

## **Myanmarese Migrant Workers and Karaoke: Politics of Place-Making in Thailand**

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**ABSTRACT :** *This paper focuses on the Myanmarese migrants who cross the border easily from the Myanmar's harbor, Victoria Point to the Thai port city, Ranong province, Thailand's south, and then find room in Ranong or somewhere else in Thailand. It can be said that there are lots of Myanmarese migrant communities in Thailand now. Myanmarese migrants would like to build new communities in Ranong to get the feeling of being at home. The first part of this paper concentrates on the cultural globalization, market expansion and social spatial practices of Myanmarese workers, and analyze particularly socio - spatial dialectics of place-making on border land. And the second part concentrates on their cultural activities. One of their activities after work is that they love to hang out around the local restaurants to sing a song and practice a karaoke is something like to cross tension between voice and desire. Actually, this cultural activity is not the nostalgic attempt to symbolically return home. As metaphor, the practice of karaoke is like recalling the old identity they lost and reflecting on the new one they found. It can be argued that karaoke as participatory consumption is so important in their contested spaces of floating lives in Thailand.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Myanmarese Migrant Workers, Politics of Place-Making, Karaoke*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

For the past several years Thailand has attracted an increasing numbers of migrant workers, mostly from neighboring countries. When the number of low-skilled or unskilled workers had exceeded an estimated 2 million, migration became a policy issue. Subsequently, The Royal Thai Government has steadily moved to put in place systems that resulted in the Ministry of Interior (MOI) registering approximately 1,280,000 persons from Cambodia, The Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar or Burma, who were found to have migrants to Thailand, about 45 per cent of the migrants who registered with MOI from Myanmar.<sup>1</sup> In late 1980s, Thailand's booming economy has become a magnet for migrants from neighboring countries. As the most developed country in the region, at that time, its per capita GDP is twelve times higher than that of Myanmar (\$151). Other neighbors like Cambodia (\$270 per capita GDP) and the Lao PDR (\$330) also suffer from acute underdevelopment. Consequently, an estimated two million irregular migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia and the Lao PDR are now believed to be present in Thailand.<sup>2</sup> Disparities in the level of economic development and wage levels between Thailand on the one hand and Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar on the other largely account for the desire of workers from the neighboring countries to find employment in Thailand.

Many of these migrants are employed in Thailand's fishery, agricultural, manufacturing, construction and service sectors. Numerous factories have been built in border areas to profit from cheap foreign labour. A historical lack of official labor migration channels has resulted in widespread human trafficking and smuggling. Economic and social push factors that feed human trafficking include poverty, disparities in economic development, lack of education and job opportunities, traditional migration patterns and lack of information in countries of origin about the risk of exploitation associated with irregular migration. Pull factors include huge demand for cheap labour to work in factories, fishing boats, construction sites, family homes as domestics labour and in karaoke bar for prostitution as well. Of course, economic factors are not the only ones promoting migration. Within Myanmar, the lack of social services, particularly education and health, as well as uncertain economic and political environments have also induced persons to migrate. On Thailand's side, improved transportation and communication infrastructure has also facilitated migration.<sup>3</sup> A migrant can be virtually guaranteed a safe crossing across the border and transported to an employer in Thailand and this has continued for a decade.

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<sup>1</sup> Huguét, J W. & Punpuing, S. 2005: 3-5

