

**Inequality and way of life of Burmese migrants in Thailand:
A case study in Chiang Mai**

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Abstract

This paper draws on case studies of Burmese migrants in the city of Chiang Mai, Thailand, to explore concepts and theories of migration, uneven development and acculturation in which migrants engages in the new environment of urban societies. It examines the new emergence of push-pull factors of migration, mainly economic reason and urban attractions, which bring Burmese migrants into the city. Further, the paper pays more attention on the concept of uneven development, which comes along with the process of development in urban areas. It discusses about the cities like Chiang Mai as a place where provides residents to access not only greater opportunities for work, activity and key good as well as services, but the places also emerge alongside rising urban inequality for a certain group of people, particularly Burmese migrant workers are recognized as a local symbol of inequality in Chiang Mai, as well as in Asia region. Lastly, the paper focuses analytical attention on ‘way of life’ of Burmese migrants of varying cultural, social, political and economic backgrounds, which it responds to the narratives about urban diversity and development of the city of Chiang Mai where they encounter. Based on acculturation framework, cultural way of life of Burmese migrants living in Chiang Mai is classified into three main areas; assimilation, separation and integration, and each area of way of life would be adapted by different generations of the migrants. Therefore, one can see the social phenomenon of Burmese migrants, especially Shan ethnic group, would emerge through Thai society in the city at different levels of lifestyles.

Introduction

This paper is an individual research as apart of a course “Urbanism and Development” assigned by a lecturer, namely Dr. Shirley Worland. Each student is required to choose and submit the individual paper regarding a class related topic. I, Tithirat Pripotjanart, as a student thus decide to study about migration, inequality and way of life of Burmese migrants in the city of Chiang Mai, Thailand.

First of all, I would like to explain the aims of this research. Interestingly, Chiang Mai as the second largest city in Thailand is experiencing a significant increase in population both its citizens and immigrants, and through the term “development,” the city has shaped people’s “Way of Life” as well as it is also shaped by urbanism. Beside this, among the social groups, the city of Chiang Mai has not only provided a wider variety of opportunity, goods and services to dwellers, but it has also created a widening of the gap between migrants and local residents.

From here, the paper first aims to explore the factors that attractively bring Burmese migrants to Chiang Mai. It next aims to examine whether it is fair or not to consider the cities like Chiang Mai as development and urbanization as the places concurrently emerge through the process of development with inequality among different groups of people, ethnicities and genders, as well as social services. Lastly, the paper is interested to see how Burmese migrants create their way of lifestyles influenced by the urban society in Chiang Mai.

In this paper, it will first clarify about the background of research. Then the paper will explain about conceptualization of the research. Next, it will give an overview of research structure. Further, the paper will discuss about literature review in order to illustrate the research problems. For the next section, the paper will prove research problems as well as its findings by analyzing the research data. After that it will end with conclusion and recommendation. Last, it will provide the references, which the paper is cited by different sources, including articles, web pages and so on.

Background of Study

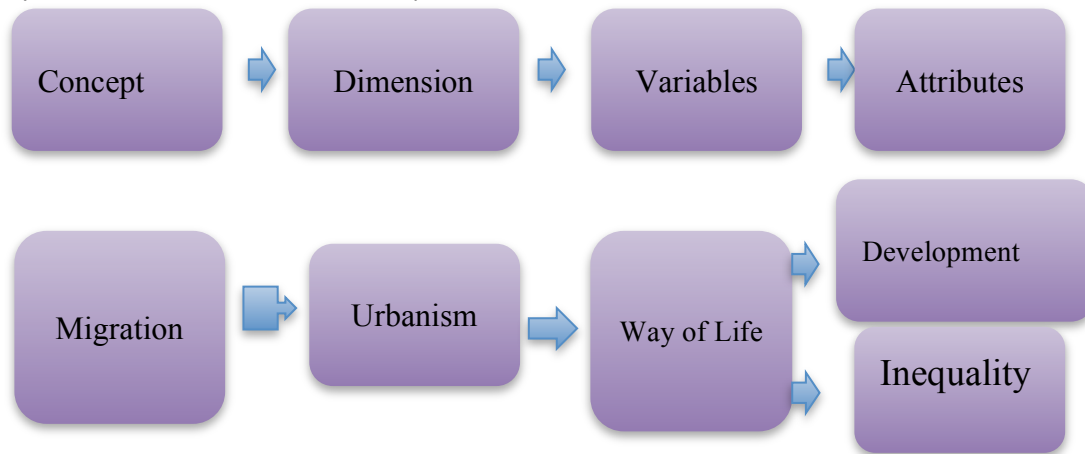
In Thailand, Chiang Mai as a cultural and economic city has become a top destination for a large number of Burmese migrants as well as the citizens in living and searching of job opportunity, refuge and a better life. Over 200,000 Burmese migrants or one-sixth of the total population of Chiang Mai are currently dependent labors in all areas of low paying jobs, including construction, agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and the manufacturing and food processing industry (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2012).

