CHAPTER 4

USING GENDER, ETHNICITY AND RELIGION AS SOCIAL CAPITAL

This chapter explores the intensification of inequality in domestic work, as rooted in gender, race and ethnicity. This intensification of inequality has led to the marginalization of migrant domestic workers around the globe; however, in this study, I argue that the migrant female domestic workers in Chiang Mai city are not only victims or passive agents of their circumstances, but in fact have used their marginalized identities as Burmese (ethnicity), Muslims (religion) and women (gender) as social capital, in order to help them make a living and earn money in the host society. Several case studies of Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers in this study show the ways in which they have turned their marginalized and vulnerable identities into social capital in the host society.

4.1 Social Capital as an Important Factor for Immigrants

Many scholars of migration studies have paid attention to social capital as an important factor for migrants from many perspectives, such as educational achievement and socio-economic mobility (Dwyer et al., 2006 and Shah, 2006). Migrants who bring with them little human capital (for example, education) and little financial capital (for example, money) have to rely heavily on social capital (for example, migrant networks). Lin (1999: 30) refers to social capital as an investment in social relations with expected returns; however, the use of social capital can be divided into two levels: (i) the individual and (ii) group levels. On the one hand, social capital can be used by individuals; for example, individuals access and use resources embedded in social networks to gain returns in instrumental action (like finding a job), whilst on the other hand, it can bring benefits at the group level; for example, some groups develop and maintain social capital as a collective asset and enhance such a collective asset to improve group members' opportunities (Lin, 1999: 32).

As with other scholars, I see social capital as a very important factor for the poor Muslim female migrants from Burma. Social capital, which can be seen on an individual level in terms of gender, or on a group level in terms of a network, has helped to facilitate the flows of these Muslim female migrants from Burma to Chang Klan area, and has facilitated the lives of people living this migrant community in many ways, as will be clarified in more detail below.

4.2 Gender in Domestic Work

Gender norms based on the household division of labor are strongly attached in many localities, as they are rooted in social, cultural, economical and political perspectives. From a social perspective, the ideology on domestic work is that it is women's work, meaning women in many societies around the world have to carry the burden of domestic work by themselves, and in many households women and girls work as free labor, without being able to share the responsibility with men, society or the state. From an economic perspective, the ideology that domestic work is low-skilled work and reproductive work reflects why domestic workers do not receive equal payment to others (such as those working in factories) and why the work is never assessed based on its economic value. From the political perspective, almost everywhere in the world state policies promote male breadwinners, preferring to hire men to work in the labor market, while preventing women from participating in the labor force. These national policies make poor women even poorer, because domestic work is not recognized as work and so domestic workers are exposed, due to the fact that they receive little protection from labor laws. More important is that the people who do paid domestic work are normally poor women who have little social, financial and political power to convince men, society and the state to officially recognize their work as being a part of the labor market (Huang et al., 2005).

For a long time, gender norms on domestic work constructed in the family, society, nationally and globally, have tried to fix it as low-value, unskilled work, and as reproductive work, and also have fixed domestic workers' identities as unskilled and reproductive laborers. This ideology is not only present in the family, in society, nationally and globally, but also works among the women who do the work

themselves, and is reproduced and taken for granted in reality across time and space. This ideology provides little room for women to negotiate the meaning of their domestic work and the value of domestic workers.

However, similar to much feminist thinking, I argue here that domestic work does create value in an economic sense, and that without these women migrants' contributions in the households, children could not go to school, men and women could not participate in the professional sphere, and small-scale businesses in Chang Klan could not keep charging reasonable prices for food and services. The female migrants who bring their labor into the Thai labor market in exchange for low payment, provide real support in terms of social and economic stability to the host society, as well as the receiving country as a whole. The Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers in Chang Klan community, who live under gender inequality norms, have turned their gender into social capital, in order to fit their work category as domestic workers. Several cases below show the ways in which these women have used their gender, marriage status and networks as social capital.

4.2.1 Gender as Social Capital

In Chang Klan community, the gender identity of the Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers can be seen as capital, as these women can find work in the community more easily than their male counterparts. In this community, women can work as wage laborers, construction workers and domestic workers. Furthermore, many shops and households are in great need of cheap migrant laborers, especially women, so that in this community alone more than 100 women work as domestic workers. Moreover, the women have also turned their gender into social capital, as many Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers are married, and their status as married can benefit them and can act as social and financial capital for them, as shown in the several case studies below.