<sup>2</sup> Asia Migrant Centre (AMC) 2005

<sup>3</sup> United Nations 2002

Thailand officially acknowledged the presence of cross-border migrants in 1996 when a policy of ‘temporary stay awaiting deportation’ was introduced for a quota of only 300,000 migrants in specified provinces and specified jobs. Migrants were allowed to register for a two year stay under this policy. When the economic crisis hit Thailand in 1997, the employment of Thai nationals became a priority issue for the Royal Thai Government and the subsequent policy in 1998 reduced the quota of migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos to 100,000 and for a period of one year only. This same policy was re-enacted in 1999 and 2000. However, in September 2001, a radically different policy was introduced. All migrant workers presently living in Thailand could register for a work permit with their employer, or independently, for a six month period, after which they had to undergo a health check in order to re-register for the following six months. During the September registration, 451,335 migrants from Myanmar registered to work in Thailand.<sup>4</sup> Each registration period was followed by a period of mass deportations of migrants who failed to register, or who were duped into buying false registration cards. It is impossible to estimate the actual number of people migrating from Burma to Thailand; most reports suggest that the number of migrants who registered is less than a half of the migrants actually in Thailand. The Former Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Labour has put the figure at 1.5 million. But figures from the border suggest that, at least in border towns, it may be a much higher number.<sup>5</sup> The profile of these migrants varies widely. Some stay for extended periods in Thailand, particularly the estimated 1.2 million Myanmarese, who have few prospects in their home country. Others simply stay for seasonal work. The World Vision Foundation of Thailand and The Asian Research Center for Migration (2003) carried out a study between January and May 2003 on labour migration to Thailand and attempted to rank the causes of migration. The five main reasons for persons to migrate from Myanmar were (1) low earnings in Myanmar, (2) unemployment in Myanmar, (3) family poverty, (4) traumatic experiences, and (5) a lack of qualifications for employment.<sup>6</sup>

The demand for unskilled labour in Thailand is obviously a pull factor, although in this small sampling of migrants one third were unemployed at the time of the interview. Thailand could not find Thai workers to do the menial jobs that migrants are doing. In 2000, a government plan to retrain Thai workers to replace migrant workers failed completely when 80 per cent of the local Thais replacing migrant workers quit within two or three weeks complaining about the hard work. Migrants always speak of the greater freedom in Thailand, even as illegal residents. Some migrants move to Thailand because they have lost contact with family members who had migrated. One of the interviewees has migrated to Thailand in search of her husband who had migrated several years ago. The researcher has concentrated on the cultural globalization, market expansion and social spatial practices of Myanmarese migrant worker, and analyzes particularly the nature of socio - spatial dialectics of place-making on border land.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, she attempts to review the cultural globalization and market expansion changing a border city into a multicultural marginalized space where the idea of having a clearly bounded nation – state with a homogeneous identity could become unviable but of heterogenous and diverse pluralistic society. This paper focuses on the origin, evolution and interrelation of the Myanmarese migrant workers, with the particular elements of their culture and everyday life, social- spatial, in the border city between Ranong province, Thailand and Victoria point, Myanmar. Is it that living outside the borders of the “homeland” and inside the borders of “another country” often entails a border journey into the memory and imagination that negotiates between old and new, past and present, self and other, safety and danger?

## **II. MIGRATION AND [ITS] HOME: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Migration research provides much of the experience for building the concepts of global and local culture, of de-territorialization and re-territorialization: Convention in earlier migration research was to divide the causal forces into “push-pull factors”. Poverty and oppression pushed the emigrant out of the mountain village; wage labour pulled him to industrial cities across the oceans. A central paradox emerges from an analysis of international migration in the last decade. The actual numbers crossing international borders, legally and illegally, rose substantially. At the same time, public opposition to immigration increased and, in some countries, precipitated violent protests and attacks on foreigners. Most governments responded by tightening control in an attempt to stem the flow. In doing so, they labeled as “illegal” or “undesirable” people who would have been welcomed earlier, either as useful workers or as escapees from oppressive regimes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Asia Migrant Centre (AMC) 2005: 24

<sup>5</sup> Ibid: 25

<sup>6</sup> Huguet, J W. & Punpuing, S. 2005: 6

<sup>7</sup> Shields 1991

<sup>8</sup> Henderson 1995

With the impact of development, post-cold war and globalization on international migration, there have been mass movements of population from one country to another country, driven by over population and poverty. Some cross international borders in their search for a better life. So international migration has a two part structure, on one hand, it is composed of the labour streams seeking jobs in foreign countries. And on the other, it is composed of the increasing flows of refugees from war and political disruption. Central to the question of borders is the question of propriety and property. Conceivably, one possible practice of borders is to anticipate and prepare for new proprietorship by destroying, replacing, and expanding existing ones. For this notion of borders – (as margins waiting to be incorporated as new properties) to work, the accompanying spatial notion of a field is essential. The notion of a “field” is analogous to the notion of “hegemony” in the sense that its formation involves the rise to domination of a group that is able to diffuse its culture to all levels of society.<sup>9</sup> But in Gramsci’s term hegemony has not been clearly demarcated into national and transnational spaces. Because “borders” have so clearly meandered into so many intellectual issues that the more stable and conventional relation between borders and the “field” no longer holds; intervention cannot simply be thought of in terms of the creation of new “fields”. Instead, it is necessary to think primarily in terms of borders that is, as “para-sites” that never take over a field in its entirety but erode it slowly and tactically.