Further, Chiang Mai's status as a metropolitan centre in the North becomes an attractive place for a lot of Burmese migrants to move into northern Thailand. For another reason is that because of its continuous border between Chiang Mai province and the Shan State in Burma facilitates the flow of migration. And the last reason is because of the cultural and linguistic similarity between the northern Thai dialect and the Shan language. In the urban society of Chiang Mai, the urban livelihoods of migrants are influenced by city life in Chiang Mai. At the same time, these Burmese migrants also create their space and social integration in urban society, resulting the city has been emerged with diversity of urban characteristics. However, among social groups, Burmese migrants still have been excluded and perceived negatively at different levels within the urban society. Indeed, the majority of Burmese migrants have to encounter hardships and difficulties such as bad living condition and unsanitary environment. Based on this general background of study, the paper will illustrate more in the next section in order to achieve its objectives.

Conceptualization of the research

Based on the earlier literature review and my personal knowledge as well as experiences, I have developed and conceptualized my research topic as the below in order to have a clear guideline of discussion and analysis. In my conceptual framework, migration is identified as a concept of social phenomena, which in general involves the movement of people from one place to the others either permanently or temporarily.

The paper then conceptualizes the term “urbanism” as a dimension that attracts migrants to immigrate. Further, the city of Chiang Mai has influenced social organizations, attitude and personalities of urban dwellers, which defined as variable of way of life. As a result, based on various indicators of way of life of Burmese migrants compared to the local residents are defined as development and inequality as attributes of this research topic.



This research method includes secondary data analysis of both qualitative and quantitative approach based on available reports and researches related to the topic. This draws up one or more concepts as well as theoretical frameworks from migration, urban development and acculturation base relative to Burmese migrants in the city of Chiang Mai, northern Thailand. The outline incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data analysis as it aims to assess overall picture of migration in the city of Chiang Mai, Thailand. In addition, this research method include mixed approach of secondary data analysis to develop a mature understanding on concepts of urbanism as way of life, illustrating how Burmese migrants are influenced and impacted by urban development, as well as inequality in their daily lives compared to local residents in the city of Chiang Mai.

My research study drew on migration, uneven development and way of life of Burmese migrants in the city of Chiang Mai sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are new factors that attract contemporary Burmese migrants to live in Chiang Mai?
2. Is it fair to say that the cities like Chiang Mai is ‘development’ or inequality based on the case study of Burmese migrants?
3. How do Burmese migrants create their way of lives influenced by city of Chiang Mai?

Overview of the Report

From here, the research report includes three further sections. Section Two is a literature review in which theories and concepts base relative to the research topic “Migration, Uneven development and Way of life of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai.” Section Three is the discussion of analysis of secondary dada in order to reach research findings, which qualitative approach is mainly used and followed by quantitative approach. The last section of the research report is of conclusion and recommendation, which I summarize all of data analysis and the result of my research findings. Then the

research will be ended with my recommendation based on research findings, data analysis and discussion.

Migration as Mode of Development in Chiang Mai

This section will explore of the definition, concepts and theories base relative to “migration, uneven development and acculturation of urbanism in Chiang Mai,” as well as information and fact from the secondary sources. It will be separated into three main themes. (2.1) It will first look at how migration is defined and what factors brings Burmese migrants to the city of Chiang Mai based on two theories, “push-pull factors” and “Dual labor markets.” (2.2) It will briefly explore the theories of uneven development and city of inequality by looking at urban lives of Burmese migrants in Thai context. (2.3) Based on the theory of acculturation, the paper will look at way of life of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai in different issues of assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration.

Migration and factors bring Burmese migrants to Chiang Mai

Before exploring issues of Burmese migrants, including inequality and “Way of life” in the city of Chiang Mai, it first needs to look at the definition and theory of migration. Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon and it is defined as “a move from one migration defining area to another (or a move of some specified minimum distance) that was made during a given migration interval and that involves change of residence.” In terms of person, a migrant is also defined as “a person who has changed his usual place of residence from one migration-defining area to another (or who moved some specified minimum distance) at least once during the migration interval” (UN, 1970:2).

Thailand becomes a major destination country for an international migration from neighboring countries, including Myanmar/Burma, Lao Peoples’ Democratic Republic (PDR) and Cambodia Since 1988. Migrants in Thailand can be classified into two main categories, called regular migrant and irregular migrant. Regular migrant is a person who entering into the country legally. And irregular migrant refers to a person who entering into the country illegally (Jidapa Maepien and Busakorn Sangkaew, 2013). In Chang Mai, it is also noticeable that Burmese migrants, Shan ethnic group particularly, have emerged and become visible within the city. Briefly, Shan is a sub-group of Tai ethnic group of Southeast Asia and they primarily live in the Shan State of Burma (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2008). In Chiang Mai in 2013, it is reported that almost 70,000 migrant laborers from Burma eligible for work permits and of these numbers 47, 290 applied and obtained work permits. It is estimated that more than 90% of this group were ethnic Shan nationals and the rest includes Burmese, Karen, Karenni, Mon and other ethnic groups from Burma (Office Of Foreign Worker Administration, 2014).

