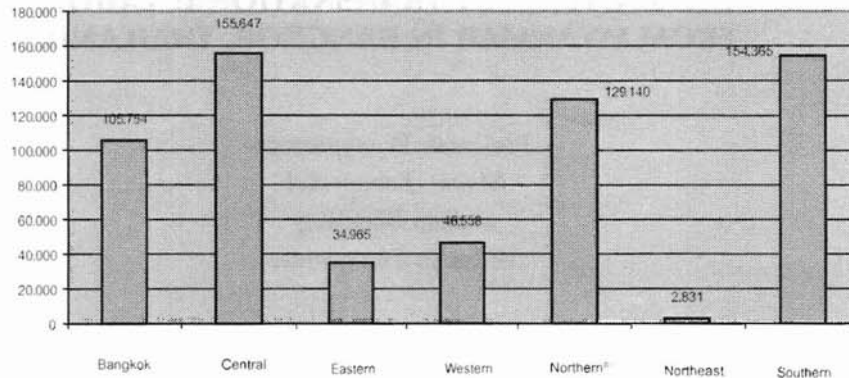


THE SURVIVAL OF TRANSNATIONAL LABOR FROM MYANMAR IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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Introduction

The transnational migration from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia to Thailand is a social phenomenon that has occurred since 1987. Economic growth of Thailand trending to industrial economy emphasizes that labor is necessary for manufacturing process. Therefore, agricultural labor moves to this area. However, labor demand from abroad affected domestic labor supply because of high comparative wage. In addition, well-educated Thai people change their attitude from unskilled work to skilled work cause some jobs which work in dirty, dangerous environment including difficult jobs (3Ds) lack of workers. Transnational labor becomes a new choice because of lower wage, endurance and powerlessness. While the countries of origin, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are encountering economic, political and social abruption. These are the factors that push those labors to Thailand. In 2004, there are 844,387 transnational workers allowed to work from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. Most of them come from Myanmar who flows to every parts of Thailand including Bangkok where 105,754 Myanmar workers are allowed to work.

Picture 1 : Number of Myanmar Authorized Workers.

Source: Office of Foreign Workers Administration , Department of Employment Ministry of Labour (2004).

When migrants move to Bangkok, they must face different cultures. Adaptation is necessary for their life. However labor's ways of life doesn't open for everyone, image is different. Migrant labors are considered in various points of view such as social problem creators or as an important input for business or as vulnerable group. These images lead to differentiation reaction for them. For public sector, non-government organizations and international organizations make an attempt to plan and solve migrant's problem from Myanmar continuously. However, migration flow, healthy problem and criminological problem still keep increasing and appearing continuously. Transnational migrant management isn't effective because of thought and data. The different thought shows the different management. For data, it means data is unable to explain and understand life of labor adequately. Although many researches have done about them in Thailand, they focus on the same area especially northern of Thailand. While migrants from Myanmar flow throughout Thailand (see Picture 1). In addition, it is necessary to have a research that covers multiple issue; politic, economic, psychology, social and culture, because it is able to create deeper understand toward transnational migrant

phenomenon. From above, it is necessary that Thai society must seek knowledge and learn more in order to use for management and reduce bias to transnational labor.

Objective of the study

The study aims to understand the migration process, ways of life and adaptation for survival of transnational labor from Myanmar in Bangkok, Thailand. There are three sets of research problem. First, why and how does transnational labor from Myanmar move to Thailand? Second, What does happen with transnational labor when they come to Bangkok? , what does it mean for them? , how do they adapt to survive? Finally, what is the main point of this phenomenon appearing from fieldwork data?

Literature Review

For answering the research problem, the researcher presents two concepts; transnational migration theory and adaptation concept.

