigrant workers from nationality verification and MOU methods made up more than half of total registered immigrant workers in Thailand, as exhibited in Table 2-1. This trend has been shared indiscriminately among all groups of immigrant worker regardless of their nationality.[79]

Table 2-1: Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Registration Method

Year	Total Low-Skilled Immigrants	Temporary Registration		Nationality Verification		MOU	
		Individuals	%	Individuals	%	Individuals	%
2006	721790	668,576	92.63	49,214	6.82	4,000	0.55
2007	632,520	546,272	86.36	72,098	11.40	14,150	2.24
2008	589,646	501,570	85.06	71,017	12.04	17,059	2.89
2009	1,419,743	1,314,382	92.58	77,914	5.49	27,447	1.93
2010	1,168,824	932,255	79.76	210,044	17.97	26,525	2.27
2011	1,825,658	1,248,064	68.36	505,238	27.67	72,356	3.96
2012	994,749	167,881	16.88	733,603	73.75	93,265	9.38

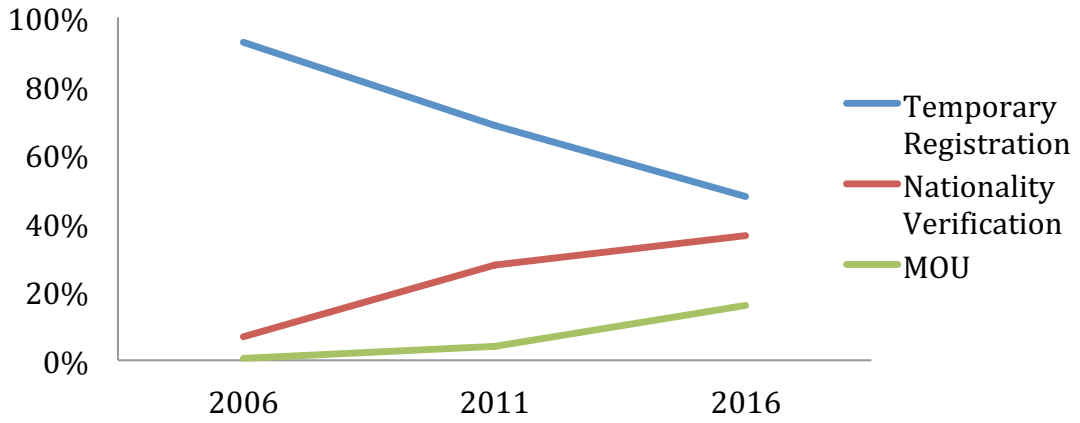
[79] See appendix 2-A for low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand, by registration method and country of origin.

2013	1,179,434	158,262	13.42	847,130	71.83	174,042	14.76
2014	2,711,304	1,533,675	56.57	971,461	35.83	206,168	7.60
2015	2,335,047	1,066,362	45.67	989,374	42.37	279,311	11.96
2016	2,469,255	1,178,678	47.73	897,828	36.36	392,749	15.91

Source: OFWA, 2006-2016; Department of Employment of Thailand, 2008; Department of Employment of Thailand 2007; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2006b; Martin 2007

The constantly rising number of registered immigrants under nationality verification and MOU methods was especially obvious during 2012 and 2013 when Thai economy was heavily affected from the major flood at the end of 2011. During which time, temporary demand for immigrant workers in Thailand was dramatically lowered due to severe damage in the nation's manufacturing sector. However, on the contrary to temporary registration which derived from urgency and impromptu demand for immigrant workers, planned employment of immigrant workers through nationality verification and MOU were not affected from short-term economic downturn. To be precise, while new demand for low-skilled immigrant workers was dwindled, immigrant workers who were already employed and resided in Thailand at that time shifted from their temporary work permit to work permit under nationality verification method. On the other side, the employment of immigrant workers via MOU method is often carried out by relatively larger companies, which, in general, take less effect during short-term economic crisis (Panya, 2015; Hill, Wickramasekera, Liesch, & MacKenzie, 2017).

Figure 2-2: The Share of Immigrant Workers Under Different Registration Methods



Source: OFWA, 2006-2016; Departmentof Employment of Thailand, 2008; Department of Employment of Thailand 2007; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2006b; Martin 2007

With regard to MOU method, Thai government's target formula for immigrant worker documentation; Figure 2-2 shows that registered immigrants under MOU method has gradually expanded its share compared to other registration methods, precisely from 0.55 percent of the total body of immigrant workers in Thailand in its inaugural year to 15.91 percent in 2016. Should this trend continue, the number of immigrant workers under MOU registration will soon surpass those under temporary registration and nationality verification methods.

2.2.3 Immigrant Worker: A Significant Ingredient Behind Thai Economy

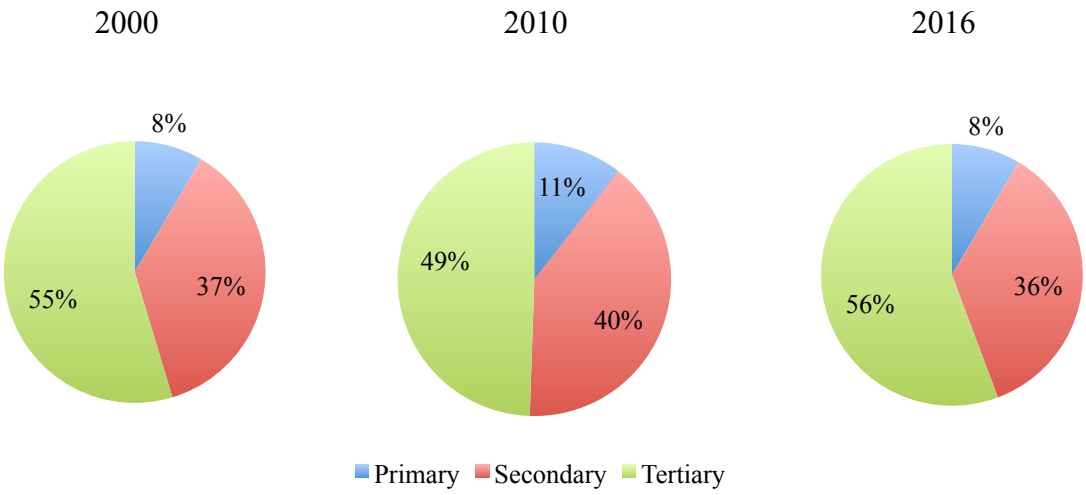
The rising number of low-skilled immigrant workers has largely come from the growing demand in the secondary and tertiary industries, exhibited in Table 2-2. From 2011[80] to 2016, while the number of immigrant workers in primary sector has notably dropped down by 31.80 percent, the numbers of immigrant workers in secondary and tertiary sectors have significantly risen by 49.86 percent and 61.08 percent respectively.[81] This data conformed to the changing structure of output of Thai economy between these years, as revealed in Figure 2-3.

Table 2-2: Estimated Sectorial Share of Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Economic Sector

Sector	2011	%	2016	%
Primary	397,723	21.79	271,265	10.99
Secondary	910,409	49.87	1,364,379	55.25
Tertiary	517,526	28.35	833,611	33.76
Total	1,825,658	100.00	2,469,255	100.00

Source: OFWA, 2011-2016

Figure 2-3: The Structure of Economic Output of Thailand, by Economic Sector



Source: World Bank, 2017

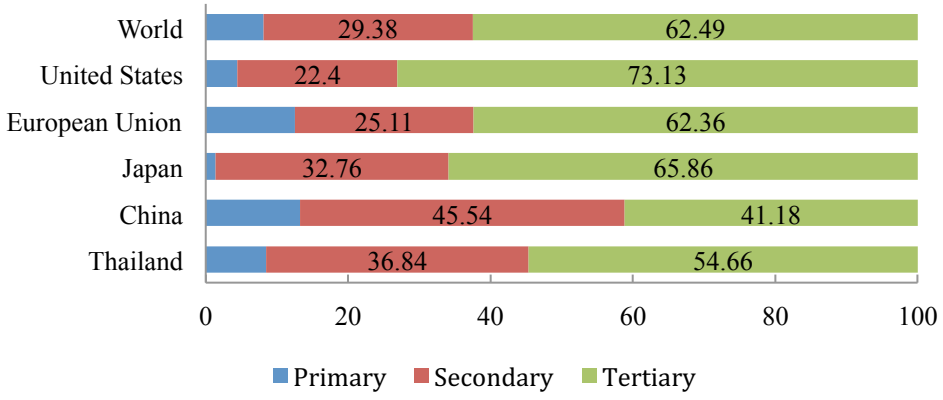
While the structure of Thai economic output was close to identical between 2000 and 2016; during this period of time, Thai secondary sector was largely expanded during the 2000s, after which time tertiary sector was largely expanded. The expansion of secondary sector was driven by the flourishing exportation of manufacturing products and strong demand for real estate since the early 2000s. Subsequent expansion of tertiary sector was fueled by the growth of tourism industry and financial sector (Koonnathamdee, 2013; Booth, 2016; Chaichanavichakit, 2014; Sajjanand, Perpoomwiwat, & Holumyong, 2010;

[80] Comparison of the number of local and foreign workers within the same industry was not possible until 2011 when NSO (2012) published national industry census which included the total number of workers in each industry.

[81] Before 2009, OFWA implemented different industry classification for the employment of low-skilled immigrant workers; a large portion of registered immigrants was unclassifiable by economic sector.

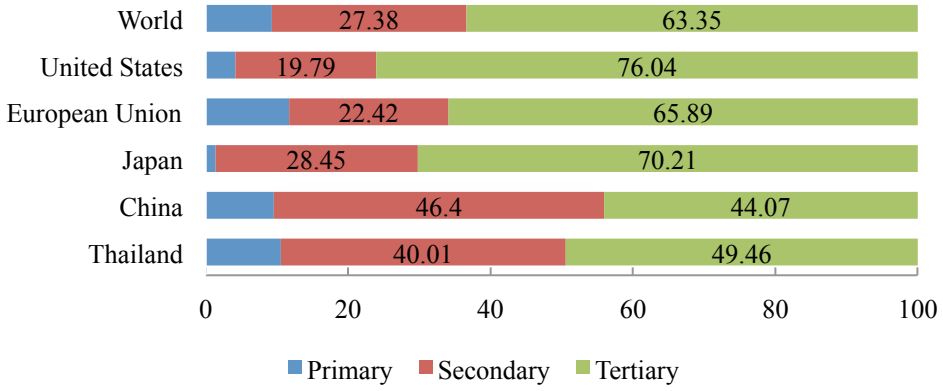
Rattanaprichavej, Sriboonjit, & Kulvisaechana, 2015). The expansion of tertiary sector in Thailand conforms to the traditional pattern of economic development, precisely developed countries tend to gradually shift from their originally dependence on primary and secondary economic sectors to tertiary sector (Hill, Wickramasekera, Liesch, & MacKenzie, 2017; Henderson, Dicken, Hess , Coe, & Yeung , 2002). Figure 2-4 to 2-6 reveal the structure of economic output of Thailand and selected countries between 2000 and 2016.

Figure 2-4: The Structure of Economic Output of Thailand and Selected Economies in 2000, by Economic Sector



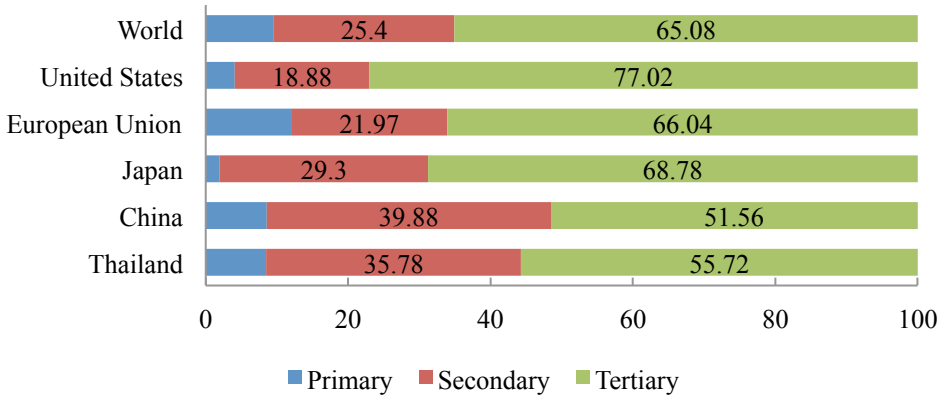
Source: World Bank, 2017

Figure 2-5: The Structure of Economic Output of Thailand and Selected Economies in 2010, by Economic Sector



Source: World Bank, 2017

Figure 2-6: The Structure of Economic Output of Thailand and Selected Economies in 2016, by Economic Sector

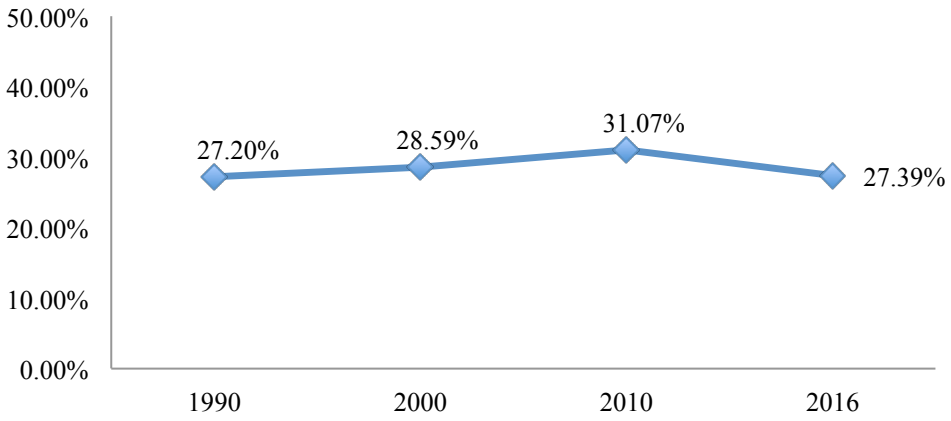


Source: World Bank, 2017

2.2.4 Immigrant Workers in Manufacturing Sector: Ascending Dependency on Immigrant Workforce

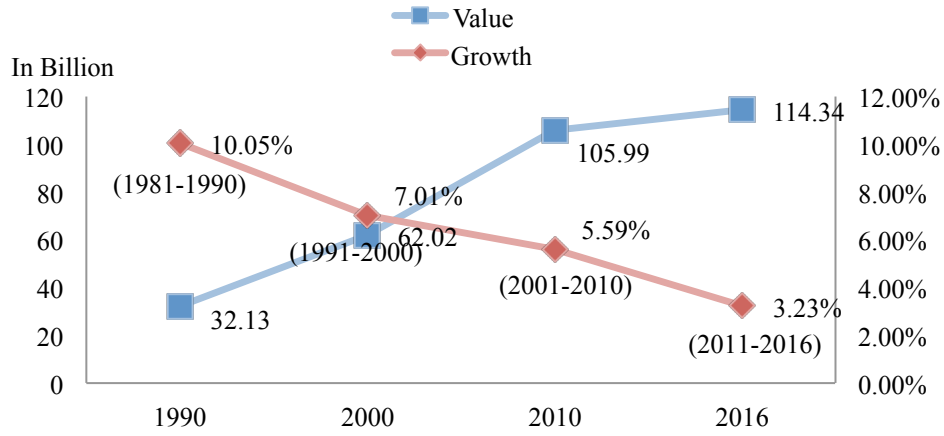
Thai production sector has been largely driven by manufacturing industries, which are considered the backbone of Thai export-oriented economy. In fact, manufacturing sector has constantly comprised more than one fourth to Thai GDP, as shown in Figure 2-7. Figure 2-8 highlights the performance of manufacturing sector in Thailand since 1990. Despite the downturn of growth in recent years and the expansion of tertiary sector; manufacturing sector, comprising much of the output in production sector, is expected to remain an important force driving Thai economy for a long period of time (Paitoonpong, 2011; Chaichanavichakit, 2014).

Figure 2-7: Thai Manufacturing Sector to GDP



Source: World Bank, 2017

Figure 2-8: The Value of Thai Manufacturing Sector and Sector Growth



Source: World Bank, 2017

According to the current immigration policy, low-skilled immigrant workers are now being permitted to work in 25 specific businesses, 12 of which are in manufacturing sector (OFWA 2016). Table 2-3 shows the growth rate of immigrant workers in these manufacturing businesses. Between 2011 and 2016, the size of immigrant workforce in Thai manufacturing sector had gradually expanded from 570,805 in 2011 to 895,478 in 2016, an average growth of above 11 percent per annum.

Table 2-3: Estimated Immigrant Workers in Manufacturing Sector, by Industry

Industry	2011	2016	Change (%)
Agricultural Processing	119,776	231,105	92.95
Clay Processing	14,397	12,260	-14.84
Construction Material	24,882	54,307	118.26
Electronics	10,083	50,249	398.35
Freshwater Animal Processing[82]	None	13,188	None
Garment	109,243	136,202	24.68
Livestock Processing	61,491	72,776	18.35
Paper	7,726	21,844	182.73
Plastic	35,304	98,441	178.84
Recycle	26,814	39,672	47.95
Seafood Processing	156,301	160,066	2.41
Stone Processing	4,786	5,367	12.14
Total Manufacturing Sector	570,805	895,478	56.88

Source: OFWA, 2011-2016

In 2016, agroprocessing industry held the highest share of immigrant workers in the manufacturing sector as approximately one fourth of them were employed in this industry.

[82] Freshwater animal processing industry was added to the list of industries which permit the employment of immigrant worker in 2016.

Beside agroprocessing industry, seafood processing and garment are the other two industries which employed more than 100,000 immigrant workers. This is closely followed by plastic industry which hosted 98,441 immigrants. In fact, the size of foreign workforce reflected the gap of labor supply and demand in these industries.

In the aspect of growth rate, electronics business possessed the strongest growth with 398.35 percent rise from 10,083 individuals in 2011 to 50,249 individuals in 2016. The surging number of immigrant workers was the result of stronger export performance of electronics products, especially electronics integrated circuit, machinery and parts, and air conditioner and parts. Paper, plastic, and construction material businesses had also significantly expanded the number of immigrant workers employed, exceeding 100 percent. Agroprocessing industry also employed a remarkably escalating number of immigrant workers during these years, with 92.95 percent increment. These industries have, in fact, benefited from the economic cooperation within ASEAN community as well as the expansion of Thai manufacturing products into new markets, especially China and India (Ministry of Commerce of Thailand, 2015; Ministry of Industry of Thailand, 2016).

Intense Dependency on Immigrant Worker

Perhaps, Thai manufacturing sector's level of dependency on immigrant workers cannot only be depicted by absolute number; the ratio of immigrant workers to the total workforce in each business, relative dependency, is another criterial component to clarify and highlight the significance of immigrant workforce in these Thai manufacturing industries.

Though foreign workers contributed only approximately 6.52 percent to Thai nationwide workforce in 2016, different sectors had different degrees of immigrant workers dependency. As exhibited in Table 2-4, Thai manufacturing sector, in 2016, relied on immigrant workers more than four times of national average at 27.11 percent.

Table 2-4: Estimated Foreign Workforce Dependency in Thai Manufacturing Sector in 2011 and 2016, by Industry

Industry	2011		2016	
	Immigrant Workers	Ratio (Immigrant Workers : Total Workforce)	Immigrant Workers	Ratio (Immigrant Workers : Total Workforce)
Agricultural Processing	119,776	9.80 %	231,105	19.20 %
Clay processing	14,397	7.76 %	12,260	6.61 %
Construction Material	24,882	10.29 %	54,307	22.17 %
Electronics	10,083	2.32 %	50,249	13.41 %
Garment	109,243	25.65 %	136,202	38.09 %
Livestock Processing	61,491	28.33 %	72,776	29.64 %
Paper	7,726	9.23 %	21,844	24.93 %
Plastic	35,304	18.54 %	98,441	48.57 %
Seafood Processing	156,301	72.40 %	160,066	82.85 %
Stone Processing	4,786	38.47 %	5,367	42.60 %

Total Manufacturing Sector[83]	570,805	16.84 %	895,478	27.11 %
Total National Workforce	1,950,650	4.89 %	2,655,519	6.52 %

Source: OFWA, 2016; NSO, 2012a; NSO, 2017; OIE, 2018; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2006b; Chaichanavichakit, 2016

Out of 10 comparable manufacturing businesses which immigrant workers were permitted, seafood processing industry had the sharpest degree of immigrant workers dependency. While being the second by absolute number in 2016, seafood processing industry had steadily relied heavily on immigrant workers by relative dependency; in 2016, approximately 82.85 percent of the low-skilled workforce in this industry were immigrant workers. Plastic and stone processing industries also possessed considerably high degree of dependency on immigrant workers at 48.57 percent and 42.60 percent, respectively. In fact, incremental dependency on foreign low-skilled workers had been observed in almost all industries across the board. Interestingly, while agroprocessing industry employed the highest number of immigrant workers, 231,105 individuals; the industry only moderately relied on foreign workforce, as 19.20 percent of its workforce were immigrant workers.

On the contrary, garment and plastic industries both possessed relatively high number of immigrant workers as well as high degree of relative dependency. Garment industry ranked the third by absolute number of immigrant employees and the fourth in terms of degree of relative dependency. Plastic industry was the fourth ranked manufacturing industry by absolute number of immigrant workers, while being the second by degree of relative dependency.

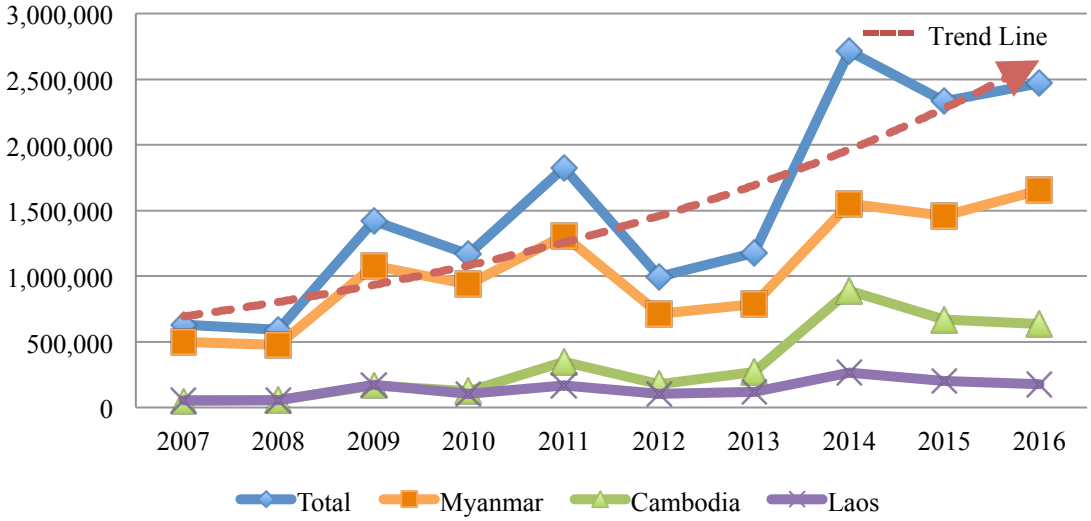
2.2.5 Immigrant Workers' Countries of Origin

Despite two major turbulences during 2007-2008 and 2012, as mentioned in earlier section, immigrant worker inflow has shown strong tendency of continual growth. During the past 10 years, the number of immigrant workers has nearly quadrupled itself with an increment from 632,520 individuals in 2007 to 2,469,255 individuals by the end of 2016, 290.38 percent growth rate.

In accordance with the prevailing trend, the number of workers from Myanmar and Laos has progressively, although not consecutively, risen from 498,091 and 54,193 individuals in 2007 to 1,657,190 and 173,092 individuals in 2016, respectively. The numbers of Burmese and Lao workers have grown at a consonant pace, with the growth rate of 232.70 percent for Burmese workers and 219.40 percent for Lao workers. However, the number of Cambodian immigrant workers, strikingly, has expanded pervasively with extraordinary growth rate of 1,249.00 percent, from 47,248 individuals in 2007 to 637,374 individuals in 2016. Figure 2-9 exhibits this growing trend of immigrant worker inflow between 2007 and 2016, as well as separate immigration inflows from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos.

[83] While OFWA has regularly adjusted the job classification of low-skilled immigrants, such classification does not always conform to job classification from other government agencies. This table excludes recycling and freshwater animal processing industries for two reasons. Firstly, in order to analyze the level of dependency on immigrant workers, the numbers of Thai and foreign workers in the same industry need to be available; however, NSO, the agency which is responsible for national industrial census and annual labor survey applies different job classification. Consequently, certain industries, which are recycling and freshwater animal processing industries in this case, are not compatible to compare. Secondly, the numbers of immigrant workers in these two industries were not considerably significant; in fact, they represented 4.43 percent and 1.47 percent of total immigrant workforce in Thai manufacturing sector in 2016.

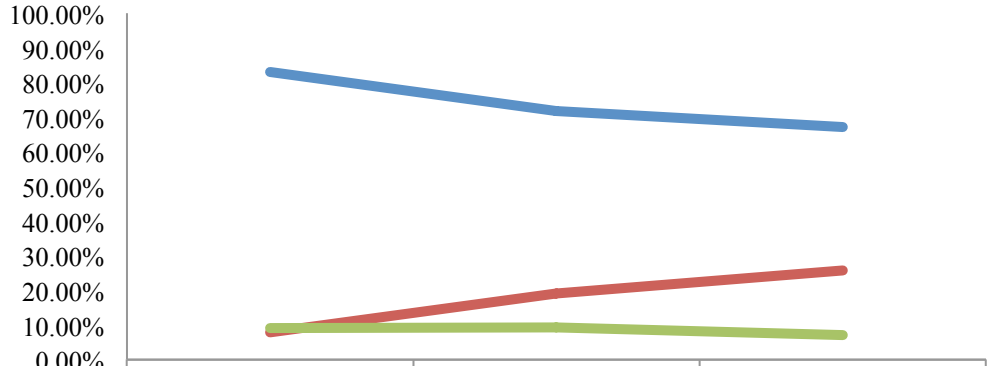
Figure 2-9: Estimated Low-Skilled Immigrant Worker Stock in Thailand 2007-2016, by Country of Origin



Source: OFWA, 2007-2016

Different growth rates of each group have slowly changed the demographical landscape of low-skilled migrant worker sector in Thailand. The Burmese immigrants, while strongly maintaining their numerically leading position, has been gradually trailed by the Cambodian immigrants. Figure 2-10 shows gradually lowering proportion of Burmese workers in Thai low-skilled worker sector. From 83.08 percent in 2007, the proportion of Myanmar workers has shrunk approximately 16 percent to 67.11 percent in 2016. The number of Lao immigrant workers, even with the growth rate of 219.40 percent, could not keep up with the rapid growth of Cambodian workers, which soared at 1,249.00 percent. As a result, Lao share of migrants in Thai low-skilled worker sector slightly fell approximately 2 percent.

Figure 2-10: Estimated Share of Low-Skilled Immigrant Worker Stock, by Country of Origin



	2007	2011	2016
Myanmar	83.08%	71.73%	67.11%
Cambodia	7.88%	19.04%	25.81%
Laos	9.04%	9.23%	7.09%

Source: OFWA, 2007-2016

On the other hand, Cambodian workers have significantly expanded their share in Thai low-skilled worker sector. While Myanmar and Lao fractions were shrinking, the proportion of Cambodian workers has continually been enlarged. From the last position in 2007, the share of Cambodian workers in Thai low-skilled sector has rapidly grown from 7.88 percent to 25.81 percent in 2016.

Further close-up study on immigrant workforce in each industry in Thai manufacturing industry reveals similar dynamic of change, exhibited in Table 2-5. Figure 2-11 shows that Myanmar has constantly been the major source of foreign low-skilled workers in Thai manufacturing industry, following by Cambodia and Laos. Since 2009,[84] while the number of immigrant workers from Myanmar and Laos has been rapidly expanding, the rate of increment was not comparable to those of the Cambodian. During this period, the employment of immigrant workers in manufacturing industry had risen 161.70 percent; specifically the Burmese 126.78 percent, the Cambodian 630.03 percent, and the Lao 164.44 percent respectively.

Table 2-5: Estimated Number of Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers Employed in Thai Manufacturing Sector in 2009 and 2016, by Country of Origin

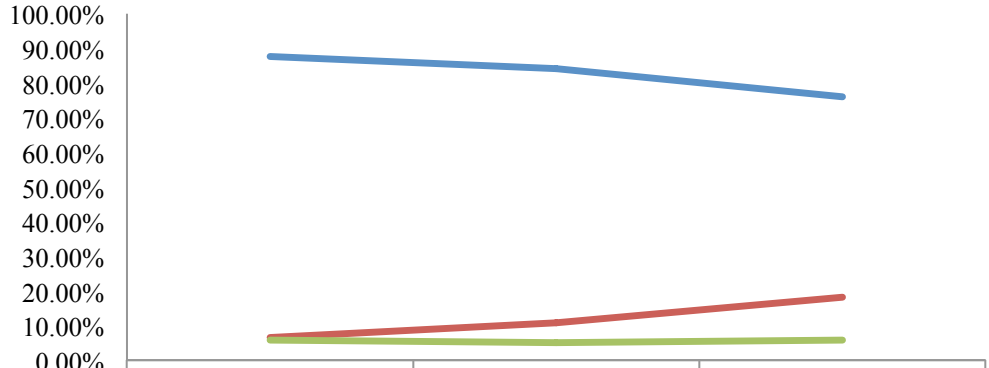
Industry	Myanmar		Cambodia		Laos	
	2009	2016	2009	2016	2009	2016
Agricultural Processing	59,401	167,352	7,167	53,042	3,972	10,711
Clay processing	5,258	9,172	744	1,936	348	1,152
Construction Material	9,875	37,252	1,083	11,681	1,400	5,374
Electronics	2,269	39,230	164	8,577	369	2,441
Freshwater Animal Processing[85]	None	13,022	None	23	None	143
Garment	44,979	108,107	1,878	18,218	6,612	9,876
Livestock Processing	8,229	47,940	477	19,984	855	4,852
Paper	2,194	15,061	150	4,800	431	1,982
Plastic	13,977	71,408	1,448	19,609	2,887	7,424
Recycle	10,366	25,537	2,393	10,487	1,469	3,649
Seafood Processing	140,176	143,298	6,503	12,291	1,275	4,477
Stone Processing	3,296	2,994	247	1,825	284	547
Total Manufacturing Sector	300,020	680,374	22,256	162,475	19,902	52,629

[84] Before 2009, OFWA implemented different industry classification for the employment of low-skilled immigrant workers; a large portion of registered immigrants was unclassifiable by economic sector.

[85] Freshwater animal processing industry was added to the list of industries which permit the employment of immigrant worker in 2016.

Source: OFWA, 2009-2016

Figure 2-11: Estimated Share of Low-Skilled Immigrant Worker Stock in Thai Manufacturing Sector, by Country of Origin[86]



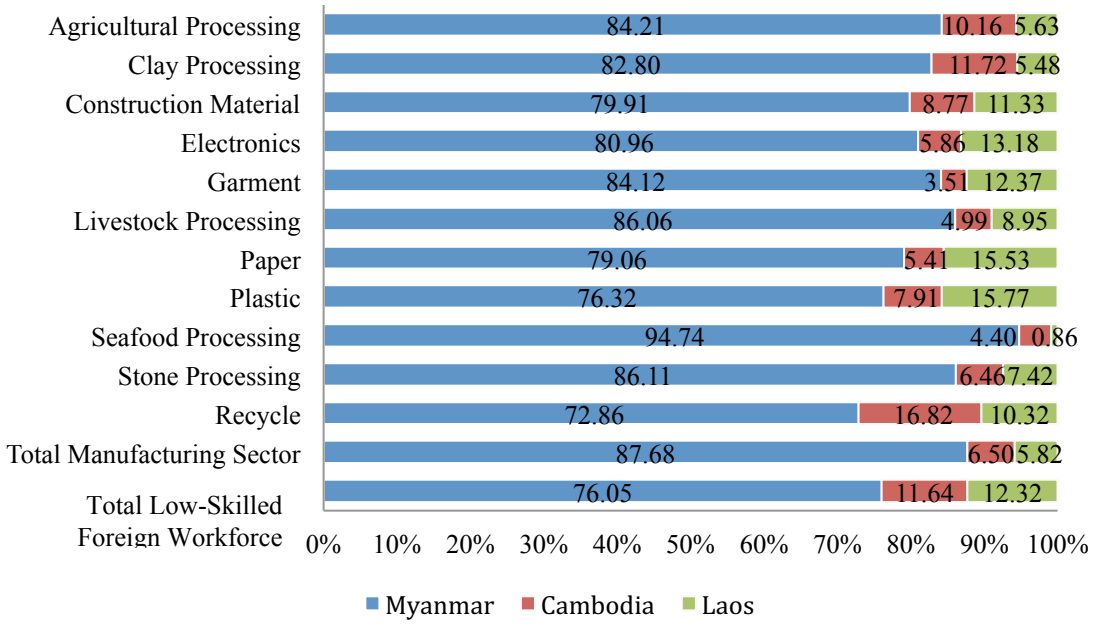
	2009	2011	2016
Myanmar	87.68%	84.14%	75.98%
Cambodia	6.50%	10.81%	18.14%
Laos	5.82%	5.04%	5.88%

Source: OFWA, 2009-2016

Figure 2-12 and Figure 2-13 highlight the expansion of the Cambodian immigrant worker share in every manufacturing industry in Thailand between 2009 and 2016. While the share of Lao immigrant workers was consistent between these years, the share of Burmese workers has gradually been replaced by the Cambodian.

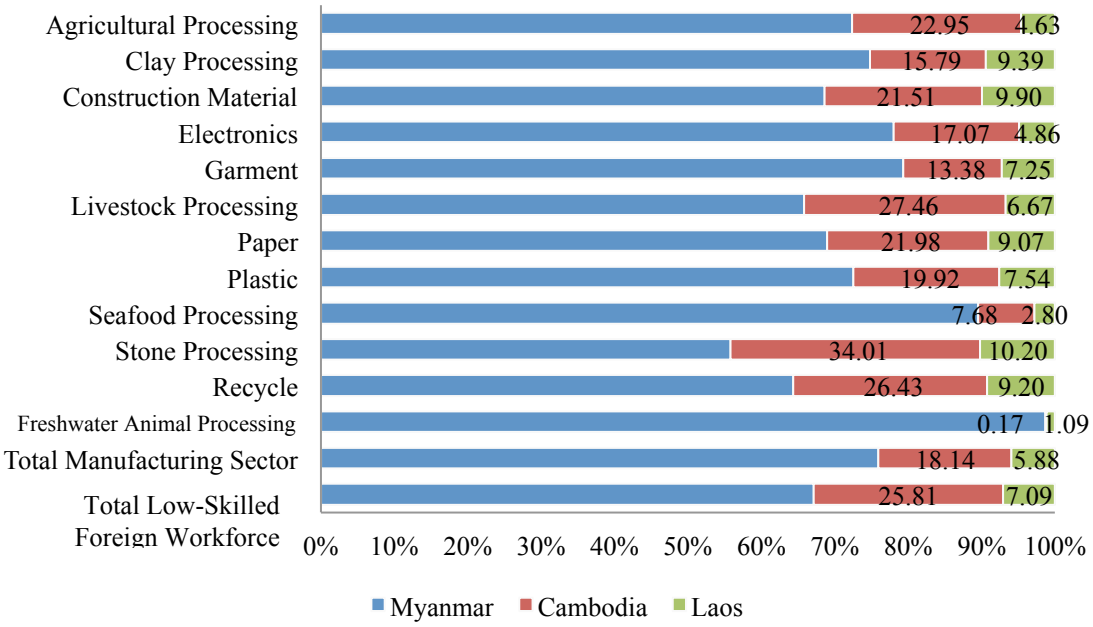
[86] Before 2009, OFWA implemented different industry classification for the employment of low-skilled immigrant workers; such classification left a large portion of registered immigrants unclassifiable by economic sector. In 2012, 2013, and 2014, while OFWA supplied data regarding immigrants' country of origin, OFWA did not supply data regarding their employing industry. Hence, data from 2009, 2011, and 2016 were used as three points of reference in this figure.

Figure 2-12: Estimated Share of Immigrant Workers in Thai Manufacturing Sector 2009, by Industry and Country of Origin



Source: OFWA, 2007-2016

Figure 2-13: Estimated Share of Immigrant Workers in Thai Manufacturing Sector 2016, by Industry and Country of Origin



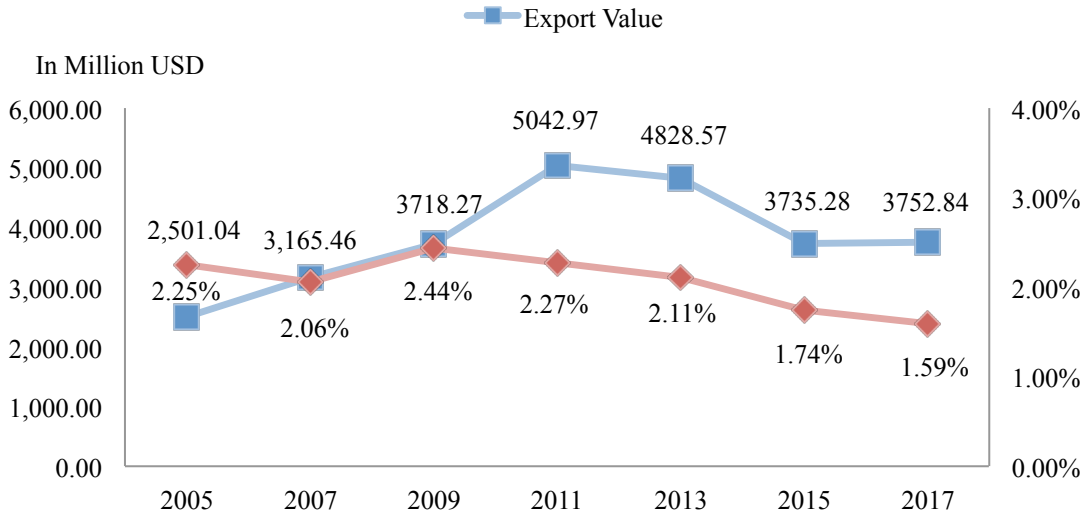
Source: OFWA, 2007-2016

2.3 Immigrant Workers and Thai Seafood Processing Industry

Seafood processing industry has been one of the most significant manufacturing industry under Thai strategic export-oriented economic policy. Geographically, seafood processing businesses have been centralized around provinces located along the Gulf of

Thailand.[87] In 2017, Thai processed seafood's export was worth $3,752.84 million, approximately 1.59 percent of Thai total export value. In fact, processed seafood has consistently been among Thai top 20 export products (MOC, 2019).[88]

Figure 2-14: Export Value and Share to Total Export of Processed Seafood Products 2005-2017



Source: MOC, 2019

Data from MOC (2019) revealed that the export value of Thai processed seafood had been on the strong rise up until around the mid of 2010s when Thailand started facing pressure from international communities on the issues about human rights and employment practices of low-skilled immigrant workers in the case of the US and harmful fishing in the case of the EU; both of whom has been the main markets for Thai processed seafood products. Export performance of seafood processing industry took severe hit from these international pressures which resulted in sharp decline of exportation since.

Figure 2-14 also revealed gradually lowering share of processed seafood export value to national total export; while international pressures, prior described, played important role, the diversified export products of Thailand has also been another key factor dwindling this share. Nevertheless, the export value of processed seafood products has signaled positive sign after Thailand was lifted from the US's trafficking in persons report's blacklist in 2016; experts predicted that once the formal warning from the EU is also lifted, the export performance of Thai processed seafood products will rapidly recover (Chantavanich et al., 2014; Kmonpetch et al., 2018).

2.3.1 The Withdrawal of Thai Workers from Seafood Processing Industry and the Extraordinarily High Rate of Dependency on Foreign Workers

As a labor-intensive industry, seafood processing industry has constantly high demand for worker; however, such labor demand has not been adequately fulfilled by Thai domestic workforce. Indeed, seafood processing industry was one of the first manufacturing industries which Thai government allowed the employment of low-skilled workers from foreign countries (Martin, 2004).

[87] Please refer to Table 1-7 in Chapter 1.

[88] Please refer to Appendix 1-A.

Data regarding the dependency on low-skilled foreign nationals of Thai manufacturing industries was not available until 2011 when NSO (2012) published the national industry census which revealed national workforce in each industry. Among all manufacturing industries, data reveals that seafood processing industry has constantly been the industry with the highest level of dependency on low-skilled immigrant workers.[89] In 2016, 82.85 percent of low-skilled workforce in this industry were immigrant workers; this meant that every ten workers in seafood processing industry, at least eight of them were foreigners. Along with the current dynamic of immigrant workers in the nation, seafood processing industry shows strong tendency of growing dependency on foreign workforce, evidenced by incremental industrial dependence on foreign workers from 72.40 percent in 2011 to 82.85 percent in 2016. In fact, beside seafood processing industry, there was no other industry which possessed more than 50 percent share of foreign workforce. Chantavanich et al. (2014) and Vungsiriphisal et al. (2013) asserted that, without doubt, without migrant workers, Thai seafood processing industry cannot sustain its current level of production.

The especially high rate of dependency on immigrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry, compared with other manufacturing industries, are derived mainly from two reasons: the withdrawal of Thai Northeastern workers[90] from the industry and the strong label as a job for immigrant worker. Originally, before the 1990s, workers from the northeaster part of Thailand played important roles in both fisheries-related off-shore and on-shore business activities. In fact, Martin (2004) described that commonly observed characteristic of workers in Thai fisheries-related industries was when a husband became a worker on the fishing boat off-shore, the wife became a worker in seafood processing business on-shore.

The workers from the Northeastern part of Thailand was a strong force in both fishery industry as well as seafood processing industry up until 1989; the year when the most powerful typhoon in more than 35 years, Gay, struck and caught many of the fishing ships off-guard. Typhoon Gay sank over 200 fishing boats and caused at least 458 deaths (Vongvisessomjai, 2009). The thunderous impact on the fishery industry was immediate as the fearful Northeaster workers refused to go out on the fishing boats afterwards. While the male workers withdrew from fishery industry, the female workers in seafood processing industry also accompanied their husband to pursue safer employment in other industries. As the number of the Northeastern workers in these fisheries-related industries had swiftly been reduced, they were replaced by the surging number of immigrant workers, primarily from Myanmar, up until present day (Chantavanich et al., 2016; Martin, 2004; Shigetomi, 2004a).

Another reason which made up to especially low participation of domestic workers in Thai seafood processing industry is the strong label of the industry as the industry of immigrant workers. As opportunity for education has gradually been expanded, Thai nationals, with higher level of education tend to move up the division of labor to semi-skilled and high-skilled positions. Simultaneously with the occupational upward mobility of Thai nationals, low-skilled positions have continuously been filled in by immigrant workers from neighboring countries of Thailand. According to Piore (1979), when significant amount of

[89] Please refer to Table 2-4.

[90] Northeastern region of Thailand consists of Korat Plateau, in the watershed of the Mekong River. Due mainly to the poor quality of soil and the unstable water supply, this region has historically been poorer than other regions in Thailand. Consequently, since the industrialization of Thai economy in the 1950s, the rising labor demand in Bangkok Province and other large cities has been fulfilled by workers from the Northeastern region; in fact, this region supplies the largest domestic migrant workforce within the country (Shigetomi, 2004a; Tonlerd et al., 2017; Shigetomi, 2004b).

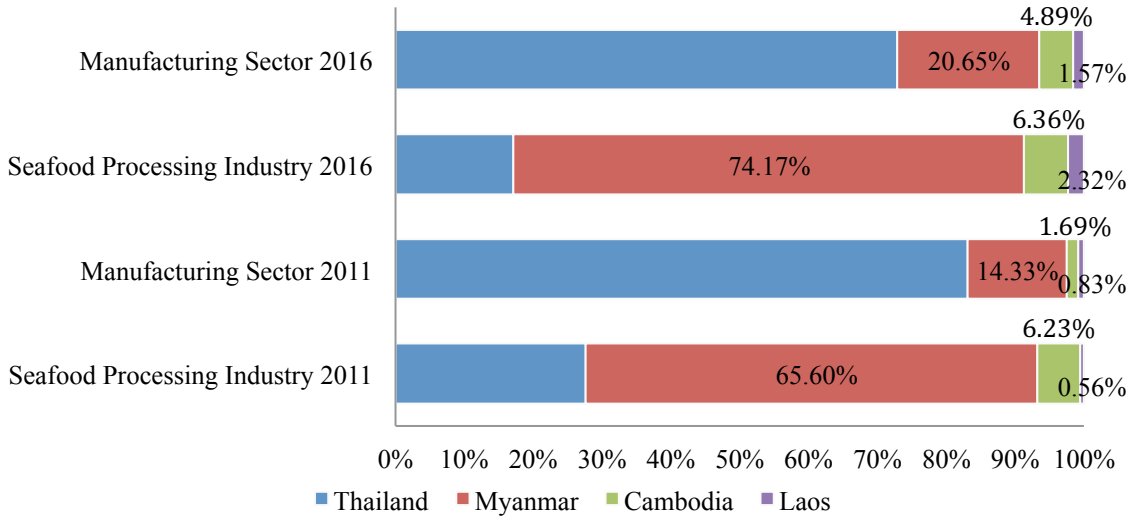
immigrants fills in positions in certain jobs, those jobs become socially labeled as "immigrant jobs".

As seafood processing industry was one of the first manufacturing industry which Thai government allowed the employment of low-skilled immigrants and as the Northeastern Thai workers made an early withdrawal from the industry, seafood processing industry, consequently, started the mass employment of immigrant workers substantially relatively earlier than other industries. For these reasons, the workforce in seafood processing industry has been fulfilled by immigrant workers much earlier than other industries. As a result, jobs in this industry was the first to be labeled as immigrant jobs; such social labeling strongly discourages Thai workers away from positions in seafood processing industry (Massey et al., 1993; Martin 2004; Chaichanavichakit, 2016).

2.3.2 The Body of Low-Skilled Workers in Thai Seafood Processing Industry

To take a closer look at the body of low-skilled workers in seafood processing industry, Figure 2-15 shows that the Burmese workers has consistently been the backbone of this industry's workforce. Moreover, the share of immigrant workers, particularly the Burmese, have steadily ascended in synchronization with the continual withdrawal of Thai workers from the industry.

Figure 2-15: Estimated Share of Low-Skilled Workers in Seafood Processing Industry, by Country of Origin



Source: MOC, 2019

Compared to the rest of industries in manufacturing sector, the participation rate of Burmese workers in seafood processing industry has been exceptionally high, 65.60 percent to total workforce in 2011 while the industry average was 14.33 percent, and 74.17 percent to total foreign workforce in 2016 while the industry average was 20.65 percent. During the same period of time, the participation rate of Cambodian workers has been constant at approximately six percent to total workforce in the industry. To be precise, whereas the phenomenally high growth of Cambodian workers has invincibly changed the demographical proportion of workers in most manufacturing industries in Thailand, such transformation has been minimal in seafood processing industry. Instead, immigrants from Myanmar has continued expanding their share of workforce and replaced Thai workers who pull out of the industry. While it is obvious that seafood processing industry depends much greater on immigrant workers than the sector average; however, available statistics suggests that other

manufacturing industries are also likely to follow the pattern of employment preceded by seafood processing industry.[91]

Area of Origin and Ethnicity of the Burmese and the Cambodian Workers in Thai Seafood Processing Industry

As the Burmese and the Cambodian workers are the two most significant groups of immigrant worker in Thai seafood processing industry, they are the focal points in this research. Whereas existing literatures, pilot study, and field research in primary stage suggest that the majority of Burmese workers in Thailand are Mon Burmese and their most common area of origin is Mon State and that the majority of Cambodian workers in Thailand are Khmer Cambodian and their most common area of origin is Banteay Meanchey Province; in order to supply the most accurate data, prior to the expand stage in this study's field research, a survey was conducted to precisely examine the area of origin as well as the ethnicity of Burmese and Cambodian workers in Thai seafood processing industry (Vungsiriphisal et al., 2013; Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012; Koenig, 2016; Sophal & Sovannarith, 1999). During this process, 400 Burmese immigrants in Samut Sakhon Province and 400 Cambodian immigrants in Rayong Province who worked in seafood processing industry were asked about their area of origin and ethnicity.[92] The results for the Burmese immigrants are elaborated in Table 2-6 and the results for the Cambodian immigrants are elaborated in Table 2-7.