More importantly, a further question needs to be raised that what are factors bring Burmese migrants to the Chiang Mai? Here, two theories, known as ‘push and pull factor’ and the ‘Dual labor market,’ seem to be well describing the international migration in Thailand. According to Lee’s push and pull model in 1966, the push factors are things that are unfavorable about the area that the individual lives in while the pull factors are things that attract one to another area. Besides the push-pull theory, the ‘Dual labor market theory’ is relevant to describe the characteristic of international migration in

Thailand. According to the theory, pull factors in more developed countries mainly cause migration. The theory assumes that the labor markets in these more developed countries consist of two segments: primary, which requires high-skilled labor, and secondary, which is very labor-intensive but requires low-skilled workers (Jidapa Maepien and Busakorn Sangkaew, 2013).

The international migration in Thailand can be classified into two main purposes, including employment purpose and fleeing from the political unrest in their home country. Likewise, Burmese migrants come to Chiang Mai with several purposes, including traveling, seeking for an employment and fleeing from economic hardship and internal conflicts in their homeland. According to Amporn Jirattikorn (2008), Chiang Mai's status as an urban centre in the North becomes a pull factor that attracts a huge number of Shan migrants to flow into the city. Another reason is that because of its continuous border between Chiang Mai province and the Shan State in Burma facilitates the flow of migration. And for the last reason is because of the cultural and linguistic similarity between the northern Thai dialect and the Shan language. The majority of these Burmese migrants work in 3Ds job (Dangerous, Difficulty and Demeaning).

This is clear that Burmese migrants in Thailand, particularly Shan ethnic groups, have migrated across Thai-Burma borders into Thailand for various purposes. Based on push-pull factors and Dual labour markets theory, Chiang Mai province as urban centre, geographical proximity between Shan State and northern Thailand and rich of cultural and economic city has become a main destination for Burmese migrants to travel, seek job opportunities and flee from unstable situation in Burma.

Inequality and Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai

Inequality persists everywhere in the world, and is expectedly pronounced in developing or recently developed nations (Boonyarit Nakphong, 2013). Inequality may be the result of global economic forces, but it matters in a local sense. A city where the rich are very rich, and the poor very poor, is likely to face many difficulties. The studies believe that international migration is a powerful symbol of global inequality, in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, or lifestyles. Millions of workers and their families move each year across borders and across continents, seeking to reduce what they see as the gap between their own position and that of people in other, wealthier, places. In turn, there is a growing consensus in the development field that migration represents an important livelihood diversification strategy for many in the world's poorest nations (Black, Natali and Skinner, 2005). In addition, the marginalized urban poor receive incomes that are too low to purchase what they need for long-term survival and advancement, reflecting poor employment opportunities, low wages and (or) low returns from informal vending or other forms of self-employment. This also reflects the extent to which and the amounts that urban dwellers pay for everything they use, with few opportunities to secure essential goods and services outside of the market, including water and sanitation, rent for housing, food, transport and health care (Mitlin, 2005).

In Thailand, migrant rights have been exclusively linked to their work place and consequently to their employer, apart from a six month period in 2001 and a twelve month period in 2004. Thus, migrants working in factories are housed in barracks within the factory compound, migrants on construction sites live in shanty dwellings on site, domestic workers live in the houses of their

employers, agricultural workers build small bamboo huts in the orchards or tin huts in the rubber plantations. Only a small minority of workers lives independently of their employer (MAP, 2010).

Furthermore, it must be stressed at the onset that large numbers of regular and irregular migrants work without encountering serious human rights violations in Thailand. However, a significant number of migrants do face a wide range of gross exploitation, occupational hazards, intense suffering and depression (Archavanitkul, et al., 2000; Amnesty International, 2005; Pearson et al., 2006a; Human Rights Watch, 2010). Migrants are often forced to do heavy and difficult work for low wages, and are placed in unsafe or unsanitary work environments. In addition, most migrants are unable to access proper health care and generally are not protected by Thai labour laws, which are loosely enforced even for Thai workers. There have been frequent stories of employers refusing to pay workers and then telling the police to arrest them, which then often result in the migrants being deported. Moreover, many migrant workers fall into semi-forced employment as they are prohibited from leaving their workplace due to the strictness of their employers or debt bondage related to the high costs of unregulated registration or regularization processes often paid by their employers first and then deducted from their salaries over many years. Reports of migrants falling victim to systematic violence (including torture and killings), extortion, unlawful arrest, detention and other kinds of exploitation in their everyday lives are also widespread (Amnesty International, 2005& Human Rights Watch, 2010).

On the other hand, it is reported that women migrants are more likely to encounter abusive practices than their male counterparts. There have been a considerable number of well-documented reports of physical violence against children and women but very few arrests have been made in any of these cases. Furthermore, the vulnerability of women migrants partly stems from the physical and social isolation of their employment. While male migrants usually live and work with other migrants, women migrants often work in jobs in the domestic and service sectors, in which they may have no contact with other migrant women. More importantly, female migrants are prone to be trapped by the human trafficking trade and (or) physically and sexually abused (Jerrold W. H. & Aphichat Chamratrithirong, 2011).