Anthropology of border has come to notice that conceptions of cultural borders have given way to globalism, multiculturalism, and transnationalism, while generic boundaries have collapsed into “blurred” or “mixed” genres.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the heightened movement of peoples, symbols and practices have not only undermined the structures that attempted to confer a sense of homogeneity in the social order, as it embedded the identity of subjects within given geo-political units and linear narratives of history, but has also problematized the degree to which migrant have made an exclusive identification with their place of work and living. The increasing polarization and itinerization of migrant communities operates against conventional practices of settlement and adaptation. As the rights of movement have become more restrictive, passages across borders more criminalized, and possibilities more precarious, the spaces of diasporic communities have undergone transformation.<sup>11</sup> The idea of permanent resettlement has become more remote. The classical migrant trajectories which were, for the most part, mapped in linear and unidirectional terms, no longer correlate with the turbulent patterns of global migration. Now patterns have emerged which highlight the provisions of settlement.<sup>12</sup>

However, Castles and Davison (2000) say that migration means leaving home and taking up residence in someone else’s home. This implies a clash between the ‘house rules’ of the new place and the practices that immigrants bring with them. The newcomers seek to construct a place that they can again call home, and follow their own preferences that involves negotiations with neighbours. That’s a place making which is a highly visible process, through signs on shops and restaurants, local market and a different use of public space. On the borderland, place making can be seen as a spatial extension of home building are linked to the partial control of local markets.<sup>13</sup> The home plays an important role for most people, home is where one feels a sense of belonging and security and one can decide on acceptable values and forms of behavior. Feher and Heller (1994) have proposed the concept of ‘house rules’, that home also implies closure: only those who belong can come in, and a home- owner can shut the door on outsiders. However, home does not just refer to a house, but by analogy to a wider social space. The notion of home is part of the discourse of the nation- state, having emotive connotations of solidarity with those inside and exclusion of those outside. The newcomers seek to construct a place of their own which they can again call home, and follow their own preferences.

Hage (1997:102) defines home-building as ‘the building of a feeling of being at home’ using ‘affective building blocks’ based on four key feelings: ‘security, familiarity, community and a sense of possibility’. Hage argues that introduction of material goods (especially food) and cultural symbols from the homeland is not a nostalgic attempt to symbolically return home. Pascoe (1992) describes the place-making (or home-building) process with regard to Italian migrants, showing how Italian regionalism is reflected in patterns of settlement in the USA, Britain and Australia. He argues that place-making consists of three sets of strategies concerned with ‘naming, rituals and institutions’. Naming refers to the practice of giving homeland names to places in the new country. It also applies to business signs in homeland languages. Rituals refer to public events that affirm the belongingness and the cohesion of the group and Institutions include welfare associations, clubs, churches and so on that both demonstrate the presence of a community and provide the services it needs.

