Chapter 3

Methodology

Ethno-survey methodology, also called the hybrid approach, was adopted in the design for this study. The approach of this methodology uses multi-method data collection, multi-site sampling, multi-level data collection, life history collection and parallel sampling, in order to improve the validity and reliability of research, and to understand the problem and trends (Massey, 1987).

This study was focused only on Mon migrants working in Malaysia, and the survey data was collected both at the place of the migrants' origin community, and also their destination. An ethno-survey methodology within this study was conducted by collecting information on the migrants and their families from their place of origin, through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were also included with key informants in both countries. The questionnaires sought information on a broad range of subjects, in order to represent the basic information on the migrants and their families, and also information and statistical variables regarding the determinants of remittance, according to the remittance theories and household expenditure. However, the remittance behavior of the Mon migrant workers and their household expenditure behavior in their place of origin were mixed with complex individual, social, economic and political data. Therefore, one model alone could not be used to analyze the behavior of the migrants and the behavior of their households. Thus, semi-structured interviews with key

informants were used as a tool to evaluate the context of both migration and remittances. However, this study focused only on the motivating factors for sending the remittances, and their impacts at home. This means that the study largely ignored the indirect effects of remittances, since this context is shaded with complex individual, social, economic and political issues, as mentioned in the previous.
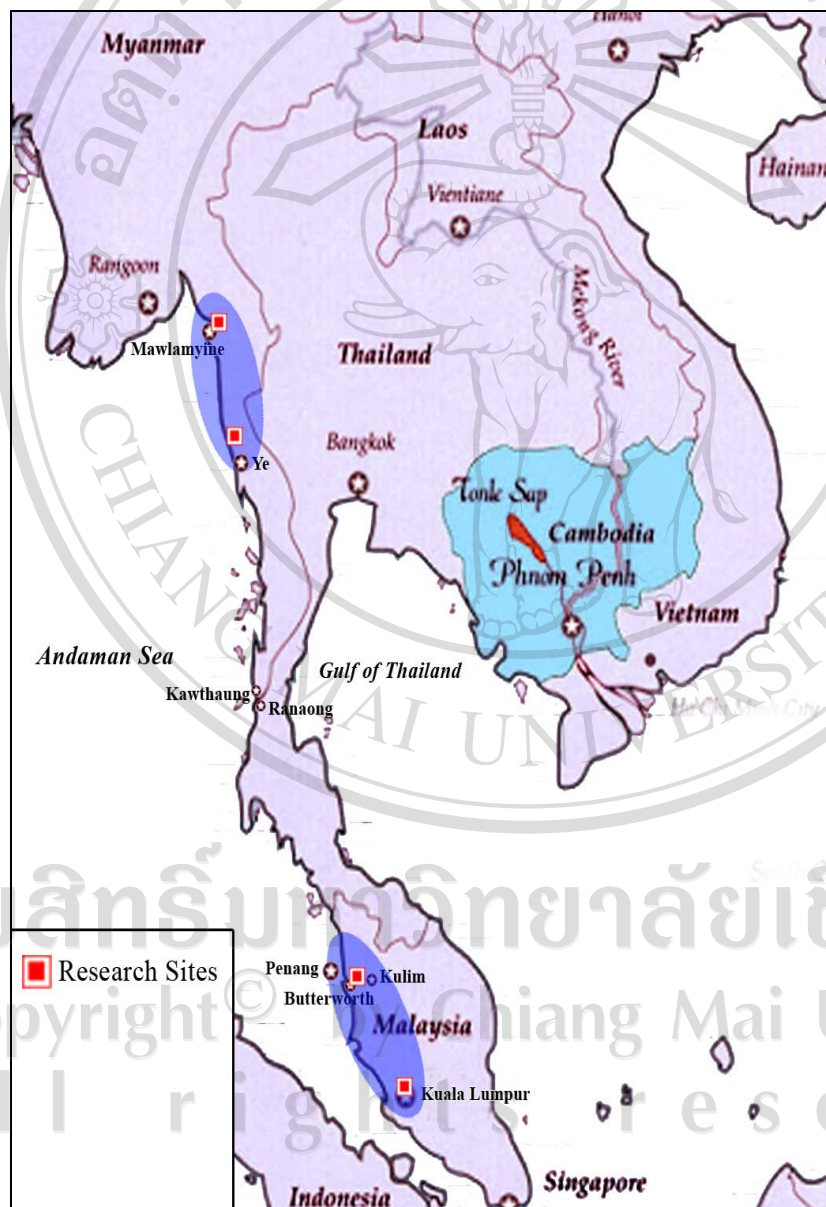
3.1 Selection of Target Areas and Participants