Table 2-6: Burmese Immigrants in Thai Seafood Processing Industry, Categorized by Origin Area[93] and Ethnicity

State / Region	Immigrants	%	Ethnicity	Immigrants	%
Mon State	282	70.50	Mon	250	62.50
Bago Region	46	11.50	Bamar	87	21.75
Tanintharyi Region	29	7.25	Kayin	27	6.75
Shan State	18	4.50	Shan	23	5.75
Kayin State	15	3.75	Dawei	11	2.75
Yangon Region	8	2.00	Kayah	2	0.50
Kayah State	2	0.50			

[91] Please refer to Table 2-5.

[92] Data collection in this process was assisted by NGOs in Samut Sakhon Province and Rayong Province; convenience sampling was implemented.

[93] The first-level administrative unit in Myanmar is divided into seven regions, seven states, and Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, a special administrative division encompasses the administrative capital of Myanmar. Historically, region and state were terminology distinguishing between region as ethnically Bamar dominated and state as ethnically minorities dominated. They are, however, constitutionally equivalent (Nixon, Joelene, Saw, Lynn, & Arnold, 2013; Ministry of Information of Myanmar, 2008, p.4).

Table 2-7: Cambodian Immigrants in Thai Seafood Processing Industry, Categorized by Origin Area[94] and Ethnicity

State / Region	Immigrants	%	Ethnicity	Immigrants	%
Banteay Meanchey	153	38.25	Khmer	368	92.00
Prey Veng	52	13.00	Cham	19	4.75
Battambang	41	10.25	Vietnamese	13	3.25
Oddar Meanchey	29	7.25			
Kampong Cham	27	6.75			
Kampong Speu	22	5.50			
Pailin	18	4.50			
Pursat	14	3.50			
Koh Kong	14	3.50			
Kampong Thom	13	3.25			
Siem Reap	6	1.50			
Kampong Chhnang	5	1.25			
Preah Sihanouk	2	0.50			

Results showed that in the case of Burmese workers in Thai seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon Province, the majority of them came from Mon State, followed, by a large margin, by Bago Region and Thanintharyi Region. Mon was the most common ethnicity among the group of Burmese immigrants, also with a lead by a large margin, followed by Bamar and Kayin. In regard to the Cambodian workers, Banteay Meanchey Province was the most common area of origin of Cambodian workers in Thai seafood processing industry in Rayong Province, followed by Prey Veng Province and Battambang Province. Moreover, more than 90 percent of Cambodian immigrants were Khmer.

2.4 The Growing Importance and Dependency on Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thai Seafood Processing Industry

The second chapter of this thesis presents the significance and the dynamic of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand in recent years. Immigrant workforce has undoubtedly been an integral part of Thai modern economy considering their economic distribution as well as the high level of dependency on them in several major industries, with strong tendency of continuing rise. The dynamic of immigrant workers, the favorable circumstance

[94] The first-level administrative unit in Cambodia is divided into 24 provinces and the special administrative division of Phnom Penh (Statistic Bureau of Japan, 2013).

for the immigrants in manufacturing industries, the particularly strong dependence on the immigrant workforce in seafood processing industry, and the origins of these immigrants were highlighted in this chapter.

Between 2007 and 2016, Thailand has experienced rapidly rising number of foreign workers both in high-skilled and low-skilled worker sectors, approximately at 229.57 percent. Such phenomenon suggests strong demand of foreign workforce in Thai economy. However, despite the rise of foreign workforce in both worker sectors, obviously it was by and large driven by the surging inflow of low-skilled worker sector. While high-skilled worker sector had a slight growth rate of 7.52 percent, low-skilled sector grew immensely at 290.38 percent.

A combination of macro determinants, especially from Thai side, has led to this growing demand; major determinants comprised expanding manufacturing sector, declining birth rate, and occupational upward mobility. Particularly, the number suggests that most of the immigrants were employed in the production sector, led by the strong demand from manufacturing industries.

Whereas foreign workers contributed to only 6.52 percent of Thai national workforce, the proportion of foreign workers to total workforce in the manufacturing industry was much greater at 27.11 percent. Among all manufacturing industries, seafood processing industry was the only industry which more than half of total workforce was foreigner; in fact, the proportion of foreign workers to total workforce in this industry was as high as 82.85 percent.

Besides economic growth, declining birth rate, and occupational upward mobility which led to deficit workforce across all manufacturing industries, additional conditions in the seafood processing industry aggravated the labor shortage in this industry; they were the withdrawal of local workers from this industry due to a historic natural disaster and the strong social label as a job for migrant worker. In fact, seafood processing industry was one of the earliest industries which allowed an employment of low-skilled immigrants, as a consequence of the massive withdrawal of the local workers since the early 1990s. Since then the immigrants had constantly expanded their share of workforce in this industry to the point that the vast majority of workers in this industry was immigrant workers. As a result, jobs in this industry was labeled as immigrant jobs, a stigma which strongly discouraged Thai workers from this particular industry.

In terms of their origins, Thai government historically allowed the nationals from only three countries to work in Thailand in low-skilled sector, which were Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. While Vietnam was added to the list of permitted origin country recently, the number of Vietnamese low-skilled immigrants was marginal. In fact, the body of low-skilled immigrant workers in Thailand was heavily dominated by the workers from Myanmar and Cambodia. This statement was as well applicable to the seafood processing industry where the workers from Myanmar and Cambodia made up the first and the second sources for its immigrant workforce.

Finally—conforming to existing literature—this study found that the majority of Burmese workers in seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon Province, where the major production of seafood processing products located, were Mon Burmese who came from Mon State. Further, the majority of Cambodian workers in seafood processing industry in Rayong Province, another location where major production of seafood processing products took place, were Khmer Cambodian who came from Banteay Meanchey Province.

CHAPTER 3

AT THE DESTINATION AND AT THE ORIGIN: MIGRATION TIMELINE, CHARACTERISTICS, PATTERNS, AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

This chapter depicts the emigration timeline, characteristics, patterns, and dynamic social contexts—both at the destination and at the origin—of migrations along the Mon corridor and Banteay Meanchey corridor. Data showed the connections between migration patterns and migrants' characteristics in both corridors. While some of these patterns and characteristics were similar, parts of them were disparate owing to different affixed conditions of each corridor. These conditions, patterns, and characteristics, together with the persistency of these migration flows, altered the social contexts at the receiving and sending areas of both corridors. Again, some of these social contexts were comparable, while some of them diverged.

The first section of this chapter plots the timeline of emigration from Mon State and Banteay Meanchey to Thailand. The section elaborates the starting period, when emigration to Thailand took place in surveyed areas, and the developments of emigration through these two migration corridors along the course of time up to the present. It depicts the transitions of both migrants' characteristics and migration patterns. The second section details the current characteristics, behaviors of migrants, and migrant community contexts in each corridor's destinations in Thailand. The third section brings the reader to the current state of the two sending areas: demography, characteristics and behaviors of households with emigrants, and community context. The final section portrays the sequential relations of how distinct affixed conditions to each migration corridor led to their deviating migration patterns and, finally, the different characteristics of their migrants. The interpretation of these characteristics, patterns, and social contexts and how they reveal the forces behind migration will be fully covered in Chapter 4.

3.1 Emigration Timeline

Collected data revealed that the mass migration of low-skilled workers from Mon and Banteay Meanchey to Thailand only began in the late 20th century. In the case of the Mon corridor, the earlier groups started moving to Thailand in the 1980s. The number of emigrants began to escalate in the 1990s. However, it was not until after 2000 that most respondents regarded as the turning point of their villages' emigration flows. At that time the emigration flow from their villages reached the point that nearly everyone of working age migrated to Thailand; and this phenomenon has held true until today.

In the case of the Khmer corridor, emigration from Banteay Meanchey began shortly later than that from Mon. Collected data showed that the Khmers started moving to Thailand beginning in the early 1990s. The number of emigrants from Banteay Meanchey escalated quickly until reaching the point that most people of working age from the respondents' hometowns became migrant workers in Thailand. As with the Mons, this happened in the 2000s and persists today.

During this period of time, it is worth mentioning that the macro-level pull factor from the Thai side played a significant role in this escalating number. In the 1990s the Thai government enacted the country's first immigration policy which legalized the employment of low-skilled workers from its neighboring countries. This policy was chiefly driven by internal factors in Thailand, especially its economic strategies and the lack of workers in the country; these two factors were, in fact, connected, and are described below.

According to its fifth national economic and social development plan, which was implemented between 1982 and 1986, the Thai government focused its attention on the development and improvement of integrated infrastructure, including electricity, water, and roads, in the country's rural areas. The succeeding national strategic plan, which was effective from 1987 to 1991, laid the foundations for the country's export-oriented economic policy. Thai exportation has always relied on manufacturing as its core economic sector. Consequently, these development policies created tremendous demand for low-skilled workers in the country, particularly in the construction and manufacturing sectors. This rapidly growing demand subsequently exceeded national labor supply (NESDB, 2019).

Against this backdrop, the country's first immigration policy which legalized low-skilled migrants was enacted in 1992. The Thai government—from the beginning—allowed the employment of low-skilled immigrant workers from only three nations, which were Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos (Martin, 2004).[95] [96] Accordingly, the legalization of low-skilled immigrant workers in the country escalated the influx of low-skilled immigrants from Mon and Banteay Meanchey.

Approaching the 2000s, together with the expansion of the manufacturing sector in Thailand, the number of emigrants from Mon and Banteay Meanchey rapidly grew. The outflow of emigrants from villages in Mon and Banteay Meanchey reached a milestone in the early 2000s, when the outflows rose to the point that the majority of people of working age migrated to Thailand. This condition has persisted until today.

The ever-flourishing outflow of workers was largely the result of simultaneously the relaxed immigration policy of Thailand and emigration policy of Myanmar and Cambodia, which led to the collaboration of these countries as well as the success of Thailand's export-driven economic policy. In the mid-2000s, Thailand and its neighboring countries reached several agreements about the work of Burmese and Cambodian low-skilled workers in Thailand. These included systematic registration of both employees and employers, immigrants' entry and border control on both sides, welfare, and labor protection (Archavanitkul, 2012). These collaborative policies between Thailand and its neighboring countries prompted systematic movement of low-skilled labor from both ends of migration corridors.

Throughout this period of time, together with the declining birthrate, access to education in Thailand expanded at every level from kindergarten to higher education; these further undermined the already deficient local workforce (National Statistical Office, 2015a; Sanglaoid et al., 2014). The success of Thailand's export-oriented economic policy, however, triggered even greater demand of low-skilled workers in the country. The expansion of manufacturing industries, such as the seafood processing industry, agricultural industry, and garment industry, brought Thailand hundreds of thousands of low-skilled immigrants from Thailand's neighboring countries (Chaichanavichkit, 2016).

This section provided a broad view of the timeline of emigration from the perspective of the sending areas. Whereas it primarily addressed macro factors, the economic incentives in Thailand (the dominant micro factor) and the development of migratory social contexts both at the destination and the origin (meso factors) during this period also undeniably

[95] In fact, even before this legislation, a considerable number of low-skilled workers from these three countries already resided in the country, albeit from illegal entry and with no legal status.

[96] It was not until much later, 2015, when Vietnam was added to the list of legal origins of low-skilled immigrant workers. However, the number of Vietnamese low-skilled immigrants was marginal compared to immigrants from the other three countries.

influenced the continuity of migration flows in these two corridors. Such factors, along with how and why they perpetuated migration and drove a cascade of workers into the seafood processing industry, will be addressed in the following sections.

3.1.1 Mon Corridor

Data from the destination and the origin areas revealed that Mon people started moving to Thailand in the 1980s; the number of migrants at that time, however, was minimal. The number of Mon immigrants started to rise during the early 1990s, when low-skilled immigrants were legalized and the demand for low-skilled workers in Thailand was growing. Nevertheless, it was not until around 2000 that most respondents regarded as the turning point of their villages' emigration flow. At that time, the emigration flow in their villages reached the point that nearly everyone of working age migrated to Thailand; and such phenomenon has still held true until today.

Collected data outlined that Mon villagers began moving to Thailand as early as the 1980s; the number of emigrants at that time, nonetheless, was marginal. Their migration was largely driven by concerns of personal safety. Interestingly, this study found that an overwhelming share of the first group of migrants were lawbreakers. Various groups of criminals, such as murderers, robbers, and thieves—in order to avoid legal punishment—opted to go and take their chances in Thailand. Furthermore, because of the long-standing conflict between the Mons and the central government since the Burmese Declaration of Independence after World War II, the Mons maintained their own army force. It was not until the 2000s that the tension was gradually lowered, significantly reducing the number of draftees as well.

Data confirmed that a sizable portion of emigrants before 2000 was, indeed, male villagers who were avoiding being drafted. Wi, a 57-year-old More village chief, said,

> The earliest group of people who migrated was a mix of criminals and those male villagers who did not want to become soldiers. For the criminals, most of them were thieves. They stole money, gold, or cattle from other villagers. A few of them were even murderers. If they had stayed, they would have been put in jail or even executed. Another group of emigrants was the male villagers who hated the army. At that time, the Mons still had quite a sizable army. When they needed more people, given that those who voluntarily joined them were not enough, they would visit each Mon village and pick the male villagers that they wanted. Some of the male villagers really didn't want to join the Mon army, so they went away to Thailand.

However, this made for a very difficult life. Yai, a 67-year-old male returnee who had been among the first group of emigrants from More Village, explained,

> It was like living in shadow. At that time, it was not like nowadays. People [villagers] who went there [Thailand] entered the country illegally and worked illegally. Life was much, much tougher than it is for migrants today. We had to be very, very cautious, avoided the police, avoided being caught. We couldn't come back to visit our family, because we didn't want to risk crossing the border. If we had and had gotten caught by the Thai officials, we would have been put in a Thai jail and they would have sent us back here. It would have been very difficult to go to Thailand again. If we had gotten caught by the Burmese officials, it would have been even worse; we might have been jailed for years.

In the early 1980s, Yai had gone to Thailand and worked in a gemstone mine for several years. Today two of his children and five of his grandkids are working in Thailand legally. He further recalled,

> Most of the Mons went to Chantaburi for gemstone mining, but some of us were lucky enough to work in the rubber plantation in the southern part of Thailand. Obviously, the rubber plantation was a much better choice; who would choose to work in the mine if they had options?

After they arrived in Thailand, most Mon villagers became laborers, which were classified as low-skilled immigrants by Thai law. However, low-skilled immigrants in Thailand at that time were not yet legalized; hence, without legal status, not only were their entries difficult, but their lives in Thailand were also harsh. Most of the early generation of migrants were engaged in the gemstone mining industry located in the eastern part of Thailand—hard labor in a hazardous work environment. Besides hazardous work conditions, they lived in shadows due to their illegal status. The vast majority, if not all, of these early migrants were male.

The number of emigrants from Mon State started to rise during the 1990s, when the entry and status of low-skilled immigrants in Thailand were legalized. During this period, Mon immigrants gained access to the construction and agricultural industries, the two industries which have steadily employed a large number of immigrant workers since.

Bai, a 52-year-old returnee from Bar Village, described these changes and their effects. Prior to returning, he had worked on a Thai rubber plantation for over ten years before joining his son in a seafood-canning factory in Samut Sakhon. He recalled,

> Going to Thailand was much easier in the mid-1990s. Migrant workers were legalized, the roads were better, and there were more brokers who helped us move. So, at that time, a lot more people started to move. In our village, the number of emigrants was rising. I think by the end of the 1990s, the ratio was almost half of all villagers. Most people from Bar Village went south and worked on Thai rubber plantations. Some became construction workers, but others became domestic workers. By the end of the 1990s, no one worked in the gemstone mine anymore.

Data from the origin area revealed that, during the 1990s, approximately one third of villagers of working age went to Thailand for job opportunities. While some of them were employed in the construction industry and some of them were employed as domestic workers, the majority of emigrants at that time were employed in rubber plantations in the southern part of Thailand. The peculiar reasons were the boom of rubber industry—which benefited from the escalating industrial demand of rubber in the global market—and the proximity between the southern part of Thailand and Mon State.

Respondents additionally elaborated that while the outflow of emigrants was still dominated by male villagers, female villagers started to move to Thailand during this period of time. The earlier groups of female emigrants were usually household members of already emigrating male villagers. Once the male household members went and settled down in Thailand, they would later bring their wives or daughters with them.

Approaching the 2000s, together with the expansion of the manufacturing sector in Thailand, the number of emigrants from Mon State rapidly grew. The outflow of emigrants from Mon villages peaked in the early 2000s, when nearly all villagers of working age migrated to Thailand. In fact, most respondents estimated this proportion to be more than three fourths, regardless of the migrants' gender,[97] and this trend persists today. According to Thi, 47, Buoy Village's chief, "After 2000, it's like everyone moved out of the village; seriously, both male and female. The ones staying were the elders and the kids." As to why

[97] Please see Figure 3-8: "Estimated Proportional Size of Emigration Flow from Mon Workers' Hometowns."

the emigration flow escalated at that time, he answered, "At that time, migrating to Thailand was easier; there were quite a number of people who were already there. Getting passports and work permits was also easier and cheaper. There were more agencies as well."

Dai, a 54-year-old male returnee from Mazzone Village, explained,

> People started to move from the southern part of Thailand to the central part. From the early 2000s, rubber plantations began employing fewer and fewer workers. There are some of us who are still working on the rubber plantations, but the number is very small. For most of us, since then, we became construction workers, domestic workers, or workers in the seafood processing industry. Most of us moved to Bangkok or its adjacent provinces. It was where there were a lot of jobs.

Before he returned a few years ago, Bai had worked in rubber plantation for almost 10 years before moving to Samut Sakhon when his friends told him about job availability in a processed squid factory and the Mon community in Samut Sakhon. He gave more detail:

> In the past 10–15 years, more people have become workers in [the seafood processing industry in] Samut Sakhon, though. We have our own community there. Today if I want to send things to my children who work there, I can ask any villagers who come back home during their break. Most of us work there and they work and live close to each other.

Data revealed that, starting in the early 2000s, a large portion of Mon workers had withdrawn from rubber plantations in the southern part of Thailand due to the mixed reasons of opportunities opening up in other industries and, later, the decline of the rubber boom. The growth of the manufacturing sector in Thailand created abundant job opportunities for villagers in other industries. The cooling of the rubber boom in the later 2000s saw a precipitous drop in the price of rubber,[98] which greatly reduced the demand for workers on rubber plantations. For these two reasons, by the end of the 2000s, the number of Mon workers in rubber plantation had sharply declined. Furthermore, data revealed that the main destination for a large number of Mon workers had shifted to seafood processing businesses in Samut Sakhon Province. The reasons, along with how and why, are addressed in the following sections.

3.1.2 Khmer Corridor

In the case of the Khmers, emigration from Banteay Meanchey began somewhat later in comparison to the Mons. Collected data demonstrated that the Khmers started moving to Thailand in the early 1990s. Driven by the proximity, the ease of transportation, and the collaborating migration policy between Cambodia and Thailand, the number of emigrants from Banteay Meanchey escalated quickly until, around 2000, most working-age villagers from respondents' hometowns were becoming migrant workers in Thailand.

Respondents outlined that people from Banteay Meanchey began moving to Thailand in the early 1990s. Interestingly, considering the historical context of this region, emigration from these villages to Thailand occurred only a few years after this area became inhabitable. In fact, because of the vast impact of the Cambodian civil war which broke out in the 1970s, this region had been abandoned for over a decade before inhabited again in the latter part of the 1980s. Whereas the majority of people who reoccupied these villages were the locals who had been forced to move out during the war, a considerable number of people who settled

[98] The dwindling price of rubber in Thailand reflected the lower global demand for rubber, primarily derived from declining demand for industrial rubber wheels (Chuavallee & Pisitsupakul, 2014; Somboosuke & Kongmanee, 2018).

down indeed came from other towns or regions. Meanwhile, a large share of the former locals never returned. Borey, the former village chief of Pii Village who turned 81 this year, recalled key details:

> I was the village chief both before and after the war. It was passed down to my son 15–16 years ago. After the war broke out, people fled to other regions. The whole village had no one living in it for about 12–13 years. At that time, my family and I and some of the villagers moved to the southern part of Takeo Province, as I had relatives there. And the war did not reach that part of Cambodia. People started to come back to the village after the war ended. It was around the late 1980s. I came back around that time as well. There were also newcomers to the village. Most of them came from the burnt-down and completely destroyed villages, so they couldn't go back to their homes. Some villagers who left were completely gone and never returned. I think mass migration to Thailand started a couple of years after people started to come back to the village. Living after war was tough. Growing crops and raising cattle take time. So, there were a lot of people who decided to go to work in Thailand. After that, more and more villagers emigrated.

As alluded to here, respondents elaborated that after-war famine and economic difficulty forced the Khmer to migrate to Thailand. Interviewees further detailed that after the emigrants settled down in Thailand, they often recruited more people from their villages to join them, leading to a rapid growth in migration. Around the same period of time—the 1990s—the Thai government, out of strong labor demand for its strategic national development plans, legalized the employment of immigrant workers from its neighboring countries, which included Cambodia. Like with the Mons, this created a strong pull factor which accelerated the migration of low-skilled Khmers into Thailand.

In the early phase of migration, the Khmers were mostly employed in the construction and agricultural industries in eastern Thailand, comprising border provinces as well as proximate provinces to the border between Cambodia and Thailand, such as Sa Kaew Province, Prachinburi Province, Chantaburi Province, Trat Province, Rayong Province, Chonburi Province, and Chachoengsao Province. Some migrants, however, were employed as domestic workers in Bangkok. Describing the variety of work over time, Rith, a 48-year-old male repeat migrant (or "repeater"), said:

> The first time that I went to Thailand, it was in 1996. At that time, I was 27. I remember it well because I was very excited. I worked on a fruit farm in Chantaburi. The type of fruits changed all year round, though. I worked there for 6–7 years before I came back. I stayed in the village for about a year, then I joined my friends in Chachoengsao Province and became a construction worker. The name of the province is very difficult to pronounce,

he remarked with a laugh. He added,

> I worked there for only a few years; the construction work was hard on the body. Then I came back here for a few years. And since 2009, I joined my relatives in Rayong. I've been working in several factories for fish sauce, canned seafood, and now dried fish.

Rith met to be interviewed during his vacation leave in Moy Village.

Approaching the 2000s, accompanying the expansion of the manufacturing sector in Thailand, the number of emigrants from Banteay Meanchey rapidly grew. The outflow of emigrants from Banteay Meanchey villages reached its milestone in the early 2000s, when the emigration flow rose to the point that, by default, children were expected to grow up as

migrant workers. In fact, respondents asserted that the majority of villagers came to work in Thailand.[99] This condition still holds true today. Collected data revealed that starting from the mid-2000s, a large number of the Khmer were like Rith—previously employed in construction and agricultural industries in bordering provinces in Thailand, then predominantly mustering in Rayong Province's seafood processing industry. The reasons, along with how and why, will be fully addressed in the following sections.

> I think around the early-to-mid-2000s, emigrating to Thailand became the norm. Everyone, both males and females, both young and old, all go to Thailand. Not the ones that are very old, I mean. Villagers started returning after they turn 50 or, mostly, 60. After the children grow up and reach working age, most of them are expected to go to Thailand,

explained Prak, 51, the chief of Moy Village. He added,

> Most migrants from our village are in Rayong in the seafood processing industry. The Khmer community is large there. Also, there are several Khmer markets throughout the province. Some are construction workers, house workers, or fruit farmers in Rayong or other provinces though. Migrants from this part of Banteay Meanchey usually work in the eastern part of Thailand or Bangkok metropolis.

This same information was also repeated during the interview with Borey, the former chief of Pii Village.

3.2 At the Destination: Mon and Khmer Workers in the Thai Seafood Processing Industry

This section depicts the general characteristics, financial activities, and return decision of migrant workers—3.2.1 "Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province" and 3.2.2 "Khmer workers in Rayong Province". Next, the development of migratory social contexts at both destinations will be fully addressed in 3.2.3 "Dynamical Social Context at the Destination". The development of migratory social contexts at both destinations, indeed, emerged as a key explanation for the shift to seafood processing businesses in Samut Sakhon and Rayong for the Mons and the Khmers, respectively. Moreover, such developments were integral to social factors which played influential roles in migration decision, which is the topic of Chapter 4.

Further, the interpretation and analysis of characteristics and behaviors of migrants will be covered in section 3.4, "Disparate Affixed Conditions, Deviated Migration Patterns, and Different Migrant's Characteristics Between the Mons and the Khmers"—since the information from the origin presented in section 3.3, "At the Origin: Sending Villages in Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province", must be incorporated for a complete picture.

3.2.1 Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province

This section elaborates general characteristics, financial activities, and return decision of Mon workers in Thai seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon. Complementing qualitative data from interviews with key informants and migrant workers, statistical data presented in this section is largely based on responses from 407 sets of survey distributed to Mon workers during the expand stage.[100]

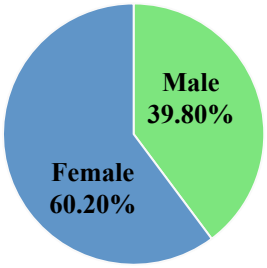
[99] Please see Figure 3-21: "Estimated Proportional Size of Emigration Flow from Khmer Workers' Hometowns."

[100] Please refer to Table 1-6 "Field Research in Three Stages" in Chapter 1 for general profiles of interviewees.

3.2.1.1 General Characteristics

Gender

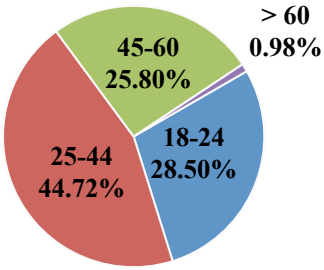
Figure 3-1: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Gender



Out of 407 respondents, 60.20 percent was female and 30.80 percent was male.

Age[101]

Figure 3-2: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Age Group

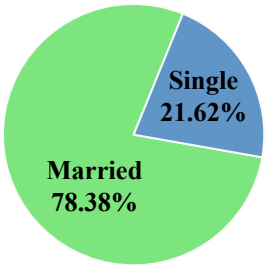


In terms of age, the most common age group of respondents, precisely 44.72 percent, were between 25 and 44 years old. This was followed by the group of respondents aged between 18 and 24 years old, 28.50 percent, the group of respondents aged between 45 and 60 years old, 25.80 percent, and finally the group of respondents aged over 60 years old, who accounted for 0.98 percent.

Marital Status

Figure 3-3: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Marital Status

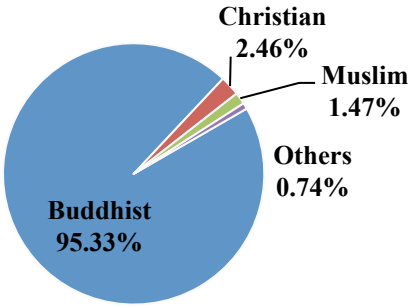
[101] Age group in this research is classified in accordance with recommended standard international age classifications for international migration suggested by UN (1982).



In general, most of the current Mon workers were married; in fact, 78.38 percent of respondents were married, while 21.62 percent of them were reported single.

Religion

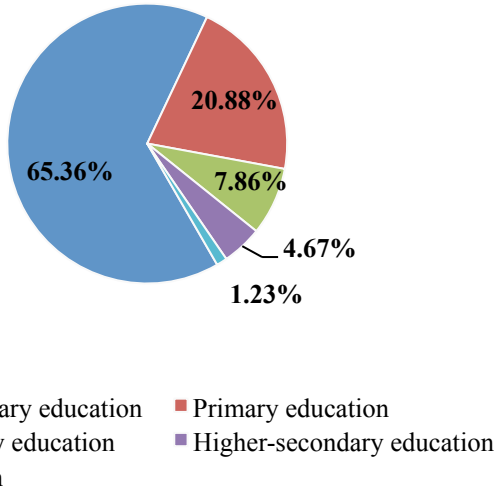
Figure 3-4: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Religion



The vast majority of Mon workers in Samut Sakhon were Buddhist. Indeed, 95.33 percent of respondents were Buddhist, while the Christians and the Muslims made up 2.46 percent and 1.47 percent, accordingly.

Education

Figure 3-5: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Education



Approximately two third of the interviewees did not finish primary education. One fifth of them cited primary education as their highest attained level of education. Immigrants whose highest levels of education were lower-secondary education, higher-secondary education, and higher education made up to 7.86 percent, 4.67 percent, and 1.23 percent, respectively.

Hometown

Table 3-1: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Hometown

State / Region	Immigrant(s)	%
Mon State	342	84.03
Bago Region	27	6.63
Tanintharyi Region	13	3.19
Kayin State	12	2.95
Yangon Region	5	1.23
Shan State	4	0.98
Mandalay Region	3	0.74
Kachin State	1	0.25

Apparently, hometowns of most respondents were located in Mon State, to be precise 84.03 of interviewees came from Mon State. The second most common home-state of Mon immigrants was Bago Region, comprising 6.63 percent of the immigrants. The rest came from Thanintharyi Region, Kayin State, Yangon Region, Shan State, Mandalay Region, and Kachin State, which made up to 3.19 percent, 2.95 percent, 1.23 percent, 0.98 percent, 0.74 percent, and 0.25 percent, accordingly.

Other Household Members in Thailand

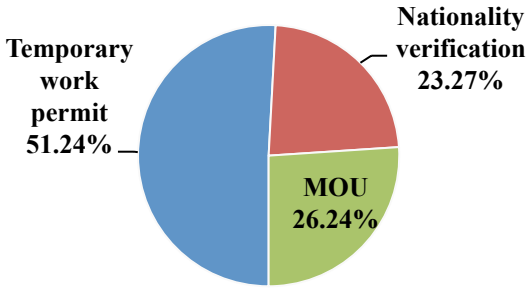
Almost nine out of ten immigrants, precisely 89.43 percent, were not the only member of their households who was working in Thailand. In fact, among them, 106 respondents had at least one of their parents who worked in Thailand at the time of interviewing. Out of 364 respondents whose other household members also worked in Thailand; interestingly, 332 was the number of cases which at least one of their household members was also employed in seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon.

Type of Work Permit

Approximately half of Mon immigrants, 51.24 percent, held temporary work permit; followed by 26.24 percent of workers who held MOU type of work permit and 23.27 percent of them who held nationality verification work permit was fairly corresponding to the overall distribution proportion of Mon immigrants' registration methods in Thailand.[102]

Figure 3-6: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Type of Work Permit

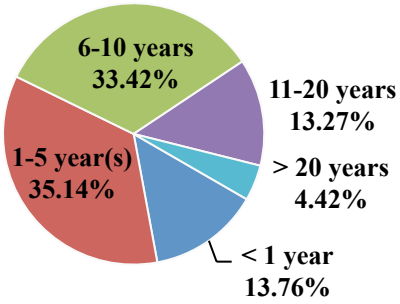
[102] Please refer to Table 2-1 "Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Registration Method" in Chapter 2.



Length of Stay in Thailand

Most of respondents had been working in Thailand for one to five years, following by the group of respondents who had worked in Thailand between six and ten years; they comprised 35.14 percent and 33.42 percent of total interviewees. Report further reveals that 13.76 percent of Mon immigrants had worked in Thailand for less than a year, while 13.27 percent of them had worked in the country between 11 and 20 years. Finally, the group of respondents who had worked in Thailand for more than 20 years represented 4.42 percent of total interviewees.

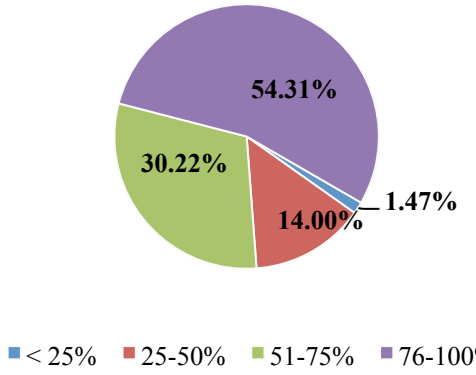
Figure 3-7: Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Length of Stay



Emigration Situation in Their Hometowns

This information derived from the interview questions which asked current immigrants in Thailand to estimate the emigration flow of work age population in their hometowns. The majority of respondents reported that the emigration flow in their hometowns was as large as 76 to 100 percent of total work age population; these respondents represented 54.31 percent of total interviewees. Approximately one third, 30.22 percent, of interviewees speculated that between 51 and 75 percent of work age population in their households were emigrant workers. Result additionally reveals that the proportional size of emigration flow was roughly 25 to 50 percent and less than 25 percent in the hometowns of 14.00 percent and 1.47 percent of respondents, respectively.

Figure 3-8: Estimated Proportional Size of Emigration Flow from Mon Workers' Hometowns



"Almost everyone come to Thailand," replied Phum—a 22 years old male migrant who came from Mon's Buoy Village three years ago. He added, "In my hometown, only the olds and the kids stay, and only a handful of people in work age. Usually, they (people in work age who stay in the village: author) are either rich from the beginning or they are public officers or they have to take care of their old parents. But like I told you, almost everyone come to Thailand. It's not only in my village but all the villages nearby are the same. Most of us come here to Samut Sakhon. Some become construction workers, some become house workers, but they are only a few."

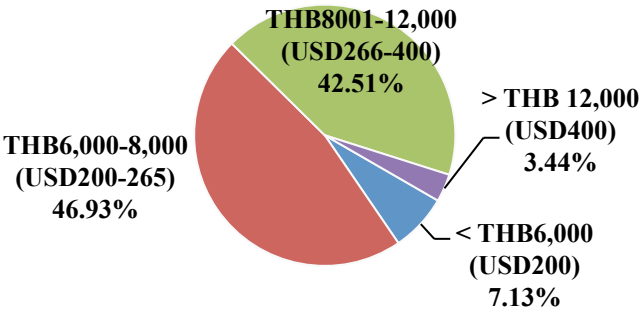
Moreover, almost all of respondents asserted that Thailand was the major destination for emigrants from their hometowns. Very few mentioned other destinations such as South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, or Japan. In general, interviewees reported that emigration to other destinations apart from Thailand was rarely observed; and while it might exist, the number was minimal.

3.2.1.2 Income, Cost for Migration, Spending, and Remittance

Income

Almost half, precisely 46.93 percent, of respondents earned between THB6,000 and 8,000 (USD200-265) per month. They were closely followed by the group of respondents who earned approximately THB8,001 to 12,000 (USD266-400) monthly. Immigrants who earned less than THB6,000 (USD200) and immigrants who earned more than THB12,000 (USD400) represented 7.13 percent and 3.44 percent of total respondents, respectively.[103]

Figure 3-9: Average Income of Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province (in THB)

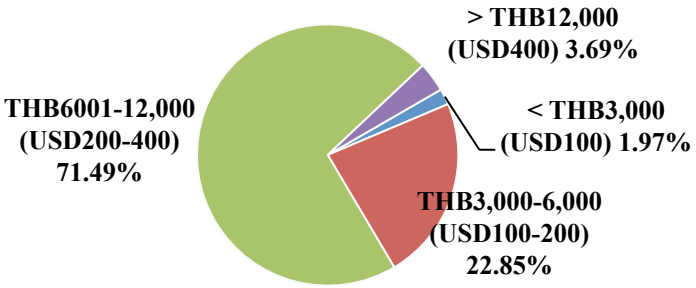


[103] THB6,000 and THB12,000 were set as benchmarks, as minimum daily wage in Thailand was THB300. Assuming workers worked approximately 20 days a month, their monthly income would be estimatedly THB6,000. THB12,000, however, represented the amount of income which doubling the minimum wage.

Cost for Migration

Because surveyed immigrants came to Thailand during different periods of time, certain fixed costs related to immigration in Thailand might vary. Examples of such costs included the immigrant worker registration fee, visa fee, and health insurance fee from Thai side and passport fee from Burmese side which were potentially fluctuated greatly from years to years. However, despite these, notably, most of respondents quoted the range of THB6,001 to 12,000 as their approximate cost for their relocation. Data from interviews uncovered that while several costs accompanying the process of migration may vary over years, the cost of migration paid by immigrants in different years was peculiarly relatively constant. The fee charged by these agencies, which also included transportation, was much less fluctuated compared to formal fees accompanying immigration published by both sides of the governments.

Figure 3-10: Average Cost of Migration for Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province (in THB)



Statistically, 71.49 percent of respondents reported that they paid around THB6,001 to 12,000 (USD201-400) when they moved to Thailand. The second most common range of the cost for migration was between THB3,000 and 6,000 (USD100-200); this group of interviewees comprised 22.85 percent of total respondents. As few as 3.69 percent and 1.97 percent quoted above THB12,000 (USD400) and below THB3,000 (USD100) as their migration costs, respectively.

"When I came, I paid around THB12,000 (USD400) to the agency. After that, they did everything for you. Normally, people came in batch. Right now, one batch can be from three to five or up to ten people coming together. But before, one batch used to be much larger, like 20 or more per batch. My nephew who came earlier this year, he also paid about THB12,000 (USD400) to the agency. He came with two other people from More Village," said Mi—a 34-year-old female Mon worker who came to Thailand six years ago and currently working in a large size frozen seafood company.

Data from interviews revealed that, for Mon immigrants, the range of THB6,001 to 12,000 (USD201-400) was considered a standard cost for migration. Precisely, raw data suggests that in general immigrants paid around THB10,000 to 12,000 (USD333-400) to migration agencies for the complete migration process. The cost of migration below THB10,000 (USD333) implied that the origin of immigrant was unusually closer to Samut Sakhon which consequently minimized his or her cost for migration, particularly on the transportation factor. Likewise, the cost of migration above THB12,000 (USD400) customarily implied that the origin of immigrant was particularly far from Samut Sakhon.

Spending

Remittance was reported as the most important form of immigrants' spending; in fact, more than half of respondents sent the plurality of their incomes back home, as exhibited in Table 3-2. The second most substantial form of spending belonged to their living expense in Thailand; followed by saving and investment, respectively. For their secondary expenditure, 43.49 percent of interviewees cited living expense in Thailand; followed by those who described remittance, saving, making merits in Thailand, investment, and entertainment in Thailand which made up to 29.73 percent, 15.97 percent, 5.41 percent, 3.19 percent, and 2.21 percent of total respondents accordingly.

Table 3-2: Spending by Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province

	Primary expenditure		Secondary expenditure	
	Person(s)	%	Person(s)	%
Remittance	223	54.79	121	29.73
Living expense in Thailand	115	28.26	177	43.49
Saving	53	13.02	65	15.97
Investment	16	3.93	13	3.19
Making merits in Thailand	0	0.00	22	5.41
Entertainment in Thailand	0	0.00	9	2.21

"I earn about THB6,500 (USD220) per month. My apartment costs THB1,500 (USD50) per month. Adding water and electricity, then it's about THB2,000 (66USD). If you are living with your husband, then it's shared. Food can be quite expensive, let's say THB50 (USD1.5) per day. If you drink liquor, then it's going to be much much more. Normally, I send money back home about THB2,500-3,500 (USD80-115), it depends on months though. The rest I keep it for myself," explained Li—a 33-year-old female migrant worker who stayed with her husband, while her two young children were sent back to their hometowns nurturing by their parents. "Sometimes, we buy housing amenities or new cloths too," She went on.

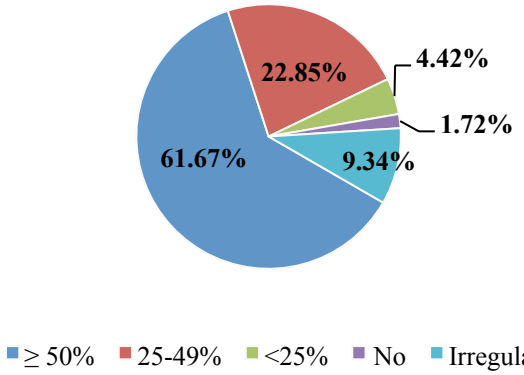
While the number of respondents who reported investment as their primary and secondary largest forms of spending was minimal; interestingly, all of them described that their investment activities took place in their hometowns. These investments ranged from investment in farming business such as new and advance harvesters, insecticides, improved seeds, and land acquisition to micro services business such as local restaurants, garages, electronic appliance services, and grocery stores.

Remittance

Corresponding to responses in preceding section, regarding the amount of money that they remitted back home, 61.67 percent of interviewees revealed that more than half of their earnings in Thailand were sent back to their households in Myanmar. This was followed by 22.85 percent of respondents who sent back approximately between 25 and 49 percent of their earnings to their households and 4.42 percent of interviewees who remitted less than 25 percent of their earnings in Thailand back to Myanmar.

"I think it's common for all of us. Beside the money we need for living here and maybe some saving, the rest we sent back to our family in Mon State," said Nai—a 46 years old male migrant from Bar Village who had been in seafood processing industry for more than ten years.

Figure 3-11: Approximate Size of Remittance in Proportion with Mon Workers' Earnings

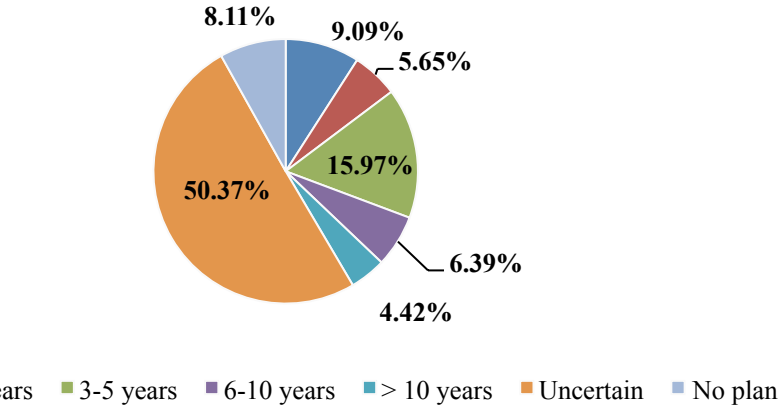


Approximately every one out of ten immigrants, to be precise 9.34 percent, did not regularly send back money to their households in origin area; they, in fact, were inclined to make remittance based on periodical requests from their households. Interestingly, this group of respondents was the group of respondents who commonly cited saving and investment as their largest forms of their expenditure in the previous section. In a few cases, interviewees who irregularly made remittance described that after paying for their living expenses in Thailand, they did not spare much money. Hence, they opted to make remittance once in a few or several months depending on their periodical financial standing. Apart from these, 1.72 percent of total interviewees mentioned that they did not make remittance at all.

3.2.1.3 Return Decision

Over 90 percent of respondents explicitly expressed their intention to return to Myanmar, albeit difference about their expected duration of stay in Thailand. In fact, more than half of interviewees—even with strong determination to return—did not have specific timeframe for their remigration. For those with specific timeframe, most of them expected to return within three to five years, followed by the groups of respondents who planned to return within one year, six to ten years, two to three years, and above ten years; these groups comprised 15.97 percent, 9.09 percent, 6.39 percent, 5.65 percent, and 4.42 percent accordingly. Interviewees without plan to return, however, made up 8.11 percent of total respondents.

Figure 3-12: Expected Return Plan of Mon Workers



Perhaps, the reason why most of the respondents with intention to return could not make up their mind about the right time for their return was related to the conditions they wish to fulfill before their remigration. This study found that upon the questions about the

reasons for their return, the majority of respondents highlighted the replacement from their household members. Exhibited in Figure 3-13, 58.72 percent of interviewees agreed that this condition was the most influential factor for their return decision. Apart from this, interviewees also cited certain amount of saving, physical conditions, parents' health, and acquisition of desired skills as their pivotal determinants for their return consideration; these made up to 20.64 percent, 9.34 percent, 6.63 percent, and 1.97 percent of respondents respectively. Another 2.70 percent of respondents mentioned other reasons such as boredom from work or living in Thailand and having children.

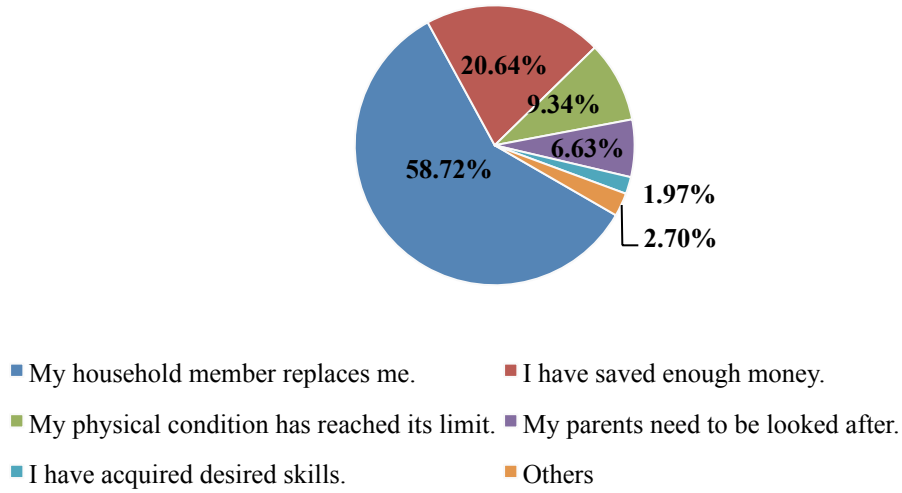
These mentioned conditions for their remigration, to a certain extent, were difficult to anticipate. Replacement by household members, the most common significant condition among respondents, for example, was not simply fulfilled by having their household members came and worked in Thailand. In fact, replaced migrants would generally stay for a certain period of time, usually one to five years, in order to make sure that replacing migrants could stably settle down in Thailand. The second most commonly cited condition, saving money, involved several contingencies such as unexpected expenses from physical conditions of household members and natural disasters in their hometowns which might inflict costs for house or farm renovation. Other conditions, as well, namely respondents' physical conditions, parents' health, acquisition of desired skills, boredom, and childbearing were potentially—in many cases—unpredictable. For these reasons, hence, the majority of interviewees, even with the perseverance to return, were not able to specify the period of time for their remigration.

"After my children replace me and my husband," answered Bam—a 42 years old Mon from Bar Village currently working in a medium size canned seafood—when asked about the time for her expected return. "I have 4 children, they are 20, 15, 12, and 7 this year. I and my husband are working for the same company. My eldest child is female, she's staying with me (working in the same place with her parents: author). The second and the third kids are staying with my parents in Bar Village. The young one, Yu, he's also staying with us. I and my husband think that after our second and third kids came here, we will return (to Bar Village: author). We think we will look after them for a while after they come. How long, you asked? We are not sure…maybe a few years, maybe more. When we feel that they can look after themselves, I think. And yes Yu, Yu will come back with us and he will come here again when he grows up," Bam shared her return plan.

As the replacement of household members was regarded as the most influential condition for return migration, in order to further investigate these interesting sequences of actions, questions were asked to determine if respondents themselves replaced certain household members when they moved to Thailand. Answers revealed that 352 out of 407 respondents, 86.49 percent, had household members who came to work in Thailand before them.[104] Interestingly, out of these 352 respondents, 296 was the number of cases which certain members in their households decided to return to Myanmar within five years after the respondents came to Thailand. Such findings highlighted the chain of actions within a household, certain action taken by a household member influenced and built upon action taken by another household member in sequences creating sequential chain of actions which was passed down generation to generation.

Figure 3-13: Respondents' Reasons for Return Migration of Mon Workers

[104] Of these 352 cases, 347 of them reported that their household members were employed in Thai seafood processing industry.



"My household depends on money from remittance. When my children replace me, I will go back," repeated answers were recorded during interviews with current Mon immigrants. "I don't have to stay here until I'm very old. If my children come to work here, then I can consider going back. My family is still farming, but the farm size is small, it's just to let my parents have something to do. But their expenses come from my and my siblings' remittance," Ru—a 38 years old male worker who had three other siblings also working in seafood processing industry—informed. Toward the question about farmland acquisition, "I think instead of buying more farmland, I think we have too much farmland. When I was young, we farmed quite a lot, but in these past ten or fifteen years, we farmed less and less."

Taking into consideration the expected conditions for their return, especially the two most commonly cited which were replacement of household member and certain amount of saving; immigrants' low enthusiasm on any type of investment was logical. These expected conditions, as well as financial dependence on remittance by their households back in their hometowns, signal that, instead of reliance on earnings from farming as the source of funding for their expenses, prevailing share of respondents indeed intends to rely primary on remittance from existing household members in Thailand as well as partially on their own saving, upon their return. This is later confirmed by interviews with household members in origin area during expand stage as well as series of interviews with key informants and immigrant workers in Thailand during follow-up stage.

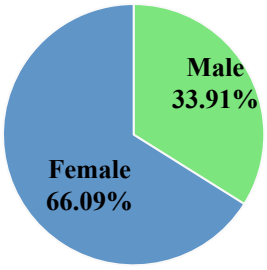
3.2.2 Khmer Workers in Rayong Province

This section elaborates general characteristics, financial activities, and return decision of Khmer workers in Thai seafood processing industry in Rayong. Statistical data presented in this section is largely based on responses from 404 sets of survey distributed to Khmer workers during the expand stage.