Using gender as social capital can be understood to work on two levels - the individual and group levels. The use of gender as social capital at the individual level can be explained by looking at the case of Sora, who came to live in Chang Klan around fourteen years ago, when she was just fourteen years-old. She is now 28 and is

pregnant, having married a Burmese man whom she met in Mae Sam Laep. Her husband was a refugee and used to live in a refugee camp in the area, but he now lives in the USA, where he works in a watch shop. Sora used to be a maid at a beauty salon in Chang Klan area, but stopped working there after four years, after she got married. Now her husband sends her a remittance from the US every month and she relies on this to cover all her costs, such as rent, meals and other expenses. She also sends remittances back home to her family in Mae Sam Laep; about every four to five months she sends 3,000 or 4,000 baht. Sora's case shows that there is some benefit to be gained from being a wife in terms of financial capital. Since her husband works in the US, he can earn a lot more money than in Thailand, and the money he sends her every month as a remittance makes her life in Chiang Mai city comfortable and more privileged than the other Burmese Muslim female migrants'.

Moreover, gender can be used as social capital at the group level as well, and here I will look at the case of women's migrant network working as social capital. Having a social network is a key factor in terms of a family or woman making the decision to migrate. Social networks serve to answer questions on when, where and how to migrate. As suggested by Curran and Saguy (2001: 59), these "networks serve to link individual and household decisions to larger social structures and have cumulative effect over space and time". The social network of the Burmese Muslim female migrant explains the links these women have developed between their place of origin and their place of resettlement, in relation to domestic work. The social networks of these female migrants make their situation less risky, as they help to circulate important information.

As Curran and Saguy (2001: 60) suggest, the initial high level of risk for individuals who migrate reduces as more of their family and friends also move, because denser networks of migrants provide other, potential migrants with increasingly reliable information about the opportunities and dangers associated with the destination and the migration process. People within each network also offer much needed assistance, such as helping new migrants to find a job or place to live, a fact which facilitates the choice to migrate and makes migration progressively more likely. A social network can be considered a form of social capital for the Burmese women,

for, as a result, rather than being isolated agents they are linked to one another. Their social networks, which are informal, can consist of family members, relatives, or friends.

Today more than 100 women are employed as domestic workers among the thousands of other Burmese currently living in the Chang Klan area, and they come from different areas of Burma. Most of them have networks in Chang Klan community, and these are particularly important for the newcomers, as people who came to the area before might already know well how to live in the host country, a place different from their own in terms of social, cultural and political issues, plus the way of life. The long-stay migrants also help the newcomers to access information about job opportunities once they arrive in the host society, as they can act as referees for the newcomers. They can also help to negotiate the wages for newcomers, by calculating the cost of living in Thailand. Those who arrived some time ago can also provide the newcomers with accommodation, money and information.

> Migrant networks "are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin. They increase the likelihood of international movement because they lower the costs and risk of movement and increase the expected net returns to migration. Network connections constitute a form of social capital that people can draw upon. To gain access to foreign expansion of networks reduces the costs and risks of movement, which…future expands the networks, and so on. Over time migratory behavior spreads outward to encompass broader segments of the sending society".
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> (Guibernau and Rex, 2010: 316)

Unlike men, who normally create their network in formal ways, women's networks are more likely to be informal, as women tend to spend much of their time with friends, relatives and other women during their free time, such as when cooking, talking, gossiping and shopping, and this helps create strong networks which can be a source of information about work and other useful aspects. This section shows some

case studies that highlight the different experiences of the women when using their networks to help others migrate, find jobs and offer other forms of help.

Before Keeta moved to Thailand, her brother and her sister-in-law worked at a fruit factory in Mahachai, Samutsakorn[1] Province, so Keeta and her husband decided to follow her brother's family to Thailand. When they arrived in Thailand, they worked in the same factory for two years, then moved to Chiang Mai city because the owner of that factory is a Chiang Mai native and wanted to hire the both of them to work at his house there. Their employer hired Keeta as a domestic worker, and her husband as a gardener, so Keeta and her husband followed the employer to find work in this Muslim community. Manoya came to live in Chang Klan area over a year ago because her husband has lived in the community for twelve years, since he was eleven years-old. He now works as a meat deliverer in the area, so she eventually followed her husband to work in Chang Klan Muslim community.

Yamira is a Burmese Muslim from Myawaddy who arrived in Chang Klan around five years ago, as she already knew many Burmese migrants working in Chang Klan area. She arrived in the area via Mae Sot. Sa used her brother, who had worked and lived in Chiang Mai for more than ten years, to help her find a way to get to Thailand, and used the support of her friends to get a job as a domestic worker in Chang Klan community.