In this study, the data was collected both at the place of origin (the migrant's village in Myanmar) and the destination (in Malaysia). Specific, the field works was conducted among Mon migrant workers who came from two selected villages[1], these being Taung Paw village and Yay Paw village, and also in and around Kuala Lumpur and Penang in Malaysia (see Figure 3.1). The main reasons for choosing the above villages were, 1) that most of the households in the village had at least one member who was a migrant abroad, 2) a significant number of migrant workers from those villages were working in Malaysia, 3) trust between myself and both the respondents and the local authorities, already existed, since the author had visited the selected areas during a pilot survey.

In order to become participants, respondents had to meet the following criteria: 1) participants must be Mon migrant workers from the selected target villages in Myanmar, 2) the duration of migration must be at least one year and above in Malaysia. Within these criteria, approximately 230 Mon migrant workers were able to participate in this study. However, only 216 migrants participated fully. Some of them were scared to answer the questions, since they were 'undocumented migrant workers' (had no legal document to stay and work in Malaysia). On the Myanmar

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[1] The real names of villages have been changed to protect identity and security of respondents.

side, the participant households needed to meet the following criteria: 1) the household must have at least one migrant worker in Malaysia, 2) the migration duration should be at least one year, and 3) the household head and his or her spouse must be of Mon ethnicity.

Figure 3.1: Location of the Research Sites

3.2   Profile of Sample Villages

Taung Paw village, one of the selected target areas, is a village in Ye Township, Mon State in Myanmar. It is located approximately 70 miles north by road from Mawlamyine Township, east of the Gulf of Martaban, in the northwest portion of Ye Township. According to the census by the village authorities in 2008, this village had a population of 9,068 people (4,413 Males and 4,655 females) in 1,822 households, and about 94 percent of the households had members who had migrated to other countries. Almost all the members of the community were Buddhist, and were Mon people. Other religious and ethnicities were less than one percent. The majority of the population worked in agriculture, as their primary activity. In the past, during the socialist period, Taung Paw village was one of the trading seaports in Mon state, for the import and export of goods, especially from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, though it was an unofficial or informal trading area.

Table 3.1: Basic Infrastructure and Services in Taung Paw Village

Basic Infrastructures and Services	Number
Mon National School	1
Primary School	3
High School	1
Monastery	1
Village Library	1
Primary Healthcare Centre	2
Bazaar	1
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	1
Midwife	2
Health Assistant	2
Government Organized Non-Governmental organization(GONGO)	3
Traditional Organizations	3

Source: Author's survey data

Yay Paw Village is located in the northwest of Kawkareik District, Kayin State, and is northeast of Mawlamyine. According to the latest census done by local authority of village in 2008, Yay Paw village had 5859 people (2881 males and 2978 females), living in 1061 households. Among the 5859 people, about 20 percent of the total population (678 males and 432 females), had migrated out of the country, to look for jobs. In Yay Paw village, most of the villagers were Mon people, at 94 percent. But, there was a small minority of Burmese (two percent), Indian (three percent) and others (one percent). The majority of the population practiced Buddhism and only less than three percent were Muslim or other religions. The main economic livelihood

source was agriculture.

Table 3.2: Basic Infrastructure and Services in Yay Paw village

Basic Infrastructure and Services	Number
Nursery School	1
Primary School	4
High School	1
Monastery	2
Primary Healthcare Centre	1
Bazaar	1
Midwife	2
Health Assistant	1
Government Organized Non-Governmental Organization (GONGO)	3
Traditional Organizations	2

Source: Author's survey data

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was separated into two stages. In the first stage, 216 Mon migrant workers from the two selected Mon villages in Myanmar, those who were working in Malaysia, were interviewed and answered the questionnaire, in order to understand the factors that influenced their remittance amounts. Since the Mon migrants are a highly mobile population in Malaysia, its actual population is unknown. To overcome this limitation, first, this study targeted the group and the location of the migrants, in order to collect data such as the construction workers group, fisheries workers group and the restaurant workers group. Then, this study used a 'snowball' sampling method to collect the data in Malaysia, through initial

contacts such as the *hundi* agents, money collectors, migrant brokers and some migrant workers.