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<sup>9</sup> Gramsci 1984

<sup>10</sup> see Appadurai 2003 and Papastergiadis 1998

<sup>11</sup> Richmond 1994

<sup>12</sup> Chambers, 1994

<sup>13</sup> Castles and Davison (2000): 130-131

**Myanmar Migrant Workers: Consumerist Cultural Activities and Assertion for Nationalism :** Burma or Myanmar is composed of 14 states and divisions, out of which 7 states and 2 divisions have borders with neighbouring countries, Myanmar shares common borders with Bangladesh and India in the West, China in the north and northeast, Laos and Thailand in the east. The Bay of Bengal lies to the west and the Andaman Sea to the south of the country. The population is estimated to be about 48.3 million, according to a Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic 2002, UNAIDS.<sup>14</sup> Then, on the Myanmar - Thailand border there are four permanent crossing points, from north to south between Tachilek and Mae Sai, Myawaddy and Mae Sot, Kanchanburi and Three Pagodas Pass, Kawthaung and Ranong. In addition, there are hundreds of points along the border where migrants cross on foot. There are over one million internally displaced in Myanmar, 120,000 refugees housed in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. The journey from Myanmar to Thailand takes most migrants at least four days and three nights; passing checkpoints on both sides they stay with friends, with brokers, or just sleep in the jungle. In the south, Ranong province the migrants make a part of the journey by sea.

At Ranong province of Thailand, the Myanmar crossed the border easily from Kawthaung, the harbour of Burma's Victoria Point to the nearby Thai port of Ranong. And, they also cross at small ports located along Kraburi River which is on Thailand- Myanmar territory. It could be said that this border seems no man's land. It means that it not seriously guarded a territory if we compare it to the north of Thailand where a minority conflict in Myanmar makes the national security very strong. Most of them left their homes and came to Thailand because they know that they could earn more money here than they can in Myanmar. Therefore, in Ranong's market, you can see lots of the Myanmar men walking around the town wearing longyis (sarongs) and taking to finish a mouthful of betel and areca nuts and the most of women make up their face with Myanmar powder (Tanaka). As is important for Ranong economy, we also see Myanmar script, along with Chinese and Thai script, displayed on the shop's front. This implies a clash between the 'house rules' of the new place and the practices that immigrants brought with them.

It could be said that there are lots of Myanmar migrant communities in Ranong province. Moreover, it can be found that if you happen to go to Ranong province, particularly to Ranong's city without adequate information regarding it, you would probably assume that it is in Myanmar and not in Thai territory. However, my concern here is not about the geographical border. If you did not know that the town of Ranong province is in Thailand, you would probably assume that it was in Myanmar. Myanmar script is written on almost every shop front, most of the men walk round the town wearing longyis (sarongs) and traditional Myanmar teashops are found at every corner. Not surprisingly, Myanmar nationals in this border town now outnumber the local. But, it is a large population of economic migrants. Despite the fact they are in the minority, being a Thai in this area has distinct advantages. Most Myanmar people are working to feed their families amidst the constant threat of deportation. "Myanmar people face many challenges here," said Ko Phyoo, the deputy head of local migrant association Yaung Chi Oo (New Dawn). "But every year more continue to come, because the situation in Myanmar is getting worse and worse."

The Myanmar migrants told that having had just arrived and they had been looking for job, some job; or they had just lost their employment. Then, they work extremely long hours and are often forbidden contact with outside world. They were working or had worked in the following jobs: as fishermen, construction site workers, shop attendants, garbage recyclers, or ironing at laundries, as waiters/waitresses, furniture polishers, domestic workers, employees spinning cotton and engaged in textile, plastic, recycling and plywood factories. They also worked as handymen, taking care of the elderly. Most of the migrants have made several trips to Thailand as a transit country on their way to work in Malaysia as well. Myanmar migrant workers often come to Ranong province with an expectation of economic and social integration into a local society. Differences between migrant workers and local people in language and traditions may seem less significant than the common acceptance of a culture and economic and political structures. However, there are such individual workers as usually can integrate to highly skilled migrants, who are not subjected to processes of labour market segmentation and residential segregation. But, most of lower- skilled migrants experience discrimination and exclusion. This often provokes a response in which group culture becomes a resource for survival and resistance. The push factors for migration forced many migrants to move from their homes and be use as forced labour by the military regime. They talk about their experience of the practices of being forced:

*"It is because of the economy. No one can survive with this very bad economy and that's because of commodity prices. People's income and spending can never be balanced. If you are a labourer you will*

<sup>14</sup> Asia Migrant Centre (AMC) 2005: 23

*earn 200 kyat a day. You can neither eat out nor bring lunch from home with that earning. So you have to borrow money from others and you become heavily in debt."*