3.2.2.1 General Characteristics

Gender

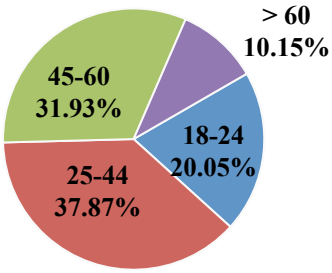
Figure 3-14: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Gender



Out of 404 respondents, 66.09 percent was female and 33.91 percent was male.

Age

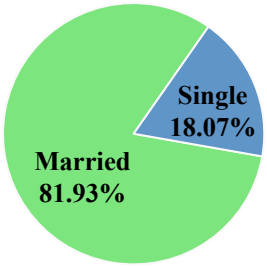
Figure 3-15: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Age Group



In terms of age, the most common age group of respondents, precisely 37.87 percent, were between 25 and 44 years old. This was followed by the group of respondents aged between 45 and 60 years old, 31.93 percent, the group of respondents aged between 18 and 24 years old, 20.05 percent, and finally the group of respondents aged over 60 years old, who accounted for 10.15 percent.

Marital Status

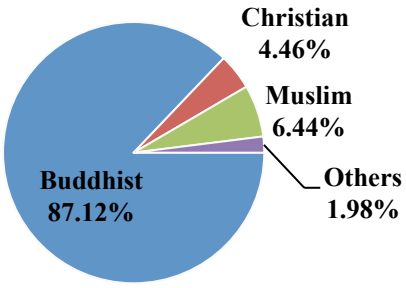
Figure 3-16: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Marital Status



In general, most of the current Khmer immigrants were married; in fact, 81.93 percent of respondents were married, while 18.07 percent of them were reported single.

Religion

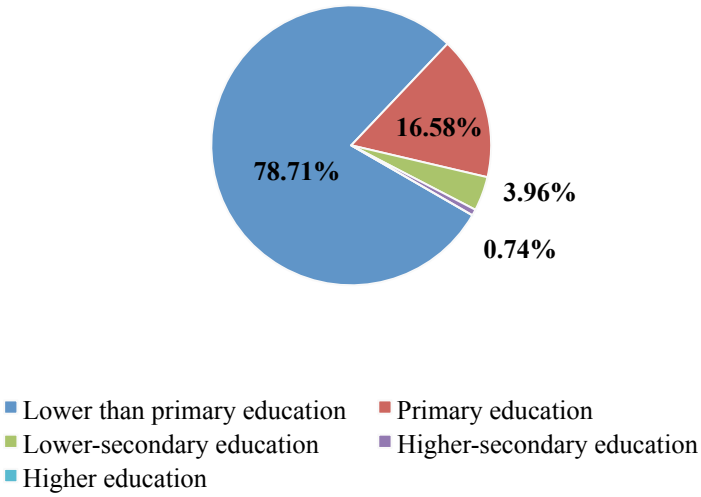
Figure 3-17: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Religion



The vast majority of Khmer immigrant workers in Rayong were Buddhist. Indeed, 87.12 percent of respondents were Buddhist, while the Muslims and the Christians made up 6.44 percent and 4.46 percent, accordingly.

Education

Figure 3-18: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Education



Almost four out of five interviewees did not finish primary education. Approximately 16.58 percent of the respondents cited primary education as their highest attained level of education. Immigrants whose highest level of education were lower-secondary education and higher-secondary education made up to 3.96 percent and 0.74 percent of total respondents, accordingly. Immigrant with higher education degree was, however, not observable.

Hometown

Table 3-3: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Hometown

Province	Immigrant(s)	%
Banteay Meanchey	198	49.01
Prey Veng	61	15.10
Battambang	46	11.39
Siem Reap	32	7.92
Kampong Cham	16	3.96

Pursat	15	3.71
Pailin	13	3.22
Koh Kong	9	2.23
Kampong Speu	8	1.98
Kampong Thom	6	1.49

Apparently, hometowns of most respondents were located in Banteay Meanchey Province, to be precise 49.01 percent—almost half—of the interviewees came from this province. The second most common home-province of Khmer immigrants was Prey Veng Province, comprising 15.10 percent of the immigrants, while the third most common home-province was Battambang Province which was home to 11.39 percent of current Khmer immigrants. The rest came from Siem Reap Province, Kampong Cham Province, Pursat Province, Pailin Province, Koh Kong Province, Kampong Speu Province, and Kampong Thom Province, which made up to 7.92 percent, 3.96 percent, 3.72 percent, 3.22 percent, 2.23 percent, 1.98 percent, and 1.49 percent to total respondents, accordingly.

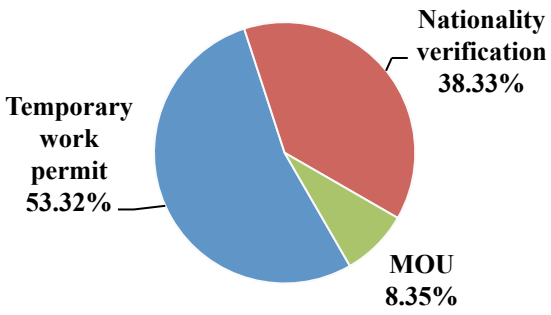
Other Household Members in Thailand

More than nine out of ten respondents revealed that, precisely 92.33 percent, were not the only member of their households who was working in Thailand. In fact, among them, 182 reported that at least one of their parents also worked in Thailand at the time of interviewing. Out of 373 respondents whose other household members also worked in Thailand; interestingly, 297 was the number of cases which at least one of their household members was also employed in seafood processing industry in Rayong.

Type of Work Permit

Approximately half of Khmer immigrants, 53.32 percent, held temporary work permit; followed by 38.33 percent of workers who held nationality verification work permit and 8.35 percent of them who held MOU type of work permit. This distribution proportion of Khmer immigrants in seafood processing industry by their registration method, indeed, was fairly corresponding to the overall distribution proportion of Khmer immigrants' registration methods in Thailand.[105]

Figure 3-19: Khmer Workers Rayong Province, by Type of Work Permit

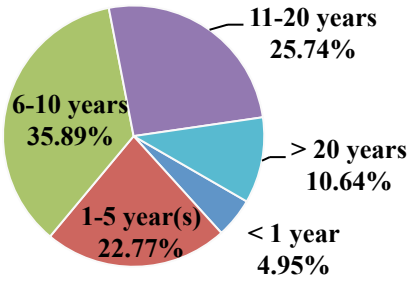


Length of Stay in Thailand

[105] Please refer to Table 2-1 in Chapter 2 for "Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Registration Method".

Most of respondents had been working in Thailand for six to ten years, following by the group of respondents who had worked in Thailand between 11 and 20 years; they comprised 35.89 percent and 25.74 percent of total interviewees. Report further reveals that 22.77 percent of Khmer immigrants had worked in Thailand for one to five years, while 10.64 percent of them had worked in the country for more than 20 years. Finally, the group of respondents who had worked in Thailand for less than a year represented 4.95 percent of total interviewees.

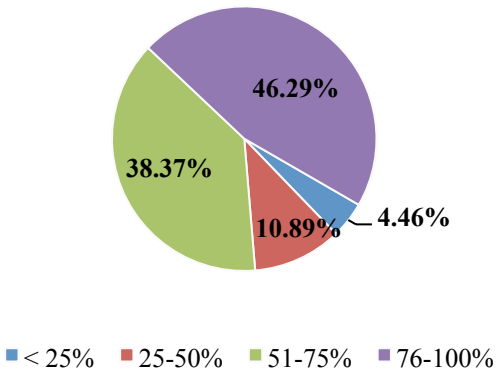
Figure 3-20: Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Length of Stay



Emigration Situation in Their Hometowns

This information derived from the interview questions which asked current immigrants in Thailand to estimate the emigration flow of work age population in their hometowns. The majority of respondents reported that the emigration flow in their hometowns was as large as 76 to 100 percent of total work age population; these respondents represented 46.29 percent of total interviewees. More than one third, 38.37 percent, of interviewees speculated that between 51 and 75 percent of work age population in their households were emigrant workers. Result additionally revealed that the proportional size of emigration flow was roughly 25 to 50 percent and less than 25 percent in the hometowns of 10.89 percent and 4.46 percent of respondents, respectively.

Figure 3-21: Estimated Proportional Size of Emigration Flow from Khmer Workers' Hometowns



"You can say that everyone has come (to work: author) to Thailand at some point. But it's not uncommon for people from my village to work in Thailand for a couple of years and return to Moy Village for a few years and then come back to Thailand again and so on. A person may migrate to Thailand several times," explained Davuth—a 37 years old male

worker from Moy Village. "So, I can say that during any given time, villagers who come to Thailand exceed half of our total villagers. I think almost everyone in my village has experienced working in Thailand, it's just that it doesn't mean that all of us are in Thailand at the same time."

Chantrea—Davuth's friend who also came from Moy Village—added that "Sometimes we got bored and want to take a long break. Sometimes we want to relax and use our hard-earned money. Then when we need money, we come back to Thailand. Besides, some of the repeaters are seasonal workers. I mean they may be farmers in Banteay Meanchey for six months, and the rest they come to worker in Thailand."

Interviews with Khmer migrants revealed that a considerable portion of Khmer workers—after working in Thailand for a few to a couple of years—often took a long break from their works in Thailand, returned home, before migrating to Thailand again. The reasons for these intermittences were usually personal reasons such as exhaustion and boredom. Once these workers—in their own words—felt ready again or, in most case, ran out of money, they would make another round of migration to Thailand. This study also found a number of workers who usually came to Thailand only during off-farming season. Since most of the farmers in their hometowns were rice farmers, their off-season was commonly around November to May. This, however, also depended on different weather condition each year. For migrants who grew other crops back home, their farming season might be different.

Moreover, almost all of respondents asserted that Thailand was the major destination for emigrants from their hometowns. A few number of respondents mentioned other destinations such as Malaysia, South Korea, or Japan. In general, interviewees reported that emigration to other destinations apart from Thailand was rare; and while it might exist, the number was minimal.

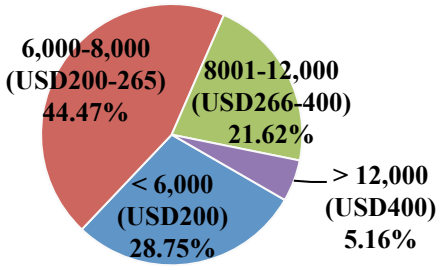
3.2.2.2 Income, Cost for Migration, Spending, and Remittance

Income

Almost half—precisely 44.47 percent—of respondents earned between THB6,000 and 8,000 (USD200-265) per month. The group of respondents who earned less than THB6,000 (USD200) per month made up 28.75 percent of total interviewees; they were closely followed by the group of immigrants who earned between THB8,001 and 12,000 (USD266-400) which comprised 21.62 percent out of total 404 interviewees. Immigrants who earned more than THB12,000 (USD400) represented 5.16 percent of total respondents.[106]

Figure 3-22: Average Income of Khmer Workers in Rayong Province (in THB)

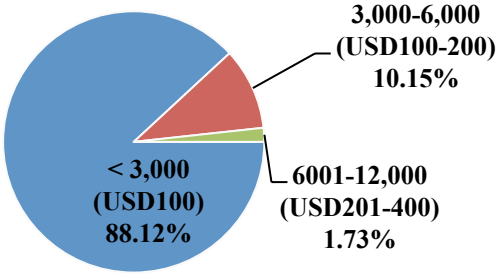
[106] THB6,000 and THB12,000 were set as benchmarks, as minimum daily wage in Thailand was THB300. Assuming workers worked approximately 20 days a month, their monthly income would be estimatedly THB6,000. THB12,000, however, represented the amount of income which doubling the minimum wage.



Cost for Migration

Because surveyed immigrants came to Thailand during different periods of time, certain fixed costs related to immigration in Thailand might vary. Examples of such costs included the immigrant worker registration fee, visa fee, and health insurance fee from Thai side and passport fee from Cambodian side which were potentially fluctuated greatly from years to years. However, despite these, notably, the vast majority of respondents stated that their approximate cost for relocation was less than THB3,000 (USD100).

Figure 3-23: Average Cost of Migration for Khmer Workers in Rayong Province (in THB)



Statistically, 88.12 percent of respondents reported that they paid less than THB3,000 (USD100) when they moved to Thailand. The second most common range of the cost for migration was between THB3,000 and 6,000 (USD100-200); this group of interviewees comprised 10.15 percent of total respondents. As few as 1.73 percent paid THB6001-12,000 (USD201-400). No respondent reported that he or she spent more than THB12,000 (USD400) for the migration.

Particularly low cost for migration, especially in comparison to the Mons, derived from the relatively closer proximity between their hometowns and Rayong Province compared to between Mon State and Samut Sakhon Province—this led to easier and cheaper transportation. As a result, one-way transportation, together with documentation fee, usually costed an immigrant less than THB3,000 (USD100). Data from the interviews additionally revealed that the cost of migration above THB3,000 (USD100) signified one of the two, or both, connotations. Firstly, it potentially signified that the origin area of that particular respondent was relatively farther away from the border between Cambodia and Thailand in comparison to other immigrants. Secondly, comparatively higher migration cost might imply that the origin area of that particular respondent was not home to a large number of Khmer immigrants in Thailand. In fact, transportation fee as well as other relevant costs such as documentation and processing fees—in the case that the workers relied on commercial

agencies—from such origin area, without plentiful alternatives and business competition, was usually higher than the area with voluminous migration traffic.

Spending

Living expense was reported as the most important form of immigrants' spending. In fact, more than half of respondents spent the largest portion of their earnings on their living expense in Thailand, as exhibited in Table 3-4. The second most substantial form of spending belonged to their remittance, followed by saving and investment.

Champey—a 39 female worker from Bay Village—said, "The cost of living in Thailand takes more than half of my earnings. The rent, food, electricity, and all necessary utensils and cloths. These are a lot more expensive than in Banteay Meanchey. My parents are also working here in Rayong, so I don't need to send back the money. Two of my younger kids are here. My two eldest children, both are boys, are now in Bay Village. If I had enough money, I would have all of them here. But at that time (when her eldest children were born: author), I still didn't have as much money like I do now, so I had to send them back to the village and asked my aunt to raise them. Of course, I send back money to my aunt every month. But compared to the amount of money that you need to raise children here, the cost is a lot lower."

When asked if she planned to have her elder children join her in Rayong, she replied, "I want to. But the costs will be too much for me if I have all of them staying here. My eldest son is already 13, and the second one is 10. So, it will be a while until they will be able to come to work here. My younger children, 7 and 6, were born here. They have never been to Bay Village once. I think if they go back to visit Bay Village, I'm not sure if they can cross the border back here. There are a lot of families like us, they have kids here, and their kids have never set their feet in Cambodia, let alone their hometowns."

Data revealed that living expense was also the most common expense for their secondary expenditure; followed by those who described remittance, saving, entertainment in Thailand, making merits in Thailand, and investment. Indeed, interviews disclosed that Khmer immigrant parents, by default, tended to have their children stay with them in Thailand, instead of sending their children back to their hometowns. This directly added up to their living expense in Thailand.

Table 3-4: Spending by Khmer Workers in Rayong Province

	Primary expenditure		Secondary expenditure	
	Person(s)	%	Person(s)	%
Living expense in Thailand	241	59.65	158	39.11
Remittance	111	27.48	127	31.44
Saving	45	13.02	56	13.86
Investment	7	1.73	15	3.71
Making merits in Thailand	0	0.00	16	3.96
Entertainment in Thailand	0	0.00	32	7.92

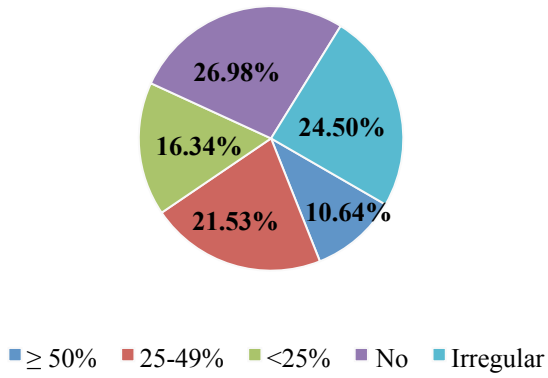
While the number of respondents who reported investment as either their primary or their secondary largest forms of spending was marginal, all of them described that their investment activities took place in their hometowns. These investments ranged from investment in farming business such as new and advance harvesters, insecticides, improved

seeds, and land acquisition to micro services business such as local restaurants and grocery stores.

Remittance

Collected data revealed that 48.51 percent of respondents regularly remitted part of their earnings back to their households in Cambodia, 24.50 percent of them intermittently remitted part of their earnings back to their households in Cambodia, whereas 26.98 percent of respondents reported that they did not remit. Among the immigrants who regularly made remittance, most of them remitted approximately between 25 and 49 percent of their earnings in Thailand, followed by the groups of immigrants who sent back their households less than 25 percent and more than 50 percent of their earnings, accordingly.

Figure 3-24: Approximate Size of Remittance in Proportion with Khmer Workers' Earnings



Estimated every one out of four immigrants, albeit remitted, did not regularly sent back money to their households; they, in fact, were inclined to make remittance based on periodical requests from their households. Another quarter of respondents, nevertheless, reported that they did not remit at all during their stay in Thailand. Further interviews with this group of respondents unveiled two primary reasons why they did not remit.

Chaya—a 24 female worker from Bay Village—revealed, "All of my family members are here in Rayong. My parents are working here. I have two siblings, both of them are here. I'm now staying with my husband, we have one kid. She was born two years ago. And all of us are here. My grandparents, well, they passed away several years ago. So, if you ask me if I normally send back money to my family back in Buan Village, well, the answer is no. Because all of my family members are already here."

She continued, "We have our home in Buan Village, yes. Or I should say it's my parents' home. I grew up there. Who takes care of the house when all of us are away? Well, it's my uncle, my mom's older brother. He takes care of our home for us. Of course, we need to send him back sometimes when the house needs fixing and stuff. But that's (the money: author) not much, and it's my parents who pay him, not me."

First, a large share of respondents from this group explained that everyone from their households were currently residing in Thailand, hence remittance was not necessary. In fact, evidently Khmer immigrants tended to work in Thailand until they were too old to work and, at the same time, they tended to have their children stay with them in Thailand. As a result, in many cases, interviews revealed that there was no respondents' household member remained in their hometowns; while in a large share of cases, the number of remaining household members was minimal.

Second, in a considerable number of cases, respondents elaborated that other migrating household members were responsible for the remittances. Often, these responsible migrating household members referred to the migrating household members who came to Thailand before and expectedly earned more than their siblings. In most case, this pointed out to the eldest sibling of the family.

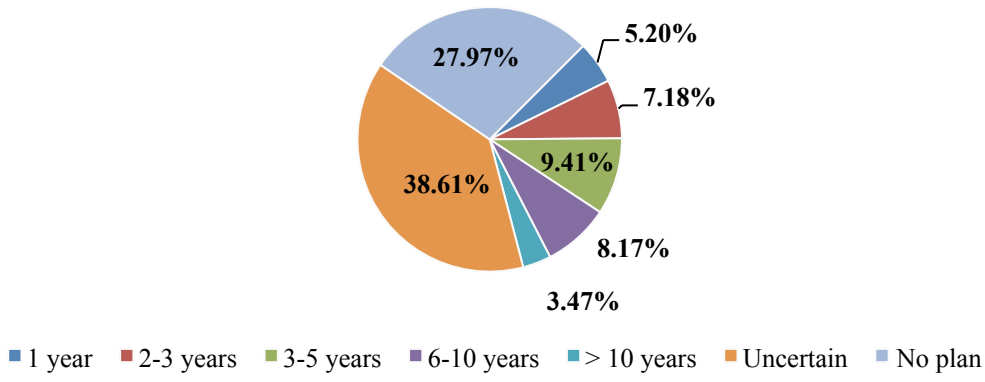
Chanthou—an eldest sibling from a family in Pii Village who turned 46 this year—said, "My dad already passed away years ago. Now, it's only my mom back in Pii Village. I was the first one out of all siblings to come to work in Thailand. I have three younger siblings also working in Thailand. But normally, I the only one sending the money back. Well, since it's my mom alone, the money that she needs is not that much. Roughly, it's about THB2,000 a month, but sometimes she would ask more if the house, motorcycle, or housing amenities need fixing. Or when she was sick. Well, sometimes it's tight for me."

He further explained, "Maybe, it's something that family expects from you as an eldest sibling, especially if you are a guy. I mean eldest siblings who are female are also, many times, responsible for this. But I saw that sometimes, if an eldest sibling who are female married a poor guy or if she has many children, then if she has sibling, other sibling will take this responsibility. But the expectation is higher if you are male, it's much harder to pass this responsibility to other sibling."

3.2.2.3 Return Decision

Approximately three fourth of respondents expressed their intention to return to Cambodia. However, among these respondents, half of them did not have a specific timeframe for their return. For those who had specific timeframe, most of them expected to return within three to five years, followed by the groups of respondents who planned to return within six to ten years, two to three years, one year, and above ten years; they comprised 9.41 percent, 8.17 percent, 7.18 percent, 5.20 percent, and 3.47 percent accordingly. Interviewees without plan to return, however, made up as much as 27.97 percent of total respondents.

Figure 3-25: Expected Return Plan of Khmer Workers



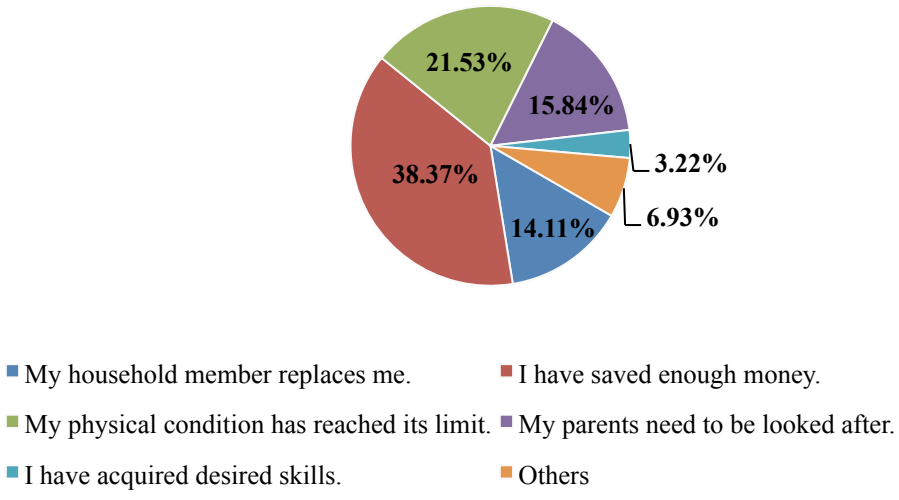
The reason why most of the respondents with intention to return could not make up their mind about the right time for their return was, perhaps, related to their expected conditions upon their return. Figure 3-26 revealed that the first four primary reasons for immigrants' return decision were enough saving, physical condition, their parents, and replacement, which comprised 38.37 percent, 21.53 percent, 15.84 percent, and 14.11 percent of total interviewees, respectively. All of these, in fact, according to the interviews, were difficult to foresee.

"I see myself back in Buan Village one day. I don't know it may be in three years, five years, or ten years. I'm still healthy, and working here earns me money. If I go back, my children will have to send the money for me. And living here, I live close by my children and my siblings. So, my life here is good. If I go back, it maybe quite lonely. My husband left me years ago. No, he didn't die, he found a new woman. We didn't contact since," Sovanna—a 52 years old female worker in Rayong. She continued, "So, I guess, I will work here to save some more money, so I wouldn't be too much of a burden for my children when I return, as long as my body holds up, I mean"

The most common condition which the respondents expected to meet before they return was enough saving money which enabled them to enjoy their financial freedom after they retire from being migrant workers. This group of respondents hoped that after their retirement, they would return to their hometowns and enjoyed their life without having to work hard anymore. They, indeed, did not fancy themselves as laborious farmers, or any other type of laborious workers, once they return to their hometowns. However, because Khmer parents tended to have their children stay with them in Thailand, their expenses when they stayed in Thailand were expectedly high; this clearly had inverse relationship with their saving. Moreover, saving money involved several contingencies such as unexpected expenses from physical conditions of household members and natural disasters in their hometowns which may inflict costs for house or farm renovation.

The second most significant condition which determined respondents' return decision was their own physical condition. In fact, approximately 21.53 percent of total interviewees stated that they would work in Thailand as long as their bodies could hold up. The third most influential condition toward respondents' return decision was their parents' health condition, representing 15.84 percent of total respondents. Finally, the fourth most influential reason which determined respondents' return decision was the replacement of other household members as migrant workers. Approximately 14.11 percent of interviewees mentioned that despite their willingness to return, as one of the main earners for their households, they needed to wait for other household members to replace them as migrant workers. For this group of interviewees, they were not firmly certain about the specific time when their substitutes would come. In addition, even when substitute household members already came, they would have to stay in Thailand for a while until they were certain that the replacing members could stably settle down.

Figure 3-26: Respondents' Reasons for Remigration of Khmer Workers



Together with the primary four conditions—comprising replies from more than 90 percent of total respondents—other conditions cited by the rest of respondents such as acquisition of desired skills, boredom, and childbearing were equally difficult to foresee. For these reasons, hence, the majority of interviewees, even with the intention to return, were not able to specify the period of time for their return.

Considering the uncertainties regarding immigrants' return conditions for their return, immigrants' low enthusiasm on any type of investment was understandable. These conditions, as well as financial dependence on remittance by their households back in their hometowns, signal that—instead of traditional reliance on earnings from farming as the source of funding for their household expenses—prevailing share of respondents, upon their return, intends to rely primary on their own saving and remittance from existing household members in Thailand. This will later be confirmed by collected data from the origin area as well as the series of interviews with key informants and immigrants in Thailand during follow-up stage.

3.2.3 Dynamic Social Context at the Destination

Since the beginning in the mid-1990s of mass migration along both migration corridors—from Mon villages to Samut Sakhon and from Banteay Meanchey villages to Rayong—the social context of migrant communities in Samut Sakhon and Rayong have gradually, yet dynamically, changed. Significant transformations in both surveyed areas comprise the flourishing migrant community, the development and the decline of migration brokers and NGOs, and access to medical care and education.

Whereas the role of migrant networks in migration decision was usually emphasized as alleviating financial and physical burdens, this study also found them remedying psychological burdens faced by migrant workers. Personal networks—immigrants' relatives and community members—and structural networks—brokers and NGOs—played significant roles in absorbing newcomers' financial and physical burdens through provision of information about living and working conditions in Thailand, transportation, accommodation, documentation, job placement, remittance transfer, and loans. However, personal networks were instrumental in assuaging migrants' psychological burdens.

The first subsection highlights migrants' personal networks. It depicts, besides its roles in absorbing newcomers' financial and physical burdens, personal networks' psychological benefits. Further, it elaborates how migrant communities developed strong bonds and a strong sense of belonging among their members and, consequently, how these encouraged future migration. The second subsection, emphasizing structural networks, traces the development and the decline of migration brokers and NGOs in both corridors. It elaborates and reasons the different turns of development in each corridor. The final subsection uncovers another facet of social context which added to the pull factor for migration decision: access to medical care and education.

These changes in social context gradually eased the barrier to entry as well as hardship faced by migrant workers. Interestingly, these transformations were found to be cumulative, as each act of migration incrementally bettered the social context of the migrant community at the destination, which triggered subsequent migration. In other words, this evolving social context encouraged the migration decision of other community members as well as emigration self-sustainment. Furthermore, this study found that, despite structural networks' roles in absorbing newcomers' financial and physical burdens, personal networks exerted a greater influence on individual migration decisions.

3.2.3.1 Flourishing Migrant Community

Ever since Mon immigrants and Khmer immigrants started surging into the Thai seafood processing industry in the mid-1990s, their personal networks at the destinations—Samut Sakhon and Rayong, respectively—have been continually expanding. In the case of the Mon community, however, the community expansion prompted not only a rising number of migrants and the denser interactions between individuals, but also the growth of social institutions, such as transborder religious institutions and a community school, which played a great part in binding the migrant community. These elements in community development at the destinations—both of which bypassed national borders from their communities at the origin—led to stronger bonds and a stronger sense of belonging among their dwellers, which in turn powerfully affected others' migration decisions.

Home Community at the Destination

This study found that, in addition to its passive role in bolstering migrants who had already joined it, the migrant community at the destination also played a remarkably active role in recruiting more workers into the Thai seafood processing industry. Interestingly, target recruits were not limited to the Mons and the Khmers who were about to migrate to Thailand, but also the ones who were already in Thailand, yet were employed in other industries. The pull of migrants' home community at the destination was remarkably effective in recruiting workers and sustaining a workforce in the Thai seafood processing industry.

Gathered data revealed that, while the wage in each industry was close to identical, migrants preferred to work in seafood processing as they felt warm and safe within their Mon and Khmer communities. Data indicated that out of 407 Mon respondents, 323 of them had, indeed, been employed in other industries before. In the case of the Khmers, the number was 252 out of 404 respondents. Most of them had been employed either in farming, construction, or domestic work. According to the interviews, immigrants expressed that by staying in their communities (Mons in Samut Sakhon, Khmers in Rayong) they were surrounded by people from the same or nearby villages; they felt like they were in their hometowns, not in a foreign country.

Data further showed that the stronger sense of belonging among the Mon and the Khmer workers in the seafood processing industry in comparison to other industries was derived from two related reasons: first, differences in the nature of the industry's work and living conditions, and second—grown out of the first reason—the tight bond between migrants' communities at the destination and at the origin. Both of these highlighted the influential role of the migrant community to migration decision.

The first reason was the difference in the work and living conditions of migrant workers in the seafood processing industry compared to other industries. Immigrants who previously worked in the construction or agriculture industries elaborated that their former jobs forced them to constantly move from place to place and that the group of people whom they worked with at each site changed accordingly. Among the former domestic workers, they commonly expressed their loneliness during the time of their previous jobs, as their former employers usually hired only one or two maids for their houses.

In the seafood processing industry, on the other hand, looser work conditions—particularly the work schedule—gave migrant workers opportunities to utilize their time after work at their own discretion. After usually eight to ten hours of work in factories on weekdays, workers could freely spend their time, which they usually did with their family and friends. In addition, migrant workers in the seafood processing industry were free to

make their own decisions about their accommodations. As one might expect, data from field research revealed that immigrants stayed with family and that immigrants from the same hometowns often stayed close to each other. These courses of action significantly contributed to the construction and the strength of their local neighborhood in the foreign country. Moreover, they forged close ties between migrant communities at the destination and at the origin, which will be elaborated below as the second reason for migrants' preference for the seafood processing industry.

The influence on migration decision from these two points—the differences in the nature of the work and the living conditions—was firmly supported by immigrants in the seafood processing industry who had been employed previously in other industries. For example, immigrants who had been housekeepers often stated that, even though their previous jobs earned them more, the work required them to be available practically 24 hours a day. Moreover, the fact that a typical household normally employed only one or two housekeepers was distressing for them.

> It was very tough to work by yourself without friends or anyone you could talk to. And the working hours were long—no, I should say that every minute could be counted as working hours. You didn't know when you would be called to work, especially when you compare it to the 8 to 10 hours of work in the factory here. And yeah, you have days off here, one or two days a week, but as a housekeeper, you worked every day—I mean every day. There was no holiday, no,

said Nah, a 26-year-old female from Mazzone Village who worked as a housekeeper in Bangkok for several years. Two years ago, she joined her aunt in a grind fish factory in Samut Sakhon. Similar stores were told by respondent after respondent who previously worked as housekeepers.

Moreover, immigrants who were employed as fruit farmers and construction workers also shared accounts of previous jobs which required them to constantly move from place to place. They were, in addition, rotated to work with new groups of immigrants once work in the previous sites were done. "I prefer it more here in Samut Sakhon. I live with people that I know, I have meals with people that I know, I don't like eating, sleeping, and sharing rooms with strangers," said Pai, a 34-year-old male from Buoy Village, who was a construction worker prior to his current work in a mid-size seafood processing company. His response was, in fact, along the same lines as those of many immigrant workers who had switched from other industries to seafood processing in Samut Sakhon and Rayong.

The second reason underlying the strong sense of belonging in the seafood processing industry is the tight bond between migrant communities at the destination and at the origin. The fact that migrants in seafood processing commonly lived and spent time with other migrants from the same or nearby hometowns gradually developed and strengthened immigrant enclaves—Mons in Samut Sakhon and Khmers in Rayong. These immigrant enclaves—their local communities at the destinations—were, interestingly, perceived by migrants as the extensions of their communities from their origins.

"Most of my school friends are here. We grew up together, we finished school together, we came to Thailand together, and now we work together in Samut Sakhon," said Bhem, a 20-year-old male from Mon's More Village. He added,

> My friends and I came here two years ago. Besides my friends, my parents and my sisters are also here. Living here, sometimes I feel like I'm in More Village, surrounded by all the familiar faces that I grew up with. It's like I'm still in my village, even when I'm here in Samut Sakhon. . . . Do you know what I mean? What's

> more . . . even being here in Thailand, there are days that I don't hear a single Thai word, but there has never been a day that I didn't hear the Mon language.

When asked if he knew the current news and what was trending in More Village, he replied,

> It's like knowing what's going on in your own backyard. People here always talk about what's going on in More Village. Most of us talk with our family members frequently, so we are always updated. I even know that my neighbor's [in More Village] cow delivered a downer calf last week. My mom said that it might bring bad luck, though.

"All of my siblings are here. My husband, my kids, and I share a room. All of my siblings, all four of them, live nearby and we see each other almost every day," said Dara, a 29-year-old female worker from Banteay Meanchey's Moy Village. She continued with a smile on her face,

> Not only my siblings, but a lot of our relatives are here. In fact, apart from the older people, most of Moy's villagers are here working in Rayong. For me, staying in Rayong and staying in Moy Village is not much different. I live with my people, and I talk my own language. Contact with my parents at home is also easy and cheap. Normally we use video calls through Line Call.[107] Video calling nowadays is not costly. You know that, right? We talk with them quite frequently, several times a week. My kids and them also seem to get along well.

Her husband, who also came from Moy Village, added, "Here in Rayong there are large Khmer communities. You can find a number of Khmer markets. Even the ATMs are available in Khmer."

This close tie between migrant communities at the origin and at the destination—in migrants' words, their home community and its extension—vividly represented the translocality of migrant communities and was apparently one of the most important developments of migrants' social contexts which reinforced the intention to migrate. Perceived as an extension of their origin community, the strong sense of belonging among the migrants at Samut Sakhon and Rayong was extraordinary and influential to their migration decision.

Whereas the role of migrant networks in the migration decision was usually emphasized for remediating financial and physical burdens, the development of migrant transborder communities helped lighten the psychological burdens faced by migrant workers. This strong sense of belonging to a migrant community—derived from the industry's different working and living conditions and the tight bond between migrant communities at the destination and at the origin—played an important role in recruiting workers and sustaining the workforce in the Thai seafood processing industry.

In addition, data revealed that the advancement of communication technology supported and facilitated this phenomenon. Respondents reported frequent usage of real-time communication technologies, primarily comprising instant messaging and videotelephony. In fact, interviewees firmly expressed that with such communication technologies, they felt closer even when they were countries apart; in other words, their perceived distance was shrinking. Evidently, the availability of these technologies encouraged the respondents'

[107] Line Call is an internet-based video call service offered by a freeware app, Line, for instant communication on electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, and personal computers. Users pay their internet service provider to use the service. The charge can be as low as $4 or less per month for an unlimited data plan.

migration decision: the levels of agreement were 4.61 and 4.00 for the Mon workers and Khmer workers, respectively.[108]

In the case of the Mons, however—besides the rising number of migrants and the denser interactions between individuals—their community development comprised two additional features: transborder religious institutions and a community school. Data revealed that these two developments substantially contributed to the translocality of the Mon community at home and at the destination. Indeed, they strengthened the connection between both communities and bound them together, leading to a strong sense of belonging which became an important pull factor to Samut Sakhon.

Transborder Religious Institutions

Complementing the Mon transborder community and contributing significantly to its flourishing was the transborder religious institutions. As strong believers in Buddhism, it was not surprising that the respondents often signified the strong influence of Buddhism in various aspects of their lives during interviews. Interestingly, while a number of Mon-influenced temples throughout Thailand had existed for hundreds of years—as the Thai and Mon shared long historic relationships with each other—the number of Mon-influenced temples in Samut Sakhon had rapidly escalated in the past decades.[109]

In present-day Samut Sakhon, it is not out of the ordinary to see temples posting announcements in the Mon language as well as in the Burmese language. Interviews with local monks outlined that in recent years, the majority of people who visited temples were Mon. Moreover, most donations were from Mons. These data suggest that Mon immigrants in Thailand had particularly high contact with the local Buddhist temples. According to interviews with key informants in Samut Sakhon—while the exact number was unclear—in the Samut Sakhon metropolitan area alone, the number of Mon-influenced temples rose from two to at least eight between 2000 and 2017. Traditionally, Mon-influenced temples referred to temples whose artwork represented Mon art, as the origin of these temples was related to the old Mon immigrants; in the present day, however, these temples might or might not be related to the new Mon immigrants. On the other hand, modern-day Mon-influenced temples referred to temples, regardless of their origins, with which current Mon immigrants were highly engaged. These temples usually hosted Mon monks, put up signs and announcements in the Mon and Burmese languages, as well as preached in the Mon language. Respondents added that visiting temples represented a form of socializing among the Mons. By visiting Mon temples in Samut Sakhon, they were able to connect with fellow Mons who stayed within the proximate area.

"I feel at peace when I come to the temple," said Na, a 27-year-old female worker in a large shrimp processing factory, whom we met at the temple. She added,

> The temple is like a place where I and the people that I know here meet—my friends, my relatives. We often come here to meet and talk, catching up with our lives. It's relaxing. People who have just come from Mon State also share with us about what is going on in Mon State and what is going on in our hometowns.

[108] The noticeable difference between the levels of agreement of current immigrants and their household members potentially implied that the current immigrants, as they were staying in the foreign country, relied more on these technologies to develop their sense of belonging in comparison with their household members in the origin area who were staying in their original communities.

[109] Please refer to Chapter 1, section 1.5.2.3, "Sociological and Anthropological Perspective," on the historical relation and its development between Thailand and the historic Mon Kingdom.

Interestingly, this study found cases of Mon-influenced temples in Samut Sakhon where Mon monks were hosted for extended periods; monks who came from immigrants' hometowns were found in the temples close by their settled communities in Samut Sakhon. Interview with two monks, who came from More Village and were currently hosted by a temple in Samut Sakhon, revealed that monks from More Village took turns staying in that temple as requested by More Village's chief. Mon monks who came to Samut Sakhon usually stayed for two to three years before being replaced by other monks from their respective origin areas. One monk, Hepah, explained,

> This is my second time coming here. The first time was six years ago; that time I was here for two years. Then I went back to More Village and came back here again earlier this year [2017]. The first monk who came from our village came here about 11 to 12 years ago. Since then, monks in our village have taken turns coming here. Almost everyone wants to come, so we have to take turns. It depends on seniority as well as proficiency in the Thai language. One cycle lasts two years; after that you need to go back, and if you want to come again, you have to wait.

Monk Hepah further elaborated on the sense of community,

> There are a lot of Mon people here. Most of the people who came from More Village also live close to this temple. So, there are a lot of familiar faces. Mon people come to the temple quite often, maybe not as often as when they were in Mon State, but it's still quite often. People are also happy that there are Mon temples and Mon monks—especially the ones who came from their hometowns—here. I think it makes them feel at home and at peace.

Si, a 33-year-old female migrant from More Village, agreed: "Having monks who came from our hometowns really makes me feel at home. It's like I'm coming to the temple in my hometown."

Similar cases were also observed for the monks from Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village. This finding, notably, demonstrated the mobility of the home religious institutions, which dynamically traversed the spaces and boundaries. Such a phenomenon, indeed, fortified the migrant communities' integrity even though the migrants were in a foreign country.

Community School

Another component which added to the strong sense of belonging of the Mons was the community-established school.[110] In the early 2010s, the Mon community had established a community school where two programs were offered: an adult program and a child program. For the adult program, classes were held on weekends with a primary focus on Thai language and culture. Optionally, the school offered career planning and development sessions for those who were interested. As for the children's program, weekend classes on Mon and Burmese languages and culture were held for children who were already enrolled in the formal school system in Thailand. The school also offered weekday preparation classes for children who wished to get into the formal school system in Thailand; these classes usually focused on Thai language and culture.

[110] It should be noted that in the case of the Khmer in Rayong, preschools for children who wished to enroll in the formal school system in Thailand were available. However, unlike the Mons' community school in Samut Sakhon—which was a result of coordination between migrant community leaders, politicians from Mon State, and local migration NGOs—preschools for Khmer children in Rayong were wholly run by local NGOs.

This school was the produce of coordination between migrant community leaders, politicians from Mon State, and local migration NGOs. Migrant community leaders were responsible for school management, while politicians provided financial support. The NGOs helped with the school-related legal administration. Some of the instructors were migrants themselves; the rest came to Thailand as humanitarian workers through NGO-sponsored visas. The latter group of instructors, interestingly, were all from Mon State.

A Mon politician who strongly supported this school said during an interview,

> I just hope to work on the well-being of Mon people here. Being a low-skilled migrant in a foreign country is not easy. I think that by having a place for them to gather, it helps them a lot. They will know that they have friends, and they have someone who they can rely on.

Further conversation with him revealed that he came to Thailand several times a year—besides his other business—to look after the school.

Interestingly, the field study showed that a large number of adult learners, especially the young adults, voluntarily wore a uniform to this school. It resembled student uniforms in Thai universities without any insignia or logo. Mindy, a young lady who was working in a large frozen seafood company, said with a giggle,

> I feel like I'm really a student in Thailand. Wearing a Thai university uniform is cute and cool. It's very refreshing after the whole week of hard work. I like coming to this school. I enjoy being a student, being with my peers, and I meet a lot of guys here. When we come to this school, we study together, we eat together. Usually, if I'm not on a date, I will go shopping, out to eat, or to see a movie with my girlfriends.

School and the connections she made there were central to Mindy's social development.

Kai, a 26-year-old male who came from Buoy Village, beamed about the Mon community school:

> Definitely one of my best experiences here. I really like Sunday school here. I have a lot of friends, and many people who came from Buoy Village also come to this school. The funniest thing is that my teacher from my school in Buoy Village is also a teacher here. Before she was a teacher, she worked in Thailand, so she's very fluent in Thai. It makes me feel like I'm studying at the school in my village. Several of my classmates back in the day were also here.

He added about his teacher, "I talk to her, and she said she'll be here for about two years, and after that someone will replace her."

Phu, a man in his mid-thirties from Bar Village, talked about how attending this school benefited him:

> Even though I finished only primary education, I actually like studying. Here, I'm learning the Thai language, how Thai people think, the way they work. I think these are useful both for daily life and for my work. In my company, at the entry level, you don't have to be able to speak Thai. But beyond that, if you want to be the supervisor and so on, you have to be able to speak Thai.

Besides its role in education, the school served the important function of disseminating information, as school authorities shared pieces of information via its students which later passed through numerous migrant networks. Participation in this school created strong bonds and unity among the Mons in this area as migrants frequently met, spent time, and shared information together. Indeed, this study found that this community school was an

essential puzzle piece to the migrant transborder community, connecting their communities at home and the destination together.

3.2.3.2 Migration Brokers and Migration NGOs: Disparate Turns of Development

Based on their general purposes, structural networks in migration could be classified into for-profit brokers and non-profit NGOs. Whereas both of them played important roles in migration, their concentrations were dissimilar; in fact, the migration brokers focused on expanding the number of migrants, while the migration NGOs usually paid their attention to the well-being of migrant workers. Their major functions ranged from providing information about living and working conditions in Thailand, legal documentation, job placement, transportation arrangements, accommodation arrangements, loans, remittance transfer, and living assistance. Migration brokers were usually active in all of these functions. Migration NGOs, however, commonly concentrated on humanitarian functions, especially legal documentation and living assistance. Despite their different focuses, this study found that both migration brokers and NGOs usually comprised both Thai employees and employees who shared the same nationality or ethnicity with the migrants that they served.

Interestingly, this study found that from the time when migration brokers became common in the 1990s—when migration corridors between Samut Sakhon and Mon and between Rayong and Banteay Meanchey were becoming busier—the turn of developments diverged sharply between these corridors. For the Mons, migration brokers remained important actors facilitating the migration flow. However, for Khmer migrants, migration brokers' importance gradually declined, and their roles were replaced by migrants' personal networks. Nevertheless, in both corridors, the roles of the NGOs became more prominent.

Mon Corridor

Migration brokers for the Mons usually consisted of Thai nationals and the earlier generations of Mon workers in Thailand. They served as the middlemen between Thai employers and the Mons. The aid for which migrant workers regularly relied on the brokers was transportation between their hometowns and Thailand, remittance transfer, loans, and legal documentation. Migrant workers usually relied on NGOs for living supports when they were in Thailand.[111] Major living supports assisted by the NGOs included conflict meditation between migrant workers and law enforcement or employer, serving as an intermediary for migrant workers to access medical care, and helping arrange for the children of migrant workers to access schools in Thailand.

Yam, a 27-year-old female worker who had been in Samut Sakhon for four years, said,

> It's quite easy if you pay for the agencies. You paid around 10,000–12,000 Thai baht (THB) ($333-400) and the agencies get everything done for you, all the documents and transportation. There is also an agency I frequently use to send back money to my family; the fee is, like, 10 THB ($3.33) for every 1,000 THB ($33.33) I send back.

As for the NGOs, she reported,

> I never heard about these NGOs before I came here. But they are quite helpful. They were the ones who took me to the hospital to deliver my latest child. At that time my husband was offshore on a fishing boat.

[111] For other forms of assistance such as information sharing about living and working conditions in Thailand, accommodation arrangement, and job placement, Mon workers often relied on their own household members or other community members.

Whereas the exact numbers of brokers and NGOs were unavailable, interviews with key informants confirmed that the numbers of organizations and their employees have grown steadily in the past 20 years. Interviews with current immigrant workers and their household members further conveyed that the spatial coverage of for-profit brokers' activities had tremendously expanded in their origin area; these activities included recruitment of potential migrant workers, transportation, and remittance transfer. The assistance of NGOs—whose spatial coverage was generally much narrower, covering only the immediate area around them—has actively expanded into a myriad of living considerations such as conflict meditation, access to medical care, and access to education, instead of traditionally passive consultation services.

Repeaters also asserted that, as a result of enlarging brokers and NGOs, migration to Thailand became more and more convenient for later generations of emigrants both for their relocation and their day-to-day living during their stay. They observed that the number of brokers and NGOs corresponded directly to the number of migration workers. In terms of received services, repeaters noted that the cost as well as the fee for broker-provided transportation, remittance transfer, loans, and legal documentation gradually decreased; at the same time, these services became faster. Repeaters suggested that instead of a traditionally monopolized or semi-monopolized market, the growing number of brokers made existing brokers compete for customers, resulting in better and cheaper services. In addition, the expanding number of NGOs made living assistance more accessible to a greater number of migrant workers in Thailand.

Do, a 47-year-old man, one of the interviewed repeaters from Mazzone Village, recalled,

> This is my third time coming to Thailand. The first time I worked in a rubber plant in Surat Thani Province for about eight years, then I went back to Mon State. The second time I also came here, it was about 10 years ago or so. That time I was here for a little bit more than four years. And this time, I came here two years ago.

As for the expansion of migration brokers and NGOs, he said,

> The number of migration agencies is a lot more than 20 years ago when I came here for the first time. The money that I paid to them…well, it's a little bit cheaper. It was 20,000 THB ($660) the first time, then it was 15,000 THB ($500) when I came here 10 years ago, and it was 10,500 THB ($350) two years ago. Their services were also better. I mean, it was a lot faster and the van that took me here was a lot better. You know, the first time I came to Thailand, I was on the back of a pickup truck without any cover together with another 15 people who all came from my hometown. I think there are a lot more Mon migrants here, so there are a lot more brokers. It's good for us [migrant workers], though; we have more options. It makes the services cheaper and better as they compete.

It is worth noting that, while almost all of the current immigrants (401 out of 407) had had contact with migration brokers before they migrated, only 30 acknowledged migration NGOs prior to their migration. The NGOs, in fact, usually became known to the immigrant workers after they settled in Thailand and the assistance from the NGOs was sought.

Khmer Corridor

Unlike the case of the Mon corridor, data revealed that, whereas the role of migration brokers was prominent when the migration corridor between surveyed villages and Thailand began in the 1990s, their importance gradually declined. In the beginning, migration brokers were formed by Thai nationals and the earlier generations of Khmer workers in Thailand and

acted as the middlemen between Thai employers and the Khmer in Banteay Meanchey. During the 1990s, they played important roles facilitating migration from surveyed villages in Banteay Meanchey to Rayong, with services such as providing information about living and working conditions in Thailand, transportation, accommodation, documentation, job placement, remittance transfer, and loans for relocation.