The questionnaire for the migrant workers working in Malaysia contained information on the amounts of remitted money, socio-economic information regarding the migrant, migration and origin household information. Before asking the questions, the author explained all the questions from the questionnaire, in order to reduce the fear factor amongst the migrants on the questions, to get a higher response rate, to give a better understanding on the questions, to explain their context, and to increase data accuracy.

All of the answers were written down on the spot. In order to answer the questions, the migrants fully participated with an understanding that their answers would assist in my education and academic studies, not for the purposes of administration.

However, thirteen migrants refused to answer the question, especially the migratory and origin household information parts. This showed that they were aware of their illegal migration status, and so feared for their family left behind, because the Myanmar authorities could arrest them, for supporting illegal migration activities.

In the second stage, the survey was completed with 147 households in the selected target villages in Myanmar: Taung Paw village and Yay Paw village. The sample households had at least one household member working in Malaysia. The culture, religious beliefs and socio-economic characteristics of these two villages were not much different. Similarly, in the early stages, since most of the migrant household members had migrated to Malaysia as undocumented migrant workers, their family members in Myanmar were frightened to answer the question, as they did

not completely trust the interviewer.

Moreover, conducting data collection for research purposes was prohibited, without having first gained permission from the concerned authorities. To avoid this constraint, the author had to explain the purpose of this research to the local authorities, by providing a letter of recommendation from my academic institution. In order to gain the trust of the migrant households, the author trained the people from the local community, those who had graduated from university and/or were NGO workers, as survey assistants, and requested them to accompany me during the whole data collection process. Furthermore, this study was conducted with some key informants: the *Hundi* dealers, money collectors, money distributors and other key local informants, all of whom were interviewed using the semi-structured interview method, and in order to understand details of the remittance behavior of the migrants, the impacts of remittances and the remittance channels.

During the whole process of data collection, the author interviewed them in their language (the Mon language) in order to reduce the risk of misinterpretation, and to reduce the fear of the respondents. In addition, the author promised to all the respondents before asking them a question, that any information provided would be confidential and only for education and academic purposes. Moreover, they could refuse to answer to any question, at any time.

3.4 Data Analysis

In this study, the deductive approach rather than the inductive approach was used to analyze the remittance behavior data, and in accordance with the relevant theories. To identify correlation among the variables, this study used an analytical approach to test the influence of the various factors on remittance behavior. A articles

in the literature argue that remittance behavior can be seen as a two-stage decision process: whether or not to remit, and how much to remit. Thus, they only use a two-stage model to analyze remittance behavior. However, this study did not rely only on an analytical approach, due to the small sample size in the case of both the remitters and non-remitters, and also a lack of secondary data. To overcome this constraint, a descriptive approach was used to identify the characteristics of the remitters and the non-remitters. To identify the factors determining the amount remitted, this study used an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression method to estimate the significance of the relationship among variables, according to the theories and literature review. In OLS model, the dependent variable, amount remitted by migrants was converted into the logarithm form. Regarding the independent variables, the measurement variables were based on three sets of figures: individual, migration and family characteristics.

The model took the following form:

$$lnRem = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1,i} + \beta_2 X_{2,i} + \beta_3 X_{3,i} + \beta_4 X_{4,i} + \beta_5 X_{5,i} + \beta_6 X_{6,i} + \beta_7 X_{7,i} +$$

$$\beta_8 X_{8,i} + \beta_9 X_{9,i} + \beta_{10} X_{10,i} + \varepsilon_i \tag{3.1}$$

$lnRem$ = total value of money a migrant sent back to their origin family within the last twelve month period

X_1 = migrant's age

X_2 = migrant's education level

X_3 = migrant's marital status

X_4 = house member in Myanmar

X_5 = house member in Malaysia

X_6 = school age children in Myanmar (under sixteen years old)

X_7 = length of stay in Malaysia

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X_8 = legal status

X_9 = phone calls to village within last twelve month period

X_{10} = Return to village within last three year period

ε_i = error term

In order to evaluate the use and impact of the remittances on household expenditure, the inductive approach was used to analyze the data, and the information obtained through questionnaires and through interviews with migrants in the villages (in Myanmar). The main purpose of using the inductive approach was to evaluate in more depth and detail, the impact of the behavior of the remittance-receiving households, on remittance and household expenditure, and to examine how the remittances impacted on development in the migrants' origin household and communities.