*(a 27 years old man who newly arrived , interviewed on 5th August 2010)*

*"In our village we always have to pay porter fees, voluntary labour fees, fire watch fees, people's militia fees. And other social donations come up to about (Ks 3,000) a month. So people with an average income of less than (Ks 20,000) a month cannot survive without getting into debt...Our farm produced 60 baskets; we had to give 12 to the government."*

*"I had to pay tax to government and rice from my plantation. If I didn't work, I had to pay tax for idleness once a year, whether I had a husband nor not."*

*(a 30 years old woman, Nian, who worked as farmer interviewed on 15th November 2010)*

*"Our family's economic situation was very bad and survival was difficult. I have a baby daughter in Burma and a wife too. If I worked harvesting peanuts or rice, I would get 400 kyat per day. I could not do anything with that 400. It costs over 1,000 kyat for one Paittha of dried fish. The prices of rice and cooking oil are increasing."*

*(a 42 years old man, interviewed on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010)*

They had seen and heard from migrants returning with money and believed that they could make more money in Thailand. So, they decided to come to Thailand.

*"I have decided to come to Thailand because my friend told me I could send home ten thousand kyat per month. In Burma I could not make any money. My father was only a public employee earning 3,800 kyat. We could not make our ends meet. Therefore, I have decided to leave for Thailand."*

Nuay, a Burma woman who is working in seafood factory (interviewed on 22nd January 2011)

*"In Thailand, we have money for food and to spend. Back home we had only farm work and no money"*

And Khin (interviewed on 22nd January 2011, She is Nuay's friend.)

She had never gone back to Myanmar, although her parents live only a day's journey away and she keeps in touch by phone and mail. Last year she sent home the equivalent of \$ 50. But she fears if she crossed the border and were caught, she would be prevented from returning to Thailand. She hopes, "I want my brother to get a good education, so he will be able to find a good job in Thailand and make a better life."

Thus, The Myanmar migrant workers also were supposed to work in the fishing and related industry that prompted them to travel to Thailand, to be authorized to work and to send remittances, with high fees at every step. Usually they pay an agent to bring them across the border and to deliver them to their destination. Alternatively, they may pay an agent to deliver an agreed number of workers (5,000 baths per person). However, they are exploited for the fees required to cross the border into Thailand and to send remittances home. Nevertheless, though the Myanmar migrant workers always dream and hope to return to their home, Myanmar, yet in virtual reality they imagine that Ranong province in their home defined in broad perspective. Mi Kay said (interviewed on 10th January 2011, She is a domestic worker.) that she still has dreams of returning to Rangoon, Myanmar, to meet her family. For now, though, she continues working in Ranong province.

*"I do not have enough money yet,"*

And Cho, now 22, dreams to return to Myanmar and start a small shop, but she earns too little to save much. (interviewed on 1st February 2011)

A migrant dreams (interviewed on 28th February 2011 with a female Myanmar domestic worker.):

*"I will work, save money, send money back home and then I will go back home. The quicker I can save money, the sooner I can go home."*

Ming dreams (interviewed on 19th February 2011 with a female Myanmar salesman in the grocery shop) are as follows:

*"I want to have my own business to earn good money so that I can spend a bit and live like everybody else. I had summer school holiday. I came here to work. This is my third time. Now I will work until I get enough money to do something in my hometown."*

Thus, many Myanmar migrant workers would like to build new communities in Ranong province which would give them a "feeling of being at home. Their feelings security, familiarity, community and a sense of

possibility”<sup>15</sup> as cultural symbols from the homeland are not a nostalgic attempt to symbolically return home. As for their home could be either imagined home in Ranong province, Thailand or returning to Myanmar.

**Home Is Not Where we sing for: Karaoke Bar and Its Place- Making :** Doing my fieldwork between August 2010 –November 2011 in Ranong province, I founded that the sounds of Myanmar’s karaoke filled the roads in every evening at Pauk Khaung, Pauk Khaung is not only where we find Myanmar village and fishing factory but also a famous Myanmar karaoke area in Ranong as well. Actually, there are not karaoke bars in the sense of night club bar, mostly karaoke jukebox are in shop houses. This area is only hit entertainment for Myanmar migrant workers indeed. Every evening, Myanmar migrant workers often sing karaoke Myanmar songs in karaoke bars/shops and present their voices very loudly. The appearance of common people and the new lifestyle are presented in the practice of karaoke singing place, which is symbolic of the newness in place making. Also, Karaoke is device to let us know that the Myanmar migrant workers seek a meaning of escape from the everyday poverty, fear and oppression that are both real and imagined.