However, as more Khmers migrated to Thailand, their personal networks became larger and stronger, eventually replacing migration brokers in most of those key services. By the mid-2010s, the only key function for which Khmer migrant workers relied on migration brokers instead of personal networks was money transfers, remittances, from Thailand to their hometowns. Respondents commonly cited costs and reliability as the main reasons for this change. Without the top up fees from migration brokers, which normally added 20 to 100 percent to the costs for migration, Khmer migrant workers spent considerably less money on their relocation. Moreover, respondents expressed that their community members were undoubtedly more trustworthy than migration brokers.

Whereas other key functions in migration facilitation were taken over by personal networks, money transfer was still overwhelmingly dominated by migration brokers. In fact, among 404 respondents who were the current immigrants, 388 of them, 96.04 percent, reported that they relied on migration brokers when they sent money back home.[112] The reason lay in the method of how remittances were sent from Khmer workers in Thailand to their households in Cambodia. Because both the migrants and their household members, by default, did not have bank accounts, they often sent back cash. While carrying it back to their hometowns by themselves or asking their community members to do this for them was extremely inconvenient, migration brokers which specialized in remittance were considered the optimal alternative. In fact, these brokers usually had bank accounts and employees both in Thailand and Cambodia. When a Khmer migrant wanted to send a remittance, they could pass their cash to a broker, who deposited it in their bank account; the broker's employees in Cambodia would withdraw the money from the account and deliver it to the designated household. The standard fees collected by this type of broker ranged between one and ten percent, depending on the proximity of designated households, the frequency of using the service, and the volume of money remitted. In general, the fees were cheaper if the receiving households were close to major cities, the migrant workers were frequent users, and the volume of remittances was high.

One interviewee's account exemplifies these trends among the Khmer migration community—the changes in number, cost, and roles of brokers. The following is from Sokhem, a 56-year-old male worker who first came from Pii Village in 1994:

> No one from Pii Village comes with a broker anymore. It has been like this for quite some time. When exactly, you asked? I don't keep records about this, but what I can say is that people who come with brokers are fewer and fewer. I think fewer people have used brokers since the mid-2000s. Then after 2010, the cases were rare, very rare, indeed.
>
> The costs [of migration] have become lower, I mean the cost for transportation, passport, and visa, things like that. Especially, recently more migrants are legally registered. What we have to pay became much lower than when we had to pay under

[112] This was considerably more than respondents' dependence on migration brokers for information about living and working conditions in Thailand, transportation, accommodation, documentation, job placement, and loans; the proportion of respondents who primarily relied on migration brokers for these services were 6.44 percent, 13.12 percent, 3.47 percent, 10.40 percent, 14.11 percent, 7.67 percent accordingly.

> the table, you know? And after many of us [Pii villagers] came to work here, our families had some savings. So, we could pay by ourselves when one of our family members moved here. That's why we don't use brokers anymore. We can arrange transportation and we can find newcomers a job by ourselves. And usually they stay with their relatives when they come here.
>
> Compared to the time when I came…at that time, all of us used brokers to come here. But now, we see them only when we want to send money back home. Sending money through them is much easier and it doesn't cost much, about 20 THB for every 1,000 THB. Normally, my family receive the money in a few days or, at most, about a week.

Sotha, a 44-year-old male worker also from Pii Village, gave other insights into these changes and their reasons. He had been working in Rayong for more than 10 years. He was also a coordinator—community leader—for all the Khmers who came from Pii Village in Rayong.

> Nowadays, people who come from villages nearby the borders no longer use brokers. Only those who come from the inner provinces of Cambodia still rely on brokers. It's because the costs for migration for them are higher, mainly from the transportation. So, the brokers will pay for all the costs, and after migrants come here, they pay back the brokers. With interest, of course. Another reason is that people who come from the inner provinces don't have many relatives or friends here, so they don't have much information about Rayong. The important thing is that they don't have much information about the available jobs. So, they need help from the brokers. Oh, and I think the brokers help them with the place where they live as well.

Apart from the migration brokers, the role of another form of structural networks, the migration NGOs, has been growing in the aspect of living supports when the migrants resided in Thailand. NGOs have usually comprised both Thai and Khmer employees. Major living assistance from the NGOs included conflict mediation between migrant workers and law enforcement or employers, being an intermediary for migrant workers to access medical care, and helping children of migrant workers who wanted to access schools in Thailand. In contrast to the dwindling number of migration brokers, except those providing remittance transfer services, the number of migration NGOs has risen in the past 20 years, albeit slowly.[113]

Chantavy, a 34-year-old female worker from Moy Village, spoke highly of one such NGO:

> I'm always thankful to Migrants Connected.[114] Both of my boys got into a Thai school because of their help. It helps me a lot that the school is free too. And there are also free lunch and free milk in school, that helps our family a lot. There was also a time that my husband got sick and I couldn't drive. So, we asked Migrants Connected to bring my husband to the hospital.

Similar to the Mons, whereas most Khmer immigrants (376 out of 404) had contact with migration brokers before they migrated, only a handful of them (17 out of 404) were familiar with migration NGOs prior to their migration. Most immigrants came to know NGOs after moving to Thailand.

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[113] Whereas formal data on the number of brokers and NGOs was unavailable, this was confirmed by the interviews with key informants, migrant workers, and their household members.

[114] Migrants Connected is a pseudonym to an actual NGO.

Disparate Turns of Development Between Mon and Khmer Corridors

Whereas in both corridors, the roles of migration NGOs in migrant communities have steadily expanded out of growing humanitarian demand, the influence from migration brokers has diverged sharply. In the case of the Mon corridor, ever since the flow of migration rose tremendously in the 1990s, migration brokers have retained their important roles. Mon workers largely depended on migration brokers in the areas of transportation between their hometowns and Thailand, remittance transfer, loans, and legal documentation. On the other hand, the need for migration brokers declined for the Khmer. Besides remittance transfer, other functions of migration brokers were largely replaced by migrants' personal networks.

These different turns of development could be traced to two underlying reasons: first, proximity. Besides remittance transfer, other functions for which migration brokers were still relevant in the Mon corridor were linked to the long distance between Mon villages and Samut Sakhon—approximately 500 to 700 kilometers, depending on the route. On any route, migrants needed to travel across mountainous areas and large rivers to reach their destination. This was in comparison to less than 300 kilometers of plains between Khmer villages in Banteay Meanchey and Rayong. While the Khmers usually made three transits to reach their destination, five transits were the minimum for the Mons. This long distance and transportation difficulty led to much higher migration costs for the Mons: roughly 10,000 THB rather than the Khmers' 2,000 THB. In most cases, migration brokers offered packages for migrants, which bundled transportation and legal documentation. In addition, migrants were offered loans if they could not pay in full. Since the cost of migration was so high for the Mons, most of them decided to buy the packages from migration brokers and pay by installments. This was in contrast to the Khmers, most of whose households were able to afford the 2,000 THB for migration. Hence, the difference in proximity led to different levels of dependence on migration brokers between these two corridors.

Khom was an officer at a migration broker and had also been a migrant worker. He worked in Thailand for more than 10 years before turning to work for the migration broker in 2004. He explained,

> Coming here from More Village and Bar Village takes four to five stops. This also depends on the season, though. In the rainy season, the mountains can be dangerous. Detour routes to avoid those dangerous paths take more stops. In the dry season, migrants come from their village and take the first stop at Mudon, then the next stop is at Mawlamyine, then the border. After they cross the border, then the next stop is Kanchanaburi or Tak, this depends on their route. And the final stop is here, Samut Sakhon. What vehicle? Well, it depends on the number of people…sometimes a van, sometimes a pickup truck, but most of the time, it's the pickup truck. The charge covers all of these transportations and also all the necessary documents. The price has been quite stable; since the 2000s, it has been about 12,000 THB for those who come from More and Bar. Those who come from the closer area pay less, and those who come from the farther area pay more. So, roughly it's about 10,000–15,000 THB.

When asked about the cost for migration before 2000, he replied,

> Before 2000, the price was higher; it could be as much as 20,000–30,000 THB. At that time, the road was not this good. More importantly, most of the workers at that time were not legal, so coming here involved a lot of under-the-table charges."

The second reason for the difference in development of the Mon and Khmer corridors was the Mon politicians. Data suggest that, unlike the Khmers, local politicians from Mon

State were highly involved with migration brokers. Besides financial benefits, through their influence over migration brokers, local politicians were able to control the outflow of emigration. The most important power that they gained from their involvement in migration brokers was perhaps the area selection.

Chim, 39, a partner at a migration broker, who was also a nephew of the Buoy Village chief, provided detail:

> Well, there are definitely more than one broker that takes people from Mon State. There are also more than one type of broker. Some brokers are responsible for transportation, and some are working on the passport and the visa. Some are dealing with Thai employers [for job placement]. These brokers work together though, like a network.
>
> Local politicians in Mon are highly involved in these brokers. They make sure that the villages under their influence are in a good position for migration. And villagers will like them. Sometimes, this puts pressure on the power brokers who work for opposing politicians who have less connection with brokers. The politicians with strong connections [with brokers] always have the upper hand. They can sway the alliance between power brokers and opposing politicians, or they can even develop their own power brokers to replace the existing ones.

Local politicians usually selected their desirable villages and facilitated the emigration of migrants from these villages. People from these villages would then be the priority on the migration brokers' list. These villagers commonly had a shorter waiting period and paid less for migration than people from other villages. Indeed, local politicians implemented area selection for emigration as a tool to raise their popularity in villages within their political sphere.

3.2.3.3 Wider Access to Medical Care and Education

As public services are a staple to modern communities, accessibility to public services for immigrants was investigated. Two fundamental types of public services were examined: medical care and education. In terms of medical care, report revealed that hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies had gradually become more accessible for documented immigrants—who were covered by the same basic health insurance as the Thai people. In addition, translators were available in most of the major medical units in Samut Sakhon and Rayong. During fieldwork, several cases were observed where medical translation for the immigrants was assisted by NGOs. In fact, while major medical units in Samut Sakhon and Rayong employed Mon, Burmese, or Khmer translators, from time to time the immigrants would have to visit these medical units outside of these translators' work hours. In such cases, immigrants often relied on the NGOs to help them access necessary medical services. In general, interview data revealed that most of the respondents were satisfied with the health services they received in Thailand.

As one example: "There are much more hospitals and clinics [that service Khmer migrants] compared to when I first came," recalled Bopha, a 49-year-old worker from Banteay Meanchey's Buan Village. Bopha has been working in Rayong for over 20 years.

> It was much harder to see doctors back in the day, difficult and expensive. But in the last five to six years, it has been much easier. Now, everyone has health insurance, and a number of hospitals here have Khmer translators. With insurance, the medical cost is quite low. Sometimes, it's even free. This is very good, especially since I'm getting older. I doubt, when I return to Buan, if the medical service there would be this good. I don't think so, really,

she said with a laugh.

Regarding accessibility to education, particularly for immigrants' children, the Thai government long ago passed a bill which allowed the children of low-skilled immigrants to enroll in Thai public schools under the same subsidized plan as Thai nationals.[115] According to data from immigrants, a notable share of immigrants who had children stated their preference to keep their children with them and enroll them in Thai schools—providing that they could afford their children's cost of living in Thailand.

"I plan to have both my children go to school in Thailand," insisted Su, a 27-year-old female worker from Mon's Mazzone Village who was a mother of two children. Her son, 7, was already enrolled in the second grade in a school in Samut Sakhon close to her dormitory. Her daughter, 3, was still too young to do so. She reasoned, "I want them to have a good future. If they study in Thailand, I believe they will have a better future than studying in Mon State." When asked to what grade she would have her children attend school, she answered, "I'm not sure. I think until our family goes back," she said.

Immigrant parents in general believed that the higher standard of education in Thailand and the opportunity for their children to formally study the Thai language would be eminently beneficial for their children. Besides formal education—as elaborated in the previous section—as a result of collaboration between migrant community leaders, Mon politicians, and NGOs, the community school in Samut Sakhon was established, first, to provide Thai language and culture education as well as to improve career development for the adults and, second, to provide preparation classes for the immigrants' children who wished to enroll in Thai schools. In the case of Rayong, while adult school was not observable, preparation schools for immigrants' children were reported. These schools were run by local NGOs.

3.3 At the Origin: Sending Villages in Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province[116]

Along with an overview of the sending areas, this section depicts the general characteristics, members' migratory status, and financial activities of households with emigrating members in surveyed villages in Mon State (3.3.1) and Banteay Meanchey Province (3.3.2). Next, the development of social contexts at both origins will be addressed in 3.3.3. Such developments, indeed, were integral to social factors that impacted migration decision, which will be clarified in Chapter 4. Further, the interpretation and analysis of different characteristics and behaviors of households with emigrating members will be covered in section 3.4, which incorporates data from section 3.2 and this section.

3.3.1 Mon State: More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village

This section elaborates general information of surveyed villages, characteristics of respondents, their household members, and their expenditures from remittances. Complementing qualitative data from interviews of key informants and household members of migrants, statistical data presented in this section are largely based on responses from 540 sets of survey distributed to villagers in these four villages—135 each.

[115] Thai nationals were exempted from tuition fees from nine years of compulsory education, which comprised six years of primary education and three years of lower-secondary education. However, currently, the Thai government fully subsidizes an additional six years of education made up of three years of preschool education and three years of upper-secondary education.

[116] Research site selection was explained and justified in Chapter 1, section 1.6.5.3.

3.3.1.1 Overview of Sending Villages

An overview of More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village is exhibited in Table 3-5. Individual characteristics of respondents such as ethnicity and religion principally refer to those of the particular household members who were interviewed; nevertheless, surveyed households customarily had uniform ethnicity and religion among all members.

Table 3-5: Overview of Sending Villages in Mon State

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
1. Households (Approximate)	1,000	700	800	1,100
2. Ethnicity				
• Mon	97.04%	97.78%	95.56%	94.07%
• Bamar	2.96%	2.22%	4.44%	5.93%
• Others	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
3. Religion				
• Buddhist	98.52%	100.00%	96.30%	100.00%
• Christian	1.48%	0.00%	3.70%	0.00%
• Others	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
4. Households with emigrants (Only Mon households)	92.37%	88.64%	91.85%	89.76%

Note: 1. Results in 1 were based on estimation by the chief of each village.
2. Results in 2-4 were based on 135 sets of survey from each of these villages.

From 135 respondents from each village, Table 3-5 reveals that 131 respondents from More Village, 132 respondents from Bar Village, 130 respondents from Buoy Village, and 127 respondents from Mazzone Village were Mon. These villages were, indeed, traditionally Mon villages. The Bamar households existing in these villages were seasonal workers employed for farm work during the time of field research.[117] In the case of Mon respondents, they were further asked about their households' migratory information. Study found that the overwhelming majority of the working-age population in these villages went to work in Thailand, with a very few of them headed to other destinations such as Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. By far the most emigrating workers who went to Thailand were employed in the seafood processing industry.

An interview with Wi, the More Village chief, bore much of this out:

> Our village is a Mon village. Basically, everyone here is Mon. Sometimes, there are some Bamars here, though. But they stay here only temporarily. They are usually hired by our villagers during harvest season. Once the harvest is over, they are gone. They usually come from Bago Region, but some of them come from as far as Ayeyarwady Region.
>
> Most of the people here go to work in Thailand. Almost all of them work in seafood processing businesses in Samut Sakhon. I think in the last 10–15 years, more and more people go to work there [seafood processing businesses in Samut Sakhon]. At first the number was small, but after a while they recruited more villagers to join them

[117] This is elaborated later in the subsection "Employment of the Bamar Workers in Mon State" within section 3.3.3.1, "Dwindling Dependence on Agriculture."

there. And the number grew bigger over time. It seems like our people like it there, too. There is our large community in Samut Sakhon—you met them before, right?

When asked about villagers who moved to other destinations, he said,

> Very few headed to other destinations. I heard that the Muslims prefer Malaysia, but we don't have Muslims in our village, though. There are a few who go to Singapore. They work as housekeepers now. And there are also a few who go to South Korea and Japan. But it is very difficult, I think. They need to study the language.
>
> This is also one of the reasons why Thailand is a default destination for us. There is a low language barrier,[118] relatively easy entry requirements, and we have our community there.

In most cases, respondents outlined that all working-age members of their family went to Thailand with the exception of two contingencies: first, if their household contained elders, patients, or a sizable number of children who needed attentive care; second, parents of the households may have decided to return to the village earlier should their children have replaced them as migrant workers in Thailand. Non-emigrating households made up approximately 10 percent of total households in each village. Generally, this group of households comprised particularly well-off households and households of government officials. This was explained by Dah, a 43-year-old male worker in a mid-size canned shrimp factory in Samut Sakhon. He was interviewed during his vacation break in his hometown, Mazzone Village.

> It's like a default. When children grew up, they go to Thailand. And when they are older, they come back to the village, especially after their children replace them. For those who stay in the village—well, except the lazy ones—some of them stay to take care of their old parents. In other cases, there are the families of landowners. They are already very rich, so they don't need to work hard in Thailand. There are also families of government officials. These families usually want their children to study to the university level and become government officials like their parents. These families may not be very rich, but they earn enough to live comfortably.

Table 3-6: Selected Demographic and Emigration Patterns of Respondents in Mon State

Village name	Ethnicity (persons)		Destination [Only the Mon] (persons)			
			Thailand		Other countries	Non-emigrant
	Mon	Non-Mon	Seafood processing industry*	Other industries		
More Village	131	4	106	13	2	10
Bar Village	132	3	104	12	1	15
Buoy Village	130	5	113	4	2	11
Mazzone	127	8	102	8	4	13

Note: *This represents the number of households with at least one household member working in seafood processing industry in Thailand at the time of interviewing.

As this study focuses primarily on the migrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry—besides key informants—data presentation in the following sections shows only data from households with at least one migrant worker currently employed in Thai seafood

[118] This is further explained in Chapter 4, section 4.2, "Embedded Perception and Social Status."

processing industry at the time of interview. These comprised 106 interview cases from More Village, 104 interview cases from Bar Village, 113 interview cases from Buoy Village, and 102 interview cases from Mazzone Village.

3.3.1.2 General Characteristics of Respondents

Gender

In all surveyed villages, the numbers of female respondents were moderately higher than male respondents, with the ratio of 64.15 to 35.85, 59.62 to 40.38, 62.83 to 37.17, and 68.63 to 31.37 in More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village, respectively.

Table 3-7: Respondents from Mon State, by Gender

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
Male	35.85%	40.38%	37.17%	31.37%
Female	64.15%	59.62%	62.83%	68.63%

Age

The distributions of respondents' age group in all villages were comparable with most of them aged between 45 and 60, following by the age group of more than 60, between 25 and 44, and between 18 and 24. In fact, as the questionnaire did not only aim to assess the latitudinal—the most up-to-date—social contexts of the villages, but also its longitudinal information—the dynamic of their altering social contexts; hence, when applicable, older household members were favored over younger members. Such preference on interviewee selection considerably distorted the aggregate data on respondents' age group.

Table 3-8: Respondents from Mon State, by Age Group

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
> 60	21.70%	20.19%	33.63%	17.65%
45 - 60	65.09%	65.38%	48.67%	65.69%
25 - 44	7.55%	10.58%	9.73%	12.75%
18 - 24	5.66%	3.85%	7.96%	3.92%

Marital Status

Similar to respondents' age group, aggregate data on interviewees' marital status in all villages was comparable. This partly derived from the fact that the rate of unmarried population in rural Mon State was particularly low and that, during the data collection process, older household members were preferred over their younger counterpart. Hence, aggregate data on respondents' marital status, as well, was expectedly considerably distorted.

Table 3-9: Respondents from Mon State, by Marital Status

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
Single	7.55%	7.69%	14.16%	6.86%

Married	92.45%	92.31%	85.84%	93.14%

Religion

Besides two Christian households in More Village, the rest of households with emigrants were reported as Buddhists.

Education

The distribution of level of education among interviewees in surveyed villages were close to each other. The majority of respondents in all villages did not finish primary education; these comprised 64.15 percent, 75.96 percent, 61.95 percent, and 65.69 percent of total interviewees in More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village, accordingly.

Table 3-10: Respondents from Mon State, by Education

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
Higher education	0.00%	0.00%	1.77%	0.98%
Higher-secondary education	6.60%	2.88%	6.19%	4.90%
Lower-secondary education	8.49%	5.77%	10.62%	11.76%
Primary education	20.75%	15.38%	19.47%	16.67%
Lower than primary education	64.15%	75.96%	61.95%	65.69%

Hometown and Locality

Besides current social conditions, longitudinal information about the social dynamic of the villages is another prime focus in this study; hence, respondents were asked about the length of their stays in the villages. Results revealed that the greatest proportion of respondents was born and grew up in the villages that they were currently living. Domestic immigration into these villages was usually a result from the marriage to the locals. Furthermore, these in-movers commonly came from other villages within Mon State. Out of these four villages, Mazzone Village had the highest number of in-movers from other states in Myanmar—which was eight.

Buoy Village Chief, Thi, explained, "Most of the villagers were born here or brought here since they were young. Some were born in Thailand or other villages, but later followed their parents or their relatives here. Villagers here usually marry the locals. Most marry with people in the village. Some marry with people from nearby villages. Only a few marry with people from elsewhere. There are cases both for in-marriage (to the village: author) and out-marriage (from the village: author), this depends on the condition of each couple. Gender doesn't matter much, it's not that the females will always have to marry into the males' families."

He also added, "Besides those who moved here since they were young, most of the in-movers are from in-marriage to our village. Normally, we marry with other Mons. Apart from this, there are also those who moved here because of their jobs such as teachers, doctors, nurses, and other public officials. But, in fact, most of these public officials are our own villagers from the beginning, though. So, the number of in-movers because of their careers is, indeed, small."

Table 3-11: Respondents from Mon State, by Length of Stays in Their Villages

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
Lifetime	67.92%	79.81%	73.45%	73.53%
> 10 years	15.09%	10.58%	10.62%	12.75%
6 – 10 years	10.38%	6.73%	8.85%	8.82%
≤ 5 years	6.60%	2.88%	7.08%	4.90%

Household Size

The average household sizes in More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village were 5.82, 6.37, 4.97, and 5.56, accordingly.[119] Table 3-12 shows that the most common household size in More Village and Buoy Village was four to five, following by six to eight, more than eight, and one to three. The most common household size in Bar Village and Mazzone Village was, however, six to eight, following by four to five, more than eight, and one to three.

Table 3-12: Household Size in Mon State

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
> 8	22.64%	25.00%	12.39%	21.57%
6 - 8	28.30%	34.62%	44.25%	29.41%
4 - 5	31.13%	26.92%	36.28%	38.24%
1 - 3	17.92%	13.46%	7.08%	14.71%
Average	5.82	6.37	4.97	5.56

3.3.1.3 Household Members in Thailand

Households in studied villages commonly had multiple members who were working in Thai seafood industry in Samut Sakhon. In fact, 81.13 percent, 89.43 percent, 84.96 percent, and 89.22 percent of households in More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village had more than one household members working in Thailand at the time of interview.

Table 3-13: The Number of Household Members Employed in Thailand: Mon State

	More Village	Bar Village	Buoy Village	Mazzone Village
Population (persons)	106	104	113	102
> 3	21.70%	16.35%	24.78%	25.49%
2 - 3	59.43%	73.08%	60.18%	63.73%
1	18.87%	10.58%	15.04%	10.78%
All emigrating members were working in Thai seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon	83.02%	86.54%	90.27%	82.35

[119] Household size reported from field research was expectedly moderately higher than the data from the national census as the data from the national census did not count the migrating citizens, while respondents in this field research usually counted their migrating household members.

Moreover, 83.02 percent, 86.54 percent, 90.27 percent, and 82.35 percent of households in More Village, Bar Village, Buoy Village, and Mazzone Village reported that all of their household members who worked in Thailand were employed in seafood processing industry in Samut Sakhon. The rest informed that some of their household members were construction workers, farm workers, and house workers.

"If it was 20 years ago, you would get different answers. Most of the villagers at that time went to the southern part of Thailand and worked in rubber farms. But now, it's different. Most of the villagers go to Samut Sakhon working in seafood processing factories. Only a few work elsewhere. As far as I know, some are still working in rubber farms, some become construction workers in Bangkok, and some are housemaids in Bangkok. But if you ask about usual cases, villagers commonly go directly to Samut Sakhon. We have our community there. Everyone wants to stay with their families and friends, right? So, going to Samut Sakhon, you can join your families and friends."" said Tem—a 66 years old male returnee from Mazzone Village. Tem worked in a rubber farm in Thailand's Surat Thani Province for more than 20 years before spending his last eight years in Thailand working in Samut Sakhon. In fact, similar answers with Tem's were time and again repeated by villagers in all surveyed villages.

He further explained, "I came back (to the village: author) about 11 years ago. Before I came back, I worked in a frozen seafood warehouse in Samut Sakhon. My wife and all of my children were also there (in Samut Sakhon: author). My wife worked with me for the same company, and also some of my children. But not all of my children worked for the same company with me, though. Some of them worked for other companies. But those companies were nearby, and we lived together. I came back here together with my wife, but all of my children are still working in Samut Sakhon now."

3.3.1.4 Expenditures from Remittance

Similar to other aspects of the answers from surveyed villages, the purposes of expenditure from their emigrant members' remittance were close to identical. Merit making was cited as the most important form of expenditure for most respondents in all of these villages. This was followed respondents who quoted living expenses as their largest proportion of expense. Other forms of expenditure—investment, saving, and household members' education—combined, made up between 7 to 17 percent of total interviewees who cited these expenses as their largest share of expenditure in each village.

Table 3-14: Household Expenditures from Remittance: Mon State

		Primary expenditure				Secondary expenditure			
		More	Bar	Buoy	Mazzone	More	Bar	Buoy	Mazzone
Population (persons)		106	104	113	102	106	104	113	102
Making merits	In %	51.89	50.96	51.33	56.86	29.25	33.65	36.28	39.22
Living expenses		40.57	42.31	31.86	35.29	42.45	38.46	38.05	39.22
Investment		4.72	3.85	7.08	1.96	9.43	13.46	7.96	10.78
Saving		3.77	1.92	6.19	3.92	5.66	7.69	10.62	6.86
Household member's education		1.89	0.96	3.54	1.96	4.72	5.77	7.08	3.92

Merit making was by and large the most preeminent form of expenditure for Mon households; in fact, almost 90 percent of respondents cited it as their first or second largest

form of expense. This highlighted the significance of the roles of religion among Mon households. To be precise, out of 425 interviewees in these villages, 394 of them expressed the strongest level of agreement that Buddhism was an important part of their lives, constituting an average, extraordinarily steep, score of 4.87 on the scale of five. Data further revealed that temple and religious ceremony were two essential aspects accentuated by respondents.

Interestingly, respondents reported that making merit at the temple regularly was a vital characteristic of a good Buddhist. In general, villagers strongly agreed that the person who donated more to the temple would be perceived as the better person compared to the person who donated less or did not donate at all. In other words, the idea that one's virtue was directly correlated with the amount of money and frequency that one donated to the temple was widely accepted.

"We usually come to the temple every Buddhist Holy Day.[120] We listen to sermons and we meditate. Normally, it takes half a day. On this day, we also make donation to the temple. It's normally food or money. If it's the money, the monks can use it to buy necessary things by themselves, to pay for water and electricity, and to renovate the temple. But you can also donate living amenities like tables, chairs, sofas, kitchenware, refrigerators, or even motorcycles. We usually make donation every time that we come to temple. Sometimes more, sometimes less, but we make donation to the temple every time," said Kham—a mother of two workers in Samut Sakhon. She was interviewed after she finished all her activities at a temple in Bar Village. She added with a smile, "For us, we always say it's okay if we are hungry, but we can't let monks hungry."

"On Major Buddhist Holy Days, the temples will hold big festivals. Every villager will join. We bring food to the temple and cook and eat together. If you have more, you bring more. If you don't have much, bring what you have, and use your body instead to help the temple on that day, for example, setting up the place, decoration, and cooking. Oh, right! And people usually donate more money on Major Buddhist Holy Days," said Tuew—a 49 years old lady from Buoy Village, whose two sons and a daughter were working in Samut Sakhon. She further explained, "Good Buddhists must take care of the temple. We donate regularly to the temple and to the monks. If you donate more, you gain more merits. If you are rich but you don't donate, villages will definitely cast a doubt on you." Indeed, answers similar to Kham's and Tuew's were repeatedly given by respondents in all studied villages.

Data from field research further disclosed that, while households regularly made merits by donating to the temple, usually the time when households spent the largest sum of money—on one single occasion—at the temple was when their sons entered the monkhood. Respondents explained that ordination was considered an important and valuable ceremony in Mon communities. Household with ordaining member customarily hosted as large and decorated ceremony as its finance allowed. Larger and more decorated ceremony implied superior wealth of ordaining person's household as well as greater merits that hosting household received. Nevertheless, despite being the ceremony which Buddhist households spent considerably large amount of money on—unlike usual ceremonies which households spent their money directly donating to the temple—the best share of the money did not go to the temple; instead, the money was circulated to circumambient businesses such as catering services and entertainment organizers.

[120] Bhuddist Holy Day is the Buddhist day of observance. On this day, devout Buddhists visit temple to listen to monks' sermons, participate in meditation sessions, and make merits. Normally, there are four Buddhist Holy Days a month; these are in accordance with lunar calendar. This is not to be confused with Major Buddhist Holy Days, which include Magha Puja Day, Vesak Day, and Asalha Puja Day.

"When villagers say they spend a lot of money on merit making, many times the money that they spend is for ordainment ceremony. It's true that villagers regularly donate money to the temple and the monks, but the amount each time is not much. For ordainment ceremony of their sons, though, they spend a huge amount of money. For decorated ceremony with good food, stage music, and lavish cloths, the villagers are willing to use years of household saving. I mean families may save their money for years for fancy ceremony. Normally, the host wants as many people as possible to join their ceremony. Everything is free for the guests, though. With larger and the more decorated the ceremony, the villagers believe that they gain more merits. They can show their generosity to fellow villagers this way…well, and also their wealth," explained Tai—a 38 years old doctor in More Village. Tai was born and raised in More Village before he went to Yangon, where he finished secondary school and medical degree. He came back to the village seven years ago. He added, "Families without son usually host or co-host their grandsons' or nephews' ordainment ceremonies."

Following merit making, household's living expenses came as the second most important form of expenditure. Most of these expenses were spent on food supplies, housing amenities, transportation vehicles, and home renovation. Another important share of money was spent on new house building; this might also include more land acquisition in some cases. Besides usual daily food supplies, fancy food and beverage—particularly those imported, housing amenities, vehicles, and especially modern house were considered trophies for successful households. Villagers usually looked up to these trophies lifting households.

"Modern house makes your family look really good. It shows that you become wealthy from all your family's hard work. Some families renovate their houses, some build the new ones. Some families buy pieces of land for their new houses. Besides new house, it can be pick-up trucks, cars, motorcycles, or modern housing amenities such as television, refrigerator, and air-conditioner. But at the end of the day, new house is the biggest achievement," said La—a 23 years old male worker in Samut Sakhon. His interview was given during his first home visit in Mazzone Village. It was his first home visit after he left the village five years ago. He added, "Imported products from Thailand are very popular here. They can be imported foods or amenities or vehicles. They make you look stylish and up-to-date."

In regard to investment, data revealed that investment in any form was scant and was obviously not among respondents' top priority. However, this did not mean that investment did not exist; in fact, migrants' households routinely invested on the resources for agricultural production such as harvesters, fertilizers, insecticides, micro irrigation systems, and seeds. Nonetheless, in comparison with the amount of money which they spent on merit making and living expenses, the proportion of money which households spent on investment was tiny.

Data further disclosed two additional notions concerning investment which were the scarcity of investment outside agricultural sector and the pattern of investment in agricultural sector. Firstly, field study found that almost all of the investments were made in agricultural sector. Investments outside of agricultural sector, while observable, were rare. In fact, in surveyed villages, investments outside of agricultural sector comprised a few local restaurants and a few grocery stores.

"After all those hard works in Thailand for many years, I don't think any of us want to work hard when we return. And we have money from our children who send back to us every month. You can see that people here still work on farming, right? But we don't work hard on that. The size of the farm is pretty small. We don't take it hard on our bodies. Usually, we farm for household use. If there are excess, we give to our neighbors, or sell in local

market. We don't do large farm, not full-scale commercially or something like that," explained Cha—a 56 years old male returnee from Bar Village.

"I returned here four years ago to take care of my mother. My father passed away since I was young, and I'm their only daughter," said Phiu—a 37 years old female from More Village. Kai was an owner of a local restaurant with about 20 seats. She was a chef and her husband was a waiter.

"I worked in Samut Sakhon for several years, so I had some saving. I used that money to open a restaurant here. And as you see, my restaurant is one of the only few restaurants in the village. It's true that normally villagers cook by themselves. But another reason is that no one wants to work hard. Most of people who stay here are returnees. They can just enjoy the money that their children send back to them. But my kids are still young, and I have to take care of them. If I had children sending me back money like they do, I wouldn't open a restaurant either. My business is doing well since there is nearly no competitor. Funnily, the days that I make the most money are during Buddhist Holy Days. Some villagers asked me to cook food for them to give to the monks. Also a lot of them, on their way to and back from the temple stop by my restaurant to eat with their friends," she further explained.

Secondly, interviews with migrants' household members and key informants highlighted certain investment pattern in agricultural sector employed by migrants' households. While primary economic activity in surveyed area was agriculture, the production intensity was particularly low. As previously outlined that households, in general, planned to rely on remittance for their expenses; for the majority of households, farming was primarily operated for the purpose of household usage—instead of commercial purpose. While they might sell their crops, such transactions were minimal; in fact, more often than not, those crops were the surplus from their household use. In most cases, transactions from farming activity was regarded as supplemental income. Full-scale commercial farming was utterly rare, especially among households with migrant workers.

"If we have spare money, we donate to the temple," Duai and Rom—a married couple in their late 50s—said in unison. They both worked in Thailand for more than 25 years before they returned to Buoy Village. When pressed if they did not have saving at all, they replied, "We have some saving in the case of emergency though, but the amount is not much. In the case that we really need more money than usual, we can ask from our children who are working in Thailand. We have 3 daughters and 2 sons, all of them are in Samut Sakhon. All of them send us money every month, so we don't need to worry."

"School is almost free. Textbooks are provided by the school. They are not new, though. The school has one set of textbooks for each class year. Those textbooks will be passed down to other students in the following year. Students don't need to wear uniform. I mean they can, if they want to. But it's their choice. For primary school, there is no tuition fee. That's why most younger generations finish at least primary school," explained Wai—a 35 years old female teacher in Bar Village. She was born and raised in this village, and became school-teacher four years ago. As for secondary school, she said, "For secondary school, students pay tuition fee, but the fee is not high. More families have their children attend secondary school these days. This is because unlike the old days, when their parents need children's help on farming, the children are not expected to work for their families. Another reason is because more secondary schools are available nearby.[121] So, it's easier for the kids to attend school." She added further, "However, that's where it's a stop for most

[121] Please refer to Table 3-33 "The Number of Schools in More Village and Bar Village".

students. After middle school, the children are approaching work age. They will prepare to go to Thailand at that point."

For the very same reason with scarce investment, saving and education were not at the top of respondents' mind. In the case of saving, because villagers commonly expected to have steady income from their household members who worked in Thailand, they did not consider saving to be necessary. Regarding education, most respondents did not expect their kids to finish beyond middle school. This was because—upon reaching work age—the children were expected to become migrant worker. In general, villagers perceived education beyond primary school to be excessive. Furthermore, in terms of education expense—in Myanmar—primary education was compulsory and fully subsidized by the government. Lower-secondary education in local public school—while not fully subsidized—was inexpensive and largely affordable with ease by villagers.[122]

3.3.2 Banteay Meanchey Province: Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village

This section gives an overview of surveyed villages, general characteristics of respondents, their household members, and their expenditures from remittances. Complementing qualitative data from interviews with key informants and household members of migrants, statistical data presented in this section are largely based on responses from 540 sets of survey distributed to 135 villagers in each of these four villages. Notably, whereas Moy Village, Pii Village, and Bay Village represented typical sending villages in Banteay Meanchey Province, Buan Village had unique characteristics. In fact, Buan Village was located close to Poipet City, a busy border town between Cambodia and Thailand, where tourism flourished from its casino businesses. The inclusion of Buan Village was expected to add a different light to this study's investigation.

3.3.2.1 Overview of Sending Villages

General information about Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village is exhibited in Table 3-15. Individual characteristics of respondents such as ethnicity and religion principally refer to those of particular household members who were interviewed; nevertheless, surveyed households customarily had uniform ethnicity and religion among all members.

Table 3-15: Overview of Studied Villages in Banteay Meanchey Province

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
1. Households (Approximate)	400	400	300	650
2. Ethnicity				
• Khmer	92.59%	94.07%	91.85%	90.37%
• Vietnamese	0.00%	0.00%	2.96%	4.44%
• Tai	7.41%	5.93%	5.19%	5.19%
3. Religion				
• Buddhist	96.30%	94.82%	100.00%	92.60%
• Christian	3.70%	2.96%	0.00%	4.44%
• Others	0.00%	2.22%	0.00%	2.96%
4. Households with emigrants (Only Khmer households)	94.40%	92.13%	95.97%	88.52%

[122] These were also supported by UNESCO's report (UNESCO, 2006).

Note: 1. Results in 1 were based on estimation by the chief of each village.
2. Results in 2-4 were based on 135 sets of survey from each of these villages.

From 135 respondents from these villages, the percentages in Table 3-15 reflect that 125, 127, 122, and 124 respondents from Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village, respectively, were Khmer. The rest of them comprised ethnic Tai and Vietnamese who historically settled down in this part of Cambodia, while a fraction of them—especially in Buan Village—were domestic migrants who moved from other parts of the country. In fact, as Buan Village was located close to Poipet City, apart from the village's locals, Buan Village was also home to a considerable number of workers from within Banteay Meanchey and elsewhere in Cambodia who were employed in Poipet City. For this reason, the number of international emigrants from Buan Village was lower than other surveyed villages.

Here are two prominent villagers' takes on Khmer migration. Borey, a previous village chief from Pii Village, explained:

> This part of Banteay Meanchey was originally occupied by mixed groups of Khmer and Tai. But after the civil war, most of the Khmer returned to this region, but most of the Tai didn't. Where did they go, you asked? Well, I'm not sure. I guess some of them illegally crossed the border to Thailand and never returned, especially those who had relatives there. Some of them moved to other parts of Cambodia and settled down where they moved. This is why almost everyone in the village now are Khmer.
>
> Actually, the Khmer, as well, there were quite a lot of them who moved from this village during the war and never returned. If they could settle down well elsewhere, they wouldn't want to return. The village after war had nothing left, everything was burnt or destroyed. Why would they want to return?

Piseth, the chief from Buan Village, said:

> Many people come here to work in Poipet. There are large businesses such as casinos, hotels, restaurants, and factories. A large number of Khmer and Vietnamese, I mean ethnic-Vietnamese Cambodians, came here from inner provinces such as Prey Veng and Tboung Khmom to get a job. Not only the ones who moved from other regions, but a number of Buan Villagers also decided to work at Poipet instead of crossing the border to work in Thailand.

Thus, he explained why there were more households without emigrants in Buan Village compared to Moy Village, Pii Village, and Bay Village.

In regard to households' migratory information, this study found that nearly everyone of working age from these villages migrated to work in Thailand, with very few of them headed to other destinations such as the United States and Malaysia. The vast majority of emigrating workers who went to Thailand were employed in the seafood processing industry.

> Today, most people go to Rayong and working in seafood processing businesses. But if it was about 15–20 years ago, most people went to Thailand and became construction workers. People from our village always work either in the eastern provinces of Thailand or around Bangkok. Not many work outside of these regions. There is an exception, though. Most of the Muslims, instead of Thailand, they preferred working in Malaysia. But going there is more difficult because of the distance and obtaining a visa. So, many Muslims from this region also go to Rayong. They also have their Islamic community in Rayong. These Muslims usually live close to each other. I heard they go to the same mosque in Rayong,

explained Borey, a former chief from Pii Village. When he was asked about the villagers who moved to the United States, he replied,

> The ones who went to the United States? They were the lucky ones! It was around the 1970s to 1980s when there was a civil war in Cambodia. Some villagers were lucky enough to be able to take refuge in the U.S. It was quite random; it was like if you were at the right place at the right time, then, bingo! You hit the jackpot! The number was small, though, between 10 and 15 from our village. Oh, but not all of them went to the U.S., though. Some went to France. Either way, it's good for them. But as far as I know, the ones who went to the U.S. sent back more money. These people, they usually sent back a large amount of money to their families. Some even sent plane tickets back to their family members to visit them in the U.S.!

By default, household members left in surveyed villages comprised the elders and the young; most of these elders were returnees, while most of the young people explicitly expressed their intention to become migrant workers when they grew up. Working-age individuals who stayed usually explained that they did it to take care of their household members who needed intensive care. Additionally, most returnees who decided to come back despite still being of working age reasoned that they returned to their village because of their physical conditions or because their children had already replaced them as migrant workers. A good example of this is Visal, a returnee from Bay Village who worked for a couple of seafood processing businesses in Rayong for more than 10 years prior to his return:

> Both of us [Visal and a friend from the same village, Samrin] came back in the same year, but for different reasons, though. I came back to take care of my parents. My dad had coronary artery, and my mom was too old to take care of him on her own. Samrin here came back because he had bad back pain. When I came back, I was 42. It was six years ago.

Samrin joined the conversation:

> I was 51 when I came back—not very old, considering most villagers usually come back after 60. But my back couldn't take it much longer, so I decided I should come back. Before I worked in Rayong, I was a construction worker in Chachoengsao. I think all the hard work for three decades finally took a toll on me.
>
> At that time, all of my children, five of them, were already working in Rayong. So, I knew that I wouldn't starve to death even if I came back. My children would send me enough money for living. But, you know, if I didn't have any children, I think I would have dealt with the injury a while longer to save some more money before I came back.

Both Visal and Samrin worked for seafood processing businesses in Rayong for more than ten years before they returned. Before that, though, in the case of Visal, he was a fruit farmer in Chantaburi and Chonburi. For Samrin, he was employed in a large farm in Rayong and later by a construction company in Chachoengsao, before becoming a worker in a ground fish company in Rayong.

Apart from these, non-emigrating households made up roughly five to ten percent of total households in surveyed villages. Generally, this group of households comprised particularly well-off households and households of government officials. About these, Prak, Moy Village chief, elaborated,

> There are a couple of rich families in our village. I mean, they are very rich from the beginning. Some of them have connections with the local politicians and own large

pieces of land. Two of them own rice mills. They would never want their children to become migrant workers. In fact, some of these families also send their children to Thailand, but as students, not as workers. There are a few families which send their children to study in Thailand from high school, while others send their children to study at the university level.

There are also families of public officials. In our village, there are teachers, nurses, and politicians. These families usually have their children study up to university level. These families normally benefit from government welfare and with stable income, they don't need to worry that much about money. Normally, the kids follow their parents' footsteps. They will try to get university degrees and become public officials. Some work in private companies though, like for the banks or for tourism agencies. These kids usually attend university in Seirei Saophoan or Phnom Penh.

Table 3-16: Selected Demographic and Emigration Patterns of Respondents in Banteay Meanchey Province

Village name	Ethnicity (persons)		Destination [Only the Khmer] (persons)			
			Thailand		Other countries	Non-emigrant
	Khmer	Non-Khmer	Seafood processing industry*	Other industries		
Moy Village	125	10	109	6	3	7
Pii Village	127	8	104	10	3	10
Bay Village	124	11	106	13	0	5
Buan Village	122	13	93	11	4	14

Note: *This represents the number of households with at least one household member working in seafood processing industry in Thailand at the time of interviewing.

As this study focuses primarily on the migrant workers in Thai seafood processing industry—besides key informants—data presentation in the following sections shows only data from household with at least one migrant worker currently employed in Thai seafood processing industry at the time of interview. These comprised 109, 104, 106, and 86 interview cases from Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village, accordingly.

3.3.2.2 General Characteristics of Respondents

Gender

In all villages, the numbers of female respondents were moderately higher than male respondents, with the ratio of 66.02 to 33.98, 60.95 to 39.05, 61.32 to 38.68, and 65.09 to 34.91 in Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village, respectively.

Table 3-17: Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Gender

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
Male	33.98%	39.05%	38.68%	34.91%
Female	66.02%	60.95%	61.32%	65.09%

Age

The distributions of respondents' age group in all three villages were relatively proportional with more than 79 percent of respondents in each village aged 45 and above. The shares of respondents with age group of 45 to 60 and above 60 were especially close in all surveyed village—with the exception of Bay Village where respondents who aged above 60 were moderately higher than respondents who aged between 45 and 60. These were followed by respondents who were between 25 and 44 and between 18 and 24. In fact, as the questionnaire did not only aim to assess the latitudinal—the most up-to-date—socioeconomic conditions of the village, but also its longitudinal information, the dynamic of altering socioeconomic conditions in surveyed villages; hence, when applicable, older household members were favored over younger members. Such preference on interviewee selection, to a certain extent, distorted the aggregate data on respondents' age group.

Table 3-18: Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Age Group

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
> 60	39.81%	46.67%	49.06%	39.62%
45 - 60	40.78%	40.00%	30.19%	42.45%
25 - 44	12.62%	8.57%	15.09%	13.21%
18 - 24	6.80%	2.86%	5.66%	4.72%

Marital Status

Table 3-19 reveals that more than four fifth of respondents in all villages were married. This partially derived from the fact that the rate of unmarried population in rural surveyed villages was particularly low and that, during the data collection process, older household members were preferred over their younger counterpart. Hence, aggregate data on respondents' marital status—similarly to aggregate data on respondents' age—was expectedly distorted.

Table 3-19: Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Marital Status

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
Single	12.62%	17.14%	15.09%	14.15%
Married	87.38%	82.86%	84.91%	85.85%

Religion

The vast majority of the respondents were reported as Buddhists as shown in Table 3-20.

Table 3-20: Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Religion

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
Buddhist	96.33%	95.20%	100.00%	96.51%
Christian	3.67%	1.92%	0.00%	1.16%
Muslim	0.00%	2.88%	0.00%	2.33%

Education

The distribution of level of education among respondents in each village was close to each other. More than three quarters of respondents in all surveyed villages did not finish primary education. These comprised 76.70 percent, 83.83 percent, 83.02 percent, and 75.58 percent of total interviewees in Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village, accordingly.

Table 3-21: Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Education

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
Higher education	1.94%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Higher-secondary education	3.88%	0.95%	1.89%	4.65%
Lower-secondary education	4.85%	2.86%	4.72%	5.81%
Primary education	12.62%	12.83%	10.38%	13.95%
Lower than primary education	76.70%	83.83%	83.02%%	75.58%

Hometown and Locality

Besides current social conditions, longitudinal information about the socioeconomic dynamic of the villages was another prime focus in this study; hence, respondents were asked about the length of their stays in the villages. This study found that this area was heavily affected from the Cambodian civil war between the 1970s and the 1980s, during which time all of the villagers took a refuge from their villages for their safety. Respondents elaborated that their villages were filled with people again from the late 1980s. People who settled down included both the people who originally resided in these villages as well as people who moved from other places in Cambodia; nevertheless, the number of people in prior group was moderately higher than the latter group.

Hence, during the interviews, respondents, apart from their length of stays in these villages, were also asked if they were born in these villages. Results revealed that most of the respondents were born in their respective surveyed villages and that most of the respondents also lived in these villages for more than 10 years. The movement of population in these villages was considerably dynamical as a large portion of respondents represented people who moved from other area of Cambodia during different points of time.

The reasons for these domestic migrations were mainly safety reasons, family reasons, and economic reasons. Firstly, safety reasons, in fact, this marginal area in Banteay Meanchey Province was not considered a central or strategic location in the Cambodian civil war. Hence, toward the end of the war in the 1980s, whereas many other regions in Cambodia was still in turmoil, this area became peaceful relatively faster than other regions especially the regions in the inner part of the country. This led to a large number of domestic migrants from other regions of Cambodia to these villages in the late 1980s as well as in the 1990s. Secondly, family reasons, a considerable fraction of domestic migrants observed during the field research reported that they moved to surveyed villages because they were married with the locals.

"After the war broke out (in this region: author), people fled to other regions. The whole village had no one living in for about 12-13 years. People started to come back to the village after the war ended. It was around late 1980s. There were also newcomers to the village. Most of them came from the burnt down and completely destroyed villages, so they couldn't go back to their homes. Some villagers who left (during the war: author) were completely gone and never returned," recalled Borey—an ex-Village Chief from Pii Village.