In addition, Thailand still does not have a universally applicable Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act, and OHS law is still a mix of prescriptive regulations, applying to some workers and workplaces. Official statistics report around 900 deaths and 200,000 injuries and diseases at work each year in Thailand, yet an International Labor Organization (ILO) reported in 2001 estimated about 7,000 and 5.5 Million respectively. In relation to migrant workplaces in particular, factories still contain numerous potentially fatal and usually uncontrolled hazards, in particular relating to fire, chemicals and machinery (MAP, 2010).

Here, it is clearly seen that although the cities such as Chiang Mai are considered as the places where provide better opportunities for people, including Burmese migrants, to access goods and services, but it also needs to see that the places of development and industrialization also create inequality among groups of people, ethnicities and genders, as well as wages, labour market opportunities, or lifestyles.

Acculturation and Burmese migrant communities in Chiang Mai

According to John Berry (1997), acculturation is a theory related to groups who migrate and settle in a culture different to their own, which can be classified into two main issues. The first issue is cultural maintenance, which relates to the extent resettling groups believe their own cultural identity and characteristics are important. And another issue is called contact and participation, which relates to the extent they should become involved in other cultural groups or remain primarily among themselves. In these two issues, there are four alternative acculturation strategies – assimilation, integration, separation or marginalization (Berry, 1997, p. 9). To briefly clarify, assimilation refers to immigrants who were to be incorporated into society through a one-sided process of adaptation. Differently, integration is often simply a slower and gentler form of assimilation.

In the case of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai, Shan ethnic group has become a highly visible group in this city. For many decades, migrants flowed across the border easily both as individuals attracted by the possibility of employment for wages, and as families moving for trade. Prior to the 1990s, Shan migrants came in small numbers, which they could find work and assimilate into an existing community easily. However, as a result of the forced relocation policy and the deterioration of the Burmese economy, the 1990s saw a major shift in the pattern of Shan migration. The new arrivals came in much large numbers. They work for low-paying jobs, which involve everything from construction work, agricultural farms, serving as housemaids, to food vendors and selling various goods in the markets (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2008).

Here, the Shan migrants can be classified into two main groups based on their social status, which are the old and the new migrants. According to Amporn Jirattikorn (2008), economic and educational factors as well as citizenship make the longtime resident Shan in Chiang Mai different from the new arrivals. The old migrants settled in northern Thailand prior to the past decade; some are from an already existing Shan community in Chiang Mai, others moved to Chiang Mai from established Shan immigrant communities elsewhere in northern Thailand. Most of them have managed to obtain Thai citizenship. They were educated under the Thai school system and are well assimilated into Thai society. In sum, they have more “cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1984).

On the other hand, another group of Burmese migrants has their own way of life of varying culture, social, politics and economics through public sphere in the urban city of Chiang Mai. This can be categorized into three main areas; 1) Shan migrants’ fairs and festivals; 2) two temples of Shan, namely, Wat Ku tao and Wat Pa pao located in the middle of the city; And 3) the Shan quarter and even a cluster of Shan Karaoke pubs in several sectors of the town (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2008).

Further, younger generation of Burmese/Shan migrants also seems to integrate well into the host society of local Thai residents in Chiang Mai. Burmese migrant children would study both formal education of Thai government and informal education supported by Thai NGOs at several levels, starting from primary school until undergraduate levels. Since 2001, the education policies of Thailand announced that every single child has right to study. In 2012, approximately 65,000 Burmese migrant students were registered in primary school of Thai government. However, 40 % of children of undocumented migrants did not attend any school (MAP, 2014).

Based on the theory of Berry, it is clear that the picture of Burmese migrants living in the Chiang Mai have their own cultural identity and communities. At the same time, some of them also try to integrate themselves with the host society in Chiang Mai.

To sum up, this paper has given an overview of the issues of Burmese migrants in the city of Chiang Mai. It is based on the concepts and theories of migration, uneven development and acculturation. It obviously shows that the three distinctive themes need to be taken into consideration for further research; Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai, Inequality and living situation of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai and way of life and Burmese migrant community in the city of Chiang Mai. In the next section, the paper will fully employ the concepts and theories of each theme in order to discuss and analyze as well as to answer the research findings.

Contemporary Migration and Urbanism in Chiang Mai

This section will discuss and analyze the issues of Burmese migrants in the urban city of Chiang Mai. This will be separated into three main themes. First, it will examine why recent Burmese migrants, particularly Shan ethnic group, as an urban characteristics still become highly visible in Chiang Mai based on “push-pull factors” and “Dual market labor theory. This clearly shows that Burmese/Shan migrants recently are brought by economic and urban pull factors rather than instability of political situation in Burma. Second, the it will analyze how the cities such as Chiang Mai are a place of development and industrialization also create inequality between groups of people, ethnicities and genders, as well as wages, labor market opportunities, or lifestyles. It argues that Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai can be considered as a group of people with inequality. Lastly, this section will discuss urbanism as way of life of Burmese migrants living in the city of Chiang Mai by analyzing Burmese/Shan migrants community in Chiang Mai in order to see the migrants are shaped by the urban city of Chiang Mai based on the concept of acculturation pattern.