The karaoke place is a source place-making imagination, as it resists the easy distinction between public and private, commercial and recreational. For karaoke singing, the indifference between the two sound machines (microphone and TV) is found not in the meaning of sound-and-vision experience but in the theatricalization of space by incorporation of the stage from the floor. Metaphorically, the significance of the visual space in this territory lies in the subjective and the collective participation. In order to fill the gap, Myanmar migrant workers rather than considering it place as ready-made, interpret it as space established by them. Thus, Karaoke was embraced as an everyday cultural practice of Myanmar migrant workers. In place like Pauk Khaung, Ranong province, the karaoke bars/shops became zones of cultural production and consumption and contested spaces of meaning-making and meaning- breaking. Karaoke shops/bars are socially constructed, in that they are made possible through the tacit and explicit social assumptions, agreements, practices, habits, and significations nurtured by the migrants. The karaoke place on the border is a highly visible process, through signs on shops and restaurants, ethnic markets and different kind of use of public space. And it is the place-making to occur everywhere karaoke shops exist.

During the evening the microphone passes from hand to hand and everyone present can be a star in turn. There are about 40 karaoke bars/shops owned by both Ranong native and Myanmar migrant workers in Pauk Khaung, Ranong province. Mostly there are shop housing karaoke. Each shop have only one karaoke jukebox and it has Myanmar music’s lists on the wall for service the customers. The Myanmar migrant workers always sing songs after work time and drink alcohol with girls and their friends. They seem not only to get rid of their stress but also to get more relaxation and imagination there. They always sing karaoke songs in Myanmar language, not in Thai language. The CDs of karaoke songs, almost are Myanmar popular music were imported from Myanmar, these are illegal. But who cares! To sing songs in Myanmar at Ranong, the karaoke became a tool of symbolism of the community. In the Myanmar migrant worker communities, karaoke is very popular because it is consistent with culture practice of social singing. Specially, one of the features in their everyday life is that they want to relax and sing songs with girls in karaoke shops. As a metaphor, the practice of karaoke suggests the old identity they lost and the new one they found. The singing is one of the methods to construct their space and power in the new country. When they live in Myanmar, they cannot sing karaoke songs in public space such as karaoke bars and restaurants or become owner especially of karaoke machine. And when they come to Thailand and live on the border, they cannot speak Thai and communicate with people around them so they feel inferior. They want to able to communicate in Thai and understand each other better. Living in a foreign land without full rights, it is understandable, they have some feelings of fear and uncertainty. However, they do not blame anyone or ask for anything beyond basic consideration as a human being.

This generalization comes specifically related to identity. Communities which are marginalized, which succeed or fail to create space, which stand against flows of capital and practice to inscribe their identity on the physical world, try to register their identity with sincerity. When a singer’s voice is mechanically amplified (with echo) and shared with the anonymous audience, it becomes more publicized than an unamplified singing voice. For those who are not strangers in the communities, a collective singing in shop houses seem like a participatory democracy in their dream. Maybe they cannot do something like this in their homeland.

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<sup>15</sup> Hage 1997: 102

Thus, a karaoke is not only a reincarnation technology but also a pre-existing cultural practice for the migrants. Moreover, the karaoke singing is expected to take a turn at performing on stage for the warmly enjoyment with others, no matter how well or badly Myanmar migrant workers perform. Indeed, they only want to present and perform as free (dom) as they can on these practices. They think that they are using imagination by buying the latest mass produced goods, karaoke. Their imagination becomes scripted by those same market forces, so that dreams become commercials, which become karaoke scenes and music, which become dreams all over again, severed from their material history and therefore believed to be unique. The imagination that makes place possible is not the imagination of fantasy. It is not that they produce self-contained worlds, which they then use to reconstruct the real world.