In regard to in-movers from marriage, he said, "There are also a lot of in-movers from marriage with our villagers. There are both males and females, but most are females, though. They come from many parts of Cambodia, but most come from within Banteay Meanchey."

Thirdly, economic reasons, this was especially obvious in the case of Buan Village. By the end of the 1990s, Cambodian government has legalized the casino businesses in the country, which led to the establishment of several casinos along the border between Cambodia and Thailand. These casinos—and casinos elsewhere in Cambodia alike—specifically targeted foreign tourists as Cambodian citizens were prohibited from gambling. In the case of casinos in Banteay Meanchey, all of them were located in Poipet City and their main customers were people from Thailand. This was largely due to the fact that gambling and casinos were illegal in Thailand; hence, Thai players came to these casinos. As these casino businesses flourished in the 2000s—besides the locals—a considerable number of Cambodians came to this area to work in these casino businesses. Data suggests that these domestic migrants usually came from inner provinces—farther away from Thai border—as these provinces did not benefit from border trade and border tourism like border provinces.

"The construction (of casinos and hotels) started around early 1990s. These casinos and hotels keep expanding though, and in the 2000s, Poipet became a one of the most popular tourist city in Cambodia. The city became crowded and busy. This is good for local economy. Since our village is adjacent to Poipet, many people who moved from other regions of Cambodia stay here because it's a lot cheaper than to rent a place in Poipet," explained Piseth—a Village Chief from Buan Village. He continued, "You went to Moy Village before, right? At Moy Village, almost all households have emigrants, right? But here, you can find more households without emigrants compared to Moy Village. Because some of the current villagers, they actually moved from inner provinces to work in Poipet. Some other original villagers, they get jobs in casinos and hotels, so they don't have to go to Thailand."

"There were some workers who came to work in casinos for a while and go elsewhere, they either returned to their hometowns or moved to Thailand. Some of us, including me, decided to stay and settle down here. I came to Buan Village with my husband in 2003 and both of us got jobs in casinos. We work for different casinos, though. My elder daughter is now also working in the same casino with me. My little daughter is still too young for this, she's still in middle school," said Waew—a 37 years old female casino worker in Poipet. She and her husband moved from Prey Veng Province to Buan Village in 2003.

"From the beginning, we decided to stay in Buan Village, because it's close to Poipet. The casinos also has bus service for staffs, they will pick up their staff before work shift and send off their staffs after work shift. It's very convenient. We may also use bicycle, it takes less than 30 minutes. There are not many apartments or houses for rent in Poipet, and the ones available are expensive. The rent is about two or three times higher than in Buan Village. In Buan Village now, we can even build our own house. It just finished in 2014. This is not possible in Poipet, the land there isn't even at a buyable price," Waew explained with a smile while showing rooms in her house.

Table 3-22: Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Length of Stays in Their Villages

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
Born here	59.37%	58.10%	54.72%	53.21%
> 10 years	64.08%	71.43%	74.53%	74.53%

6 – 10 years	20.39%	16.19%	16.04%	17.92%
≤ 5 years	15.53%	12.38%	9.43%	7.55%

Household Size

The average household sizes in these Villages were comparable. In fact, they were 5.73, 6.31, 6.21, and 6.44 in Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village, accordingly.[123] Table 3-23 shows that at least one fifth of households in these villages had more than eight members, while households with five members or less made up less than half of total households.

Table 3-23: Household Size in Banteay Meanchey Province

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
> 8	20.39%	24.76%	24.53%	27.36%
6 – 8	32.04%	39.05%	41.51%	41.54%
4 – 5	34.95%	26.67%	21.70%	25.47%
1 – 3	12.62%	9.52%	6.60%	5.66%
Average	5.73	6.31	6.21	6.44

3.3.2.3 Household Members in Thailand

Commonly, households in all surveyed villages had multiple emigrant workers in Thailand. In fact, more than 80 percent of these households had more than one member working in Thailand at the time of interview. Moreover, 76.70 percent of households in Moy Village, 81.90 percent of households in Pii Village, 80.19 percent of households in Bay Village, and 75.47 percent of households in Buan Village reported that all of their household members were employed in seafood processing businesses in Rayong. The rest became construction workers, house workers, and fruit farmers either in the eastern part of Thailand or around Bangkok Metropolis. An excerpt from an interview with Prak—the Village Chief of Moy Village elaborated more details:

"I think around early to mid-2000s, emigrating to Thailand became the norm. After the children grow up and reach work age, most of them are expected to go to Thailand. Most of migrants from our village are in Rayong, in seafood processing industry. Khmer community is large there. Also, there are several Khmer markets throughout the province. Some are construction workers, house workers, or fruit farmers in Rayong or other provinces though. Migrants from this part of Banteay Meanchey usually work in the eastern part of Thailand or Bangkok Metropolis."

"Fewer people go elsewhere, though. Most will just go directly to Rayong," asserted Vichet—a 32 years old male worker from Bay Village. He was currently working in a canned seafood company in Rayong. In fact, he and all of his siblings—2— were, at the moment, employed by the same company. He was met during his vacation in his hometown. He further elaborated, "I and my brother worked for a construction company before, we normally worked in Bangkok and Pathum Thani. But in 2009, we moved to Rayong, joining

[123] Household size reported from field research was expectedly moderately higher than the data from the national census as the data from the national census did not count the migrating citizens, while respondents in this field research usually counted their migrating household members.

our sister in a canned seafood company. Why? Because the work is less demanding. Construction was a very hard work, you worked outdoor under the hot sun all day. But in Rayong, it's an indoor work. And the pay is equal. And our community in Rayong is large too. Especially now that almost everyone from our village is there, it's like we have a Bay Village community in Rayong."

Table 3-24: The Number of Household Members Employed in Thailand: Banteay Meanchey Province

	Moy Village	Pii Village	Bay Village	Buan Village
Population (persons)	109	104	106	93
> 3	26.21%	32.38%	37.74%	34.91%
2 - 3	60.19%	51.43%	49.06%	47.17%
1	13.59%	16.19%	13.21%	17.92%
All emigrating members were working in Thai seafood processing industry in Rayong	76.70%	81.90%	80.19%	75.47%

3.3.2.4 Expenditures from Remittance

Similar to other aspects of the answers from all surveyed villages, the purposes of expenditure from their emigrant members' remittance were close to identical. Living expenses was—by far and large—cited as the most important form of expenditure in these surveyed villages. This was followed by respondents who quoted making merit as their largest proportion of expense. Other forms of expenditure—saving, investment, and household members' education—combined, made up approximately 10 percent of total interviewees who cited these expenses as their largest share of expenditure in each village.

Table 3-25: Household Expenditures from Remittance: Banteay Meanchey Province

		Primary expenditure				Secondary expenditure			
		Moy	Pii	Bay	Buan	Moy	Pii	Bay	Buan
Population (persons)		109	104	106	93	109	104	106	93
Living expenses	In %	73.39	69.23	70.75	73.26	25.69	24.04	27.36	24.42
Making merits		16.51	20.19	19.81	13.95	48.62	50.96	53.77	45.35
Saving		6.42	2.88	6.60	2.33	15.60	17.31	6.60	13.95
Investment		3.67	3.85	1.89	5.81	4.59	3.85	6.60	6.98
Household member's education		0.00	3.85	0.94	4.65	5.50	3.85	5.66	9.30

Household's living expenses were the most important form of expenditure among Khmer households in surveyed villages. Most of these expenses were spent on food supplies, housing amenities, transportation vehicles, and new house or renovation. Building new house or house renovation might also include land acquisition in some cases. Besides usual daily food supplies, housing amenities, vehicles, and especially modern house were considered glittering medals for successful households. These households were particularly admired by other villagers.

"I have three children working in Thailand now, all of them take turn to send me back money. All of them are working in seafood processing businesses in Rayong. Five of their children are living with me at Bay Village. Including my husband and my daughter, our home now has eight members. Why didn't my daughter go to Thailand? Well, she did. She worked in Rayong for about three to four years, but then she fell ill. She has a weak body with poor health. Her body isn't built for hard work, I think. So, she returned. It's a good thing that she's back, though. So, she can take care of the house and the children. Her health is fine here, she just does the house work and take care of the children," explained Sophea—a 64 years old returnee from Bay Village. She, herself, also worked in a grind squid factory in Rayong for several years prior to her return.

When asked about how she spent remittance from her children, she replied, "Most of the remittance is used for our daily living such as food, electricity, water, and housing amenities. Eight lives use a lot of money, you see. We plan to renovate our house and buy a pick-up truck when we have more money. All of the families with emigrants follow the same step. When the family has enough money, they will start to buy modern housing amenities, cars, and finally new house. Maybe, they are like the symbols of a successful family."

Merit making came as the second most important form of expenditure following living expenses. This highlighted the significance of religion among Khmer households. To be precise, out of 412 interviewees from all villages, 290 of them expressed the strongest level of agreement that Buddhism was an important part of their lives, constituting particularly average score of 4.39 on the scale of five. Data further revealed that temple and religious ceremony were two essential aspects accentuated by respondents. Interestingly, interview data disclosed that villagers largely regarded religious ceremonies as a form of gatherings and celebration, which were held at the temple. While traditions and stories behind each Buddhist Holy Day was moderately acknowledged by some adults, a larger share of respondents paid no attention to such difference.

About these, Srey—a 54 years old returnee from Pii Village—said, "Buddhist Holy Days are Buddhist Holy Days. I know that there are different stories behind each Buddhist Holy Day. But I think most villagers, including me, just treat every Buddhist Holy Day similarly. On these days, people make food offerings and listen to sermons. Some older people will practice meditation too. It's like a big gathering. Villagers will dress beautifully and spend their time eating and talking with each other. Some boys and girls also use these opportunities to befriend each other."

She continued, "In our village, there are Buddhist Holy Days once every one or two months. The monks will let us know the dates at beginning of each year. The dates don't follow usual calendar, so the dates change from year to year. Some Buddhist Holy Days are hosted by wealthy families. In those cases, there will also be stage music. Those are so much fun. So, you can say villagers normally are looking forward to these Buddhist Holy Days."

Whereas respondents agreed that making merit at the temple was considered a trait of a good Buddhist; in general, they also agreed that they would donate only when they had surplus from their living expense. The most common form of donation for them was food offering to the monks. Other forms of donation from the villagers themselves, especially those involved a large amount of money such as car and temple renovation, were rare. Indeed, villagers regarded large donation as another form of glittering medal and the donor was the one who wore it. These large donations, however, were often taken care by donation from those migrants who moved to the US.

"We usually make food offerings every morning. I would cook and wake my husband up when I finish. Then we wait for the monks to walk pass our house. The monks usually come at the same time everyday, about 6.00-6.30. The cost is not much as I cook normal food. Unless special occasions like someone's birthday or Buddhist Holy Days, I would cook something more special," said Kanya—a 69 years old female respondent from Moy Village. She was a mother to six Khmer workers in Thailand. All, except one, of her children were currently working in Rayong.

"But if you are talking about money donation, well, we don't do that quite often. Only on special occasions like on Buddhist Holy Days or when the temple asks for help from us villagers. Sometimes, they want to renovate the temple, or sometimes they need money to cover their other expenses. But we will donate only when we have spare money. This is after we spend money on our family necessary expenses. Normally, the ones who donate a large amount of money to temple for temple renovation or cars are the politicians and rich families. Some of these rich families work for the government and some are landowners. But the ones who donate the most are those families who have their members migrated to the US. I guess, they (migrants who moved to the US: author) make a lot of money there. So, their families here do not only live comfortably but are also reputable in and around the village," Kanya further elaborated.

In regard to investment, data from origin area reconfirmed that investment in any form by migrants' households was scarce and was clearly not among their top priority. However, this did not mean that investment did not exist; in fact, migrants' households periodically invested on the resources for agricultural production such as harvesters, fertilizers, insecticides, micro irrigation systems, and seeds. Nonetheless, in comparison with the amount of money which they spent on living expenses and merit making, the proportion of money which households spent on investment was tiny.

Data further reveals two additional notions concerning investment by households with migrant workers in Thailand which were the scarcity of investment outside agricultural sector and the pattern of investment in agricultural sector. Firstly, field study found that almost all of the investments were made in agricultural sector; investments outside of agricultural sector, while observable, were rare. In fact, in all surveyed villages, investments outside of agricultural sector comprised a few local restaurants and a few grocery stores.

Secondly, interview data highlighted certain investment pattern in agricultural sector employed by migrants' households. While primary economic activity in surveyed area was agriculture, the production intensity was particularly low. As previously outlined that households, in general, planned to rely on remittance and returnees' saving for their expenses; for the majority of households, farming was either regarded as a leisure activity or for household use. In fact, while transactions from agricultural production in this area were observable, such transactions were minimal. In most cases, transactions from farming activity was regarded as supplemental income; full-scale commercial farming was utterly rare, especially among households with migrant workers.

"Villagers still farm, as you can see. But it is usually done by the elders and their grandchildren. There are rice, bean, fruit, and vegetable farms. But the size of the farms are not large. People only farm as much as they are not too tired. Well, their income doesn't rely on these crops. For most households, they can live comfortably even if they don't farm," said Kosal—a 67 years old male returnee in Buan Village. Currently, he had three children and seven grandchildren working in Rayong. He added, "For the elders, farming is their leisure activity. Or for some, it can be supplementary income. Farming make them have something

to do. Their grandchildren also help them, but these kids usually focus more on school and on their preparation to go to Thailand."

Naree—Kosal's wife who was also a returnee—joined the conversation, "For our farm, we have beans and other vegetables. They are easy to grow. And they become our household supply. But if there are excesses, we either give them to the neighbors or ask our grandson to sell them in the market."

When asked about commercial farming and other kinds of investment, Kosal explained, "For large farming, you need a lot of investment. You'll have to spend a lot of money on the machines, fertilizers, insecticides, and irrigation systems. As far as I know none of the family which have their members working in Thailand does large farming. Because they rely on money from remittance, so they don't need to work hard. For other businesses as well, opening and running businesses need money and hard work. I think no one wants to invest a lot of money when they don't need to. And most people don't want to work hard since they are old and they don't have to. For small farm, you just need some small machines, tools, fertilizers, insecticides, and a small water pump. They don't cost much."

Nimith—a Pii native who became a school teacher in 2003—talked about school attendance in Pii Village: "The good news is that most of the kids now attend school. More children come to school in the last 10-20 years. Back when I first became a teacher here, a lot of children didn't attend school. They just stay home and help their families' chores. And the years that they spend in school are longer too. Previously, a lot of children attend school only until grade 3 or 4. But now most kids stay until grade 6. By then, the children can comfortably read and write in Khmer. They will also have basic math skills and they can also speak simple Thai. Yes, in our school, we also teach Thai language."

"I think because now villagers have better well-being. They have money sent from Thailand to use in daily life, so they don't need the kids to work as much as before. So, the kids have time to attend school. But only a few continue to a higher level of education, though. Most families think primary education is high enough because the kids don't need to know much more than that. And by the time the kids finish grade 6, it's close to the time that they are moving to Thailand. Unlike in Thailand, the kids here don't always start school at six or seven, and they may take more than six years to finish grade 6 as well. So, when the kids finish grade 6, they may already be 15-16," he continued. In fact, Nimith was also a construction worker in Bangkok before he decided to return and became a teacher.

For the very same reason with scarce investment, saving and education were not at the top of respondents' mind. In the case of saving, because villagers commonly expected to have steady income from their household members who worked in Thailand, they did not consider saving to be necessary. Regarding education, most respondents did not expect their kids to finish beyond middle school. This was because—upon reaching work age—the children were expected to become migrant worker. In general, villagers perceived education beyond reading and writing literacy in Khmer, basic Thai language, and basic mathematics to be excessive. Furthermore, in terms of education expense—in Cambodia—primary and lower-secondary educations were compulsory and fully subsidized by the government.[124]

[124] This was also supported by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [UNOCHA]'s report (UNOCHA, 2019).

3.3.3 Dynamic Social Contexts at the Origin

Ever since emigration to Thailand from Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province began in the 1980s, accelerated in the 1990s, and climaxed in the 2000s, the social conditions in the sending communities have gradually, yet dynamically, changed. Significant transformations observable in the surveyed area comprised a dwindling dependence on agricultural activity, the development of local infrastructure, and an improved standard of living.

Such changes, as a result of both emigration and domestic development, constituted the different social conditions faced by the later generations of migrants in comparison to the generations before. These transformations were found to be cumulative, as each act of migration gradually modified the social contexts in the sending communities in which subsequent migration decisions were made. In other words, these evolving contexts encouraged the migration decisions of other community members as well as enabled the emigration self-sustainment witnessed in this case study.

3.3.3.1 Dwindling Dependence on Agriculture

Among all the aspects of ongoing changes in the sending villages since emigration started in the 1980s, respondents emphasized the altering economic activities performed by villagers. Instead of agriculture, the majority of villagers asserted that their income now primarily relied on remittances from their household members who worked in Thailand. While large-scale commercial farming has never truly developed, traditionally households have relied on farming as a means for living. Older interviewees recounted the days when their households relied on their own crops, poultry, and river fisheries for their living. Surplus from consumption might then be traded for resources for agricultural production such as seeds, cattle, and land expansion; house renovation; housing amenities such as bedding, mattresses, kitchenware, and tableware; clothes; bicycles; or other kinds of food, such as meat and vegetables, which were not grown on their own farm. These transactions could be done either by using money or by bartering.

Di, a 78-year-old female from Bar Village, described her experience:

> I can still remember the time when most of us were farmers. It was not that long ago. It was 20, no, around 30 years ago. Almost every house raised chickens for their meat and eggs. We had cattle for farming. Mainly it was rice farming and some other vegetables like beans and potatoes. When we wanted fish, we could catch them in the river. We did all of those chiefly to fill our family members' hungry mouths. When there was excess, we would trade it with our neighbors or sell it in the local market. That was how we earned money. Then we spent that money on the next round of farming, necessary housing amenities, house renovations, or other food supply which our family didn't grow but needed.

She also said that her children were among the first groups of emigrants from Bar Village to Thailand.

As soon as Di finished her sentence, Bu, the 73-year-old chief of Bar Village, added,

> However, it started to change around 20–25 years ago. More and more people went to Thailand. Fewer and fewer people remained farmers. Households' primary income was shifting from farming to remittances. Instead of growing crops and raising poultry, villagers started to use money from remittance to buy them. From remittance, villagers could also buy newer and better housing amenities like fans, televisions, and

kitchenware. Over time, villagers started to have new and modern houses as well as vehicles like motorcycles, pickup trucks, and cars.

This illustrates how, together with the surging outflow of emigrants, farming began to lose its importance as a means for living. Instead of the traditional reliance on household agricultural production, modern households relied on remittances from emigrating members for their livelihood. In order to acquire their food supply, housing amenities, clothes, and transportation vehicles as well as to improve housing conditions, households used money. In most cases, farming was reduced to household consumption, without the intention of gaining a surplus. A sizable number of respondents considered farming a leisure activity after retirement. In fact, interviews further revealed that households were not determined to farm to meet their household consumption; using money from remittance to offset their consumption deficit became standard practice in surveyed villages:

> Villagers still farm, as you can see. But it is usually done by the elders and their grandchildren. There are rice, bean, fruit, and vegetable farms. But the size of the farms is not large. People only farm as much as they are not too tired. Well, their income doesn't rely on these crops. For most households, they can live comfortably even if they don't farm,

said Kosal, a 67-year-old male returnee in Buan Village. At the time, he had three children and seven grandchildren working in Rayong. He added,

> For the elders, farming is their leisure activity. Or for some, it can be supplementary income. Farming gives them something to do. Their grandchildren also help them, but these kids usually focus more on school and on their preparation to go to Thailand.

More often than not, respondents at the area of origin expressed their unambiguous distaste for the idea of hard farming. Since their living supplies could now be conveniently purchased by remittances from emigrating members of their households, interviewees found no need to farm strenuously. This sentiment was especially strong in the case of returnees, who took this as their turn to rest and live comfortably after years of hard work as migrants. For young respondents, instead of hard farming, they would opt for work in Thailand, the jobs they considered less labor-intensive while earning them more money. Cai, a 56-year-old male returnee who came back to More Village from Thailand three years ago after his son and daughters replaced him, said,

> People here don't farm laboriously anymore. You can say we do part-time farming. There are only old and young villagers left, so we don't have a strong workforce to begin with. We just farm as much as our bodies allow, without getting too tired. What's more... you know, in recent years, people here have begun to stop raising poultry. It's easier to just buy their meat and eggs.

Thida, an 18-year-old female from Bay Village who expected to join her parents in Rayong within the next few months, said,

> Hard farming is not on my mind. I'm sure it's not in the minds of other people of my generation, either. I'm going to work in Thailand soon. I'm sure I can earn more as a worker in Thailand. No one in my family has to do hard farming. I will send money back home once I settle down in Thailand. We still farm, but our farm is not that big. We don't need to grow everything by ourselves; we can buy what we don't have.

The following subsections address distinctive elements of the dwindling dependence on agricultural activity in different origin areas. In Mon State, the rising volume of Mon emigrants led to the employment of Bamar farm workers from different regions to fill in the

depleted workforce for remaining farm activities. In Banteay Meanchey Province, the Cambodian civil war between the 1970s and the 1980s was one of the most influential causes of villages' declining farm activity.

Employment of the Bamar Workers in Mon State

Along with increased emigration and the declining significance of farming, Mon households started to employ Bamar workers from other regions to help with their farm work in the mid-2000s. As described in the preceding section, since the 1990s, domestic farming gradually lost its importance as the primary means of household income; nevertheless, virtually all households still farm, albeit to different degrees and extents. Some surveyed households treated farming as a secondary source of income, others as the partial means of food supply for their households, while others treated farming as a leisure activity. In any case, the employment of the Bamars became a plausible choice when households planned to lessen the workloads of household members or to farm beyond their household's workforce.

According to the interviews, respondents revealed that while their households put less weight on farming, they did not plan to quit farming completely. They reasoned that, first, since farming knowledge and farmlands were passed on to them by their ancestors, they should carry them on, even if not to the same extent; second, without farming, there were not many things for them to do. In most cases, however, respondents reported constantly downsizing the land used for their household farming, which began when the first batch of their household members started working in Thailand. Pum, a 58-year-old female returnee from Mazzone Village, recollected,

> When my husband and I came back six years ago, the village was totally different from what it was when I left. There used to be rice farms everywhere within and around the village, and every house raised chickens. Literally, everyone was a farmer back in the day. Our lives revolved around farming, seasons, insects, plant and animal diseases. But when I came back, all of these were not important anymore. I mean, every household could simply survive without farming. You know, farming had always been the most important source of income for villagers. But not anymore. Now we can live simply from remittances from our household members in Thailand.
>
> But it doesn't mean that everyone stopped farming entirely. In fact, most households still farm. A number of households still raise chicken and cattle. It's just that their lives don't depend on it anymore. For example, my husband and I, once we came back, what do you expect us to do? Of course, our children in Thailand send back the money for us every month. But doing nothing doesn't sound like a kind of life, right? So, we need to have something to do. From the beginning, our household has had farmland, so we decided to farm rice, beans, and some other local vegetables. But we don't use all the land we have. We just use a small portion of it. Compared to when my parents and I were farmers before I went to Thailand, the size of our current farm is very tiny.
>
> It gives us something to do. And it's also an activity that we can do with our grandchildren, so we have something we can do together. I know that farming skills may not be important for them [her grandchildren] in this age and time, but who knows? The skills might come in handy sometime in the future. I want them to at least know how to grow crops and how to properly treat poultry and cattle. I want to teach them everything that I know about farming. I want to pass on what my parents taught me when I was young.

While the employment of Bamar workers on Mon farms might not be a new phenomenon—in fact, the employing workers regardless of their ethnicity has always been practiced in the region—the mass employment of the Bamars just recently began in the mid-2000s. Traditionally, Mon households would decide to employ additional workers during harvest seasons if the work exceeded their household capabilities; available local workers, either Mons or Bamars, would then be recruited to help. This could be done formally for payment in money or agreements to exchange goods or services, or informally, where villagers took turns and helped each other. However, since the mid-2000s, households have increasingly employed Bamars from other regions, rather than the usual local Bamars in Mon State. Their most common origins were Bago Region and Ayeyarwady Region. This phenomenon derived from three interrelated reasons: the contracting local workforce, the changing lifestyle of Mon households, and a national disaster in Ayeyarwady Region.

First, despite the declining significance of farming, farming remains an integral part of Mon communities. While farming production might not be as intense as in the old days, it is still the primary economic activity among Mon villagers. During harvest season, households might consider hiring additional workers to fill the gap of the increased workload. Traditionally, this gap was filled by the local workforce; however, as the emigration flow of people from Mon State to Thailand steadily grew, the number of local workers was insufficient. The outflow of population of working age from Mon state to Thailand did not comprise only Mons, but also people of Bamar ethnicity.

Hence, Mon households began employing Bamar workers from other regions of the country. Initially, they came from Bago Region, adjacent to Mon State. Compared to other adjoining states and regions, namely Tanintharyi Region and Kayin State, Bago Region had a much higher population as well as population density. However, toward the end of the 2000s, these Bamar farm workers were dominated by those who came from Ayeyarwady Region. An interview with Bu, 73, who has been Bar Village chief for more than 25 years, gave insights about this:

> There have always been Bamar workers during harvest season. But previously, they were the Bamars who lived close by. During harvest season, large farms would ask other villagers to help them. But if that was still not enough, they would hire workers from outside the village. These could be Mon or Bamar, but like I said, they were the nearby locals. But with the massive emigration 15–20 years ago, not only our villagers, but also people around here were fewer in number. It's true that the size of farms was smaller during the same time, but still, during harvest season, farms needed a lot of workers.
>
> So that was when we started to see the Bamar workers from Bago Region. And later a large number of the Bamar from Ayeyarwady Region came looking for work on this side of Myanmar. Ayeyarwady Region was hit badly by a cyclone in 2008. Everything was lost—lives, houses, farms, businesses—everything. The ones who lived on needed to find jobs in order to survive. Ayeyarwady Region, like Bago Region, is predominantly populated by Bamars. Since everything in Ayeyarwady was wiped out, they were scattered in many parts of Myanmar. Some of them came as far as Mon State. Most of them are seasonal workers, though. They come to Mon State only during harvest season. But some of them settle down in Mon State; that is, if they find farms that employ them throughout the year, or they find jobs in townships in Mon State.

Second, as illustrated in the previous section, the idea of strenuous farming was not appealing to present-day Mon households. In contrast to traditional farming, which took great

effort from household members, Mon households were not willing to work laboriously on the farm anymore. Hence, if farm work became demanding, they opted for additional help instead of devoting more energy themselves. Yi, a 62-year-old female returnee from Buoy Village, elaborated:

> No kids fancy themselves farmers. Everyone sees themselves working in Thailand. Working in Thai factories is much more appealing to the young. They think that farming is hard work but doesn't earn much. I have rice farms and vegetable farms. Normally, my husband, my grandchildren, and I take care of these farms just fine. It's just during sowing and harvesting seasons that we need helpers. As you can see, there are not many people left in our village, and the children, well… If they are not your own grandchildren, it's not very likely that they will cooperate. And even if they are your own grandchildren, you don't want them to work too hard. As for my husband and me, we are old now. So, every sowing and harvest season, we hire workers to help us. Most of them are Bamars. Some of them come from Bago, but lately most of them come from Ayeyarwady.

Third, an unfortunate natural disaster in 2008 cost millions of people in Ayeyarwady Region their homes and their jobs. According to interviews, the economy of Ayeyarwady Region was substantially damaged by Cyclone Nargis, which hit the region during mid-2008; together with loss of most places of business in the region, millions of people became homeless. In order to survive, people from Ayeyarwady, the vast majority of whom were Bamar, sought shelters and jobs in other regions. During that time, Mon State was one of the major destinations for them, as the state faced a declining workforce, especially in the agricultural sector. Hence, farm work in Mon state grew to be dominated by Bamar workers from Ayeyarwady Region.

The employment of Bamar workers in Mon State, however, became one of the reasons why the locals developed a negative perception of farmers. This will be expanded in the subsection "Employment of the Bamar Workers and Perceived Social Status" within Chapter 4, section 4.2, "Embedded Perception and Social Status."

Cambodian Civil War and the Loss of Agricultural Capability

Whereas traditionally rural Khmer households usually relied on agriculture for their primary source of income, modern-day households in Moy Village, Pii Village, Bay Village, and Buan Village no longer do. This is largely a result of two intertwining and successive developments: the Cambodian civil war and, later, the emerging occupational opportunities in Thailand. Indeed, while the former wiped out agricultural production in the surveyed villages, the latter lowered the prospects of reviving these villages' agricultural capability. As Borey, a former chief from Pii Village, explained:

> When we came back here in 1988, everything was gone. The village was a shadow of itself. Houses and farmlands were in ruins. Tools, seeds, cattle, irrigation—everything was gone. So, with what we had at that time, we fixed the house to the point that people could actually sleep in it. We grew simple vegetables, we caught fish to survive. Oh, life at that time was very difficult. You can never imagine.
>
> Villagers helped each other and we tried to fertilize the land to make it possible to grow crops. Soil takes time to be fertilized, you know. But before anything, villagers started to cross the border to Thailand. I think it was a few years after the villagers returned to the village, the Thai government legalized migrant workers from Cambodia and there was plenty of work there. So, it was not a hard decision to leave the poor-quality soil for jobs which ensured employability and stable income. If

> villagers stayed, they needed a lot of time to revive the soil. They would need to invest in seeds, fertilizers, tools, and cattle too. I think we were lucky that Thailand opened its gates at that time, or else our villagers would have been very poor for a long, long time.

First, the Cambodian civil war, which broke out in the 1970s and lasted until the mid-1980s, wiped out both the people and the agricultural production from the surveyed villages. By the time these villages were reoccupied again in the late 1980s, the villagers had to rehabilitate both the housing and farmland. However, respondents expressed that the post-war economic depression made it difficult for them to carry out those tasks. Additionally, before the villagers could fully revitalize their farmlands, a second development—increased labor demand in Thailand—intervened.

Derived from its national development strategy, several industries in Thailand called for a large pool of low-skilled workers. Against the backdrop of the dwindling Thai national workforce, the demand for a low-skilled workforce from its neighboring countries was rapidly rising. Together with the enactment of Thailand's first low-skilled worker immigration policy, which legalized the employment Cambodians in 1992, Cambodian workers gained easier access to abundant job opportunities in Thailand.

Since the first generation of movers migrated from the villages in the early 1990s, the number of emigrants gradually escalated until the mid-2000s, when almost everyone of working age in the surveyed villages became migrant workers in Thailand. As this phenomenon persisted, their farmlands back in their hometowns were never fully redeveloped and expanded. In most cases, existing farmlands in surveyed villages were often small, and their agricultural tools were usually ready for only small-scale farming. According to interview data, among villagers today, farming was indeed either perceived as a supplementary source of income or a leisure activity. From these developments, contrary to villagers' pre-war traditional way of living which primarily depended on agriculture, modern-day villagers relied largely on migrant jobs in Thailand as their primary source of income for their living.

3.3.3.2 The Development of Local Infrastructure

While not a social factor itself, massive infrastructure development in Mon State from the early 2010s and Banteay Meanchey Province from the late 1980s has had a profound impact on the social contexts in surveyed villages. Major developments in Mon State comprised access to electricity and water and the renovation and expansion of public roads. In the case of Banteay Meanchey, major developments consisted of the access to electricity and the renovation of public roads.

Mon State

Access to Electricity

According to data from fieldwork, electricity was not accessible in surveyed villages until around 2012, reaching full coverage in 2013. Before 2010, access to electricity in Mon State was largely limited to Mawlamyine and its vicinity; however, under the national development policy from the central government, access to electricity was widely extended nationwide. In the case of Mon State, utility poles were gradually extended from the Mawlamyine area. Pa, the 44-year-old Mazzone Village chief, recalled,

> You see that every house has lights now, right? Well, it was just a couple of years ago that these were possible. Previously, electricity was accessible only in Mawlamyine. But after 2010, the government had a mega infrastructure development project. Utility

> poles were extended from Mawlamyine in every direction. This also included our village. You can't imagine how happy the villagers were.

Accessibility to electricity improved living standards of households in surveyed villages twofold: more convenient farm work and more convenient living. First, accessibility to electricity replaced cattle raised for farm work with harvesters as well as enabled the use of water pumps. Replacing cattle with harvesters not only lessened farmers' burden of raising and taking care of cattle, but the use of harvesters also expedited farming production. The arrival of water pumps, likewise, eased farming hardship as well as facilitated the water coverage on larger farmland.

Second, everyday life gained many conveniences. Accessibility to electricity enabled the use of household appliances such as electric fans, cleaners, and refrigerators as well as communication devices such as televisions, mobile phones, and computers. While appliances eased villagers' household chores, communication devices brought respondents entertainment and news as well as connected them with their relatives and friends who lived away from them.

"Compared to life before electricity, I think it's incomparable," Nuai, a 63-year-old lady from, said with a laugh.

> Farming is much easier; we can now use harvesters and water pumps. But we don't farm as much as we used to, anyway. You know, we used to raise cows and buffalos for farming. That took a lot of time and energy. Sometimes there were diseases; it was sad when your cow or buffalo died…not just because of the bond but more so because they were expensive.
>
> Some rich families, they have vacuum machines, washers, refrigerators, and electric kitchens. The doctor that you talked with before, his house even had air conditioners. I wish I had all of those. My house now has electric fans and televisions. And yeah, almost everyone has a phone. I also have one; I use it to talk with my children in Thailand every day. My grandkid just taught me how to use video calling a few weeks ago. It is fun when you can see the face of the person you are talking to. They can show me their rooms and places in Samut Sakhon. This is very exciting for me. Access to electricity really changed our world, in a good way, I mean. It's more convenient and life is happier.

Si, Nuai's niece who taught her how to use video calling, joined the conversation:

> All of these were not available before our village had electricity, though. Before the utility poles reached our village, the only way to use electricity was through motors. You need to buy a motor and its fuel to make it run. That was expensive and not very convenient.

Si was 14 years old when interviewed, and she expressed her strong desire to follow her parents to Samut Sakhon as soon as she could.

Interestingly, fieldwork found that while government-funded utility poles reached surveyed villages, they were set up along the main roads, which did not cut through the villages; in fact, the main roads only went past the front of these villages. In order to access the electricity, villagers, under leadership from village committees,[125] needed to pool their

[125] A village committee is a group of people who collaborates with the village chief. They gather opinions from villagers and make decisions based on benefits to the village. The members of a village committee are agreed upon by the village chief and the villagers.

money and set up their own local utility poles as well as electric distribution transformers which connected electrical cables and electric power from the government's utility poles on the main road. Nu, a 44-year-old Mazzone Village chief, described this:

> The government's poles only reached the front of each village. If a village wants to access the electricity, people from that village will have to install village poles themselves. So, in our case, we asked villagers to pool their money. It was a couple of years ago. By that time, there were already a lot of people from our villages who worked in Thailand. So, pooling money was not that difficult. Most households were willing to contribute the money; everyone wanted to use electricity.
>
> Pooling money for a local road was more difficult though, because not many villagers had cars at that time. So, money was collected mainly from the houses that had a car and wanted the local road to pass their houses. So, you can see, our local road is pretty short and doesn't reach every house, unlike the electricity poles.

While almost every household contributed to these local utility poles and transformers, the exact amount of money each household pitched in was not identifiable. This was because when the village committee asked households for their contribution, the village committee did not specify the expense items; the village committee would only inform each household the aggregate amount of money expected of them for village development. Usually, the village development fee included expenses on public facilities such as the maintenance of utility poles, electric transformers, the local road, and water supply systems, as well as expenses on community services such as traditional ceremonies and security services. The villagers acknowledged that, during the early 2010s, the village development fee was considerably higher than usual because of the development of the local electric systems and the construction of the local road.[126]

According to the interviews with key informants who were the authorities in surveyed villages, the amount of money requested from each household for village development was determined by the extent of a given household's usage of community facilities and services as well as the financial status of that household. Additionally, in regard to the development of electricity accessibility and local road, households located deeper in the villages were expected to pay more, as they required a longer extension of utility poles and the local road. Village authorities asserted that, whereas the amount of money asked from each household was not equal, the quoted development fee was, indeed, fair.

Notably, even though most households chipped in for the local electric systems, a number of households were not financially capable and did not contribute to such local development. These households, however, were excluded from the access to electricity even though the utility poles might pass the front of their houses. While access to electricity was not limited to households with emigrating members, as certain households without emigrating members were able to afford to contribute, all of the households without access to electricity in the surveyed villages were households without emigrating members.

Access to Water Supply

The construction of a dam which aimed to improve the state's irrigation, particularly for the area to the south of Mawlamyine, was completed in 1995. However, it was not until several years later when irrigation canals were created and became accessible in surveyed villages. Albeit accessible, villagers in need of water had to manually go to the canal, fill their containers, and carry them back. With the accessibility of electricity in the early 2010s,

[126] The construction of local roads is elaborated in the next section.

the use of water pumps was enabled. Through water pipes, villagers were able to conveniently utilize the water supply both for household and farm use; in fact, a sizable number of households had their own water storage. Like access to electricity, access to water provided respondents more convenient farm work as well as lifestyle. Wi, the More Village chief, elaborated:

> The construction of the dam finished decades ago. It's not that far from here, about 40 kilometers. The size is not very large, but it's enough for the agriculture of people in this region. But for some unknown reason, there was no irrigation canal to support the irrigation systems. Can you believe that it was almost 10 years after the dam was completed until the whole thing was functional and the irrigation system was accessible in our village?
>
> Unlike in large cities with advanced water supply systems where the water just comes out of the tap, here we need a water pump to draw the water out of the irrigation canal into water pipes which run through each house. Of course, you can pool the money, and the village committee will take care of the installation of the water pump and water pipes. Or you can do it by yourself. Normally, the houses close by the canal will choose the second option. But for most of the houses, they are not very close to the canal, so it's more economical to pool money. There are also some houses that don't join the village's pipe system. When they need water, they will carry a bucket to the canal like in the old days when we still didn't have electricity.
>
> Most of the houses have water tanks, just in case the water system doesn't work. Since this water system became available, it became much more comfortable for the villagers both for farming and daily life.

The Renovation and Expansion of Public Roads

In parallel with the extension of access to electricity, the government renovated existing yet undermaintained public roads, as well as broadly expanded them nationwide, with an aim to develop domestic inter-state connection. In the case of Mon State, the funding mostly covered the renovation of existing roads, with part directed toward the construction of new roads. In fact, existing main roads in Mon State were extensively renovated, starting from the early 2010s; with the central junction of the state in Mawlamyine, the main road to the North was connected to Bago Region, the main road to the east was connected to Kayin State, and the main road to the South was connected to Thanintharyi Region.

> Nu, Mazzone Village's chief, recounted,
>
> It was around the same time as the extension of electricity poles from Mawlamyine. Besides electricity, the mega infrastructure development project from the central government also included the renovation and the expansion of public roads. The government wanted to development inter-state connections. So, the roads were renovated and extended between Mawlamyine and Bago to the north, Mawlamyine and Kayin in the east, and Mawlamyine and Thanintharyi in the south. The road that passes through our village is the one that connects between Mawlamyine and Thanintharyi.
>
> Actually, there have always been main roads which connect Mon State with other states. It's just that they were very old. I'm not even sure when they were built. I've seen them since I was young. The problem was that these roads were not well maintained, so their condition was very poor. It was only five years ago that these roads were renovated to mint condition. Lanes were also expanded. Now, it's much easier for the villagers to go to Mawlamyine.

The renovation of the main road which passed the front of the surveyed villages was completed in 2012. As with access to electricity, villagers had to pool their own money for the local roads which cut through their villages. Both the main road and the main local roads in surveyed villages were paved; however, houses deeper off the main local roads were connected with either gravel roads or dirt roads. About this Nu explained,

> Pooling money for the local road was more difficult [than electricity poles] though, because not many villagers had cars at that time. So, money was collected mainly from the houses that had a car and wanted the local road to pass their houses. So, you can see, our local road is pretty short and doesn't reach every house, unlike the electricity poles.
>
> Though the main local road, the concrete one, is short, there are also gravel roads and dirt roads for houses deeper off the main local road. The cost is much cheaper. So, apart from the main local road which was finished in 2015, its extensions are all either gravel roads or dirt roads.

With the renovation and expansion of public and local roads, villagers in rural areas were able to easily access larger and readier hospitals, higher level of schools and colleges, as well as downtown markets in larger towns, especially in Mawlamyine. Respondents explained that, previously, because of the poor conditions of the roads, the transportation from their villages to Mawlamyine was severely difficult, unlike in the present day when Mawlamyine can be reached within approximately half an hour. An excerpt from an interview with Sah, a 34-year-old female respondent from Bar Village, vividly presented these changes from the perspective of the villagers:

> Just a couple of years ago, the roads were very poor. If you wanted to go to Mawlamyine, first, you needed to get to the front of the village from your house. It sounds easy, right? But no, especially if your house was deep in the village, it could take you half or a full hour for that. If you had a motorbike, it might be faster. But the road was poor, so you could not be that fast, anyway. And then when you reached the front of the village, you needed to wait for the public bus; they came twice in the morning, and they took you back in the evening. Although Mawlamyine was not that far, it took you around an hour and a half to reach it. And the bus was not always on time, you see.
>
> Well, if you had a pickup or you could borrow one, it could be a lot easier, because you could drive it to Mawlamyine yourself. But then again, I think before 2010, there were only a handful of pickups in this village. It was very difficult, especially if someone was sick and needed to go to the hospital. Just getting from their houses to the front of the village was an extremely difficult task.
>
> But today? Just like how you came here. If you are in a car, it's only about half an hour, right? From Mawlamyine to this village. A lot of households in this village now have cars as well. So, even for households without a car, it's easier to borrow or rent a car from the households which have the cars; and almost all the households have motorbikes. The roads are better now, so it's not difficult to go to the bus stop at the front of the village anymore, and the public bus takes you around 45 minutes to an hour to reach Mawlamyine.

Apart from outbound traffic, easier transportation also facilitated inbound traffic to the village. Particular inbound traffic worth mentioning in this section was a mobile market conveyed by pickup trucks. Usually, in surveyed villages, a number of pickup trucks would come to the villages every day to trade food. Most of the time, these trading pickups would

sell meat or crops to households that needed them; however, the selling of crops from households to these trucks was not uncommon.[127] The presence of these trading pickups made it easier for households in surveyed villages to purchase their food supply; which, in turn, added to the lessening significance of farming in these areas.

Banteay Meanchey Province

Access to Electricity

Data from field research revealed that electricity was not accessible in surveyed villages until the mid-2000s. Before that time, access to electricity in Banteay Meanchey was largely limited to Serei Saophoan and its vicinity; however, under the national development policy, access to electricity was widely extended nationwide. In the case of Banteay Meanchey Province, utility poles were gradually extended from the Serei Saophoan area. Arthit, the 41-year-old Bay Village chief, explained,

> It was around 2006–2007 when electricity poles reached here. The lines were extended from Serei Saophoan. The government started the project in Banteay Meanchey in the early 2000s, but here is quite far [from Serei Saophoan], so it took several years.

When asked what villagers used electricity for, he said,

> Well, mostly, they use electricity for their conveniences like mobile phones, televisions, refrigerators, cleaners, and water pumps. The lives of people here are much easier and happier. It is also used for farming, especially the harvesters and water pumps. Farming is also much easier and faster. All of these are not possible without electricity.
>
> But if you ask about the most popular electronic device, well, it has to be the smartphone. Every house has a smartphone. I mean, some houses don't have a motorbike, some houses don't have a television, some houses don't have a water pump; but every house has a smartphone. It's like an all-in-one device. Of course, you can make a call, and you can also watch movies, surf social media, listen to music, and play games. And because most households have emigrants, a smartphone provides them the best way to communicate with each other. Now, villagers use a smartphone for video calls with their household members in Thailand. Instead of only voices, they see faces and also how people on the other side of the phone live. This helps villagers a lot when they are missing each other.

Accessibility to electricity chiefly improved living standards of households in surveyed villages in two folds: more convenient farm work and more convenient living. First, more convenient farming, accessibility to electricity replaced cattle raised for farm work with harvesters as well as enabled the use of water pumps. Replacing cattle with harvesters did not only lessen farmers' burden of their responsibility to raise and take care of their cattle, but the use of harvesters also expedited farming production. The arrival of water pumps, likewise, eased farming hardship as well as facilitated the water coverage on larger farmland.

Second, more convenient living, accessibility to electricity enabled the use of household appliances such as electric fan, cleaner, and refrigerator as well as communication devices such as television, mobile phone, and computer. While these appliances eased villagers' household chores, described communication devices brought respondents

[127] This refers to sales of small quantities; normally households would have to ship large quantities of crops to downtown markets on their own.

entertainment and news as well as connected them with their relatives and friends who lived away from them.

> These poles are all funded by the government. They run throughout the village. Villagers who want to use electricity just have to pay for the connection between the public line and their home line. The cost is not much: including the mechanic, it's about $30. And then there will be a meter fee each month in addition to the electricity used.

Whereas government-funded utility poles cut through all of the villages in the surveyed areas, a considerable number of households—approximately one fourth—was not connected to them. In fact, interview data revealed that in order to connect the power line from utility poles for home use, households needed to pay a monthly fee as well as a meter fee. As a result, a number of households who were not willing to pay such fees decided not to connect the power line from public utility poles. From close observation, while the access to electricity was not limited to households with emigrating members, all of the households without access to electricity in all surveyed villages were households without emigrating members.

The Renovation of Public Roads

The civil war which lasted more than a decade not only shattered residential and agricultural areas of the villages but also left public roads in ruin. After the end of the war, however, starting from the late 1980s, the Cambodian government gradually renovated the nationwide road system. Concrete roads which passed the front of surveyed villages were largely renovated, while local roads in the villages were either gravel or dirt roads. Borey, previous chief of Pii Village, explained,

> It's not that the roads were good before the war. Turning back 40–50 years, the roads in this area were just dirt roads. But after the war, they became much worse. Except the large pickup trucks, I don't think any other car would do. It was around very late 1980s, after the war, that the roads in Serei Saophoan were renovated. Then around the early- to mid-1990s, the concrete road reached our village. The road did not cut through our village, though. It just cut past the front of our village. So, as you can see, our local roads in the village are all dirt roads. Anyway, all of these were funded by the government.

Bona, Borey's son who was the current Pii Village chief, added,

> It became much easier for the villagers to travel. There are kids who want to attend middle school, there are the elders who regularly need to visit the hospital, there are villagers who want to buy or sell things downtown. You know that our village has neither a school beyond primary level nor a hospital, right? So, they need to go to larger towns. Now, these are viable for them. Without good roads, all of these were very difficult.
>
> Another thing is the food trucks. This makes everything even more convenient for us. As you can see, villagers here don't farm as much as they used to in the past. So, instead of growing crops and raising chicken by ourselves, we buy from the food trucks. We don't even need to go to the market. The food trucks will stop by your home. You can also make your order in advance, like what you want to have tomorrow, and they will prepare it for you. There are several of them: some sell vegetables, some sell fish, some sell pork, some sell chicken and eggs, or some sell a little bit of everything. Some of them come in the morning and some of them come in the afternoon.

With the renovation of public and local roads, villagers in rural areas were able to easily access larger and readier hospitals, higher levels of schools and colleges, as well as downtown markets in larger towns, especially in Serei Saophoan. Especially in the case of surveyed villages, with the lack of medical care and school beyond the primary level, the ease of transportation was extraordinarily important.

Apart from outbound traffic, easier transportation also facilitated inbound traffic to the village. A particular inbound traffic worth mentioning in this section was the presence of mobile market which took the form of trading pickup truck. Usually, in surveyed villages, a number of pickup trucks would come to the villages every day for food supply trading. Most of the times, these trading pickups would sell meat or crops to needing households; however, the selling of crops from households to these trucks was not uncommon.[128] The presence of these trading pickups made it easier for households in surveyed villages to purchase food supply; which, sequentially, built on to the lowering significance of farming in these areas.

3.3.3.3 Improved Standard of Living

Since the 1980s, when large-scale emigration began in surveyed villages, their standard of living has been rising gradually. Besides the developments of local infrastructure, positive data on key indicators relevant to the standard of living were reported. This study—in order to assess the changing standard of living of villagers in sending areas—developed a separate questionnaire.[129,130] In Mon State, data was collected from households in More Village and Bar Village with members currently working in seafood processing businesses in Samut Sakhon. In Banteay Meanchey Province, data was collected from households in Moy Village and Pii Village with members currently working in seafood processing businesses in Rayong.[131]

Mon State

Conditions of Housing Units

Traditionally, villagers relied solely on wooden materials for their house construction until around the 2000s when people started to adopt cement for their housing. The number of houses which were primarily made of cement grew rapidly in the previous decade; when the data was collected in 2017, the majority of the houses in both surveyed villages were principally made out of cement.[132] Collected data reflected remarkably higher housing durability of households in sending area since 2000. Respondents reasoned that with higher household income, particularly from the emigrant members in the 2000s, together with the observation of improved housing conditions of their neighbors, the decision for their house renovation was only natural consequence.