Poor women from Burma are heavily reliant on their social networks - which can be friends, relatives or family members - to help them migrate and minimize the cost and risk along their travel routes. When they arrive at the host location in Chang Klan, their social networks also help the newcomers find jobs. Keeta, Manoya,

[1] Samut Sakhon is located approximately 30 kilometers to the west of Bangkok. The size of Samut Sakhon is 872 sq. kilometers and it is known as the primary destination for Burmese migrant workers. Abundant job opportunities, higher wages and a well-established Burmese migrant community are the main attractions of Samut Sakhon. Samut Sakhon's economy, in turn, relies heavily on migrant workers, as it hosts the second largest Burmese migrant worker population in Thailand, after Bangkok. The much smaller size of Samut Sakhon makes the Burmese migrant population much denser than in Bangkok. Some officials and media refer to Samut Sakhon as a Burmese town. Officials in Samut Sakhon usually claim that the population of Burmese migrant workers is approximately 120,000, but the actual migrant population could be upwards of 300,000. The Burmese migrant population in Samut Sakhon consists of ethnic Mon, Karen, Burman, Shan and Kachin, the majority of whom are ethnic Mon (Vasu, 2010:180).

Yamira and Sa used their informal network in order to help them migrate, which provided support in the form of money and information. When they arrived in Chang Klan, their networks also helped them find a job, accommodation and financial support.

The Thai word *'bpaithiaw'*[2] reflects the fact that the social lives of the Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers in Chang Klan community tend to belong to the private sphere, while men's belong to the public sphere - a gender norm rooted in most Asian countries, and especially in Thailand and Burma. In Thailand, Curran and Saguy (2001: 63) note that traditional gender roles assign women a heavily kin-based, domestic role, while young men are expected to live free of the household, to *bpaithiaw* or go adventuring – in the form of labor migration or being itinerant Buddhist monks, cattle sellers or other traveling workers. *Bpaithiaw* is thus part of a gendered scheme which encourages men to acquire status and social influence through association with peers and contact with institutions of power and knowledge by moving to urban centers. In turn, these contacts help migrant men find jobs. In contrast to men, women have traditionally had stronger ties to their natal households and have not been encouraged to develop non-kinship ties or to venture far from home. This explains why many Burmese female migrants mostly rely on their kin-based networks or close networks like friends from the same villages.

Chang Klan community, as a female migrant resettlement area, helps to facilitate these activities for women, as they cannot or are not encouraged to do so in their home locations. If *bpaithiaw* is not a preferred activity for women in general, it is particularly true for Muslim women; however, the resettlement area in Chang Klan allows the migrant women to perform activities usually reserved for the men - it allows them to act in a similar way to men. As many scholars who study gender roles have stated, changes in relations caused by migration mean that women often have more freedom in the resettlement area, and this is particular true in the case of the Burmese female migrants in Chang Klan community.

[2] *Bpaithiaw* is a Thai verb meaning 'to travel for leisure'.

In Chang Klan area nowadays, since more and more women migrants have arrived in the community, they tend to have formed their own groups; those normally based on family members, relatives and friends. The women usually spend their time together when they finish work in the evening, cooking together for lunch or dinner, spending time together at the market, going shopping or sometimes going out for picnics - going to hot springs and waterfalls.

Bourdieu's work, The Forms of Capital (1986), raises the possibility that people who lack economic capital may be able to use other forms of capital to achieve their needs. Based on this, the *bpaithiaw* activities carried out by the Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers, on the one hand strengthen their social networks, and on the other allow them to enjoy their leisure time, relax, reduce their level of homesickness and create a sense of belonging. Bourdieu (1986) seeks to understand how subordinated groups might look to raise their socio-economic status by deploying or investing in different kind of capital beyond the economic ones, and these different forms of capital include social capital, such as the operation of a women's social network, or group memberships created and maintained as informal networks, like the *bpaithiaw* activities mentioned here

As discussed above in terms of the unequal structure of social, economic and political matters, the study women have been able to turn these gender norms into benefits. On the social side, domestic work is seen as work for women and it is known that women know how to do this work well, so this kind of ideology on the one hand has allowed the female migrants to slot into this type of work, but on the other has prevented male migrants from doing the same. In economic terms, gender norms state that domestic work is unskilled labor, and so the salaries are very low. As a result, women migrants have to be willing to work very hard and accept low payment in order to fit the gender norms. In political terms, the female migrants from Burma who have lived and worked in Thailand for a long period of time have been able to accumulate, not only financial capital, but also social capital, such as friends working in non-profit organizations (NGOs) or other migrants who have transformed themselves from illegal migrants into NGO workers. The NGOs then play a key role in the lives of the migrant workers in many ways.

