

Transnational Everyday Life and Practice of Myanmar Migrants: Focusing on Mae Sot, Thailand after 2021

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Abstract

Since the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, increasing numbers of exiles have crossed the border into Thailand. Mae Sot has become a major destination for these exiles. This study focuses on the transnational everyday lives and political practices of Myanmar exiles who have relocated to Mae Sot. Political exiles in Mae Sot tend to maintain close connections with their homeland and continue their political practices in their daily lives.

This study analyzes how the lives of Myanmar exiles have been formed, structured, and reconfigured through migration to Mae Sot after the coup. Many became involved in the revolution in response to the political crisis in Myanmar. To escape persecution and seek safer conditions, they often migrated without visas or passports. During their journeys through liberated zones, they developed networks and began to engage in transnational practices.

After arriving in Mae Sot, they tend to begin the process of attaining forms of “partial citizenship,” which help them sustain their everyday lives. Through this process, they are able to maintain a life that is imperfect yet provides a degree of relative freedom. They also encounter a new ethnic field in Mae Sot. Some experience reversed power relations with ethnic minority groups from Myanmar, while others receive support from ethnic minority civil society organizations.

Their transnational activism began in Myanmar and continues in Mae Sot. They pursue political activism oriented toward Myanmar through networks linking the homeland, the host country, and third countries, while simultaneously supporting exile communities in Mae Sot. These activities not only contribute to the revolution through fundraising and community support but also help prepare future generations and facilitate onward migration to third countries, enabling the continuation of political movements across borders.