Table 3-26: Housing Material in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present

[128] This refers to a selling of crops from households in small quantity; for large quantity, normally households would have to ship their crops to downtown markets by their own.

[129] This questionnaire was developed based on prior community studies research by which these indicators were suggested (Rutstein & Johnson, 2004; Cordova, 2009; Booysen et al., 2008).

[130] Please see Appendix 3-A.

[131] Whereas data could be collected from all households in the Mon State sample, some households from the Banteay Meanchey Province were unable to answer a number of retrospective questions. Hence, the number of cases from Moy Village and Pii Village presented in this section was slightly lower than in the previous section.

[132] A considerable number of surveyed households, indeed, used mixed materials for their house constructions; however, collected data reflected construction material which represented larger proportion of the houses.

More Village (106 households) in %				
Cement	0.00	0.00	21.70	62.26
Wood	100.00	100.00	62.26	37.74
Bar Village (104 households) in %				
Cement	0.00	0.00	14.42	54.81
Wood	100.00	100.00	85.58	45.19

In regard to sanitation, before the 1990s, households in general relied on communal toilets which were, in fact, pit latrines. In the 1990s, households started to have their own pit latrine toilets; their dependence on communal toilets was, on the other hand, on the decline. However, the end of communal toilets came in the late 2000s when Myanmar's central government discouraged the use of communal toilets for sanitary reasons; the discouragement was escalated to the point that existing communal toilets in surveyed villages were burnt down to rule out any remaining users.

Table 3-27: Toilet in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village (106 households) in %				
Flush toilet	0.00	0.00	54.72	91.51
Pit latrine	2.83	58.49	34.91	8.49
No toilet	97.17	41.51	10.38	0.00
Bar Village (104 households) in %				
Flush toilet	0.00	0.00	46.15	85.58
Pit latrine	0.96	43.27	40.38	14.42
No toilet	99.04	56.73	13.46	0.00

Households were introduced to flush toilets in the 2000s, since then they were rapidly spread. At the time of data collection, communal toilets no longer existed; most of the households in surveyed villages had their own flush toilets, with marginal users of pit latrine toilets.

Housing Amenities

The use of electronic appliance in surveyed villages strongly correlated with villages' accesses to public electricity. Table 3-28 shows that prior to 2000, electronic appliances were almost non-existent in rural Mon State. Except the television, only few households owned any kind of electronic appliances in the 2000s. The source of electricity during this period of time, in fact, came from home electricity generator and home battery; hence their electricity capabilities were limited.

While non-communication electronic appliances such as refrigerator and electric fan have gradually owned by more households in the 2010s, the sharp upturn of ownership of communication devices was peculiar. In present day, all surveyed households had mobile phones in their possession; approximately 90 percent of these were smartphones which could be connected to the internet. Respondents reported that the ownership of mobile phone had just recently been deregulated in the late 2000s; prior to that point, ownership of mobile phone was exclusive only for higher ranked governmental officials. Soon after the deregulation of the mobile ownership, more service providers came to the market competing

with previously monopolizing governmental supported service provider as the central government successively deregulated the competition for mobile phone service provider; lowering the cost of mobile service.

The prevalence of smartphone in Mon rural area exemplified the leapfrogging of communication technology in two folds: a skip of landline phone and a skip of landline internet. With the lack of investment in infrastructure before the major development in the early 2010s; the access to landline phone was exclusive for exceptionally wealthy households for its expensive installation, while the access to landline internet was indeed non-existent. However, as a consequence from the deregulations of mobile phone ownership and service provider, mobile phone and mobile internet services became accessible for ordinary households. Evidently, in this area the technologies of landline phone and landline internet were skipped and replaced by more advance communication technologies.

Table 3-28: Housing Amenities in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village (106 households) in %				
Television	0.00	1.89	23.58	82.08
Refrigerator	0.00	0.00	0.00	20.75
Conventional phone	0.00	0.00	1.89	0.00
Mobile phone	0.00	0.00	7.55	100.00
Internet	0.00	0.00	2.83	92.45
Electric fan	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.21
Futon	2.83	53.77	67.92	97.17
In-house bathroom	0.00	0.00	6.60	11.32
In-house toilet	0.00	0.00	4.72	8.49
Bar Village (104 households) in %				
Television	0.00	0.96	16.35	79.81
Refrigerator	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.50
Conventional phone	0.00	0.00	0.96	0.00
Mobile phone	0.00	0.00	2.88	100.00
Internet	0.00	0.00	0.96	89.42
Electric fan	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.69
Futon	3.85	49.04	65.38	93.27
In-house bathroom	0.00	0.00	3.85	7.69
In-house toilet	0.00	0.00	1.92	5.77

In regard to futon, as a representative of non-electronic household amenities, futon was indeed considered a luxurious household amenity back in the 1980s. However, it became more common in the 1990s, and later turned into a household item in the 2010s.

Apart from previously mentioned household amenities, this study also assessed the availabilities of in-house bathroom and in-house toilet in surveyed households. Traditionally, together with communal toilets, villagers also shared communal bathrooms. Thereafter,

starting from the 1990s, during the same time when households started to construct their own toilets, households began to build their own bathrooms. These constructions, however, were built separately from the main housing units. The modern house design which included bathroom and toilet within the same roof with the main housing unit was still rare in surveyed villages.

Water Treatment Prior to Drinking

In both surveyed villages, households traditionally relied on water from natural sources such as rivers, rain, and underground water. For drinking purpose, they would normally use layers of gravel, sand, charcoal, and cloth to filter the water prior to drinking. Afterward, when transportation infrastructure was developed in the 2010s, the majority of villagers shifted to bottled water which was delivered primarily from Mawlamyine for drinking purpose. Although more costly, respondents who bought bottled water reasoned that they felt safer and that it was more convenient.

Table 3-29: Water Treatment Prior to Drinking in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village (106 households) in %				
Boiled	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.83
Bottled water	0.00	0.00	1.89	66.04
Filtered	100.00	100.00	98.11	31.13
No treatment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bar Village (104 households) in %				
Boiled	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.73
Bottled water	0.00	0.00	0.00	58.65
Filtered	100.00	100.00	100.00	34.62
No treatment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

A few number of households, as electricity became accessible, opted for boiled water. These households expressed that, although considered more expensive than bottled water, it was more convenient for them as they could boil water at any time that they wanted; they further elaborated that they did not have to wait for bottled water delivery and did not have to calculate their uses of water before the next delivery.

Cooking Fuel

According to the energy ladder model,[133] from 1980 until present, households in surveyed villages have successfully climbed up from the initial stage to the third stage of energy generator. While villagers traditionally relied on biomass before 2000; in present day, they overwhelmingly relied on modern fuels, the majority of which were electricity, for their cooking.

[133] The energy ladder model suggests a three-stage fuel switching process. Starting from the reliance on biomass as the early stage of energy generator; in the second stage, households shift to transition fuels, such as kerosene, charcoal, and coal as they achieve higher incomes and as they transit into the process of urbanization. The third stage, households are introduced to modern fuels, such as electricity, natural gas, and liquefied petroleum gas [LPG]; these modern fuels come with the altered lifestyle of urbanized population. Higher incomes and relative fuel prices are summarized as the key drivers for this shift in sources of energy (Droege, 2018; Leach, 1992; Department of Population of Myanmar, 2017b).

Table 3-30: Cooking Fuel in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village (106 households) in %				
Electricity / Gas	0.00	0.00	0.00	88.68
Charcoal	0.00	0.00	3.77	4.72
Wood	100.00	100.00	96.23	6.60
Bar Village (104 households) in %				
Electricity / Gas	0.00	0.00	0.00	90.38
Charcoal	0.00	0.00	1.92	2.88
Wood	100.00	100.00	98.08	6.73

Means of Transportation

Prior to the 2010s, Burmese government did not allow importation of used cars and trucks; in fact, existing cars and trucks in surveyed villages during that time came illegally through Myanmar's shared borders with China and Thailand. More than that, except from the extremely rare case of incredibly wealthy households, almost all of them were trucks for agricultural purpose. These vehicles, however, were all used vehicles, as the new ones were considered too expensive for villagers; indeed, respondents reported that the price of used vehicles was around one third to half of the full price of the new ones.

Data from key informants suggests that falling number of the trucks in the 2000s was due to strict border control from the Burmese side; furthermore, during that time existing trucks which were imported before the 2000s became very old, many of them were falling apart. Another relevant point was that, in rural part of Myanmar, the mechanic schools were sparse. Hence, once the cars or the trucks became old and needed major repairs, there were high possibilities that such maintenances would be beyond capabilities of the local garages. While the garages in Mawlamyine might be able to fix them, the charge would normally go beyond the price which was affordable by the villagers. Such condition partially made up to the lowering number of cars and trucks during the given time.

However, from the early 2010s, Burmese government legalized the importation of used cars and trucks, albeit seasonally. Together with the ascending wealth of villagers which led to higher demands of both cars and trucks, the legalization of used cars and trucks strongly drove the number of these vehicles in the villages. During this time, ownership of car has gradually become more common among households in surveyed villages.

Table 3-31: Means of Transportation in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village (106 households) in %				
Car / Truck	3.85	3.85	1.92	15.38
Motorcycle	0.00	0.96	2.88	91.35
Bicycle	1.92	41.35	80.77	88.46
Bar Village (104 households) in %				
Car / Truck	1.89	4.72	2.83	17.92
Motorcycle	0.00	1.89	5.66	95.28

Bicycle	2.83	50.00	86.79	92.45

Similarly to the cars and the trucks, motorcycles prior to the 2010s were illegally imported from Myanmar's neighboring countries. The number of motorcycles in the villages rose significantly in the 2010s as the importation of used motorcycles was legalized and as the households advanced their financial strength. During this time, motorcycles replaced bicycles as the primary mean of short distance transportation of the villagers in surveyed villages. Notable difference between the ownership of cars and trucks and the ownership of motorcycles in surveyed villages was that while all of the cars and trucks in these villages were used vehicles, approximately two out of ten motorcycles were bought first hand. This was due to the relatively more affordable price of first hand motorcycles compared with first hand cars or trucks.

It is worth mentioning that improved road condition largely enhanced the growing number of these vehicles in surveyed villages. The improved road condition, in fact, significantly facilitated the transportation of these vehicles to the villages.

In regard to the bicycles, the bicycles were the primary mean of transportation for short distance since the 1990s in surveyed villages until they were replaced by the motorcycles in the 2010s. On the contrary to the three previously mentioned vehicles, bicycles were domestically manufactured in Myanmar. Nevertheless, while, in general, the motorcycles were favored over the bicycles, the bicycles were still the primary mean of transportation for students in the surveyed villages. Hence, the bicycles were commonly observable in nearly all of the surveyed households.

Persons per One Bedroom

Data from interviews reveals that traditional plan of the houses in surveyed villages comprised two floors. The first floor was usually wall-less and was used for poultry farming, as common area, and as prevention measure in rain season against the flood. The second floor was commonly served as kitchen area and bedroom. Households reported that during the 1980s, almost all of the houses had only one bedroom. To be precise, regardless of the number of household members, everyone slept together in a single room.

Table 3-32: Persons per One Bedroom in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village (106 households)	8.32	6.74	3.87	2.13
Bar Village (104 households)	9.14	7.25	4.76	3.52

Afterward, in the 1990s, the number of persons per one bedroom moderately declined for two reasons: the growing number of villagers who went to Thailand and the installation of partitions in a portion of households. However, major drop came in the 2000s, when most households either extensively renovated their houses or built the new ones. In either case, houses during this period comprised more than one bedroom, with one bedroom usually was reserved for the parents. This added up to the lowering number of villagers from the rising emigration flow in surveyed villages.

Such circumstances continued in the 2010s, with the additions of two factors which contributed to even lower number of persons per bedroom in origin area; they were the birth of children in Thailand and the lowering birth rate. According to interviews both in the origin

area and in Thailand, the proportion of migrant who decided to keep their children with them in Thailand, though mild, was rising. Major reasons cited were better education opportunity for their children and the opportunity to live together.

Another factor was the lowering birthrate among the Mon migrants. While, traditionally, in agricultural contexts, having more children was considered beneficial as it translated into more resources for agricultural production; however, in present day, Mon people do no rely as much on agriculture compared to the old days, hence Mon people's perception on the number of children has been changed. Modern Mon parents did not concern much about the number of their children; in fact, they concerned more about their financial capabilities to raise their kids.

Access to Education

While the number of schools in a certain village may not be an accurate indicator for the access to education of students in that particular village as students may alternatively go to schools located in proximate villages or larger towns; however, it gave a rough picture of the demand and supply for education institutes in that village. Table 3-33 reveals the growing number of schools in both surveyed villages, which suggests stronger demand of education in these areas over time. Furthermore, less number of schools at the higher levels of education implies that fewer students were motivated to continue their study and that the ones who wished to do so might have to travel longer distance. However, data also hinted that the number of schools at the higher levels of education might partially be hindered by the government's readiness to establish and support schools in these levels.

Table 3-33: The Number of Schools in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village				
Primary school	1	2	2	2
Middle school	1	1	1	1
High school	0	1	1	1
Bar Village				
Primary school	1	1	1	1
Middle school	0	0	1	1
High school	0	0	0	0

Access to Medical Cares

Concerning the access to medical services, data reveals stagnant capability from the government to provide health care services for people in surveyed villages. In fact, the number of health care centers provided by the government in these villages remained static since the 1980s. Respondents further asserted that while there have been improvements in terms of the number of health care providers and the technological advancement in these centers, such improvements were minimal.

In fact, the majority of people in surveyed villages, in the cases that their financial conditions allowed, opted for private clinics, albeit slightly to moderately more costly, as the services and their health care technologies were superior to those provided by the government-run community medical center. Two implications which can be drawn from the rapid growth of private clinics since the 1990s were the strong demand for better health care services and the rising number of skilled workers in health profession.

Firstly, with more money to spend, modern healthcare became one of the prioritized expense purposes, creating stronger demand for health care services in both surveyed villages. Respondents reported that when their household members got sick, today there was higher tendency that a person who fell ill would be treated in modern private clinics; instead of in the old days when most of the sufferers would be traditionally treated primarily by local herbs.

Secondly, the escalating number of private clinics reflected the growing number of skilled workers in health profession. The health professionals who worked in these private clinics were either the doctors, the nurses, or the pharmacists who finished specialized degrees or specialized trainings. While some of these healthcare professionals came from other places, most of them were the locals who continued their studies in the higher levels and came back to their hometowns. This, in fact, reflected the expanded education opportunity as well as the growing locals' academic interests.

Table 3-34: The Number of Health Care Units in More Village and Bar Village

	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
More Village				
Community medical center (Government)	1	1	1	1
Private clinic	1	2	2	8
Bar Village				
Community medical center (Government)	1	1	1	1
Private clinic	0	1	2	3

Whereas the technologies which were implemented by the private clinics might be advance compared to those provided by the community medical center, patients with severe cases had to be transferred to the main hospitals in Mawlamyine City. In fact, a number of respondents shared their experiences when their household members or themselves had been further transferred to Yangon City as even the specialists and technologies of hospitals in Mawlamyine City were considerably limited.

Banteay Meanchey Province

Conditions of Housing Units

In general, villagers traditionally relied on wooden materials for their house construction until around the 2000s when people started to adopt cement for their housing. The number of houses which were primarily made of cement grew rapidly in the previous decade. As of 2017, however, the majority of the houses in both surveyed villages were principally made out of cement.[134] Collected data reflected remarkably higher housing durability of households in sending area since 2000. Respondents reasoned that with higher household income, particularly from the emigrant members in the 2000s, together with the observation of improved housing conditions of their neighbors, the decision for their house renovation was only natural consequence.

[134] A considerable number of surveyed households, indeed, used mixed materials for their house constructions; however, collected data reflected construction material which represented larger proportion of the houses.

Table 3-35: Housing Material in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households) in %			
Cement	1.94	33.98	70.87
Wood	98.06	66.02	29.13
Pii Village (102 households) in %			
Cement	0.00	44.76	80.95
Wood	100.00	55.24	19.05

For sanitation, before 2000, approximately half of surveyed households owned pit latrine, while the rest relied on existing communal toilets which were, in fact, also pit latrines. During the 2000s, more households started to adopt flush toilets, since then the adoption of flush toilet was rapidly spread. At the time of data collection in 2017, while the existence of pit latrine was still common, the majority of households in surveyed villages had their own flush toilets.

Table 3-36: Toilet in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households) in %			
Flush toilet	0.00	28.16	54.37
Pit latrine	52.43	58.25	45.63
No toilet	47.57	13.59	0.00
Pii Village (102 households) in %			
Flush toilet	0.00	29.41	61.76
Pit latrine	43.14	52.94	38.24
No toilet	56.86	17.65	0.00

Housing Amenities

The availability of household electronic appliance in surveyed villages strongly correlated with villages' accesses to public electricity. Table 3-37 shows that prior to 2000, electronic appliances were almost non-existent in rural part of Banteay Meanchey Province. The source of electricity during this period of time, in fact, came from home electricity generator and home battery; hence their electricity capabilities were limited.

Since access to public electricity became available during the mid-2000s, the ownership of household electronic appliance has gradually risen. While non-communication electronic appliances such as refrigerator and electric fan have constantly owned by more households in the 2010s, the sharp upturn of ownership of communication devices was remarkable. In present day, all surveyed households had mobile phones in their possession; approximately 90 percent of these were smartphones which could be connected to the internet.

In fact, smartphone became widely available in the local market in the late 2000s, while internet data package in Cambodia later covered surveyed area in the early 2010s. The use of smartphone prior to that time relied on devices purchased from Thailand as well as data package from signal which was leaked from Thailand's side. For the devices, interview

data reveals that migrants' household members might purchase smartphones by themselves at the border market or that migrants might bring back smartphones for their household members during their visits, and data package available from Thailand. In regard to mobile signal, since this part of Cambodia was at a close proximity to Thailand, mobile signal from Thailand was reachable; hence, while this area was still lack of mobile signal, they used mobile signal leaked from Thai side of the border. Similar to the devices, data package was available for villagers' purchase at the border market.

However, since smartphone devices as well as data packages became available in this region of Cambodia, the villagers shifted for local device distributors and data providers. This was because the price both for the devices and the data packages were usually cheaper from local device distributors and data providers; more importantly, they offered more customized supports for the Cambodian which were available in Khmer language.

The prevalence of smartphone in Banteay Meanchey's rural area exemplified the leapfrogging of communication technology in two folds: a skip of landline phone and a skip of landline internet. With the lack of investment in necessary infrastructure, the access to landline phone was exclusive for exceptionally wealthy households for its expensive installation, while the access to landline internet was indeed non-existent. However, as a consequence from advance technological development in telecommunication, mobile phone and mobile internet services became accessible for ordinary households. Evidently, in this area the technologies of landline phone and landline internet were skipped and replaced by more advance communication technologies.

Table 3-37: Housing Amenities in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households) in %			
Television	1.94	16.50	64.08
Refrigerator	0.00	1.94	20.39
Conventional phone	0.00	0.97	2.91
Mobile phone	0.97	34.95	100.00
Internet	0.00	7.77	82.52
Electric fan	0.00	2.91	55.34
Futon	40.78	80.58	100.00
In-house bathroom	0.00	15.53	61.17
In-house toilet	0.00	1.94	6.80
Pii Village (102 households) in %			
Television	0.95	11.43	56.19
Refrigerator	0.00	3.81	26.67
Conventional phone	0.00	2.86	2.86
Mobile phone	0.00	29.52	100.00
Internet	0.00	4.76	96.19
Electric fan	0.00	5.71	51.43
Futon	31.43	70.48	98.10

In-house bathroom	0.00	13.33	67.62
In-house toilet	0.00	4.76	12.38

In regard to futon, as a representative of non-electronic household amenities, futon was indeed considered a rather luxurious household amenity back in the 1990s. However, it became more common in the 2000s, and later turned into a household item in the 2010s.

Apart from previously mentioned household amenities, this study also assessed the availabilities of in-house bathroom and in-house toilet in surveyed households. Traditionally, villagers either relied on communal bathrooms or home bathrooms which were separated of the main housing units. Nevertheless, starting from the 2000s, in the case that households decided to build new homes or renovate their existing homes, new design often included bathroom, and to a lesser extent toilet, within the same roof with the main housing unit.

Water Treatment Prior to Drinking

According to interview data, households in surveyed villages traditionally relied on water from natural sources such as rivers, rain, and underground water. In the 1990s, however, approximately half of the households used layers of gravel, sand, charcoal, and cloth to filter the water prior to drinking, while another half of the households did not and consumed the water as is. Starting from the 2000s, the portion of households which filtered the water before drinking gradually rose, on the contrary to the lowering portion of households which did not treat water prior to drinking. Along the same period of time, a small, yet growing, number of households with access to electricity started to adopt the water treatment method of boiling.

Table 3-38: Water Treatment Prior to Drinking in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households) in %			
Boiled	0.00	7.77	12.62
Bottled water	0.00	0.00	3.88
Filtered	43.69	49.51	58.25
No treatment	56.31	42.72	25.24
Pii Village (102 households) in %			
Boiled	0.00	4.76	9.52
Bottled water	0.00	0.00	1.90
Filtered	36.19	60.00	68.57
No treatment	63.81	35.24	20.00

In the 2010s, data also reveals a small, yet potentially growing, share of households which opted for bottled water, instead of self water treatment. This group of respondents often cited convenience, water quality, and price as their main reasons for their selection. They elaborated that quality control was difficult for filtered water and whereas boiling might guarantee water sanitation, the cost for electricity was as expensive as purchasing bottled water. As a result, bottled water was considered an optimized alternative for them. In fact, convenient transportation, derived from the ongoing renovation of Cambodian road systems, largely contributed to the availability of bottled water distribution in surveyed area.

Cooking Fuel

Referring to the energy ladder model, from 1990 until present, households in surveyed villages have gradually, yet successfully, climbed up from the initial stage to the third stage of energy generator. While the villagers traditionally relied on biomass before 2000; since the 2000s, they had shifted to primarily reliance on transitional fuels such as charcoal, coal, and kerosene. In the 2010s, the use of biomass as cooking fuel was not observable; instead, a growing number of households has adopted modern fuels such as electricity and gas for their household cooking.

Table 3-39: Cooking Fuel in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households) in %			
Electricity / Gas	0.00	0.00	19.42
Charcoal	11.65	69.90	80.58
Wood	88.35	30.10	0.00
Pii Village (102 households) in %			
Electricity / Gas	0.00	0.00	26.67
Charcoal	15.24	64.76	73.33
Wood	84.76	35.24	0.00

Means of Transportation

Prior to 2000, the ownership of private car was close to non-existent, except for the case of extraordinarily wealthy households. A small number of car or truck owners, exhibited in Table 3-40, prior to 2000 largely represented the number of households which owned agricultural trucks. During that time, the ownership of motorcycle was approximately six to ten percent, while the ownership of bicycle was roughly around 16 to 36 percent across all surveyed villages.

After 2000, however, the ownership of all surveyed transportation vehicles had sharp upturn in both surveyed villages. In fact, as of 2017, approximately 26 to 37 percent of households had either car or truck under their possession, while the rates of motorcycle and bicycle ownership were higher than eight out of ten in both villages.

Table 3-40: Means of Transportation in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households) in %			
Car / Truck	2.91	10.68	36.89
Motorcycle	6.80	22.33	92.23
Bicycle	13.59	81.55	99.03
Pii Village (102 households) in %			
Car / Truck	1.90	12.38	25.71
Motorcycle	9.52	30.48	81.90
Bicycle	24.76	74.29	89.52

The rapid increment of vehicle ownership rate was largely derived from enlarging household income as well as improved road systems. Besides the increasing household

income which was elaborated in preceding section, the improved road systems facilitated the transportation of these vehicles to the villages as well as enabled the utilization of these vehicles. Without functioning roads, the transportation of these vehicles to the villages was extremely difficult; moreover, in the case of poor road conditions, these vehicles could not be utilized effectively.

Persons per One Bedroom

Collected data from field research reveals that traditional plan of the houses in surveyed villages comprised two floors. The first floor was usually wall-less and was used for poultry farming, as common area, and as prevention measure in rain season against the flood. The second floor was commonly served as kitchen area and bedroom. Households reported that prior and during the 1990s, almost all of the houses had only one bedroom. To be precise, regardless of the number of household members, everyone slept together in a single room.

Table 3-41: Persons per One Bedroom in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village (103 households)	7.22	5.15	3.34
Pii Village (102 households)	7.44	5.34	4.11

Since the 2000s, nevertheless, the number of persons per one bedroom has gradually declined for two reasons: the growing number of villagers who went to Thailand and the installation of partitions in a portion of households. In addition to the growing number of emigrants from surveyed villages, these emigrants usually kept their children with them in Thailand, instead of leaving them to stay behind in their hometowns. This was especially apparent in the case of their newborns in Thailand. In regard to house design, indeed, the number of persons who shared the same bedroom was notably lowered in a renovated house or newly built house as they usually comprised more than one bedroom.

Access to Education

Whereas the number of schools in a certain village may not be an accurate indicator for the access to education of students in that particular village as students may alternatively go to schools located in proximate villages or larger towns; however, it gave a broad picture of the demand and supply for education institutes in that village. In this regard, Table 3-42 suggests alarming availability of education for children in surveyed villages. The rate of school expansion both in terms of quantity and level of education, though growing, was particularly slow. In fact, in two out of three surveyed villages, only primary school was available; the highest level of education available in another village was, nonetheless, lower-secondary education. Children who intended to continue their education at a higher level were forced to travel to larger villages or cities, as a result.

Interview data, however, reveals that in addition to the government's lack of readiness to establish and support schools at the higher levels, the demand for schools in these villages was not particularly high. This, indeed, derived from the fact that the majority of work age villagers migrated to Thailand and that these emigrants usually had their children stay with them in Thailand. Hence, in most cases, Khmer children born from emigrating villagers often attended schools in Thailand, instead of schools in their hometowns.

Table 3-42: The Number of Schools in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village			
Primary school	1	1	2
Middle school	0	0	0
High school	0	0	0
Pii Village			
Primary school	1	1	1
Middle school	0	0	0
High school	0	0	0

Access to Medical Cares

Formal medical services were almost non-existent in surveyed villages—with an exception of recently opened private clinic in Pii Village. According to the interview, the shortage of medical services derived from the lack of readiness of Cambodian government both in terms of financial capital and human resources in medical sector. In fact, respondents informed that they usually relied on traditional medical practitioners when they were ill, whereas the cases which villagers traveled to larger villages or cities seeking formal medical treatments were irregular.

Table 3-43: The Number of Health Care Units in Moy Village and Pii Village

	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-Present
Moy Village			
Community medical center (Government)	0	0	0
Private clinic	0	0	0
Pii Village			
Community medical center (Government)	0	0	0
Private clinic	0	0	1

3.4 Disparate Affixed Conditions, Deviated Migration Patterns, and Different Migrants' Characteristics Between the Mons and the Khmers

Collected data revealed both similarities and differences in patterns and characteristics between the Mons and the Khmers. While several characteristics of respondents from both origins—gender, marital status, religion, education, household size, and employment of their household members in Thailand—were comparable, major disparities comprised the age group of respondents both at the destination and the origin, type of work permit held, length of stay, income in Thailand, cost for migration, migrant's spending, remittance, and return decision. In fact, this study found that these different characteristics were led by different migration patterns between the two studied groups and that these different migration patterns were indeed shaped by different conditions affixed to their respective corridors.

This section addresses and unveils the relations between these affixed conditions, migration patterns, and migrants' characteristics. Data revealed three different conditions affixed to studied migration corridors to be especially influential to their disparate migration

patterns. These three conditions were the sense of belonging to their hometown, the proximity between the origin and the destination, and the size of the factory at the destination.

3.4.1 The Sense of Belonging to Their Hometown

Collected data revealed much higher attachment to their hometowns among the Mons in comparison to the Khmers. Whereas the Mons were usually born, raised, and returned to the very same village, the Khmers were different. Largely due to the Cambodian civil war between the 1970s and 1980s, a large number of Khmers were displaced. As a result, studied villages in Banteay Meanchey were home to barely half of their current population. A large portion of these villages' current population moved there only after the civil war. They spent only a few years in these villages before the mass migration to Thailand began. Even everyone who was born in these villages was forced to leave their hometowns for 15–20 years as a consequence of the civil war. Once they returned to their home villages after the civil war, like the newcomers, they spent only a few years there before the mass migration brought them to Thailand. Hence, these distinct occurrences at the origin of these two corridors led to the different levels of sense of belonging to their hometowns among the Mons and the Khmers.

Bhum, a 45-year-old female returnee from Mon's Buoy Village, said,

> Most of us grew up here; of course, we love our home. Our family, our relatives, and our friends are all here. We went to Thailand to earn money. We did what we had to do. But after our kids replaced us, it was like our responsibility was over. We could finally return. Life in Thailand was not bad, but here is our home. There had never been a day that I hadn't missed my village when I worked in Thailand.

Different sentiment was observed in the case of the Khmers. An excerpt from an interview with Vuth, a 56-year-old male worker in a processed shrimp factory, is an example of typical replies from Khmer migrants in Rayong:

> I was born in Bay Village. I was about 13 or 14 when the war broke out and we had to seek refuge from the village. Our family was separated; my mom and I went to live with my mom's parents in Oddar Meanchey Province. My dad, my older sister, and younger brother fled to Kratie Province. After the war, my mom, my dad, and I went back to Bay Village. But my sister and brother did not; they stayed with the relatives in Kratie. We met two or three times [after they were separated] when they came to visit us in Bay Village, though.
>
> By the time that I returned to the village, I was 26 or 27. Our home was in terrible shape. It took us about a week to make it livable. We lived there for a little over a year before we decided to come to Thailand. We came together—my mom, my dad, my wife, and I. I already had a wife at that time, and two kids. My aunt took care of my kids for a couple of years, and when they were old enough, they followed us to Thailand.

When asked if he missed Bay Village, he replied,

> Not really. I don't feel like going back. There is nothing in particular that makes me want to return. I know that one day the time when I can't work anymore will come, but until then I will just stay in Thailand. Of course, my children will send me money if I decide to return. But I think my life is here, working and living here in Rayong. Rayong is more like my home, that's how I feel. My children and grandchildren are

all here. Back there, I don't know a lot of people. Even if I do, we are not close. All of my close relatives and friends are here.

These different levels of sense of belonging to their hometowns led to different patterns of migration between the Mons and the Khmers. In general, the Mons developed a stronger attachment to their hometowns. Hence, once their responsibility as breadwinners for their families was replaced by other family members, they wanted to return to their hometowns. This was evidenced in section 3.1.1.3, "Return Decision," where by far the most Mon workers asserted that they would return to their hometowns only after their family members successfully replaced them as the breadwinners.

At the other end of the spectrum, the low sense of belonging to their hometowns led to different conditions for the Khmers' return decisions. A large number of Khmer workers expressed that they had no plan to return and that their physical condition dictated their return decision.[135] In fact, it was far more common to observe two or more generations of Khmer family members staying together in Thailand, forming the characteristic of household migration in which all household members simultaneously became migrant workers. Instead of returning, older workers opted to stay with their family in Thailand. As a result, since their parents were also staying in Thailand, Khmer couples with newborns usually kept their children with them, as it was difficult for them to ask someone to take care of their children back in their hometowns.

Ratree, a 40-year-old female worker in a canned seafood factory in Rayong, said,

> I was born in Pii Village. But I was very young when the war broke out; I cannot remember anything. What I remember is that I grew up in Sihanoukville. I grew up with my mom in her relatives' house. My dad didn't make it. He was caught by the army and we didn't hear from him again.
>
> I have three kids now, and all of them stay with me in Rayong. They are 11, 6, and 4. I keep them here because I want them to stay with me. Another thing is that my mom, my husband, and his relatives are all in Thailand. I can't think of any close relatives who I can ask to look after my children. My husband and I talked about this before, several times. Indeed, it's not easy to keep all of them here, not only because of more expenses, but also because my husband, my mom, and I have to work. So, we take turns looking after them. Sometimes we leave our children with our neighbors who also have kids on the days that all of us have to work. And on our days off, those neighbors will leave their kids with us. Since my first two children reached school age, things have been easier. Now, I just have to wait a few more years for the little one,

she ended with a giggle while looking at her youngest son.

Aforementioned diverged determinants to their return brought on two notable differences between the Mons and the Khmers: the average age of respondents both at the origin and at the destination and migrants' spending in Thailand, which included their remittances. First, this study found that the average age of workers in Rayong was moderately higher than workers in Samut Sakhon. On the other hand, the average age of villagers in Mon villages was notably higher than villagers in Banteay Meanchey villages. This, indeed, derived directly from their different migration patterns. Whereas the Mons were ready to return once their family members replaced them, the Khmers tended to stay in

[135] Please refer to section 3.1.2.3, "Return Decision."

Thailand much longer—in many cases, until their body surrendered. As a result, older Khmer workers in Rayong were much more common than older Mon workers in Samut Sakhon.[136] At the same time, adult villagers—many of whom were returnees at both origins—were visibly younger in Mon villages than in Banteay Meanchey villages.[137]

The second point was migrants' spending and remittances while in Thailand. Whereas Mon workers usually decided to return to their hometowns and passed their responsibility as breadwinners on to their children who replaced them, the Khmers commonly stayed in Thailand much longer than their Mon counterparts. As both the returned Mons and Khmers primarily relied on their family members' remittances,[138] the fact that the Mons returned earlier inferred that their family members who were working in Thailand were responsible for making remittances for a longer period of time. On the other hand, for a large number of Khmer households, because all of their family members were in Thailand, remittance was not necessary for them. Moreover, with larger household sizes in Thailand—including their newborns, whom they usually kept with them—their living expenses in Thailand were correspondingly higher than the Mons'.

3.4.2 The Proximity Between the Origin and the Destination

Besides its leverage on the stronger dependency on migration brokers for the Mon corridor than its Khmer counterpart (see section 3.2.3.2), the difference in proximities between the origins and the destinations of these two corridors directly determined their different costs for migration. Indeed, not only the shorter distance but also the smoother route effected a cheaper cost of transportation for the Khmers. From Mon villages to Samut Sakhon, the distance was approximately 500–700 kilometers, depending on the chosen route. By any route, migrants needed to travel across mountainous areas and large rivers to reach their destination. This was in comparison to less than 300 kilometers of plains between Khmer villages in Banteay Meanchey and Rayong. While the Khmers usually made three transits in order to reach their destination, five transits were the minimum for the Mons. This long distance and transportation difficulty led to higher transportation costs for the Mons; indeed, the Mons, by default, paid many times higher than the Khmers for a return ticket—roughly $150–$300 to the Khmers' $50–$75.

This cheaper cost of transportation allowed the development of intermittent migration among the Khmers, a migration pattern which was rarely observed among the Mons. Collected data revealed that, after working in Thailand for a period of time, a considerable portion of Khmer workers took a long break and returned home, before migrating to Thailand again, repeatedly. Further study found two primary reasons behind this migration pattern: work-related reasons and personal reasons.

First, work-related reasons were prevalent among seasonal workers. The majority of them worked around the Thai seafood processing business season—during the business off-season, they returned to their hometowns,[139] while the rest of them worked around Cambodian farming season—during farming off-season, they came to work in Thailand.

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[136] Please refer to Figure 3-2, "Mon Workers in Samut Sakhon Province, by Age Group," and Figure 3-15, "Khmer Workers in Rayong Province, by Age Group."

[137] Please refer to Table 3-8, "Respondents from Mon State, by Age Group," and Table 3-18, "Respondents from Banteay Meanchey Province, by Age Group."

[138] Please refer to section 3.3.3.1, "Dwindling Dependence on Agricultural Activity."

[139] This first group of seasonal workers will be explained in section 3.4.3, "The Size of Factories at the Destination."

Since most of the farmers of the latter group farmed rice in their hometowns, their off-season was commonly around November to May. This, however, also depended on different weather conditions each year. For migrants who grew other crops back home, their farming season might be different.

A second group moved primarily for personal reasons—that is, impulse—such as exhaustion and boredom. In their own words, once these workers felt ready again or, in most cases, ran out of money, they would make another round of migration to Thailand. The length of working in Thailand each time as well as the length of their break varied unpredictably. Davuth, a 37-year-old male worker from Moy Village, explained,

> You can say that everyone has come to Thailand [to work] at some point. But it's not uncommon for people from my village to work in Thailand for a couple of years and return to Moy Village for a few years and then come back to Thailand again, and so on. A person may migrate to Thailand several times. So, I can say that during any given time, villagers who come to Thailand exceed half of our total villagers. I think almost everyone in my village has experienced working in Thailand, it's just that it doesn't mean that all of us are in Thailand at the same time.

Chantrea, Davuth's friend who also came from Moy Village, added that

> Sometimes we get bored and want to take a long break. Sometimes we want to relax and use our hard-earned money. Then when we need money, we come back to Thailand. Besides, some of the repeaters are seasonal workers. I mean, they may be farmers in Banteay Meanchey for six months, and the rest [of the year] they come to work in Thailand.

This intermittent migration among the Khmers led to another different migration pattern from the Mons: the type of work permit held. As elaborated in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1, "Immigrant Workers Under Low-Skilled Immigrant Employment Scheme," temporary work permits and nationality verification work permits commonly represented a higher degree of urgent or impromptu demand for immigrant workers, in contrast to planned employment, which was usually done through MOU. Unlike temporary work permits and nationality verification work permits, which are more flexible for the employer, MOU work permits must be planned months in advance prior to the employment of migrant workers.

To be specific, an employer who wished to employ a migrant worker via temporary work permit or nationality verification work permit commonly waited for an announcement from the government for the specific time period for registration. Once the announcement was released, the employer started the recruitment and registered the migrant worker accordingly. The worker was able to start working as soon as the permit was granted. On the other hand, the process of MOU registration was much longer. An employer started by submitting needed workers—both the amount and qualifications—to the Thai government. The Thai government then forwarded this request for workers to the government of the country of origin of migrants; through local agencies, the government of that country then sent back the list of candidates to the Thai government to approve and grant legal documents. When all of these were done, migrant workers would be transported to the Thai employer.

Moreover, while the Thai government allowed the change of employer to migrant workers, to employ MOU permit holders, the new employer had to secure an approval from the former employer—a task which was difficult to achieve, especially for the Khmers, who often quit their job without their employer's consent. On the other hand, the employment of temporary permit and nationality verification permit holders did not require consent from their previous employer.

An interview with Chanchai, an owner of a canned seafood factory in Rayong, brought insight about this:

> Currently my factory has around 30-ish Khmers. My experience is that a lot of them come and go as they feel like it. My factory had this problem for years. This is very troublesome. The thing is that Rayong is close to the border, and their hometowns are not far from the Cambodian border. It's easy for them to return to their hometowns and come back again. Transportation is cheap, only a few hundred baht [approximately $10], and it takes at most half a day from here to reach their hometowns. So, when they want to return, they just go. Some good ones tell me weeks in advance, some tell me a few days before they go, and some just leave without any words. And it's easy for them to find a job once they come back to Rayong. There are over a hundred factories like mine.
>
> My problem is that the employment of these Khmers is insecure. It's impossible to make an exact plan in advance. So, all of the workers in my factory, as well as most factories around here, are either temporary or nationality verification permit holders. When we need workers, we can just recruit those who already have these permits. Or if we are recruiting during a registration period, that's even easier. A lot of Khmers are waiting to come to Thailand during such time.

When asked if he had considered employing the Khmers through MOU, he replied,

> With MOU, we have to have an exact plan well in advance. Let's say after submitting the worker demand to the government, we have to wait for 4–6 months before they send workers to us. And after we wait that long, who knows how long they will stay with us? Employing MOU permit holders who are already in Thailand is also extremely difficult. We need the consent from their former employer. How can we get that? These Khmers usually have just run away from their previous employer without a word.

For employers, anticipation of intermittent migrants was difficult. This was because their decision to return to their hometowns and their decision to come to Thailand largely depended on their personal and unpredictable reasons such as exhaustion, boredom, vitality, and lack of money. Even among those who returned to their hometowns during farming season, different crops had different farming seasons. Furthermore, unfavorable weather conditions might prolong their time in their home villages. For these reasons, intermittent migrants were usually employed under either temporary work permits or nationality verification work permits. From the employers' perspective, they would be able to employ those who were available at the time that they needed. Had they attempted to employ these workers through MOU, they would have faced risk from these workers' potential change of mind. When such thing happened, the employer had to start the whole process of MOU recruitment all over again.

This section outlined the consequences of the proximity between the origin and the destination and migration patterns: intermittent migration and work permit held. Easy and economical transportation allowed intermittent migration through the Khmer corridor, whereas such a pattern was utterly uncommon for the Mons, owing to their difficult and costly transportation. Due to their unpredictable nature, intermittent migrants were generally registered under temporary work permits or nationality verification work permits. Hence, the proportion of Khmer workers who held an MOU work permit was three times lower than the Mons.

3.4.3 The Size of Factories at the Destination

Besides closer proximity, the relatively smaller size of factories in Rayong compared to those of Samut Sakhon was another condition reinforcing intermittent migration, and therefore the Khmers' holding of a temporary work permit or nationality verification work permit. According to data from the Department of Fisheries of Thailand (2017), Rayong had much more small- to medium-size seafood processing businesses than Samut Sakhon, where large seafood processing businesses were abundant. Collected data revealed three reasons why smaller factories commonly opted for migrants with temporary work permits or nationality verification work permits over MOU work permits. These reasons were the associated cost of different types of work permit, the volume of workers needed, and the nature of operations depending on the size of the business.

First, whereas the associated cost of a work permit varied in each round of registration, the fee for a 2-year MOU work permit was usually around $350–$450, and the fee for a 2-year temporary work permit and nationality verification work permit were approximately $50–$150. Hence, the fee for MOU registration per worker was three to nine times higher than temporary and nationality verification registrations. For this reason, smaller factories—presumably with less capital—usually preferred temporary and nationality verification registrations over MOU registrations.

Second was the volume of workers needed. Despite its much higher fee, worker registration through MOU had an upside in this regard. Through the MOU registration process, employers submitted to the Thai government the number and qualifications of workers that they needed. The Thai government would then work with the government of the country of origin of migrants to fulfill those demands. Employers were guaranteed the number of workers that they asked for at the start of the process. On the other hand, employment through temporary and nationality verification permits depended largely on the current state of the labor market and whether qualified migrants were available at a given time. Furthermore, since temporary registration and nationality verification registration were typically opened once a year, recruiting a large number of workers at the same time was a difficult task due competition between firms and limited supply.

Muenfan, who ran a frozen seafood factory which employed more than 400 migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, explained,

> Yes, the fee is several times higher. But it's only a one-time fee. After that, the pay is equal whether you hire a temporary permit holder or MOU permit holder. What I pay more attention to is that I have enough workers when I need them. With employment through MOU, my factory is guaranteed to have the right quantity and quality of employees by the time the recruitment process is finished.
>
> I would say if you expect to recruit more than 50 or 100 migrants at the same time, MOU is a good idea. If you recruit those with a temporary permit or a nationality verification permit, you'll need to wait for a long time. You may get 5–10 new workers a week. Now, let's think about training new workers. If all new workers come at the same time, we need only one round of training. But if they come separately, it'll be such a burden.
>
> Another benefit of employing through MOU is that it's difficult for them to leave your company. If they quit and want to work for a new company, they have to ask for consent from their previous employer. So, they cannot just run away and join the new company. But this is not the case for temporary permit and nationality verification

permit holders. For these permits' holders, after they quit, they can just join any company that hires them.

Third, smaller seafood processing factories had a rather different nature of operations compared to larger factories. While the larger factories usually relied on numerous suppliers for their seafood materials, most smaller factories were limited to only a few. As a result, smaller factories were prone to shortfalls, which potentially occurred a couple of times a year, depending on when the fishing season, the catch, and weather were unfavorable. During such times, workers—the majority of whom were wage earners—did not earn. During low seasons, many workers would decide to return to their hometowns and later come back during business season to mitigate the higher cost of living in Thailand. Uncertain business seasons urged employers to hire migrants through temporary registration or nationality verification registration as their labor demand tended to be spontaneous and less predictable.

One owner, Charoen, talked about his business in Rayong and its employment of Khmer workers:

> Mine is rather small. We have about 20–30 workers during the fishing season. Normally, we are busy from early May to mid-November. We employ workers during that time. We keep only 2–3 workers during the off-season. Sometimes, there are small catches, and it's also a good idea to have some workers regularly check the warehouse and the machines. They can also be handymen when there is no catch. Normally, we start recruitment in late April and they [migrants] will be with us until November.

Comparing his with large seafood businesses, he explained,

> But large factories are different. They work with many types of sea animal. So, they operate year-round. They also have several large suppliers. So, it's not likely for them to lack for materials, unless in some severe cases like typhoons, sea temperature change, or boat strike. But for smaller businesses like us, even in the business season, sometimes we are short materials. We don't have more than a couple of suppliers, and none of them is a big business.

An interview with Khemera, a 33-year-old male worker from Moy Village who was currently working for Charoen's business, gave us perspective from a migrant's angle:

> I've worked with Mr. Charoen for more than 10 years. One of the good things for me is that the off-season for fishing here is the rice harvest season in Banteay Meanchey. Harvest season is normally during December and January. So, normally I return to my hometown to help my parents and relatives. We have small farm plots there. I stay there for a while and come back here in late April.
>
> But in some years, I haven't gone back home. There were some years that I got a job here. Sometimes, some factories recruit temporary workers during the off-season. Sometimes even during off-seasons there are big catches. It's fishing—you can't be 100 percent sure. It depends on the weather; it depends on the luck.

This section portrayed the sequential relations of how distinct affixed conditions of the two migration corridors led to their deviating migration patterns and, finally, the different characteristics of their migrants. The different degrees of sense of belonging between the Mons and the Khmers guided their return decisions, which explained divergent proportions of respondents' age groups at the destination and the origin as well as migrants' spending and remittance habits. Besides reducing dependency on migration brokers in the Khmer corridor in comparison to its Mon counterpart, the closer proximity between Banteay Meanchey and

Rayong, together with the relatively smaller size of factories in Rayong, fostered intermittent migration among the Khmers. This migration pattern led to a much lower proportion of the Khmers holding MOU work permits than the Mons.

CHAPTER 4

MIGRATION DECISION: THE CONCERT OF INDIVIDUAL END RATIONALITY, VALUE RATIONALITY, AFFECTION, AND TRADITION

This chapter documents the intertwining economic and social determinants behind migration decision and their connection with the prevailing social contexts of one's family and local community. Drawing on data both from the origin and the destination, this study traces migrants' drives for migration to their individual ends, values, affection, and tradition—all of which were imbued within these economic and social determinants. Further, this chapter unveils how these four drives connected and interacted with each other as well as upheld and sustained the continual flow of migration through the Mon and Khmer corridors into Thailand.

Chapter 4 starts off with an investigation of key actors and their roles in migration. The section sets up the conceptual framework for migration decision, in which household and local community—that is, the migrant's social context—are incorporated. Section 2 details how differing economic gains—individual end rationality-led drive—led to divergent perceptions of different occupations and their associated social status, forming a strong value rationality–led drive to migrate. In relation to the individual end rationality–led drive, the repeated statements of local community leaders—village chiefs, monks, and teachers, all of whom actively encouraged their people to migrate—and the sensational image of Thailand were formed, representing affection-led drive among the migrants. Their roles in and interactions with community sentiment are presented in section 3.

Drawing on embedded perceptions of occupations and their associated social status, sustained over a long period of time, a culture of migration developed. Having an established culture was the basis for the tradition-led drive, which refers to villagers' way of thought and practices, in which spending years as a migrant worker in Thailand became an integral part of their life. This connection between the value rationality–led and tradition-led drives in forming a migration culture is addressed in section 4. Finally, section 5 concludes and reveals the whole picture of how individual end rationality–led, value rationality–led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives together assembled the migration decisions of Mon and Khmer villagers for the Thai seafood processing industry. It also elaborates how these drives connected and interacted with each other.

4.1 Migration Decision as a Household Decision

To investigate migration decision in depth, identifying actors involved in the migrants' migration decision is the key starting point. This study found that, in contrast to a number of studies which referred to it as an individual activity, migration decision was indeed negotiated between household members. According to collected data, a large majority of both Mon and Khmer migrants explicitly expressed their household members' deep engagement in their migration from the start—their preparation, their settlement in Thailand, and their return. Household engagement ranged from providing information about work and life in Thailand, recommending agencies, job placement, financing their relocation, as well as finding them accommodations. Perhaps the most important form of engagement was that they had, in most cases, the authority to permit—that is, encourage—or not to permit—that is, discourage—migrants to come to, and to return from, Thailand.