Newly emerging factors and Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai

This theme will discuss and analyze why Burmese migrants, particularly Shan ethnic group, as an urban characteristics still become highly visible in Chiang Mai based on “push-pull factors” and “Dual labor theory. It assumes that Burmese/Shan migrants recently are brought by economic and urban pull factors rather than instability of political situation in Burma.

Since I have been living in the city of Chiang Mai for three years, it is clearly noticeable that the characteristics of the city become more crowded and dense with the increased number of population. In this population, Burmese migrants, especially Shan ethnic group, have emerged and become a visible characteristics of Chiang Mai. Interestingly, this note inspires the paper to trace and explore more on issue of Burmese migrants as well as the reasons that bring them to the city of Chiang Mai.

Over the past two decades, economic strife and internal conflict in Burma have driven Burmese migrants across the border from Burma into Thailand on an unprecedented scale (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2012). This is reasonable by looking at the economic and political situation, which had pushed Burmese people to escape from their homeland and come into Thailand.

However, the recent situation in Burma seems to be better since a series of political and economic reforms has taken place since 2011. As part of the reforms, in August 2011, Burma's president Thein Sein called on all exiles to return home (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2014). Consequently, a number of Burmese political exiles have returned to their home country. Those returnees state the reason of return as "we want to contribute to the country" (Rose 2012; Horn 2012). But, for Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai, they are still highly visible in every corner of the city. Moreover, the number of migrants from Burma continues in fluxing into Thailand, in particular the North of the country. An evident shows that an average of twenty Burmese migrants crosses the Thai-Burma border in Fung district, Chiang Mai Province everyday (MAP, 2014).

Here, the paper is interesting to raise a further question "what are the reasons make Burmese migrants still continue to flow into Thailand, especially in Chiang Mai?" Based on this question, the paper argues that the flow of Burmese/Shan migration in Chiang Mai today is more likely to be attracted by economic and urban pull of the city of Chiang Mai rather than migrating because of the internal conflicts in Burma. To illustrate, the fact show that during 1980s until late 1990s, most migrants from Burma had to escape their country due to the consequences of the political unrest as well as the economic reason. But since 1997 is mainly the consequence of the economic reason (Jidapa Maepien and Busakorn Sangkaew, 2013). Based on this fact, the paper would further argues that the development and urban city of Chiang Mai in the North of Thailand need to be considered as a key factors that bring as well as maintain Burmese migrants, especially Shan people, in itself. To illustrate, although most Burmese migrants are now allowed to return and work in their homeland, but still the lack of job opportunity, the poverty, losing of wealth, and the discrimination from the majority in Shan state and other areas in Burma pushing them to live in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Moreover, Thailand, as more developed and modern societies compared to Burma, has strongly pulled the migrants come into its cities such as Chiang Mai in order to find the better opportunities, networks and better income. As Amporn Jirattikorn in 2008 said Chiang Mai's status as an urban centre in the North becomes a pull factor that attracts a huge number of Shan migrants to flow into the city. In addition, the paper believes in migration law studied by Ravenstein (1885) saying that the majority of migrants move a short distance and migrants who move longer distances tend to choose big-city. Likewise, according to Amporn Jirattikorn in 2008 also argued that flow of migration into the city of Chiang Mai is consequences of its continuous border between Chiang Mai province and the Shan State in Burma facilitates the flow of migration. This clearly illustrates that the reason that the majority of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai are Shan ethnic group and the consequences of their migration include urban pull, bounding geography as well as the cultural linguistic similarity between the northern Thai dialect and the Shan language, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Furthermore, the paper also attempts to see other factors of migration, which concurrently impact on moving and living of Burmese/Shan migrants in the city of Chiang Mai. Based on the dual labor market theory, the paper found that Thai labor market, nowadays comprises of two segments. On the one hand, it needs highly skill workers in order to escape from the middle-income trap. But on the other hand, they need the low skill labor for the labor-intensive sector. The evident shows that the most Burmese migrants would work in every area of low-pay jobs, which involve construction (60%),

agriculture (20%) and services and other (20%) (Migrant Justice Program, 2014). But, for the Thai workers nowadays, they do not want to involve in the 3Ds (Dangerous, Difficulty and Demeaning) job. Additionally, Thai government also gives the effort to increase the highly skill workers by expanding the education opportunity from 9 years to 12 years and promote the education for all policy. Therefore, Thai need to import the migrants from the neighboring countries in order to fulfill the shortage of labor in this group.

To summarize, it is found that recent Burmese migrants have emerged highly in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is because of the consequences of the economic reason and urban pull factors rather than political unrest in Burma prior to the 2011.

Inequality and Living situation of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai

“The more illegal a migrant, the greater is the danger of the journey, or of being exploited, or even enslaved by traffickers and unscrupulous employers.”
(Grant, 2005:2).

This section will critically discuss and analyze how the city of Chiang Mai as a place where inequalities also emerge between groups of people, ethnicities and genders, as well as wages, labor market opportunities, or lifestyles. It focuses on Burmese migrant workers who are considered as a group of people with inequalities in terms of migrant rights, living and working condition, as well as other social services when they lives in the host communities.