Transnational migration theory

Transnational migration means that people move across their national border to another nation to live and work. (Asia Research Center of Migration.1998) For three decades, migration is important issue. Many countries are country of origin, country of destination, sending & receiving country or transit country. The neo- classic economists explain cause of migration that migrant is economic migrant or labor. Human decide to move because of economic causes. Pull factors are wage and employment. Theories in this group are The Neo-classic Economics: Macro Theory, the Neo-classic Economics: Micro Theory and The New Economics of Migration. Firstly, the Neo-classic Economics: Macro Theory proposes that labor who come

from country having low wage, move to country having higher wage. Secondly, the Neo-classic Economics: Micro Theory considers individual level. Individual choose to move after calculating cost and benefit. Thirdly, The New Economics of Migration explain that household influences to individual to be migrant. When household faces low income, risk is reduced by sending member of household to work at another area. In addition, political economists propose that economic structure is cause of migration. Host country having high economic condition will develop to have two labor markets; primary sector and secondary sector. Population of host country will move to primary sector being skill job and high compensation. Then secondary sector consisting dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs and low wage lacks of labor. So labor from slow economic country move instead. Two theories being well known are Dual Labor Market Theory and World System Theory. For sociology perspective, economic variable is a part of migration system. Sociologist views that migration is system covering economic social, culture and politic factors including migration process.

Adaptation Concept

Migration is a process of social change .It is not only a shift in new place but new faces and new norms. Movement over distance implies the cross of social system boundaries. The concept of adaptation is derived from the biological concept. It was believed that only strong species would be able to adjust themselves to various environments and survive. The adaptation of migrant is the way of establishing and maintaining a stable, reciprocal relationship with the new environment. (Speare .1983:22) Explanation about migrant adaptation can be viewed as the adjustment process of migrant and as type of migrant adaptation.

For the adjustment process of migrant, migrant adjustment is believed to occur step by step, meaning that the migrant must adjust themselves to the beginning step first before they proceed to the second step and following step. Although many scholars try to present different detail, generally the adjustment process is

divided into three stages; adjustment stage, assimilation stage, integration stage. The adjustment stage is when the migrant tries to adjust to the new environmental conditions which have changed from those they used to live with, for example, ways of eating ,traveling, seeking employment, etc. This step of adjustment would occur in the beginning period after arrival in the destination community. The assimilation stage is when the migrant has been able to adjust in stage one including getting employment, earning and having a suitable place to stay. They may start to adjust and become part of the new society by learning to speak a local language and participating in various activities together with other people in the destination community. The integration stage is when the migrant decides to permanently settle down in the destination community and shows obvious signs of this, such as building a house or purchasing land with a house, getting married to people of the destination community, transferring their name into local registration.

For type of migrant adjustment, much of the cognitive perspective on adaptation has been related to the measurement of attitudes toward the host group and culture, identity and stereotypes and attribution. Searle and Ward (1990) distinguished two forms of adaptation; *psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation*. Psychological adaptation refer to mental and physical well being , feeling to cultural identity and individual identity and life satisfaction, whereas sociocultural adaptation emphasized the capability to organize one's daily life in new context such as language ability, culture knowledge, social relationship. Various researchers have accepted and followed this perspective. Many researchers have tried to analyze adaptation and to illustrate the more important variables that influence the process. According to some, adaptation depends on both situational variables (e.g. characteristics of the society of origin and the society of settlement) and individual variables (e.g. sociodemographic and personality characteristics) existing before, or emerging, during the process acculturation.

Studies in Thailand on transnational migration from Myanmar found that they appeared in political science and

demography research and organizations concerning problem solving. Majority of studies tried to find cause, ways of life and effect to Thai society. Many studies focused on the Northern provinces especially Tak, Mae-Hong-Son and Chiang-Rai.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on behavioral science using interdisciplinary for answering research problem. The researcher uses transnational migration theory and adaptation concept consisting economic, political science, sociological, psychological view. Transnational migration theory is used to explain the cause of migration analyzing multiple level; individual, group and economic structure. In addition, migration system considering process and subsystems lead to answer research problem about cause and what occur in migrants' life. Adaptation concept is used to explain adaptation strategy and process for survival in Bangkok.

Research Method

This research design is the qualitative method. The selected appropriate people are unauthorized or authorized migrants from Myanmar who are living and working in Bangkok. A factory in Bangkok is the field for this study. Data is collected by in-depth interview and participant observation. The researcher recognizes the quality of research that must have trustworthiness, prolonged and persistent fieldwork and triangulation (methodological, data triangulation and member checks) are used in this research.

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