Nam, a 19-year-old worker from Mon's Buoy Village, said,

> You can say that I came here prepared. I had two sisters who were already here when I came. Both of my parents also worked here before they returned. My sisters prepared me a room and found me a job. Actually, it's the factory that both of my sisters have been working for. We used video calls quite a lot, so I knew what kind of place I would live in and what the factory looked like even before I came.
>
> Well, to come here for the first time, a lot of money was needed, about 15,000 THB [$500]. So, my parents paid for the agency for me. I didn't know any agency, though. It was my parents and my sisters who contacted them for me. I came here as soon as my parents allowed. They said that I was grown up enough to take care of myself in Thailand,

he added with a laugh. Nam recently came to Samut Sakhon—four months before the interview.

Moreover, before they came, all the migrants had either relatives or community members from their hometowns who already worked in seafood processing businesses at their destinations. Indeed, 352 out of 407 Mon workers and 368 out of 404 Khmer workers reported that they had household members who worked in Thailand before they came—out of these, 311 cases and 343 cases, respectively, were their parents. These relatives and community members played great roles assisting and facilitating their settlement in Thailand.

Sraem was a 25-year-old female worker from Banteay Meanchey's Buan Village who came to Thailand two years before her interview. She said,

> Normally, those who want to come [from Banteay Meanchey] will contact someone that they know—most of the time, it's their own relatives, or sometimes people from their hometowns who have been working here [in Rayong]—to see if it's a good time to come, like if there are jobs available, or if it's already close to migrant worker registration period, and such. Also, when we know about job vacancies, we will tell our people back in our hometowns to see if anyone wants to come.
>
> Those who come before usually help newcomers a lot. It's not only about job placement. I mean, even before the newcomers come, the ones who are already here will share information about Thailand about the work and how the newcomers should prepare. Many times, especially for family members, the newcomers will stay with their family members who are already here.

Currently she was working in a large canned seafood company, the same company as both of her parents who had come years before her. "I waited until my parents told me to come," she revealed when questioned about how she made up her mind about when to come to Rayong.

In regard to their household's involvement in their returns, data exhibited that, since the vast majority of migrants' households back in their hometown relied heavily on remittances from migrant workers, household income was an important factor determining migrants' return decisions. Especially in the case of the Mons, they typically waited until other members of their households came to Thailand to replace them, usually their children.[140]

Whereas most villagers of working age in all sending villages—in both origins, Mon State and Banteay Meanchey Province—migrated to Thailand, certain individuals stayed behind for family reasons. More often than not, they stayed behind in order to take care of aging parents. In other instances, especially among households with children from several

[140] Please refer to Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.3, "Return Decision."

members, some household members remained in the village to take care of the children. In fact, a large number of migrants' children were raised in their parents' hometowns, most for economic reasons. Whereas this responsibility was typically expected from migrants' retired parents, in some cases the number of children was overwhelming. If so, additional household members of working age would remain to take care of the children. This situation was especially observed in households where the current immigrants had siblings. The account of Toch, a 26-year-old female returnee from Banteay Meanchey's Pii Village, illustrates one example:

> Right now, there are nine kids in our home. The eldest is 14 and the youngest was born a few months ago. They are the kids of my older brothers and sisters who are now working in Thailand. Actually, the number of their kids is more than this, but some are staying with them in Rayong.
>
> I also worked in Rayong before. But my parents are too old to raise these kids by themselves. And the number of the kids keeps increasing. So, we decided that one of us siblings needed to come back to help my parents. And it happened to be me, probably because I'm the youngest. So, that was why I came back a couple of years ago.

Further interview suggested that perhaps the reason why her family picked her as the kids' caretaker was because she was the only single person out of all of her siblings. Indeed, all of her siblings were reluctant to separate from their partners and return home alone, and the idea of coming back together would not be economically healthy for their household.

Looking through the evidence, the central unit which decided to migrate might not necessarily be the person who was migrating; indeed, the central unit tended to be the household as a whole. The household had immense roles in the migration decisions of its members, whether convincing, facilitating, deciding which members should migrate and which members should stay. The last role especially disclosed the division of work within the household, as it determined the economic activity—that is, the migration decision—of household members. All of these indicated the tight bond between one's migration decision and the other household members. The following sections elaborate how households interacted with their residing community and how these connections—between one's migration decision, households, and local community—contributed to the interrelated economic and social determinants of migration decisions.

4.2 Embedded Perception and Social Status

The next key to understanding present-day migrations of the Mons and the Khmers lay in their embedded occupational perception and social status. For respondents both at the destination and the origin, working in the local area was considered less attractive than being a migrant worker in Thailand. This, in fact, derived primarily from the higher and stable income in Thailand—that is, individual end rationality–led drive—forming a positive perception and social status which largely contributed to the value rationality–led drive behind migration decision.

The relation between the higher and stable income in Thailand and the favorable perception and high social status of migrants clearly represented the connection between the individual end rationality–led drive and value rationality–led drive. Back in their sending villages, both the Mons and the Khmers asserted that their only feasible occupational option—if they decided against becoming migrant workers—was to become farmers. Whereas becoming migrant workers generally guaranteed higher return and stable income,

being farmers expectedly earned less and could not guarantee stable income. For this very reason, over time certain perceptions of both occupations became embedded in the villagers' culture. On the one hand, because migrant workers usually earned a larger and more stable income than local farmers, they were commonly perceived as skilled and hard workers who planned for their futures. On the other hand, local villagers who stayed and became farmers were perceived as lazy people who opted for the easier alternative to make a living.

Rith, a 48-year-old male repeat migrant from Banteay Meanchey's Moy Village, explained,

> It's not only because working in Thailand earns us more money; it's also because in our villages, the income is not stable income. Most of the people in the villages are farmers, and farmers have unstable incomes. It depends on the weather, it depends on the water supply from the government, and it also depends on the demand of the crops, which may be different from year to year. Construction work also exists, but it is seasonal and chancy. You may get a job for two months and have nothing to do for four months. These are the things that happen in our hometowns.

Yi, a 52-year-old returnee from Mon's More Village, said,

> Anyone can be a farmer, and there is nothing special about it. But if you are good enough, you can become a migrant worker. If you love your family and want them to live comfortably and happily, you will go to work in Thailand. You will have a new and modern house and modern housing amenities like a new television, refrigerators, and electric kitchen. The more successful ones will have modern cars. Owning these, you are a successful person. The villagers will respect you and your family. You will be considered successful, and your parents will be praised for raising you well.

When asked about those who decided not to go to Thailand, Yi replied,

> Stay-behinders are the slackers, or your parents are sick. The latter one is understandable. But for the first group, they are lazy people. In many families, if their children decide to become farmers and don't go to Thailand, they will feel embarrassed.

Indeed, views similar to Rith's and Yi's were repeated time after time in interviews with both Mons and Khmers.

Furthermore, this study found that both the Mon and the Khmer returnees usually brought their experience in Thailand to conversations in their villages. Fellow migrants, returnees, and members of migrant households with shared experiences and greater wealth than non-migrants could participate in these conversations; those who did not go to Thailand would be excluded from them, which barred them from this tacit elite club of migrants. Their exclusion, indeed, was another sign of their inferior social status.

These divergent occupational perceptions were largely fueled by the ability of migrant workers' households to spend money on new houses, new vehicles, and massive religious donations,[141] all of which were considered trophies that displayed their owners' social status among the villages. These extravagances were hardly affordable for the farmers. Hence, migrant work has continually been perceived as a job with higher social status.

[141] Whereas donations to monks and temples were one of the aspects contributing to social status for both the Mons and the Khmers, these donations carried more weight to social status in the case of the Mons. Please refer to "Expenditures from Remittance," section 3.3.1.4 for the Mons and 3.3.2.4 in the case of the Khmers, in Chapter 3 for detailed explanation.

The following subsections address two distinct aspects of the perceptions and social status of migrant work and farming among the Mons—one a case-specific cause of such perceptions and status, and the other a case-specific consequence. First, the employment of the Bamar workers in Mon State added to the negative label of local farmers, further lowering their social status. Second, resulting from the positive view of migrant workers and negative view of those who stayed in the village, marriage opportunities became a powerful drive for local women to become migrant workers. These circumstances further intensified the Mons' value rationality–led drive to migrate.

Employment of the Bamar Workers and Perceived Social Status

The reasons, development, and chronology of the employment of Bamar workers in Mon State were explained previously.[142] This subsection outlines the reason why the employment of Bamar workers detracted from attitudes toward local farmers and their perceived social status.

The more positive perception of migrant workers in Thailand and the replacement of local farm workers in Mon State with Bamars together led to a notable consequence: the further degraded label of farm work which came not only from the job but also from ethnic discrimination. As elaborated in the previous section, while migrant workers were attached to positive work attributes such as being skillful, hardworking, and future-oriented, local farmers were perceived as their lazier and less skilled counterparts. The inflow of the Bamar people into local agricultural production, however, worsened the already negative perception of local farmers among the villagers. This had roots in the historic ethnic relationships between the Mons and the Bamars.

Po, a 62-year-old returnee from Buoy Village, said:

> There are a lot more Bamars in our village in the last 10 years. When all the young people from our village moved to Thailand, only the older people and children were left. So, during harvest season, there are not enough farm workers. That's why many farm owners started to hire the Bamars. Most of these Bamars come from Bago. Some come from as far as Ayeyarwady. Most of them stay only during harvest season, though.

Po owned a large piece of land near the village, on which he decided to grow rice and seasonal vegetables. Po had four children, all of whom were currently working in Samut Sakhon. Staying with him were his grandchildren. One of them—Rah, 23—helped Po with the farm work and raising other younger children. Po said that Rah wanted to go to Thailand, but Po asked him to wait until one of Po's children came back to replace Rah. On his opinion about these Bamar workers, Po said,

> These Bamars are lazy, and they are not very smart. I think two or three Bamar workers equal only one Mon worker. If it were possible, I'd want to hire Mon workers, but there are not many Mon workers left. The Mons are more skilled, so Mon people tend to go to Thailand. But these Bamars cannot—no wonder about that. They don't have what it takes to go to Thailand.

In fact, the Mons and the Bamars have a long history of political tension, which led to numerous large-scale wars dating back to the 11th century. Even now that the Bamar have become the dominant ethnic group in present-day Myanmar both in terms of their political power and their number, the Mons' animus toward the Bamar persists and is evident today.

[142] See "Employment of the Bamar Workers in Mon State" in Chapter 3, section 3.3.3.1, "Dwindling Dependence on Agriculture."

On the same land which became present-day Myanmar, the Mon Kingdom flourished long before being taken over by several Bamar kingdoms. For this reason, the prevailing notion among Mons is that the prosperity of the Burmese civilization today originates from the ancient Mon Kingdom and that, from their older civilization, the Mons are more civilized than the Bamars. Against this backdrop, ethnic bias toward the Bamars among the Mon people developed (Mon, 2010; Ocharoen, 1976). Typically, the Mon people perceive themselves to be superior to Bamar people; the Mons assert that they are more competent and hardworking.

Hence, as more farming jobs in Mon State were occupied by the Bamars—a group of people perceived as inferior to the Mons—becoming a farmer was even more degrading. Negative labels on farmers—lazy, shortsighted, and ignorant—became stickier. This, indeed, deepened villagers' lower perception of farmers' social status, making farming an even less desirable option among the Mons.

Women and Their Marriage Opportunities

Second, as a consequence of the positive view of migrant workers and negative view of those staying in the village, marriage opportunity became one of the most forceful drives urging local women to become migrant workers. One of the most intriguing findings in this case study was that marriage opportunity was found to be a highly influential drive for migration for half of the migrants—the females. Since the early 1990s, when the migration outflow was constantly growing—leading to the shrinking working-age population in Mon State—the pool of marriage candidates locally was gradually dwindling. Aggravated by the plummeting social status of people who stayed in the villages, the opportunity to find an ideal spouse was extremely limited. In fact, data revealed that the escalating migration outflow from Mon State in the 2000s was largely a reflection of the increase in female emigrants during that time.

In the 1980s female emigrants were extremely rare, while in the 1990s they were typically limited to household members of male emigrants who had already gone to Thailand. However, in the 2000s their number rose sharply; it was during this time that migrant worker became the default occupational alternative among the villagers in the origin area regardless of gender.[143] According to collected data, as the number of male villagers became staggeringly low and as the remaining men were perceived as lazy and unqualified, the local women were not left with a feasible choice if they wanted to marry a qualified man, except to migrate to Thailand themselves. In fact, data revealed that a large number of married couples in surveyed villages since the 2000s met each other while they were both migrant workers in Thailand. Below are examples of the interviews with female respondents at the origin and at the destination. Similar experiences were replayed during the course of interviews both in surveyed villages and Samut Sakhon.

> It started about 10 to 15 years ago when the women began to realize that all the desirable bachelors could not be found in the village. We started to hear that the good guys had couples when they were working in Thailand: they became partners with the Mon girls who they met in Thailand. So, more women in the village started to go to work in Thailand. If you stay in the village, how can you find a good guy? By the time they came back, they were all married and had children,

recalled Toai, a 41-year-old female returnee from More Village. "I was 18 at that time [when she migrated], and I found my husband there within a few months," she added.

[143] The emigration timeline from Mon villages was fully elaborated in Chapter 3, section 3.1.1, "Mon Corridor".

> Those guys who stay in the village are the lazy ones or the Bamars. Staying with them would do no good. Everyone knows, if we want to stay with good guys, we have to come here [Thailand]. About the length of our stay in Thailand…Well, it depends. Though some stay here for a long time, some just stay here for a few years. But we should stay at least until we find a good husband. Most of the time, when a couple returns, they will return together,

explained Nuai, a 22-year-old female migrant from Bar Village. She was currently working at a shrimp processing factory in Samut Sakhon, where she had gotten married and given birth to a son within two years after coming.

Besides Mon women's desired qualifications in a husband—hard working, skillful, and future-oriented, all labels attached to men who decided to migrate—Mon men and women explicitly stated an additional preference for partners who were also of Mon ethnicity residing in Mon State. The levels of agreement of these preferences among the respondents were remarkably strong: above 4.6 out of 5. This proceeded from the ethnic discrimination described above as well as from the ethnic enclave sensed among the Mons.

An excerpt from an interview with Cai, a 56-year-old male returnee, unveiled insights about this:

> Most villagers marry fellow villagers or people from close-by villages. It's like we know who they are. We know their families, we've known that person since they were young. So, that's what most people do. Some married Mons who were from larger cities and moved there.
>
> It's not likely that Mons will marry Bamars, though. At least, not around here. Of course, there were some who married the Bamars. But all of them moved away, none of them settled in our village. It's a good thing, though. It's their choice to marry, but we feel better if the Bamars don't live with us. The spouses who have moved in [to the village] have all been Mons. They will be looked down on—I mean those villagers who marry the Bamars—like they are not good enough to find a good Mon to marry.

Another excerpt from an interview with Thi, Buoy Village's chief, gave more information about this:

> Because Mon is an ethnic minority in Myanmar, if we want to survive, we need to stick together. Marry Bamars, and there will be fewer Mon people. Mon people who married to the Bamars and moved away would soon lose their Mon-ness. I'm a proud Mon, and I hope my people will be the same.

For reasons elaborated above, as a consequence of perception and social status, marriage opportunity became another push to migrate based on value rationality, especially among Mon women. In contrast, this condition was not the case for the Khmers, as from the beginning their migration did not differ by gender for two primary reasons. First, due to close proximity, their journey to Rayong was not considered exceptionally dangerous; hence, female emigrants have always been common. Second, emigration from Banteay Meanchey has tended to occur as a household—every household member simultaneously became a migrant worker. This is unlike emigration from Mon State, where only selected household members became migrant workers.[144]

[144] Detailed explanation can be found in Chapter 3, section 3.4.1, "The Sense of Belonging to Their Hometown."

4.3 Messaging from Community Leaders and Sensational Image of Thailand

In relation to both individual end rationality-led drive and value rationality-led drive, the repeated resonances from the local community leaders—village chiefs, monks, and teachers—all of whom actively encouraged their people to migrate and the sensational image of Thailand were formed, representing affection-led drive among the migrants. First, as a shared characteristic among all observed villages, village chiefs, monks, and teachers were highly influential to the villagers' way of thought. Data revealed that these community leaders diligently encouraged their people to migrate, building on their affection-led drive. Further investigation suggested that these leaders' encouragement stemmed primarily from their community's gains from remittances and the consequent positive perception of migrant workers. These cases represented the connection between motivations of individual end rationality and of affection: gains from remittances and villagers' sentiments about migration, respectively. Statements of village chiefs, monks, and teachers are presented and examined separately below.

First, whereas household gains from remittances built up villagers' individual end rationality–led drive, village gains from remittances led to enthusiastic support of migration from village chiefs, which enhanced villagers' affection-led drive. In common among villages, a village chief's roles could be classified into two aspects: formal authority and social influencer. Notable formal authority included the official registrations—birth, marriage, death, land transfer, and inheritance—as well as mediation when conflicts occurred. In surveyed areas, one could think of the village chief as the president of the village—as village chief literally held all authorities in domestic affairs of the village. Apart from formal authority, the village chief possessed strong social influence over the villagers, the particular role which aroused villagers' intention to migrate. According to Phum, a 22-year-old male migrant from Mon's Buoy Village,

> He [the village chief] was very supportive of villagers' emigration. He always shared information about working in Thailand and told us how coming to Thailand would be good for ourselves, our family, and our village. Since I was young, I remember he often asked me when I would come to Thailand.
>
> He told us that households with more emigrants would be richer and that village development was possible from emigrants, and what he said was true. Households with more emigrants were actually more affluent, and remittances were also used for local roads and connecting electricity in our village. And he actually took good care of this for everyone. He will even contact the agencies for you, if you ask for his help. And he always has information about job openings in Samut Sakhon.

Gathered data revealed strong leverage from village chiefs over migration decision. Encouragement to migrate from village chiefs served as validation and approval for migrants' choice of occupation. From the village chief's perspective, their encouragement was largely driven by the development of the village, which would not be possible without villagers' remittances. They firmly believed that major developments in their villages were possible from remittances, including electricity, irrigation systems, and local roads. Furthermore, according to them, the whole village became prosperous after emigration started, and even more so with the rising volume of emigrants. Households with migrant workers were also able to raise their standard of living.[145] In contrast, households without emigrating members

[145] Please refer to Chapter 3, section 3.3.3.2 for local infrastructure development and section 3.3.3.3 for improved household standard of living.

were noticeably poorer and their members were more likely to become troublemakers, committing crimes such as theft and using drugs.

"I'm happy that most of my villagers go to Thailand," said Bona, Banteay Meanchey's Pii Village chief.

> Why? Well, that's how they earn money. Problems in the village normally come from poor households; they are normally the ones with no or too few members who went to work in Thailand. What problems, you ask? Stealing money, crops, cattle, poultry, or property of others. Becoming alcoholic, getting into debt, you name it. And sometimes, they don't have money to go to the hospital, and they are infected—troubling other villagers. Households with enough members in Thailand normally take care of themselves well.

As for how he encouraged his people, he said,

> I did it on several occasions, like when I would visit their homes, I would ask about their children. If their children were close to the age when they could work in Thailand, I would ask when they planned to go to Thailand, where they would work, who they would stay with, or how they would go to Thailand…questions like that. Because the majority of people go anyway, if they know how to go and already have someone to help them, that's fine. But if they need help, I can provide them assistance. I know a lot of people who can help.

Apart from home visits, the Pii Village chief mentioned, "This topic can be brought up on any occasion, such as during village festivals, ordainment ceremonies, or even when I casually meet my villagers on the street, in the market, or at a restaurant."

During the interview of Wi, Mon's More Village chief, he shared his experience about the development in the village:

> All the major and important developments in the village came from remittances…roads, electricity, water, new houses, everything…If people didn't go to Thailand, it's not only their households that would be in trouble—the whole village would be in trouble.

These opinions and practices were shared by the village chiefs across all surveyed villages.

Interviewed village chiefs unanimously expressed their favorable opinions about migrating to Thailand and explicitly stated that they commonly encouraged the villagers to pursue job opportunities in Thailand. This enthusiastic encouragement of migration clearly functioned as the validation and approval for the villagers for their choice of occupation, adding to their affection-led drive to migrate.

Second, besides village chiefs, monks were also highly influential. According to gathered data, respondents cited that the monks were the second most influential community figure encouraging their migration decision. Albeit without formal authority, they possessed strong social influence over the villagers. Interestingly, this study found that their teachings about migration were greatly influenced by their village chiefs. Furthermore, the monks in all surveyed villages shared the belief that migrant workers brought development and a higher standard of living to their villages and that the volume of migrant workers had a direct relation to the volume of donations to temples.

Monk Suna, a vice abbot from a local temple in Mon's Bar Village, explained,

> The chapel where we are currently was just finished two years ago. Without donations from remittances, it wouldn't have been possible. Right now, the new crematory is

being built to replace the old one. The common building where villagers gather during Buddhist holy days was also greatly extended. This temple is currently in a lot better shape compared to how it was 10 years ago, all thanks to the money from migrant workers.

Monk Herau, another monk, voiced,

> That's why we think migration is a good idea. The village chief also agrees with us. All the roads and access to electricity were possible because of remittances. When he said so, it ensured that it was the right thing. Indeed, we [the village chief and the monks] often talk about migration, like who has recently gone to Thailand, who is returning, how the villagers have been in Samut Sakhon, and whose children are about to go there. Actually, it's not only us; the villagers always talk about this, too.

Monk Suna added, "It's good for the villagers, too; now they can make merit more often."

Asked about how they encouraged migration, Monk Suna replied,

> By stressing how remittance is beneficial for everyone—oneself, families, village, and temple—during the Buddhist holy days and other religious occasions such as Buddhist festivals and ordainment ceremonies. We have often mentioned that all the new buildings and improved infrastructure within the temple were possible because of migrant workers. So being migrant workers is not only good for their households, but also for the temples and the monks as well. Sometimes, the village chief, when he has been the speaker during these events, he would also emphasize the same thing.

Similar messages were shared by the monks in other sending villages.

Hence, for these reasons, local monks supported and encouraged villagers' migration decision. Similar to the village chiefs, their enthusiastic support of migration assured and justified villagers' decisions to migrate, further reinforcing their affection-led drive to go work in Thailand.

Third, following village chiefs and monks, teachers were another prominent local figure. Similar to the monks, teachers' opinions regarding emigration were largely influenced by the village chiefs. Their voices, indeed, reached villagers in two ways: to the adults through daily conversation and consultation and to the children through their classes and lessons. As a community figure with educational credentials, a local teacher's advice was often sought when the villagers were in doubt. Likewise, as a reliable figure in school, children tended to be swayed by the teacher's words. For these reasons, local teachers' favorable opinions about emigration, as well, encouraged the migration decision of the locals. In general, just as the village chiefs and monks, local teachers asserted that migrant workers' remittances brought development and elevated living standards of people in the village. This included the expansion of local schools in the form of school buildings, teaching supplies, and teaching personnel.

Theary, a fifth-grade girl from Banteay Meanchey's Moy Village, said,

> The teachers often talk about working in Thailand during classes. Most of them told us that it's good enough for us to be able to read and write the Khmer language and maybe some basic mathematical calculations if we are not going to work for the government. They said that primary education, or at most lower-secondary education, should be enough. After that, we will be doing well as migrant workers.

Chea, Theary's 52-year-old grandmother, joined the conversation:

> More than half of the teachers in her school are returnees. But most worked in Thailand not very long, then came back and became teachers. Only Teacher Sros, that one worked in Thailand about 10 years. Teacher Sros speaks Thai like the Thai people, no wonder. Lately, the school also teaches the Thai language to the students. This is very good. It will be very useful.

Data showed that a considerable number of teachers, prior to their teaching career, had work experience in Thailand; most had been employed in seafood processing or construction businesses. Furthermore, local schools often included Thai language and culture as part of their curriculum. This was to address the locals' need, as the villagers generally wanted their children to be prepared to work in Thailand.

In conclusion, this study found that community leaders—village chiefs, monks, and teachers—were another influential force on migration decision in surveyed areas. Out of these community leaders, data revealed that the village chief was the most influential figure expediting villagers' migration decision. Indeed, village chiefs not only directly encouraged their people, but they also convinced the village monks and teachers to. Following the village chiefs were the monks and the teachers, whose voices were generally in harmony with the village chiefs. In the sending villages, respondents elaborated that harmonizing messages from these community leaders functioned as the validation and assurance for them to migrate, building on their affection-led drive for migration.

Second, the sensational image of Thailand in sending areas as providing both higher and stable income contributed to villagers' perception of Thailand as an ideal place for working. It also contributed to the development of affection for Thailand as an ideal place to lead a desirable lifestyle. Through word of mouth and Thai media—the latter of which has grown in popularity in both Mon and Banteay Meanchey—the Mons and the Khmers have observed Thailand's urbanized lifestyle, superior infrastructure, advanced technology, and higher quality of education and medical care. All of these induced the senses of advancement, wellness, and security associated with living in Thailand—constituting the value rationality–led drive—which strongly contributed to villagers' positive affection toward Thailand as the place for living an ideal lifestyle.

Cha, a 56-year-old returnee from Mon's Bar Village, recounted,

> Long before television and internet were available like today, villagers knew about Thailand only from migrant workers when they visited home or when they returned. They would talk about their exciting experience in Thailand. People would gather and listen to their breathtaking stories. When I was young, I listened to these and imagined what Thailand looked like, what it would be like to work in Thailand. And you know, these returnees usually came back with things that we had never seen before. I can still remember the first time that I saw the portable music player. It blew my mind.
>
> Around 20 years ago, television started to become available. But they were available only in the rich families and temples. At that time, electricity hadn't reached Bar Village yet. So, we depended on electricity from generators. The temple would turn on television every Saturday afternoon, and everyone would gather there. It was like a festival.
>
> But after around 2012, electricity reached our village, and many families started to have enough money to buy televisions. A few years afterwards, villagers started to use smartphones. Since then, villagers have gotten to know Thailand much better. Thai television programs are super popular, especially the dramas. You can say that

> every family here is addicted to Thai dramas. Some of us also watch variety shows, reality shows, and news programs.
>
> I think it's also a big part of why villagers want to go to Thailand: the cities look marvelous. There are a lot of tall buildings, a lot of modernized shops and restaurants.

Cha's daughter, Diu—currently employed in a large frozen warehouse in Samut Sakhon—who was visiting home on a break, joined the conversation:

> I even wanted to attend school there. I watched a drama about teenagers in a high school when I was young. That made me want to go to Thai school, it looked so much fun. Life in Thailand looked modernized. There were fancy dresses and modernized buildings. But even though I couldn't [attend Thai school], my dream is partially fulfilled now that my daughter is enroll in a Thai school,

she added with a big smile.

In the initial migration period of emigration in both surveyed areas, the 1980s, the spread of the positive image of Thailand was largely driven by the migrant workers themselves, when they visited their homes during their breaks or after they returned for good. Nonetheless, since the 2000s the positive image of Thailand has been expansively facilitated by mass media, and later in the 2010s this was further reinforced by access to the internet.[146] While the positive image of Thailand might be disseminated in the sending areas through several means, data highlighted mass media as the most penetrating and the most influential. In fact, respondents reported that they accessed information about Thailand mostly through television programs. The elderly, however, preferred watching television programs through satellite-connected television, while the young usually watched them via smartphone.

Interestingly, within migrant circles, this study found that the majority of both Mon and Khmer migrants in Thailand and their household members in the origin areas preferred Thai television channels to their domestic television channels. Data collection revealed particularly strong levels of agreement of 4.59 and 4.51 out of 5 for Mon migrants and their household members, respectively. The level of agreement was similarly strong in the case of the Khmers: 4.75 and 4.50 for migrants and their household members, respectively.

The most common reason for their preference was the programs' contents. They typically cited the relatively modernized plots, actors' appearance, and superior production of Thai television programs in comparison to their domestic television programs. As exhibited in Table 4-1, drama programs were by far the favorite type of television program both for the Mons and the Khmers, followed by sports, other entertainment programs, music, and news and current affairs. Popular sports programs included boxing and cockfighting, while popular forms of other entertainment programs comprised game shows, variety shows, and reality shows.

"Thai dramas are very popular here. They are fun to watch. The actors are all good looking," said Dara, a 16-year-old female from Banteay Meanchey's Bay Village. She finished grade 6 and was now waiting for her turn to go to Thailand. She further detailed with enthusiasm,

> The most popular channel is Channel 7; their dramas are the best. Villagers here usually watch the same drama programs. If you don't watch, sometimes you don't know what others are talking about the next day. Some from Channel 3 are okay too. Thai songs are also very popular. They are catchy and modern.

[146] Please refer to Chapter 3, section 3.3.3.2, "The Development of Local Infrastructure."

> Another thing is that, for younger villagers, we can learn the Thai language from Thai dramas and songs too. It's learning, but it's fun at the same time. I think I learn a lot of Thai words from dramas and songs. And the slang words, you know, those used in real life, but not in the textbook. Also, I think I know Thailand a lot better,

she added. When asked if these dramas and songs in any case encouraged her to go to Thailand, she replied, "Definitely, yes. I want to know what living there feels like. It must be nice to work and live there. I want to visit many places that I saw from the dramas too."

Table 4-1: Favorite Categories of Thai Television Programs for the Mons[147] (in %)

	Mon		Khmer	
	Migrants in Thailand	Household members at the origin	Migrants in Thailand	Household members at the origin
Drama	61.80	67.05	74.79	69.41
Sports	16.29	17.05	11.78	16.47
Music	3.93	5.68	2.19	2.35
News and current affairs	5.34	3.41	3.56	0.00
Children	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Education and culture	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tourism and health	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other entertainment programs, e.g., game show, variety show, and reality show	12.64	6.82	7.67	11.76

Besides a positive perception of Thailand, the spread of Thai media in sending areas brought closer cultural proximity between Thailand and both origin areas. Through television programs, villagers became constantly more familiar and proximate to Thai culture. Data revealed that apart from entertainment, respondents learned about the way of thought and living of people in Thailand. Furthermore, a considerable number of youths treated Thai television programs as their preparation before they moved to Thailand, both linguistically and culturally.

Bai, a 52-year-old male returnee from Mon's Bar Village, shared his opinion:

> I think Thai people and Mon people are quite similar, like the way we speak and the way we think. Maybe it's because we are both Buddhists, and maybe it's also because Mon people and Thai people are close. Thailand and Mon have a long relationship, right? The slight difference is maybe Thai people are more direct. Mon people are softer and calmer. But I feel like it's not hard to communicate with Thai people.
>
> Maybe, Thai people in the dramas are too extreme. Real people aren't that expressive. But it can tell us what Thai people like and don't like. There are also variety shows and reality shows. They are more real than the dramas, I think.

When asked if Thai television programs are popular among the young villagers, he replied, "The children watch Thai shows a lot. Besides entertainment, I think it's also a good way to learn about Thailand, Thai people, and the language."

[147] The classification of Thai television programs was adapted from Chalaby (2016) and the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission of Thailand [NBTC] (2016).

The messaging from community leaders and the sensational image of Thailand revealed how the individual end rationality–led and value rationality–led drives bolstered the affection-led drive to migration decision. The following subsections address two distinct aspects of the Mons' affection-led drive to migrate. First, Mon community leaders not only exercised their influence within the boundary of their village, but their influence also stretched to the Mon migrant community in Thailand. These interactions gradually weaved a transborder meso-layer in migrant networks which added to their depth and strength, further reinforcing Mons' affection-led drive to migrate. The second is the language barrier to the Mons posed by Myanmar's official language of Burmese—which most Mons do not speak—which furthered their preference of Thai media, advancing the cultural proximity between them and Thailand.

Migrants' Meso Network: Tightened Migrant Networks Through Meso-layer Bond

Data revealed that the encouraging roles of Mon community leaders extended across borders to the Mon migrant community in Samut Sakhon. Their transborder interactions forged a strong meso-layer bond—that is, falling between traditional personal networks and structural networks—in their migrant networks.[148] Village chiefs maintained their role as caretaker of their villagers at the destination by establishing direct and close contact with carefully selected representatives. These representatives usually were migrant workers who currently worked in Samut Sakhon; most of the time, they either were family members or had close personal relations with the village chiefs back in their home villages. As for the monks and the teachers, their role was primarily observable in the mental health of migrant workers. The places of village chiefs in the transborder network, then of monks and teachers together, are examined below.

First, data revealed close coordination between village chiefs, migrants, and migration brokers, with village chiefs as the intermediary. The village chiefs actively facilitated migration of their villagers—provision of living and working information, transportation, accommodations, documentation, job placement, and remittance transfer—by ensuring smooth cooperation and transaction between migrants and migration brokers. Because this process commonly involved migrants' household members who already resided in Samut Sakhon, the coordination with these household members was done through community leaders at the destination who had been assigned by their village chiefs at the origin. These assigned community leaders served as proxies to the village chiefs as caretakers and facilitators in the Mon migrant community at the destination.

Ni, a 19-year-old female migrant from Buoy Village, recalled,

> The village chief really takes good care of us. I am grateful for him. I mean, he's very helpful. Before I came here [Samut Sakhon], he visited me and gave me advice. He even sent me off the day that I left the village. I mean, I have my brothers here, so actually he doesn't have to go to any trouble for me.
>
> Oh, yes, and when I first arrived here, the village chief told his son [Ham, 22, who also came to work in Samut Sakhon] to accompany my brother to take me to the dorm. Ham is also very helpful. He always looks after everyone from Buoy Village. And most of us live close by, right? So, our community is very close. Ham is also very fluent in the Thai language. He can even read and write. So, he's always a big help for everyone.

[148] Please refer to Chapter 3, section 3.2.3, "Dynamic Social Context at the Destination," for detailed explanation about personal and structural networks in this case study.

An interview with Ham gave valuable insights: "It's not only Buoy's community. There are also other communities of people who came from the same village. Normally, we tend to stay close to each other, you see." When asked about his role as a de facto community leader for the Buoy community in Samut Sakhon, he explained,

> My father handed this responsibility to me. He told me to take care of our people here. Actually, it was passed on from my uncle. He went back to Buoy Village last year, though. Other communities also have their leaders. Normally, they are the close relatives of their village chiefs.
>
> I think it's important to have someone to take care of the villagers here. As migrant workers, we need to look out for each other, we need to help each other. Or else, the employers, the police, or other bad Thai people may take advantage of us.

When asked why he was able to speak Thai very fluently, he laughed and said,

> Oh, thank you. I'm still learning. Indeed, since I was young, I knew that I would come to Thailand. So, I'm kind of studying the Thai language hard. Who taught me? Well, school also taught Thai. And a lot of my relatives are returnees. So, I learn from many people.

Second, as previously detailed in Chapter 3,[149] both the monks and the teachers from Mon villages were present in temples and community schools in Samut Sakhon. Investigation revealed that their presence was not incidental, but instead was planned and organized. Because Mon migrants from the same home village commonly lived close to each other in Samut Sakhon, these monks and teachers were usually dispatched from migrants' home villages to temples or community schools close by their people's settlement to look after their people.

Furthermore, this study found that these monks and teachers took turns staying in Thailand. Monks' turns were negotiated between village chiefs, temple abbots, and the monks themselves, and teachers' turns between village chiefs, school directors, and the teachers themselves. In general, a turn lasted approximately two to three years, after which they were replaced by fellow monks or teachers. Typically, the monks and the teachers were willing to take their turn staying in Thailand; to expand their horizons and to tend to their people were the most common reasons. Their presence, indeed, made migrants feel at ease and at home, remedying their psychological burdens.

Monk Hepah said,

> This is my second time coming here. The first time was six years ago; that time I was here for two years. Then I went back to More Village and came back here again earlier this year [2017]. The first monk who came from our village came here about 11 to 12 years ago. Since then, monks in our village have taken turns coming here. Almost everyone wants to come, so we have to take turns. It depends on seniority as well as proficiency in the Thai language. One cycle lasts two years; after that you need to go back, and if you want to come again, you have to wait.
>
> There are a lot of Mon people here. Most of the people who came from More Village also live close to this temple, so there are a lot of familiar faces. Mon people come to the temple quite often, maybe not as often as when they were in Mon State, but it's still quite often. People are also happy that there are Mon temples and Mon monks

[149] See Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1, "Flourishing Migrant Community."

here—especially the ones who came from their hometowns. I think it makes them feel at home and at peace.

Aum, a schoolteacher from More Village who came to join the Mon community school in Samut Sakhon last year recounted,

> Village Chief Wi [More Village chief] talked to us [teachers in the school in More Village]. He told us that there would be a community school in Samut Sakhon. He wanted to have one of us in the community school to teach Thai to migrants and teach Mon to their children. He said that it would be great if we could have a teacher to teach our villagers in Samut Sakhon. We also thought it was a good idea, and we were very excited about it. That was four years ago.
>
> Actually, besides a few teachers who have young children, everyone wants to come. So, we take turns. I'm the third one. This is my second year here. So, next year, it's another teacher's turn. Well, I'm very happy here. Living in Thailand is a very good experience. I speak Thai a lot better too. I also went to lots of places. I think I will have many things to talk about with the students once I return.

She talked about the first time she came to the community school:

> More villagers here were very surprised to see me at first, I mean, surprised in a good way. After that, we were just happy to see each other here. I think we become closer. We share our experience and help each other here.

An interview with Wi, More Village chief, revealed how monks' and teachers' turns were set up:

> It was around 2005 that I talked with the local temple's abbot about the possibility of having monks from our village in our community in Samut Sakhon. Mon people always visit the temple. And I think having Mon monks there, that would make our people there feel happier. The feedback is good, our people there like it when they go to temples and there are Mon monks who can perform religious and traditional ceremonies for them. They can communicate in their own language. And they can make sure that their donation doesn't go to waste. So, the abbot and I make sure that there are always monks from our village in the Mon temple in our community in Samut Sakhon Province.
>
> For the teachers, it was much later. In fact, it was just a couple of years ago. I heard from one of the local [Mon] politicians that there would be a Mon community school established, and he asked if I could send some teachers there. Since a lot of our people were there, I thought it was a good idea. Our villagers would definitely feel happy to have teachers from our own village; that was what I thought. So, I went to the school and talked with the teachers. They all agreed with the idea.

The presence of these community leaders at the destination not only added to their strong migrant community at the destination (as described in Chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1, "Flourishing Migrant Community"), but it also carried over and raised the volume of the repeated and unified message reassuring their decision to migrate. Furthermore, the presence and interactions of these community leaders, monks, and teachers—migrants' meso network—in the migrant community at the destination functioned as a bridge and weaved a tighter bond between the migrant community at the origin and at the destination.

Language Barrier to the Nation's Official Language

Collected data revealed that, while content was the most common reason why the Mons preferred Thai television programs to Burmese television programs, a large number of the Mons cited the use of the Thai language in these programs as their primary reason. Besides those who watched Thai television programs as part of their Thai language and cultural preparation, a large number of the Mons watched them because they understood Thai but not the Burmese language.

In order to understand this anomaly, relevant community contexts in the origin area needed to be explained. This study found that, while the official language of Myanmar and the language used in most Burmese television programs was Burmese, the primary language among the Mons in Mon State was the Mon language. Data further unveiled that while Burmese was the primary language in formal education in Myanmar—Mon State included—a large number of villagers did not go to school or did not attend school long enough to be proficient in Burmese. This was especially true for older generations and the children of migrants who grew up in Thailand.

Tam, a 45-year-old male returnee, said,

> Most people here can't speak Burmese. We speak Mon. We use Mon in the village. It's true that they teach Burmese in School. But most of us, when we were young, we did not go to school. There were some who did, though, but only for a few years. They already forgot the Burmese language. We don't use it in our daily life anyway. But a lot of us here can speak Thai. Some are very fluent, some are passable. Well, it's because most of us went to Thailand [as migrant workers] before. So, we learned how to speak Thai. As you can see, a lot of us can communicate in Thai, but only a few can communicate in Burmese.
>
> If you find villagers here who can speak Thai, you can assume that they are returnees. Young people are different, though. They go to school for many years, so they can speak and write in Burmese. But if you ask them, they will tell you that they want to be fluent in Thai more than Burmese.

Historically, Burmese developed based on the pre-existing Mon language; hence, Burmese resembles Mon, especially in written form. However, the spoken languages—despite modest similarities—are strikingly different. For this reason, villagers who did not properly learn Burmese were not able to understand the language in Burmese television programs. On the other hand, despite its exclusion from the formal education system, spoken Mon is still passed down to the younger generation through household usage. In terms of the written language, however, the number of people who are able to fluently read and write in Mon have gradually declined. In fact, today they are limited to monks and a small number of highly educated elders. Nevertheless, fieldwork data revealed that, in an attempt to preserve their traditional language, Mon language classes were recently organized by the local monks in the temples in all surveyed villages. The Mon children as well as interested adults were welcome to join such classes for free.

Interestingly, while a considerable number of villagers could not speak Burmese, the number of villagers who could not speak Thai was much lower. In fact, together with the rise of migrant workers from surveyed villages, the number of villagers who could speak Thai rose drastically. The reason was, in general, after migrant workers went to Thailand, they would acquire some extent of the ability to speak and understand Thai. Returnees were commonly proficient in spoken Thai. As a result, the comprehension of spoken Thai was higher than Burmese for most villagers in surveyed villages. This phenomenon added to the

Mons' preference for Thai television programs, which led to the greater penetration of Thai media as well as the cultural proximity between Thailand and the Mons.

4.4 Culture of Migration

Drawing on the positive perception of migrant work and its associated social status, sustained over a long period of time, a culture of migration emerged. This culture of migration refers to the villagers' way of thought and practices, in which spending years as a migrant worker in Thailand became an integral part of life, representing a tradition-led drive to migrate. Over time, this way of living became natural as well as influential to the migration decision of villagers in these villages.

Chavy, a 15-year-old young woman from Banteay Meanchey's Buoy Village, expressed,

> I'm looking forward to joining my family in Rayong. My parents and my older brother are all there. Well, I was born in Thailand. My parents have been workers in Thailand since before my older brother was born. After we were born, we were sent back to stay with our relatives in Buoy Village. At first I was raised by my grandmother, but since she passed away I've been staying with my aunt.
>
> He [her older brother] is five years older than me. So, he already joined our parents a few years ago. Indeed, I miss him so much. We are very close, because both of us grew up together. Our parents came back to visit us about only once a year,

she continued almost without a pause. When asked what she would do if she were not going to Thailand, she replied,

> I don't know. I haven't thought about that before. I just know that when I'm old enough, I will go to Thailand. Most of the villagers go to Thailand when they turn 16–20 years old. If you ask other children, you'll get the same answer. It's rare in Bay Village to find a young person who says she or he will stay and not go to Thailand. I know some who say they will become a teacher or a police officer, but their parents are already public officials. So, I guess they are different.

Interestingly, Chavy said that she liked watching Thai dramas and listening to Thai music. She believed that they were good preparation before she joined her family in Thailand in the next few years. She also added that she learned a lot of Thai slang from her favorite reality shows, which were model competition and singing competition programs.

Another excerpt from an interview with Bam, a young man of 17 from Mon's Mazzone Village who was going to Thailand in a few weeks, revealed close to identical thoughts on migration:

> I can't wait to go to Thailand. All of my friends are already there. We talk every day using video calling. They showed me places, foods, their rooms, and how they live. Well, most of the people I grew up with are staying there. From their video calls, I see all the familiar faces.

When asked about his parents, he said,

> My parents are also there, with my older brother. I also have two younger sisters. Now, all of us are staying with our grandparents. A few days ago I talked to my parents. They said they will wait until my first younger sister is old enough to work in

> Thailand, then they will return. So, I guess that will be another couple of years. My first younger sister is just turning 14 this year.

When asked what his life would be like if he were not to go to Thailand, he replied with the questions, "Why wouldn't I go to Thailand? Why would I want to stay?" In addition, Bam revealed that he was not a fan of drama, but he liked watching Thai cooking programs: "I like when they are trying their best to win. Unlike dramas, this is more real. Most young people here like Thai shows, it's just which kind of program they like."

Interviews with Chavy and Bam were conducted in Thai. Both of them were very enthusiastic and cooperative. Their Thai was very fluent, with only slight difficulties, especially some vocabulary outside the realm of daily life. They treated the interviews as a form of their Thai language test. "I will tell my friends about this. They have to know that I gave an interview to a Thai researcher," said Chavy. "I'm now a lot more confident in my Thai," said Bam.

Bu, chief of Mon's Bar Village, explained,

> When the children grow up, they go to Thailand. After they work there for a while, they will have partners. Then they will have kids. These kids are usually sent back for their grandparents to raise. Then when these kids grow up and go to work in Thailand, they [their parents] will return. Then their kids will have kids. Now that they have become grandparents, their grandchildren will be sent back for them to care for. The cycle is like this.

The cases of Mon and Khmer migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry exemplify how the value rationality–led drive, over time, congealed and constructed a tradition-led drive to migration decision through the repetitive migration of the villagers. Simultaneously with the larger number of emigrants, the favorable perception and social status of migrant work became cemented as the whole community shared the same culture of migration. In other words, the development of a migration culture—tradition-led drive—formed circular relations with both embedded perception and social status—value rationality–led drive—and the volume of emigrants. Whereas the perception and social status of migrant work congealed and shaped the culture of migration, in turn the culture of migration over time solidified that positive perception and social status in villagers' minds. Furthermore, as the number of emigrants from the village rose, life as a migrant worker became more natural as an integral part of villagers' way of living. This, indeed, further strengthened villagers' tradition-led drive to migration.

4.5 Migration Decision: Individual End Rationality–led, Value Rationality–led, Affection-led, and Tradition-led Drives and Their Circular Relations

The cases of Mon migrants and Khmers migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry drew a vivid picture of how individual end rationality–led, value rationality–led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives together assembled their migration decisions. The cases also revealed how these drives connected and interacted with each other. The volume of emigrants and migrant networks were also two direct variables in this migration canvas.

Starting from the individual end rationality–led drive, economic gains from migration urged villagers to migrate. After a series of successful pioneers, more villagers followed in their footsteps, leading to a rising number of emigrants. Migrant workers—through remittances which led to their households' affluence, elevated standard of living, and offerings to monks and temples—set a good example for their fellow villagers. Besides

improving their own households, these remittances enabled several developments in their home villages. Part of their money was collected and pooled for village improvements—notable ones were electricity, irrigation systems, and local roads. These developments raised villagers' quality of life like never before. They could now use electronic devices, access the internet, immediately use water, and make trips with ease. Better transportation also meant that villagers had easier access to better medical care and a higher level of education, which were usually available in larger cities. Furthermore, besides outbound transportation, trade trucks could come from outside of the village. Adapting to the changing lifestyle of people in the villages, where agricultural production was declining, these trucks brought them their food supply, which, instead of growing and raising it themselves, they now relied on remittances to acquire.

This series of events led to the image of village hero being ascribed to the villagers who became migrant workers in Thailand. Gradually, positive labels were affixed to migrant workers: skillful, hardworking, and future-oriented. In contrast, those who decided to stay in the village were labeled lazy, incompetent, and shortsighted. Village heroes who returned from Thailand were considered prestigious and held higher social status than those who stayed in the village, most of whom had become local farmers. These labels greatly contributed to the local perception of different occupations, which led to the uneven social status of those who decided to migrate and those who decided to stay, forming a strong value rationality–led drive to migrate.

This perception escalated to the point that it led to the emigration of Mon women. These women, owing to the much longer distance and stronger sense of belonging to their hometowns in comparison to the Khmers, had never considered migrating to Thailand until the early 2000s. It was around this time that most men of working age were migrating to Thailand, and the ones remaining were perceived as lazy and unqualified. With fewer ideal partners in their villages, migrating to Thailand themselves was the most feasible solution. As a result, from 2000, the number of female migrants from Mon villages rose sharply. Reports also confirmed that a large number of Mon couples from surveyed villages first met each other in Thailand. In addition, the employment of Bamars—an ethnicity with deep-seated historical tension with the Mons—as farm workers in Mons villages further tarnished the Mons' perception of farmers.