There are considerable benefits to living in or near an urban area. Urban areas can provide engines for economic growth, offering residents greater opportunities for work, commercial activities and access to key services. They also offer greater societal freedoms. Urban areas fulfill strategic roles in development (economies of scale, vibrancy, change processes). At the same time, though, it is important to acknowledge that these processes are often occurring alongside rising urban inequality and new forms of urban insecurity (Grant, 2004). The paper definitely agrees with the statement raised by Grant in 2004 and it looks beyond than this that how international migrants can be seen as urban inequality and how the societies have reacted and made change to this urban inequality. By doing so, the paper narrows down its scope on living situation of Burmese migrant workers in Chiang Mai by looking at working and living condition of Burmese/Shan migrants with some areas of case study.

Findings from earlier literatures believe that city as urbanization or ‘development’ is the place where equality between wage and workers developed, where ties of kinship, ethnic and religious identification and the bonds of gender were dissolved according Marx and modern sociologists (Thorbeck, S., 1988). This is true by looking at some areas of being and having life in the urban societies. In terms of social aspect, majority of people, especially local residents or citizens, who live in the cities would gain wider opportunities to access social services and goods compared to a particular group of people. However, this is still doubtful to the paper when it critically thinks about the certain group of people who live in the remote areas or an isolated group in the city. From here, the paper makes its argument that what the statement of Marx and other modern sociologists have studied cannot be applied with every area or case of cities such as Chiang Mai in Thailand, and either in third world

countries or developed countries. As a statement of Black, Natali and Skinner in 2005, international migration is powerful symbol of global inequality. The paper also agrees with the statement of Black, Natali and Skinner in the sense that a case of Burmese migrant workers who become not only a powerful symbol of global inequality but also local matter, either in terms of human rights, goods and services opportunities or gender inequality.

As this section focuses on the issues of Burmese migrant workers in Chiang Mai, it first needs to discuss on working and living condition of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai. As the information of Burmese migrants has already been mentioned in the previous section, it noted that migrants in Thailand face many difficulties and abuses. The migrants are often forced to do heavy and difficult work for low wages, and are placed in unsafe or unsanitary work environments (MAP, 2005). In addition, irregular migrants are one of the groups most vulnerable to rights violations in a host state since their invisibility in society often means that they are unable to report abuse (International Organization for Migration, 2011). This evident shows an opposite view from the statements of Marx and modern sociologists mentioned above. Furthermore, as an aim of the paper, it also looks beyond how human agency as well as the societies has responded to this situation. This can be illustrated by looking at a case study of Burmese migrant workers supported by one of NGOs in Chiang Mai.

The story was that *“Six Shan workers on a construction site in Chiang Mai had not been paid between 2 to 5 months. However, with the support of MAP, the workers filed a complaint with the Labour protection employer agreed to pay 20,000 baht per worker, but requested to deduct money for food and work permit fees, thus offering only 800 – 2,500 baht per migrant. With further negotiations, four workers received 5,324 baht, the other two workers had in the meantime left Chiang Mai and their compensation remains at the Labour Protection office”*(MAP, 2005).

Further, based on a concept that a Swedish anthropologist, namely Ulf Hannerz, points to the fact that *“in a city one has access to a wider variety of services and goods than in small community”* (Zenner, W. &Gmelch, G. 1997). This is true by looking at some areas of being and having life in the urban society. However, the paper would like to argue that the cities like Chiang Mai provide not only opportunities but also a challenge of urban poverty and inequality, which the concept of Hannerz should not ignore. Here, it is essential to discuss with further urban life of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai. As many stories reported that most migrants, especially irregular migrants, face a common fear of arrest and deportation. This fear keeps many migrants from moving freely and impedes their access to health care and other social services that may be available. For this reason migrants suffer in silence from easily treatable diseases. The spread of communicable diseases is facilitated by lack of access to health care facilities and medicine, cramped living conditions and poor sanitation. In addition, lack of knowledge of the local language also prevents migrants from seeking help when they face unhealthy or dangerous situations. This combination of fear of arrest and lack of knowledge about the laws, customs and language of their host country means that migrants are easily exploited and abused by their employers, Thai officials and others.

However, it is believed that the plight of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand has not gone undocumented. This means access to justice and to social services is limited for each of the above categories of migrants. Similarly, migrants in all of those categories are not permitted to move freely

within Thailand but are restricted to their district of registration (or temporary shelter for displaced persons). Civil society, especially international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has been instrumental in promoting the rights of migrants in Thailand.

In addition, MAP in 2014 reported that low-skilled migrant workers in Thailand who obtain work permits must pay a fee in order to obtain the universal health-care coverage they are entitled to. Once these workers have the coverage, they can seek health care in a government clinic or hospital for little or no cost. Migrants who are not registered, however, do not have such coverage and must pay for any treatment received. Government facilities also treat many migrants who cannot afford to pay. In this context, three key policy issues are: (a) improving migrants' access to the health system, (b) improving the quality of health services for migrants and (c) financing health care for migrants.