Tentatively, I think, their voices empowered them and also expressed their yearning for freedom or freedom. Hence, karaoke is intimately related to the democracy and freedom of self expression in Thailand. However, many karaoke shop houses operated in small private rooms and open door. The local authorities always went there and sometimes forced the owner to close the shop house. Because they supposed these shops had connection with the underground economy such as prostitution, trafficking, drug and tax evasion. It is important to note that their voices are liberated by them for freedom. While they escaped from their homeland and confront the new home, they have to build new place like their home in Burma. Hence place-making imagination must be something more than the mere production of images of place or space. Karaoke place, as place-making imagination was constructed for escaped the reality, after work in everyday. Many Myanmar migrant workers expect their home to be democratic country, the homeland of their imagination and they expect the new home to give democratic lifestyle and modern life. In reality, they want to express them in front of Thai society and enjoy respect from the Thai people. Not only they imagine and dream in karaoke but also they want to meet what is imagined in the real world, "Life is not all bad, when we look at the brighter side" said a Myanmar migrant worker who was sitting in karaoke shop.

Furthermore, they build place-making which is a highly visible process, through signs on shops and restaurants, markets and a different use of public space. It can be seen as a spatial extension of home-building through which they partially reshape their neighborhoods to correspond more closely to their needs and values. It is a collective process that only becomes possible as a result of migrants clustering. So place-making is linked to the partial control of local markets, above all the housing, labour and retail markets, by minorities. Therefore, home-building and place-making are important parts of community formation. If the home is a place to go out from into the wider society, it is also a place to return to for protection from discrimination or violence.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Burma, i.e., Myanmar is ruled by a repressive military junta, which is showing little desire to improve the rights and living conditions of its poverty-stricken people. Not only is it hard for ordinary citizens to earn a living, it is becoming increasingly dangerous for some people to continue living there at all. In the past two decades, the waves of Myanmar migrant workers moved across Thailand's border to escape poverty in Myanmar. Leaving home and taking up residence in another land, Myanmar migrant workers seek to construct particular places that they can make through negotiation with neighbours in many cities on the border between Thailand and Myanmar and also in the cities distance from the border. However, the migrants from Myanmar are particularly highly represented in border areas, as low-status working population and unskilled workers. They were working hard and their jobs are commonly known as "dirty, dangerous, and demeaning". Many of them expect their home land will be a democratic country but before that, their temporary living place in Thailand gives them a chance of democratic life and modern lifestyles. In fact, they are never respected as much as they want to be by the Thai people. The democratic from of struggle in everyday life is just what they need. In Ranong province, the important border city of southern of Thailand, Myanmar migrant workers also constructed a place at Pak Khaung which had cultural meanings in their everyday life while they were living in this city. One of the cultural forms that they used is the karaoke. And there are many karaoke bars/shops in Myanmar migrant worker community on Pak Khaung Ranong. And the songs they sang signified a symbolized community. It is not surprising that these Myanmar migrant workers did not feel a sense of belonging and security in their homeland. These were no freedom of speech there.

The karaoke Myanmar songs in karaoke bars/shops represented the voice of freedom. It is very loudly. Moreover, the karaoke shops' places took the lines among leisure, work and entertainment which were blurred. Their loudly voices also empowered them to get the freedom in the place not only they used to belong to but also in that they belong to now. Thus, they also felt that karaoke is related to the democracy and freedom of self expression in their living in Thailand. Moreover, Myanmar karaoke is a device to let us know that Myanmar migrant workers intend to seek a means of escape from the everyday poverty, fear and oppression that are both reality and imagination.

However, the globalization, market expansion and social spatial practices of Myanmar migrant workers on the borderland such as Ranong province often entails a 'border journey' into the memory and imagination that negotiates between past and present, homeland and neighbouring countries, self and other, safety and danger. Then, it is within such dynamic processes of negotiation that they seek to insert their culture and everyday life to making place for living in Thailand to live. Thus, home does not just refer to a house, but by analogy to a wider social space – even a country. The notion of home is part of the discourse of the nation-state, having emotive connotations of solidarity with those inside and the exclusion of those outside.

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