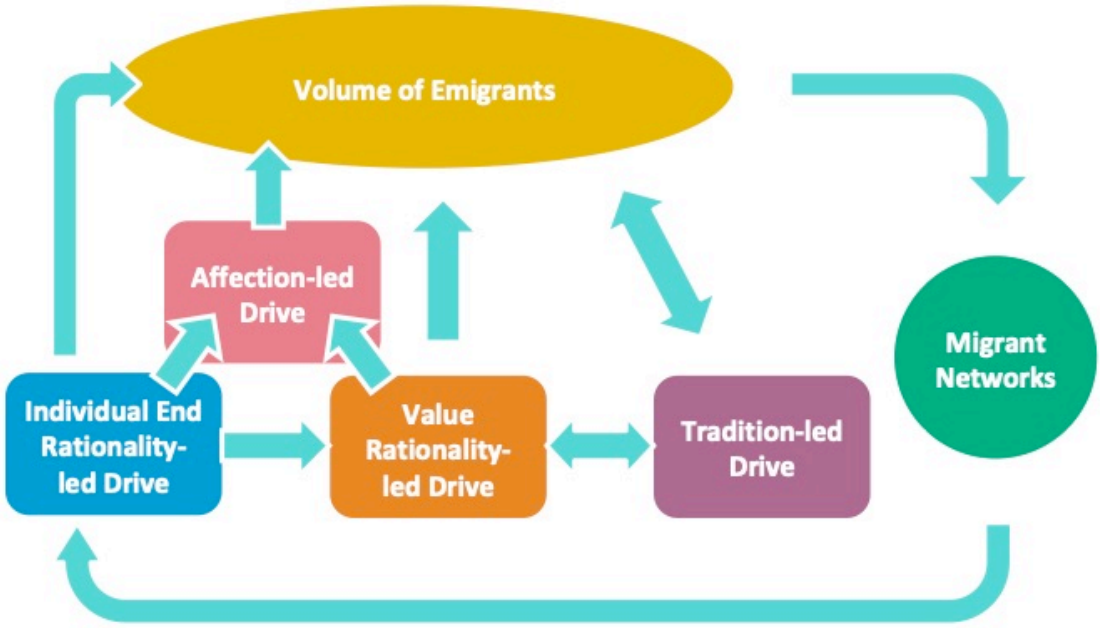
In relation to both individual end rationality-led drive and value rationality-led drive, the repeated resonances from the local community leaders—village chiefs, monks, and teachers—all of who actively encouraged their people to migrate and the sensational image of Thailand were formed, representing affection-led drive among the migrants. First, because of community developments that remittances made possible, community leaders agreed that migration brought prosperity to the village and elevated villagers' standard of living. In the case of the Mons, however, their encouragement went far beyond the boundary of their village. Through the representatives of village chiefs as well as visiting monks and teachers—all from sending villages—in the migrant community at the destination, their messages were bolder and more convincing. These transborder interactions added another layer and deepened the migrant network with a meso network. Data further revealed that, for villagers, harmonizing echoes from their community leaders functioned as the validation and approval for their decision to migrate, building on their affection-led drive. Besides reinforcing the affection-led drive, the fact that these community leaders' encouragement stemmed from community development from remittances exemplified the connection between the individual end rationality–led drive and affection-led drive, in which the former triggered the latter.

Second, as higher and stable income contributed to villagers' image of Thailand as an ideal place to work, it also bred affection toward Thailand as an ideal place to live a desirable lifestyle. Through word of mouth and Thai media, the latter of which has grown in popularity in both Mon and Banteay Meanchey, the Mons and the Khmers have observed Thailand's urbanized lifestyle, superior infrastructure, advanced technology, and higher quality of education and medical care. All of these induced senses of advancement, wellness, and security associated with living in Thailand—the value rationality–led drive—which strongly contributed to villagers' affection for Thailand as the place for living an ideal lifestyle. Notably, the infrastructure development in sending areas which enabled the use of electronic devices and access to the internet greatly boosted the penetration of Thai mass media in recent years.

From the long-sustained high regard and social status of migrant workers emerged a culture of migration. This refers to the villagers' way of thought and practices, in which spending years as a migrant worker in Thailand became an integral part of life, amounting to a tradition-led drive to migrate. Over time, this way of living became natural as well as influential to the migration decision of villagers in these villages. Indeed, the cases of Mon and Khmer migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry exemplify how the value rationality–led drive eventually congealed and constructed the tradition-led drive to migration decision, through the repetitive migration of the villagers.

Besides these linear relations between the four drives that contributed to villagers' intention to migrate, data revealed that these drives also upheld circular relations, in which the volume of emigrants and the migrant networks were another two indispensable pieces of the puzzle. This study found three circular relations between these components—the four drives, the volume of emigrants, and migrant networks—all of which formed a large wheel strengthening and sustaining the continual flow of migration through the Mon and Khmer corridors into Thailand. The interplay of these linear and circular relationships is portrayed in Figure 4-1 below.

Figure 4-1: Components of Migration Decision: Circular Relations



The first and the second circular relations—between the value rationality–led drive and tradition-led drive and between the tradition-led drive and the volume of emigrants—shared their pivotal point in the tradition-led drive. First, whereas the positive perception and social status of migrants congealed and shaped the culture of migration, in turn, the prevailing culture of migration solidified this perception and social status in villagers' minds—forming the circular relation between value rationality-led drive and tradition-led drive to migration decision. Further, as the number of emigrants from the village rose, life as a migrant worker became more natural as an integral part of villagers' way of life. This additionally strengthened villagers' tradition-led drive to migrate, motivating more villagers to leave the village, reinforcing a circular relation between the tradition-led drive and the volume of emigrants.

The third circular relation was between the individual end rationality–led drive, the volume of emigrants, and migrant networks. Undoubtedly, economic gains—the goal of the individual end rationality–led drive—first prompted villagers to migrate. Over time, the volume of emigrants from sending areas added up to growing migrant networks. These migrant networks comprised personal and structural networks—with an additional meso network in the Mon corridor—which facilitated and eased the international movement. Indeed, migrant networks played significant roles in absorbing newcomers' financial and physical burdens—through provision of information about living and working conditions in Thailand, transportation, accommodations, documentation, job placement, remittance transfer, and loans—as well as psychological burdens—such as stress, homesickness, and anxiety. Networks lowered associated costs and risks to migration, magnifying migrants' expected returns, that is, their individual end rationality–led drive.

In conclusion, the cases of Mon and Khmer migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry revealed how the four drives synchronously contributed to the decision to migrate, an economic action which was made within a collective social context, particularly one's family and local community. The cases further revealed how these components—with the addition of the volume of emigrants and migrant networks—connected and interacted with each other. This study found three circular relations at the core of these connections, functioning as a wheel that strengthened and sustained the continual flow of migration along the Mon and Khmer corridors into Thailand.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusions

International movement of labor has emerged as a strong force in today's global economy, which has become increasingly interdependent and dynamic. In order to explain how and why people migrate, scholars have developed a variety of theoretical models and concepts. Despite their intention to achieve the same goal, they have employed deviating fundamental assumptions and frames of reference, some of which focused on economic determinants, while others emphasized sociological determinants. Adding the guidance from modern migration studies which suggest the interrelations as well as the different natures of economic and social determinants of migration decisions, instead of separating economic studies and sociological studies, this study adopted the perspective of economic sociology and incorporated both economic and social determinants to draw a complete picture of migration decision.

The cases of Mon and Khmer migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry revealed interwoven economic and social determinants behind migration decision and their connection with the prevailing social context of one's family and local community. Drawing on data both from the origin and the destination, this study described migrants' rationality-led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives to migrate, which were imparted within these commingled economic and social determinants. It outlined how, as a result of continued migration, community contexts at both ends of the migration corridors noticeably changed in such a way that they enhanced these drives, thereby reinforcing the tendency for future migration.

The cases further demonstrated how these components, with the addition of the volume of emigrants and migrant networks, connected and interacted with each other. This study found three circular relations at the core of these connections, functioning as a wheel strengthening and sustaining the continual flow of migration from the Mon and Khmer corridors into Thailand. These were mutually reinforcing relations between value rationality–led drive and tradition-led drive, between tradition-led drive and the volume of emigrants, and between individual end rationality–led drive, the volume of emigrants, and migrant networks.

Findings' Highlights

Repetitive migration from the Mon and Khmer corridors over time altered migrants' social contexts at the origin and at the destination. Data revealed that these changes reinforced the tendency for future migration. Altered social contexts at the origin included dwindling dependence on agriculture, development of local infrastructure, and improved standard of living. Such changes—the majority of which were the result of remittances from migrants—led to villagers' dependence on remittances. Households gradually became prosperous, affording new houses, modern housing amenities, and vehicles. For these reasons, villagers formed a strong positive perception of migration. This gradually developed into a way of thought and living which favored emigration to Thailand.

At the destination, notable transformations comprised the flourishing migrant community, the development and the decline of migration brokers and NGOs, and access to medical care and education. Repeated migration over time forged larger and stronger migrant networks. This study observed the importance of personal and structural networks—plus the

meso network, in the case of the Mon corridor—which facilitated and eased international movement. Indeed, migrant networks were critical to lightening newcomers' financial and physical burdens by providing information about living and working conditions in Thailand, transportation, accommodations, documentation, job placement, remittance transfer, and loans.

In addition, mentally, these networks closely bound migrant communities at the origin and at the destination—in migrants' words, their home community and its extension—vividly representing the translocality of the migrant community and constituting one of the most important developments of migrants' social context which reinforced their intention to migrate. By perceiving Samut Sakhon and Rayong as extensions of their original communities, the strong sense of belonging among the migrants there was instrumental to their migration decision.

Collected data revealed both similarities and differences in patterns and characteristics of the Mons and Khmers. While many characteristics of respondents from both origins were comparable (gender, marital status, religion, education, household size, and employment of their household members in Thailand), major disparities comprised age group of respondents at the destination and the origin, type of work permit held, length of stay, income in Thailand, cost for migration, migrant's spending, remittances, and return decision. This study traced these different characteristics to different migration patterns between the two studied groups that sprang from distinct conditions in their respective corridors: the sense of belonging to their hometown, the proximity between the origin and the destination, and the size of the factory at the destination.

Differing senses of belonging to their hometown resulted in different conditions for return decisions between the Mons and the Khmers, which accounts for the disparate average age between Mon and Khmer workers and returnees as well as how they spent their money. The shorter distance between the origin and the destination and the relatively smaller size of factories at the destination contributed to the Khmers' pattern of intermittent migration. This practice resulted in their higher number of temporary and nationality verification permit holders than the Mons.

The Mon and Khmer migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry drew a vivid picture of how rationality-led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives together compelled them to migrate. The cases also revealed how these drives connected and interacted with each other. The volume of emigrants and migrant networks were another two direct variables in this migration canvas.

Starting from the individual end rationality–led drive, economic gains from migration urged villagers to migrate. After a series of successful pioneers, more villagers followed in their footsteps, leading to a rising number of emigrants. Migrant workers—through remittances which led to their households' affluence, elevated standard of living, and offerings to monks and temples—set a good sample for their fellow villagers. Besides improving their own households, these remittances enabled several developments in their home villages. Part of their money was collected and pooled for village improvements, notably electricity, irrigation systems, and local roads.

Gradually, positive labels were affixed to migrant workers: skillful, hardworking, and future-oriented. In contrast, those who decided to stay in the village were labeled lazy, incompetent, and shortsighted. These labels greatly contributed to local perceptions of different occupations, which led to the uneven social status between those who decided to migrate and those who decided to stay, forming a strong value rationality–led drive to

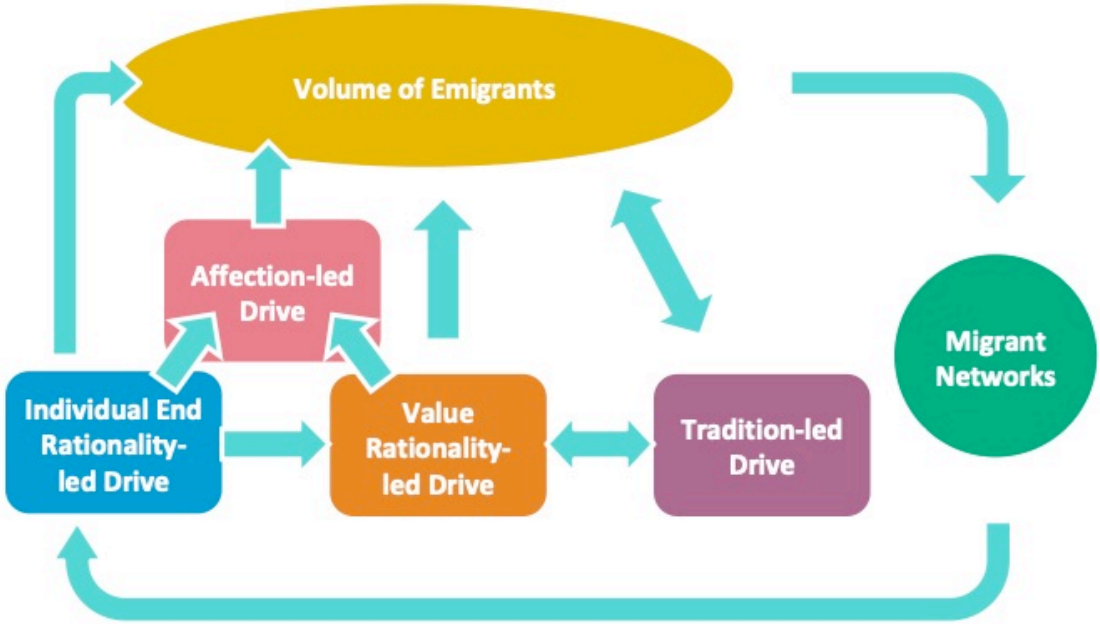
migrate. These labels and occupational perceptions directly impacted the social status of the locals. Returnees were considered prestigious village heroes and held higher social status than those who remained in the village, most of whom became local farmers. This sentiment was largely enhanced by mass media from Thailand, which contributed to villagers' positive perception of the country as an ideal place to work and lead a desirable lifestyle. Notably, the infrastructure development in sending areas which enabled the use of electronic devices and access to the internet significantly boosted the penetration of Thai mass media in recent years.

In relation to both individual end rationality-led drive and value rationality-led drive, the repeated resonances from the local community leaders—village chiefs, monks, and teachers—all of who actively encouraged their people to migrate and the sensational image of Thailand were formed, representing affection-led drive among the migrants. First, because of community developments that remittances made possible, community leaders agreed that migration brought prosperity to the village and elevated villagers' standard of living. Data revealed that, for villagers, harmonizing echoes from their community leaders served to validate and approve their decision to migrate, building on their affection-led drive to relocate. The fact that these community leaders' encouragement was rooted in the influx of money into the community exemplifies the connection between the individual end rationality–led drive and affection-led drive, in which the former triggered the latter.

Second, as higher, stable income contributed to villagers' idealization of working in Thailand, it also bred affection toward Thailand as an ideal place to live. Through word of mouth and Thai media, the Mons and Khmers have observed Thailand's urbanized lifestyle, superior infrastructure, advanced technology, and higher quality of education and medical care. All of these induced senses of advancement, wellness, and security associated with living in Thailand—the value rationality–led drive—which strongly contributed to villagers' affection for Thailand as the place for living an ideal lifestyle.

Due to the positive perception of migrant work and its associated social status being sustained over a long period of time, a culture of migration emerged. This refers to the villagers' way of thought and practices, in which spending years as a migrant worker in Thailand became an integral part of life, representing a tradition-led drive to migrate. Over time, this way of living became natural as well as influential to the migration decisions of villagers in these villages. Indeed, the cases of Mon and Khmer migrants in the Thai seafood processing industry exemplify how the value rationality–led drive, over time, congealed and constructed the tradition-led drive to migration decision through the repeated migration of the villagers.

Figure 5-1: Components of Migration Decision: Circular Relations



Besides aforementioned linear relations between individual end rationality-led drive, value rationality-led drive, affection-led drive, and tradition-led drive—all of which contributed to villagers' intention to migrate, data revealed that these drives—indeed—upheld circular relations, in which the volume of emigrants and migrant network were another two unmissable pieces of jigsaw. This study found three circular relations between these components—between value rationality-led drive and tradition-led drive, between tradition-led drive and the volume of emigrants, and between individual end rationality-led drive, the volume of emigrants, and migrant network—all of which formed a large wheel strengthening and sustaining the continual flow of migration from Mon corridor and Khmer corridor into Thailand.

The first and the second circular relations—between value rationality-led drive and tradition-led drive, between tradition-led drive and the volume of emigrants—shared their pivotal point in the tradition-led drive. Indeed, whereas embedded perception and social status were congealed and shaped the culture of migration; in turn, the culture of migration—over time—solidified such embedded perception and social status in villagers' mind—forming the circular relation between affection-led drive and tradition-led drive to migration decision. Further, as the number of emigrants from the village rose, life as migrant worker became more natural as an integral part of villagers' way of living. This, indeed, additionally fortified villagers' tradition-led drive to migration—driving more villagers away from the village—revealing circular relation between tradition-led drive and the volume of emigrants.

The third was the circular relation between individual end rationality-led drive, the volume of emigrants, and migrant network. Undoubtedly, economic gains—rationality-led drive—prompted villagers to migrate. Over time, the volume of emigrants from sending area added up to growing migrant networks. These migrant networks comprised personal network and structural network—with an addition of meso network in the case of Mon corridor—all of which facilitated and eased the international movement. Indeed, migrant networks played significant roles absorbing newcomer's financial and physical burdens—through provision of information about living and working conditions in Thailand, transportation, accommodation, documentation, job placement, remittance transfer, and money loan—as well as psychological burden—such as stress, homesickness, and anxiety. All of these, indeed,

lowered associated costs and risks to migration—magnifying migrant's expected return from such international movement, i.e., individual end rationality-led drive.

5.2 Discussion

This section addresses and discusses particularly intriguing findings—two which were found in the Mon corridor and two in the Khmer corridor—as well as recommendations for policy makers and business strategists. Notable findings were the Mons' tighter migrant networks (the meso network) and Mon women's marriage opportunities, and the Khmers' intermittent migration and declining reliance on migration brokers.

Tighter Migrant Networks in the Case of the Mons: Meso Network

Besides traditional personal and structural migrant networks, the Mons have developed another layer of migrant network which falls between them, a meso network. This meso network derived from the transborder interactions of Mon community leaders: village chiefs, monks, and teachers. Data suggests that this development grew out of a strong sense of belonging within their own community and the support of local Mon politicians.

Even while staying in their home village, village chiefs maintained their role as caretaker of their villagers at the destination by establishing direct and close contact with carefully selected representatives. These representatives usually were current migrant workers in Samut Sakhon; most of the time, they either were family members or had close personal relations with the village chiefs back in their home villages. As for the monks and the teachers, they were usually dispatched from migrants' home villages to temples or community schools close by their people's settlement to tend to their people. Moreover, this study found that these monks and teachers took turns staying in Thailand, coordinated by their immediate overseers, village chiefs, and themselves.

These transborder interactions not only added to their strong migrant community at the destination, but also carried over and raised the volume of repeated and unified messages reassuring their decision to migrate. Furthermore, the presence and interactions of these community leaders, monks, and teachers—migrants' meso network—in the migrant community at the destination functioned as a bridge and weaved a tighter bond between the migrant community at the origin and at the destination.

Mon Women and Their Marriage Opportunity

One of the most intriguing findings in this case study was that marriage opportunity was found to be a highly influential drive for migration for half of the migrants—the women. In the 1980s female emigrants were extremely rare; in the 1990s they were typically limited to household members of male emigrants who had already gone to Thailand. However, in the 2000s the number of female emigrants rose sharply. This coincided with the time when migrant work became the default occupational alternative among the villagers in the origin area regardless of their gender. Collected data revealed that the rise of female emigrants was a result of the lack of qualified candidates for marriage in their home villages.

Indeed, after the image of the migrant worker as a village hero was established, positive labels came to be affixed to migrant workers: skillful, hardworking, future-oriented. In contrast, villagers who stayed in the village were labeled lazy, incompetent, and shortsighted. These labels contributed to local perceptions of these occupations which led to

the uneven social status of those who decided to migrate and those who decided to stay, forming a strong affection-led drive to migrate.

This sentiment escalated to the point where it led to the emigration of female Mon villagers. Indeed, these women—out of the much longer distance and stronger sense of belonging to their hometowns compared to the Khmers—had never considered migrating to Thailand until the early 2000s. It was around this time when most male villagers of working age were becoming migrant workers in Thailand, and the ones remaining were perceived as lazy and unqualified. With the lack of ideal partners in their villages, migrating to Thailand themselves was the most feasible solution. As a result, from 2000, the number of female migrants from Mon villages rose sharply. Reports also confirmed that a large number of Mon couples from surveyed villages met each other in Thailand.

The Development of Intermittent Migration Among the Khmers

Derived from the close proximity between Banteay Meanchey and Rayong, which resulted in the relatively cheap cost of transportation, intermittent migration was widely practiced by the Khmers. Gathered data revealed that, after working in Thailand for a period of time, a considerable portion of Khmer workers took a long break from their work and returned home, before migrating to Thailand again and repeating the cycle. Further study found two primary reasons behind this migration pattern: work-related reasons and personal reasons.

Work-related reasons were prevalent among seasonal workers. The majority of them returned to their hometowns from Thai seafood processing businesses during the off-season, while the rest came from Cambodian farms to work in Thailand during the farming off-season. A second group moved primarily for personal reasons: impulses such as exhaustion and boredom. In their own words, once these workers felt ready again or, in most cases, ran out of money, they would make another round of migration to Thailand. Their length of working in Thailand each time as well as the length of their break varied unpredictably.

Decline of Migration Brokers in Khmer Corridor

In the earlier phase of their migration in the 1990s, migrant workers from Banteay Meanchey relied heavily on migration brokers for their migration to Thailand. The functions performed by migration brokers usually ranged from providing information, transportation, accommodations, documentation, job placement, remittance transfer, and loans for relocation. Over time, however, personal networks eventually replaced migration brokers for most of these key functions. By the mid-2010s, the only assistance that Khmer migrant workers relied on from migration brokers was remittance transfers from Thailand to their hometowns, as this function was relatively technical and capital-intensive. Collected data suggest that—due to the close proximity of origin and destination, the improved infrastructure for transportation and communication, and greater familiarity with the immigration system in Thailand—existing Khmer migrants in Thailand could manage the migration of newcomers without the need to rely on services from migration brokers.

Recommendations for Policy Makers and Business Strategists

Under the contexts of steady worker demand in Thailand and domestic economic development in Myanmar and Cambodia, which created abundant domestic occupational opportunities in these countries, should Thailand want to sustain its body of foreign workforce from Myanmar and Cambodia, the Thai government and employing businesses

need to understand their drives to migrate. This study proposes that, besides conventional economic incentives, policy makers and business strategists may opt for other impetuses, particularly those that appeal to their affection-led and tradition-led drives. Gathered data suggests that migrant communities in Thailand, network-building with community leaders, and positive country image may prove to be the keys to success in retaining the foreign workforce in the country. Each of these is addressed below.

First is the importance of migrant communities in Thailand. Data revealed that the freedom to choose their own accommodations is particularly influential to the decision of Mon and Khmer migrant workers. In both cases, migrants explicitly expressed their strong preference for communal accommodations where they could freely choose who they lived with as well as their neighborhood. Migrants usually preferred to live close to their kin and people who shared the same area of origin. This observably contributed to their sense of community. Indeed, migrants' sense of community was higher among industries or businesses whose nature allowed them to form a sizable community. This sense of community played important roles recruiting and sustaining the body of migrant workers who shared the same origin.

Failure to form a community may lower the number of workers in an industry or business. Workers may move to other industries or businesses where they feel more attached. Indeed, this was evidenced by a large number of respondents who revealed that they decided to quit their previous jobs at construction sites, farms, and private houses, as these jobs did not allow them to stay with their kin and their friends. Hence, to attract and sustain them, employers should either ensure freedom in their accommodations or prepare communal accommodations where migrants can stay with their community members.

Second, according to collected data, network building with community leaders is another key to recruiting and sustaining migrant workers. Community leaders—village chiefs, monks, and teachers—were found highly influential to migration decision; Thai governmental agencies or business coordinators may consider networking with community leaders in sending areas. Direct contact between Thai public agencies and employers and migrant community leaders at the origin and the destination will develop trust and mutual understanding among them. Public agencies and employers may consider communicating work permit registration, safety protocol for migrants, and migrants' basic rights. Furthermore, dedicated migratory centers should be established as one-stop migratory services for migrants.

Finally, third, data revealed that the positive image of Thailand, which was associated with an urbanized lifestyle, advanced technology, and modernized infrastructure, created a strong pull factor for migration decision. Strengthening such an image will likely build on the drive to migrate within the migrant community. This can be approached through media and workers' experience, that is, word of mouth, in ways described below.

First, as findings showed that Thai television programs were exceptionally popular among migrant workers as well as their household members in the sending areas, authorities may accentuate and reproduce Thailand's positive image through popular television programs. Authorities may also consider including Mon or Khmer characters in those shows. Moreover, Thai authorities may launch shows which center on the lives of foreigners in Thailand—their lives before they come, how they reach their decision to migrate, their preparation before coming, how they travel, and their daily lives in Thailand. These would

not only promote the positive image and inclusiveness of Thailand, but also provide a walkthrough for the prospective migrant.

Furthermore, respondents at the destination and origin areas expressed that they learned Thai and experienced Thai culture through television programs. Perhaps, together with including Mons and Khmers in shows and shows which depict the lives of foreigners in Thailand, Thai language learning programs especially designed for Mons and Khmers may prove to be effective bridges which enhance the movement of workers from Myanmar and Cambodia to Thailand.

Second, through worker experiences, word of mouth is another means of promulgating a positive image of Thailand. Migrants as well as returnees pass on their experience in Thailand to their community members. When migrants have a good experience in Thailand, they are inclined to deliver the positive aspects of Thailand to their peers back in their home villages. Positive worker experiences are achievable through fair treatment both from law enforcers and employers, public awareness on diversity and inclusiveness in Thailand, and foreign worker rights policies.

Future Study

Future study may pursue the characteristics, patterns, and myriad of drives to the migration decision of migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia in other industries in Thailand, particularly the services industry, which has been rapidly expanding and becoming a major part of the Thai economy. Interested researchers may also extend their studies to migrant workers from different migration corridors to examine the interactions between economic and social determinants in those corridors. In addition, whereas this study focuses on low-skilled migrant workers, the framework of this research is just as applicable to studying the migration decision of high-skilled workers. Such investigation would potentially draw out the similarities and differences between these two groups of workers, which would be beneficial for both academics and practitioners.

Researchers may also revisit existing studies on migration decisions in their preferred migration corridors implementing the conceptual framework of economic sociology. These research expansions will extend the body of knowledge on the understanding of individual end rationality–led, value rationality–led, affection-led, and tradition-led drives to migration decision—particularly their components and how they connect with each other. Case-specific components and connections will definitely broaden and deepen the theoretical grounding as well as the current body of knowledge on migration decision.

Furthermore, later studies would benefit from other methodologies. Future research may incorporate other research methods, such as quantitative-oriented and ethnographic approaches, to expand the conceptual framework and data collection, which would potentially result in a more accurate and comprehensive study on migration. A quantitative method would enable quantifying, rating, and ranking the influence of different determinants on migration decision, while an ethnographic method would likely bring more insight to migration decisions at a personal, household, and community level.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1-A: Thailand's Major Export Products 2008-2017

Unit: USD

	2008		2012		2017	
	Product	Value (million)	Product	Value (million)	Product	Value (million)
1.	Computer and parts	18,384.16	Automobile and parts	22,912.61	Automobile and parts	27,044.07
2.	Automobile and parts	15,585.53	Computer and parts	19,056.55	Computer and parts	18,490.20
3.	Processed petroleum oils	9,006.86	Jewelry	13,147.55	Jewelry	12,827.18
4.	Jewelry	8,270.07	Processed petroleum oils	12,881.30	Rubber tires	10,255.33
5.	Electronic integrated circuit	7,241.30	Natural rubber	8,745.80	Thermoplastic	8,673.67
6.	Natural rubber	6,791.73	Thermoplastic	8,531.71	Electronic integrated circuit	8,267.38
7.	Rice	6,204.08	Chemicals	8,516.38	Machinery and parts	7,573.98
8.	Thermoplastic	5,520.00	Rubber tires	8,403.91	Chemicals	7,460.30
9.	Irons and steels	5,361.49	Irons and steels	6,914.90	Processed petroleum oils	7,182.80
10.	Rubber tires	4,549.81	Electronic integrated circuit	6,689.04	Natural rubber	6,024.49
11.	Chemicals	4,309.41	Machinery and parts	6,239.49	Irons and steels	5,558.90
12.	Machinery and parts	4,238.74	Processed seafood	5,224.67	Rice	5,186.57
13.	Processed seafood	3,905.55	Electronic appliance and parts	4,708.12	Air conditioner and parts	4,819.80
14.	Electronic appliance and parts	3,755.79	Rice	4,632.27	Internal combustion engine and parts	4,319.10
15.	Garment	3,505.25	Radio, television, and parts	4,233.64	Plastics	3,901.60
16.	Air conditioner and parts	3,274.19	Air conditioner and parts	4,081.01	Electronic appliance and parts	3,768.45
17.	Radio, television, and parts	3,149.72	Sugar	3,952.64	Processed seafood	3,752.84

18.	Plastics	2,692.49	Plastics	3,328.43	Facsimile, telephone, and parts	3,182.01
19.	Internal combustion engine and parts	2,112.71	Internal combustion engine and parts	3,204.94	Wood and processed wood	2,871.34
20.	Cosmetics, Soap, and skin cares	1,995.22	Garment	2,949.61	Radio, television, and parts	2,854.07

Source: Ministry of Commerce of Thailand [MOC], 2019

Appendix 1-B: Expert Panel Members' Profiles

1. Vungsiriphaisal Premjai
Senior Researcher,
Asian Research Center for Migration,
Institute of Asian Studies,
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
Education

- *Doctor of Philosophy in Development Education, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)*
- *Master of Arts in Cultural Studies, Mahidol University (Thailand)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Ramkhamhaeng University (Thailand)*

2. Jiropas Apiradee
Lecturer,
Faculty of Social Science and Humanities,
Thaksin University, Thailand
Education

- *Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations, Universiti of Sains Malaysia (Malaysia)*
- *Master of Science in International Relations, University of Bristol (UK)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Thammasat University (Thailand)*

3. Srakaew Sompong
Founder and Director,
Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation, Thailand
Education

- *Master of Science in Community Development, Thammasat University (Thailand)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in Social Work, Thammasat University (Thailand)*

4. Kyaw Thin Mon Mon
Lecturer,
Department of International Relations,
University of Yangon, Myanmar
Education

- *Master of Arts in International Relations, Waseda University (Japan)*
- *Master of Arts in International Relations, University of Yangon (Myanmar)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in International Relations (Hons), Dagon University (Myanmar)*

5. Htwe Thaingi Khin
Lecturer,
Department of International Relations,
University of Yangon, Myanmar
Education

- *Master of Arts in International Relations, Waseda University (Japan)*
- *Master of Research in International Relations, Dagon University (Myanmar)*
- *Master of Arts in International Relations, Dagon University (Myanmar)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in International Relations (Hons), Dagon University (Myanmar)*

6. Houth Sothea
Deputy Chief of Bureau,

Europe Department,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Cambodia
Education

- *Master of Arts in International Relations, Waseda University (Japan)*
- *Advance Certificate of Higher Education in English, National Institute of Education (Cambodia)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, Phnom Penh University (Cambodia)*

7.Official (Anonymous),
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Cambodia

8. Worawatthanabancha Sukumarn
Management Executive,
Kuiyu Ltd., Part., Thailand
Education

- *Master of Laws in Business Law, Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration, Thammasat University (Thailand)*

9. Johnson Matthew
Communications Officer,
Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation, Thailand
Education

- *Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience (Hons), Otago University (New Zealand)*

10. Soodrak Sunisa
Regional Programme Associate,
Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster,
United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], Bangkok Regional Hub
Education

- *Master of Social Science in Business Administration, Malardalen University (Sweden)*
- *Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Thammasat University (Thailand)*

Appendix 1-C: Questionnaires for Semi-Structured Interview for Migrant's Household Members in Origin Area

Interview information

Language: Burmese / Mon or Khmer or Thai (English, as necessary)

Person(s) who conduct interview: Self (with Burmese / Mon or Khmer translators, as necessary)

**Note 1: Questions will be simplified in actual interview to facilitate communication between interviewer and interviewees.*

**Note 2: This questionnaire summarizes all the questions during interviews with key informants in origin area during expand stage; each key informant was not expected to answer all the questions presented in this aggregate questionnaire. Topics were discussed based on each key informant' expertise and information.*

Confidential Statement

This study is conducted solely for academic purpose. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to answer and it will be confidentially recorded. Your responses will be anonymous and will never be linked to you personally. Your personal information will not be presented anywhere in the research; only aggregated results will be presented. If there are items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. Your cooperation is deeply appreciated. Thank you.

Part 1: General information

1. Name / Surname (Optional):
2. Nationality / Ethnicity:
3. Gender:
4. Age:
5. Religion (Optional):
6. Hometown, State / Province:
7. How long have you been living in this village?:
8. Marital status:
9. Education:
10. How many members are there in your household?
11. What do they do for earning?
12. How much does a person earn per month? (e.g. as a farmer, government officer, private company officer, and trader)

Part 2: Actors and Roles in Migration Decision

13. Discuss these influences over migration decision:

Economic incentive / Family reasons / Better living conditions / Security & safety reasons / Others (Please suggest)

14. Do household members influence immigrants' migration decision?

15. Discuss influences from migration actors regarding these migration issues:

- Migration actors: Relatives, Friends or Community members / Commercial agencies / NGOs / Employers / Others (Please suggest)
- Migration issues prior to migration: Information about job, work condition, and living condition in Thailand / Transportation to Thailand / Accommodation when first arrived in Thailand / Work, health, and legal documentation / Job placement / Money loan for relocation / Others (Please suggest)
- Migration issues during immigrants' stay in Thailand: Remittance (Money transfer to Myanmar or Cambodia) / Money loan / When immigrants face problem, who will they ask for help? / Others (Please suggest)
- Do these assistances influence migration decision? Which one(s) do you think is/are especially influential?

Part 3: Community Context in Origin Area

16. How does these issues affect immigrants' migration decision?

- Income differentials / Easier transportation / Easier communication / Better medical services / Better education

17. Do immigrants' households depend primarily on emigrant members' remittance?

18. Are households with migrant worker richer than households without migrant worker?

19. Have households with migrant worker acquired more land than households without migrant worker?

20. Do people who work in Thailand earn more money than those who stay in the village?

21. Do villagers know Born Village and their farming?

22. Do villagers know flower farmers in Mazzone Village?

23. Why do you think villagers here do not replicate their ways of farming?

24. How is parent-child relationships here?

25. Do villagers compare their standard of living in their hometowns with their neighbors / Thai people / what they see on TV?

26. What is the general perception toward people who migrate to work in Thailand?

27. Have Thai dramas and songs become more common during the past 30 years?

28. Have Thai products become more common during the past 30 years?

29. Have more villagers been able to communicate in Thai during the past 30 years?

30. Do you think, during the past 30 years, villagers have become more familiar with Thai culture, people, and lifestyles?

31. Does the spread of Thai culture relate to growing number of villagers who come to work in Thailand?

32. Do people from Mon / Banteay Meanchey prefer spouse of the same origin?

33. Do villagers feel positive about Thailand as source of income / skills and technology transfer?

34. How is occupational social value in Mon / Banteay Meanchey?

35. Do you think if it is possible to earn the same amount of money here, with being immigrants in Thailand, villagers will not migrate?

36. How are the relationships between immigrants and the temple (or church or mosque) both in Thailand and in their hometowns?

37. Do you think monks in Mon / Banteay Meanchey also encourage migration?

38. Do villagers watch Thai TV channels? If so, why? What do they watch? Do you think watching Thai TV channels relate to the growing number of immigrants?

39. In your opinion, what are the reasons which differentiate migration decision of villagers in Born Village / flower farmers in Mazzone Village from others?

40. In your opinion, what do you think are the reasons which differentiate migration decision of Christian villagers in More Village from others?

Part 4: Remittance, Returnees, and Land Ownership

41. How do households spend remittance money?

42. Did your household member, including you, work in Thailand before? If so, in which industry? For how long? And why did they, or you, return?

Q.43 is for returnees.

43. Discuss these topics/issues with returnees:

- Later migrant workers have better information than previous generations of migrants.
- You encourage other villagers to work in Thailand.
- Migrant workers normally work until their children are old enough to replace them.
- After you return, your family income relies mostly on remittance from other migrant worker in your family.
- You think that if villagers are trained about business or financial management, villagers can make investment from the remittance money.

44. Does your household own farmland outside of your own village? Please elaborate.

----------Thank you very much. ----------

Appendix 1-D: Questionnaires for Structured Interview for Immigrant Workers in Thailand

Interview information

Language: Burmese / Mon or Khmer or Thai (English, as necessary)

Person(s) who conduct interview: Self (with Burmese / Mon or Khmer translators, as necessary)

**Note: Questions were simplified in actual interview to facilitate communication between interviewer and interviewees.*

Confidential Statement

This study is conducted solely for academic purpose. This survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to answer and it will be confidentially recorded. Your responses will be anonymous and will never be linked to you personally. Your personal information will not be presented anywhere in the research; only aggregated results will be presented. If there are items you do not feel comfortable answering, please skip them. Your cooperation is deeply appreciated. Thank you.

Part 1: General information

1. Name / Surname (Optional):
2. Ethnicity:
3. Gender:
4. Age:
5. Religion (Optional):
6. Education (please circle your answer)

    A. Lower than primary education
    B. Primary school (1-5 years)
    C. Middle school (6-9 years)
    D. High school (10-11 years)
    E. Higher education (Bachelor degree or above)

7. Hometown, State / Province:
8. Marital status:
9. How many members are there in your household?
10. How many members in your household are currently working in Thailand?
11. In the case that respondent is not the only migrant worker from his / her household, who else and which industry are other members working in?
12. Type of work permit

    A. Cabinet resolution
    B. Nationality verification
    C. MOU or Official recruitment)

13. How long have you been working in Thailand?
14. In your hometown, how much do people in work age (15-65 years old) go to work abroad? (please answer in %):

15. In your hometown, how much do people in work age (15-65 years old) go to work in Thailand? (please answer in %):

Part 2: Earning and Remittance

16. How much was the cost for your relocation to Thailand? [including transportation and agency fee / not including work permit related fee]

A. Less than 3,000 Baht
B. 3,000 - 6,000 Baht
C. 6,001 - 12,000 Baht
D. 12,001 Baht and above

17. How much do you earn per month?

A. Less than 6,000 Baht
B. 6,000 - 8,000 Baht
C. 8,001 - 12,000 Baht
D. 12,001 Baht and above

Please rank the answers based on your opinion.

18. What influences your migration decision?

_____ Economic incentives
_____ Family reasons
_____ Better living conditions
_____ Security / safety reasons
_____ Others (Please specify)

19. How do you spend your earning in Thailand?

_____ Living expense
_____ Remittance
_____ Saving
_____ Investment
_____ Making merit in Thailand
_____ Entertainment in Thailand
_____ Others (Please specify)

20. How much approximately do you remit per month? (please circle your answer)

A. 50% or above of your earning
B. 25-49% of your earning
C. Less than 25% of your earning
D. No
E. Irregular remittance

21. How is the remittance money spent?

_____ Making merit
_____ Living expense
_____ Family member's education

_____ Building house

_____ Saving

_____ Investment

_____ Others (Please specify)

Part 3: Actors and Roles in Migration Decision

22. Before you came to Thailand, did you know any of following persons or organizations involving in Thai seafood processing industry? You can circle more than one answer.

A. Relatives

B. Friends or Community members

C. Commercial agencies

D. NGOs

E. Employers

F. No (Skip to Q.23)

Please ✔ the answers which best represent your opinion regarding following question.

Who assisted you the most regarding these issues? (please choose only one answer)

	Relatives, Friends, or Community Members	Com-mercial agencies	NGOs	Employers	No assis-tance	No inform-ation
Before you came to Thailand.						
22.1 Information about job, work condition, and living condition in Thailand						
22.2 Transportation to Thailand						
22.3 Accommodation when first arrived in Thailand						
22.4 Work, health, and legal documentation						
22.5 Job placement. (Workplace)						
22.6 Money loan						
When you live in Thailand.						
22.7 Remittance (Money transfer to Myanmar)						
22.8 Money loan						
22.9 When you are in trouble, who will be the first person you contact for help?						

Please ✔ the answers which best represent your opinion.

	Strongly Disagree --> Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
23. Your household members involved in your migration decision.					
24. Information about job, work condition, and living condition					

received before departure reinforced migration decision.					
25. Having relatives, friends, or community members working in Thailand reinforced migration decision.					
26. Having relatives, friends, or community members working in Thailand lowered the cost of relocation.					
27. Existing NGOs reinforced migration decision.					
28. Existing commercial agencies reinforced migration decision.					

Part 4: Community Contexts

Please ✔ the answers which best represent your opinion.

	Strongly Disagree --> Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
29. Difference of income between your village and Thailand reinforced migration decision.					
30. Easier transportation between your hometown and Thailand reinforced migration decision.					
31. Easier communication between your hometown and Thailand reinforced migration decision.					
32. Your household in Myanmar depends primarily on emigrant members' remittance.					
33. In your hometown, households with migrant worker are richer than households without migrant worker.					
34. In your hometown, households with migrant worker have acquired more land than households without migrant worker.					
35. In your hometown, people who come to Thailand earn more money than those who stay in the village.					
36. It is difficult to find job with stable income in your hometown.					
37. Better medical services in Thailand reinforce your desire to stay in Thailand.					
38. If you have a child and you can afford, you want your child to attend school in Thailand.					
39. The best way to earn money for you is to work in Thailand.					
40. People in your hometown feel positive about people who migrate to work in Thailand.					
41. When you grew up, your parents normally gave you concrete idea about what you should or should not do.					
42. Your parents think that you become adult once you are married.					
43. Your parents think that you become adult once you have kid.					
44. Your parents think that you become adult once you earn your own money without depending on your parents' help (e.g.					

your parents' farmland).					
45. You prefer spouse from Mon State.					
46. You prefer spouse who is also Mon.					
47. Moving to Thailand, you have better opportunity to marry preferred spouse.					
48. You think that migrants' households have better standard of living (e.g. new home, car, television, child education, access to health service).					
49. When you see that neighbors in your hometown have better standard of living, you also want to achieve that standard.					
50. When you watch TV program and see better standard of living of other people, you also want to achieve that standard.					
51. When you see that people in Thailand have better standard of living, you also want to achieve that standard.					
52. You feel positive about Thailand as source of income.					
53. You feel positive about Thailand for skills and technology transfer which you receive.					
54. You think that being a farmer is socially less attractive than being a migrant worker.					
55. You think that being a farmer is socially less attractive than other works such as government officer, trader, and office worker.					
56. You think that experience as migrant worker can help you to achieve better social status in your hometown.					
57. If being a farmer in your hometown earns the same amount of money with being a migrant, you will not migrate.					
58. You think that Bhuddism (or Christianity or Islam) is important part of your life.					
59. You think that temple (or church or mosque) and religious ceremony are important parts of your life.					
60. You think that it is necessary to make merit by regularly donating to temple (or church or mosque).					
61. The more you donate, the better person others will perceive you.					
62. Monks in your hometown also encourage migration.					
63. Monks in your community in Thailand also encourage migration.					
64. In Thailand, you prefer to visit temple (or church or mosque) which relates to your local background.					
65. As soon as you save enough money, you want to go back to your hometown.					
66. Thai dramas and songs are becoming more common in the village during the past 30 years.					
67. Thai products are becoming more common in the village during the past 30 years.					

68. More people in the village can communicate in Thai during the past 30 years.					
69. You think that the spread of Thai culture in your hometown is related to growing number of villagers who come to work in Thailand.					
70. During the past 30 years, people in your hometown have become more familiar with Thai culture, people, and lifestyles.					
71. You prefer Thai TV channel to Burmese TV channel.					
Q.71.7-71.2: Only when the answer of Q.71 is 4 or 5.					
71.1 You prefer Thai TV channel to Burmese TV channel because of its content.					
71.2 You prefer Thai TV channel to Burmese TV channel because of Thai language.					

71.3 (135.3) Please rank the television program genre in the order of your interest

A. Drama

B. Music

C. Sports

D. News and Current Affairs

E. Children

F. Education and Culture

G. Tourism and Health

H. Other Entertainment Programs (e.g. game show, variety show, and reality show)

72. How often do you visit temple (or church or mosque) when you were in Myanmar?

A. 4 times a month and major religious days

B. 1-3 times a month

C. Only on major religious days

D. Rarely

E. More than 4 times a month (Excluding major religious days)

73. How often do you visit temple (or church or mosque) when you are in Thailand?

A. 4 times a month and major religious days

B. 1-3 times a month

C. Only on major religious days

D. Rarely

E. More than 4 times a month (Excluding major religious days)

Part 5: Return Decision

74. Have you been working in other industry in Thailand before?

Yes.

No. (Skip to Q.75)

74.1 Which industry were you working in before?

74.2 How long have you been working in seafood processing industry?

74.3 Do you have plan to change your job to other industry?

A. Yes, within one year.

B. Yes, after one year.

C. Yes, but uncertain when.

D. No.

Please ✔ the answers which best represent your opinion regarding the reason why you changed your job to seafood processing industry.

You decided to work in seafood processing industry because (of)…	Strongly Disagree --> Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
74.4 You can earn more money.					
74.5 Your relative(s) and/or community member(s) work here.					
74.6 Existing Mon community in Samut Sakhon.					
74.7 Comparably freer work condition (e.g. certain work hour and compensation).					
74.8 You can visit temple more often.					

75. Had your household member worked in Thailand before you came to Thailand?

A. Yes, parent(s).

B. Yes, other household member(s).

C. No. (Skip to Q.78)

76. Had your household member worked in seafood processing industry before you came to Thaialnd?

A. Yes, parent(s).

B. Yes, other household member(s).

C. No.

77. Did you replace your household member? (Certain household member returned within five years after you came.)

Yes.

No.

78. Do you have plan to return to Myanmar?

A. Yes, I plan to return within ____ years.

B. Yes, but I have no specific timeframe.

C. No, I don't plan to return.

79. What will be the reason for your return?

A. My household member replaces me.

B. I have saved enough money.

C. My physical condition has reached the limit.

D. My parents need to be looked after.

E. I have acquired certain skill which will raise my earning in Myanmar.

F. Others. (Please specify)

----------Thank you very much. ----------

Appendix 2-A: Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers in Thailand, by Registration Method and Country of Origin

Year	Total Low-Skilled Immigrants	Myanmar[150]			Cambodia			Laos		
		TR[152]	NV[151]	MOU	TR	NV	MOU	TR	NV	MOU
2006	721790	568,878			48,362	20,898	600	51,336	28,316	3,400
2008	589,646	476,676			12,094	32,578	11,555	12,800	38,736	6,197
2010	1,168,824	812,984	122,751	4,641	56,476	51,196	14,818	62,792	36,097	7,066
2012	994,749	63,768	630,185	18,241	39,706	73,793	63,405	64,409	29,625	11,619
2014	2,711,304	623,648	831,235	97,984	696,338	107,172	87,398	213,689	33,054	20,786
2016	2,469,255	723,761	737,677	195,752	385,829	99,225	152,320	69,489	60,926	44,677

Source: Office of Foreign Worker Administration of Thailand, 2006-2016; Department of Employment of Thailand, 2008; Department of Employment of Thailand 2007; Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2006; Martin 2007

[150] While immigrant registration through nationality verification and MOU methods for workers from Cambodia and Laos were effective since 2006, such methods were effective in the case of Burmese worker in 2009 and 2010 respectively.
[151] NV refers to Nationality Verification.
[152] TR refers to Temporary Registration.

Appendix 3-A: Questionnaire for Living Standard Assessment

Living Standard Indicators

Please mark X in the period that you possess the asset.

Item	1980 - 1991	1992 - 2000	2001 - 2011	2012 - Present
Television				
Refrigerator				
Conventional phone				
Mobile phone				
Internet				
Electric fan				
Bed				
Indoor bathroom				
Indoor toilet				

Means of transportation	1980 - 1991	1992 - 2000	2001 - 2011	2012 - Present
Car				
Motorcycle				
Bicycle				

Cooking fuel	1980 - 1991	1992 - 2000	2001 - 2011	2012 - Present
Electricity / Gas				
Charcoal				
Wood				

Water treatment prior to drinking	1980 - 1991	1992 - 2000	2001 - 2011	2012 - Present
Boiled				
Filtered				
No treatment				

Toilet	1980 - 1991	1992 - 2000	2001 - 2011	2012 - Present
Flush toilet				
Pit latrine				
No toilet				

Please input the number of persons sharing the same bedroom in each period.

Item	1980 - 1991	1992 - 2000	2001 - 2011	2012 - Present
Persons per one bedroom				