Thus, it is clear that the cities like Chiang Mai as a place where not only provides residents to access greater opportunities for work, activity and key good as well as services, but the place also emerges alongside rising urban inequality in itself, especially a certain group of people like irregular migrant workers.

Burmese migrants and 'Way of Life' in Chiang Mai

This theme discusses urbanism as way of life of Burmese migrants who living in the city of Chiang Mai. It will analyze how Burmese/Shan migrants form their communities in Chiang Mai and how they are shaped by the urban city of Chiang Mai based on the concept of acculturation pattern.

According to Amporn Jirattikorn in 2008, while 'way of life' of Burmese or Shan migrants has emerged to confront their living in the city of Chiang Mai, at the same time they provoke a feeling of threat to Thai national integrity and unease among the local Thai residents on many levels. From here, it is interesting to look further by discussing this social phenomenon with a theory, called acculturation.

Based on acculturation pattern studied by Berry (1997), the community of Burmese migrants, the Shan ethnic group particularly, in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand provides an attractive case in which to examine their cultural way of life can be classified into four areas- assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration. To discuss and analyze each issue, it is essential to consider generation by generation of Shan migrants in Chiang Mai.

The Shan are able to assimilate better into Thai society than other ethnic groups from Burma (the Shan Women's Action Network, December 2005).

Based on this quote, the paper is inspired to raise a few simple questions; 1) "Would all the Shan like to assimilate into Thai society?" 2) "If so, why does cultural identity of the Shan still emerge in the city of Chiang Mai highly?" Once again, in order to answer these two questions, the paper argues that not only generation of Burmese/Shan migrants needs to be considered, but also the group of people is created by urbanism of Chiang Mai requires further discussion.

First, it needs to be clear that assimilation refers to immigrants who were to be incorporated into society through a one-sided process of adaptation. In here, a study of Amporn Jiratikorn in 2008 believed that for many decades, migrants drifted across the border easily both as individuals attracted by the possibility of employment for wages, and as families moving for trade. Prior to the 1990s, Shan migrants came in small numbers; they could find work and assimilate into an existing community easily.

Additionally, Shan migrants are sought for their ability to speak Thai better and faster than any other ethnic group. Furthermore, the paper also believes that to have a safety life in the host society, the assimilation became livelihood strategies for them.

However, as a result of the forced relocation policy and the deterioration of the Burmese economy, the 1990s saw a major shift in the pattern of Shan migration. The new arrivals came in much large numbers. This may be the reason that the younger generation of Shan migrants in Chiang Mai are not doing well to assimilate into Thai society due to their communities have been formed and wider emerged, which will be discussed in the next issue.

Thus, this evident can be analyzed that first generation of Burmese migrants, especially Shan people, are able to assimilate better into the host society of Thai compared to the younger generation and other ethnic groups from Burma.

Second, it is interesting to look at “separation” as another issue of acculturation framework. Briefly, separation involves a commitment to one’s own culture with little or no contact with the host culture. As the paper has mentioned above, it argues that generation of Shan migrants and a number of population as well as impact of urbanism in the city would lead to separation between groups of people in the societies. As some studies believe that concepts of urbanization and industrialization make possible for workers and oppress people to create their own culture and organization (Thorbeck, 1988).

Here, it is necessary to trace historical background of migration of Burmese migrants in the past two decades. Since the Burmese government introduced a forced relocation policy in 1996 in many areas in Shan State in order to break up any alleged links or support for armed opposition groups, northern Thailand began to experience massive migratory flows of Shan ethnic nationals from Burma (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2008). In addition, as earlier sections have already mentioned that other push- pull factors and Thailand’s economic reason bring the younger generation and new arrivals of Shan migrants came in much large numbers. As a result, the cultural identity and way of life of Burmese/Shan migrants has become highly visible within the city of Chiang Mai. This argument can be illustrated and proved by the fact and evident according to the earlier studies of Amporn Jiratikorn in 2008 and 2012.

In Chiang Mai, Shan migrants have their own communities and cultural identity separated from Thai society. The way of life of Burmese/Shan migrants can be categorized into three main areas. First, Burmese/Shan migrants have their own a variety of fairs and festivals, such as Shan New Year festival, religious festivals and so on. Shan New Year festival, for example, is celebrated every year in the city of Chiang Mai. The celebration provides not only Shan to traditional New Year, but it also provides space as venue for Shan migrants to practice, share, preserve and promote their own cultural identity and traditional belief. Furthermore, Shan migrants also have two local temples, namely WatKu tao and Wat Pa pao, located in the middle of the city of Chiang Mai, as well as the Shan quarter and even a cluster of Shan karaoke pubs in several sectors of the town. Additionally, in the quarter of Shan migrants, there are Burmese and Shan foods stalls, dried foods and other products imported from Burma. Lastly, the separation of way of life of Burmese/Shan migrants is also involved with mass communication. In Chiang Mai, there is a community radio program broadcast in the Shan language, which airs three times a week on radio station FM 99 MHz. The program is produced by staff at the Migrant Assistance Project (MAP), an NGO based in Chiang Mai whose mission is to inform migrant workers of their rights vis-à-vis health,

labor and women's issues (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2012).

On the other hand, the Thai categorization of the Shan has always been ambiguous and selective. The Thai authorities perceive the Shan as "*phi nong kan*" (ethnic brothers and sisters), while also seeing them as "*khon tung dao*" (alien others) who have no name and no ethnic identity, but nonetheless need to be kept in their place and documented. The perception of the Shan by the Thai public is thus complicated and contradictory (Amporn Jirattikorn, 2012).

This finding can be summed up that the new arrivals of Burmese/Shan migrants are more likely to separate their cultural way of life from the Thai society as consequences of increasing number of the migrants have create their own communities and impact from the development of urban city of Chiang Mai as well as excluded perception from Thai society.

Lastly, this theme is also interested to see how another younger generation can be integrated in the Thai society. According to Berry in 1997, integration allows for a continuing attachment to one's original culture while becoming involved in the culture of the host society.

In Chiang Mai, Burmese/Shan child migrants have also emerged in the city. Some of these children would study both formal education of Thai government and informal education supported by Thai NGOs at several levels, starting from primary school until undergraduate levels. According to MAP in 2012, it is estimated 65,000 Burmese migrant students were registered in primary school of Thai government. Of course, spending time whole day for studying in the Thai school, the migrant children would be also influenced by Thai culture and lifestyle in the host society. At the same time, they would also maintain their Shan cultural identity because there are also migrant schools such as Migrant Learning Center (MLC) in Chiang Mai, providing Burmese, Shan and other ethnic languages and cultural practice to the migrant children. In addition, the degree to which the Government of Thailand envisages that the 3.5 million international migrants in the country will be integrated into the Thai nation varies according to the group. The Government approved a Cabinet Resolution on 18 January 2005 on a "Strategy to solve problems on legal status and rights" of persons who were stateless, of indeterminate migration status or without Thai nationality. This policy applies essentially to the highland population and other ethnic minorities. Long-term migrants have the potential to obtain the status of a legal migrant and their children born in Thailand may obtain Thai nationality (MAP, 2014).

This can be interpreted that the younger generation of Burmese/Shan migrants are able to integrate better into the local society compared to their parent generation who lives in Chiang Mai. At the same time, the migrant children also keep their native cultural identity if they are still influenced by parents and migrant communities in Chiang Mai strongly.

Thus, based on acculturation framework studied by Berry, it is clear that cultural way of life of Burmese migrants living in the Chiang Mai can be classified into three main areas-assimilation, separation and integration, and each area have been adapted by each generation of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai.

To sum up, in this paper I have discussed and analyzed the issues of Burmese migrants in the urban city of Chiang Mai. It is classified into three main themes and finding of each theme can be summarized as the follows. For the first theme is issue of recent Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai. The paper found that contemporary Burmese/Shan migrants have emerged highly in Chiang Mai, Thailand is

the consequences of the economic reason and urban pull factors rather than political unrest in Burma prior to the 2011. Another theme is inequality and living situation of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai, which notes that Chiang Mai as a place where is providing residents to access greater opportunities for work, activity and key good as well as services. Concurrently, it is emerging alongside rising urban inequality in itself, especially a certain group of people like irregular migrants. The last theme of the paper is Burmese/Shan migrants and their cultural 'Way of Life' in Chiang Mai. This section found that generation by generation of Burmese/Shan migrants would adapted themselves in three different issues of cultural way of life based on acculturation pattern; namely assimilation, separation and integration.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This research paper, a part of the course "Urbanism and Development," has studied the issue of Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai. Based on the secondary data, the paper has explored and found the concepts and theories related to migration, uneven development and acculturation, as well as the information and facts in which migration engages in the new environment of urban and developed societies. It is separated into three main themes, and in each theme, the paper has employed the full concepts and theories in order discuss and analyze in order to answer research questions and findings. This can be summed up as the following; 1) Prior to 2011, contemporary Burmese migrants have emerged highly in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is because of the consequences of the economic reason and urban pull factors rather than political unrest in Burma; 2) The paper found that the cities like Chiang Mai as a place where provides residents to access not only greater opportunities for work, activities and key goods as well as services, but the places also emerge alongside rising urban inequality for a certain group of people, particularly irregular migrant workers. For this to be changed positively, the paper suggests that both local and global NGOs, academics and local and national Thai government should hold further social dialogue and action and; 3) Based on acculturation framework, the study found that cultural way of life of Burmese migrants living in the Chiang Mai can be classified into three main areas; assimilation, separation and integration, and each area of way of life would be adapted by different generations of Burmese/Shan migrants. Therefore, one can see the social phenomenon of Burmese migrants, especially Shan ethnic group, would emerge through Thai society in Chiang Mai with different levels of lifestyles.

The issues of migration, urbanism and development are closely related to one another and they provide many interesting areas to explore. If possible, I as a researcher would also like to study more on Thai economic growth and migration within the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). However, as I have a limitation of time and other sources, I therefore would like to recommend one who is interested in this issue as further study.

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