One organization which has an office based in Chang Klan is the BEAM Education Foundation. This organization offers academic, vocational and cultural courses to Burmese migrants in Chiang Mai, and uses educational programs to help migrants build a bridge to a better life. Its goals and objectives are to provide higher education and advanced vocational education, improve economic opportunities through capacity building, and support social mobilization among migrant workers. Female migrants are offered courses run by this group on tailoring, the English and Thai languages and computing, hoping to use these courses to improve their lives. This NGO's work is one of example how the Burmese migrants get support from below, which can be seen as one form of social capital available to the Burmese migrants in the resettlement area.

4.3 Ethnicity in Domestic Work

In Thailand, the shift towards hiring domestic workers from outside the family has intensified in recent decades as a result of global economic restructuring. The state-led industries set up since the 1970s have pulled more and more local women into the waged economy, resulting in a lack of domestic workers in urban areas, a shortage filled by migrant workers from neighboring countries. This shift in the domestic burden to low-status migrant "others", as differentiated from the "self" by the power of a range of cross-cutting social constructs - from class to race/nationality, has had the effect of devaluing domestic work (Yeoh et al, 2005: 1). Race, nationality and ethnicity make the Burmese women "others", those paid to do domestic work in households. This dichotomy of "us" (Thai employers and local people) and "others" and "outsiders" (Burmese migrants) marks a difference in race, nationality and ethnicity among the Muslims in Chang Klan area. Even if many local people and the Burmese migrant themselves still believe that they are Muslim, race, nationality and ethnicity are reflected clearly in the attitudes that exist between the 'owners' of Thai soil and those migrants who came to live in someone else's land. Local people described to me their attitudes towards these Burmese Muslims migrants, saying things such as "These migrants come to steal the jobs from Thai people" (Pa Amporn – personal conversation in March 2010) and "Now Chang Klan community is like

Mawlamyine[3]" (Mr. Suvit - in-depth interview in March 2010). This ideology, strongly reproduced in local Thai people, leads to an unwelcoming attitude towards Burmese migrants in Chang Klan community; however, in reality the local people still need the cheap and docile labor provided by such migrants.

4.3.1 Ethnicity as Social Capital

Shan (2006: 4) evaluates the concept of ethnicity as social capital from a critical, feminist perspective. According to her, an analysis of ethnicity at the intersection of gender, generation, 'race', class and age offers a more nuanced assessment of the potential of social capital based on ethnic social relations, and as an influence on upward socio-economic mobility. In particular, drawing on research into second-generation Laotian girls participating in an ethnic specific youth project focused on leadership development and community organizing, she suggests that: a) an analysis of the gender and generational power relations within an ethnic community can reveal whether ethnicity as social capital will uniformly shape the attitudes and behaviors of girls and boys, b) while dense ethnic networks are perceived as the privileged site in which social capital is embedded, strong secondary social ties can also provide a source of social capital for the second generation, c) the impact of social capital must be contextualized within particular social contexts and structural constraints that shape socio-economic opportunities for specific groups, and d) the children of immigrants are not seen as agents but as passive recipients of the benefits of social capital. Her study finds that participation in community organizations with a social justice agenda enables new second generation immigrants to create social resources, values and ties that empower members of the immigrant community, allowing them to actively struggle for their social and political rights.

Zhou and Lin (2005) study community transformation and the formation of ethnic capital among immigrant Chinese communities in the United States, and also highlight the importance of social capital toward ethnicity. According to them, social

[3] Mawlamyine is the third largest city in Burma (Myanmar), situated 300 km south east of Yangon and 70 km south of Thaton, at the mouth of the Thanlwin (Salween) river. This city of 500,000 is the capital of and largest city in Mon State, Myanmar, and is the main trading center and seaport in south-eastern Burma.

capital impacts immediately on the social relations to be found among individuals - often determined and constrained by ethnicity. Social capital as such is also embedded in the formal organizations and institutions within a definable ethnic community that structure and guide these social relations. Lodging social capital this way is important in two respects. First, social relations among immigrants are often disrupted through the process of migration itself. Upon arrival, many immigrants, including those received into their pre-existing ethnic community, are just as likely to be strangers as they would be if they were to move from one place to another in their old homeland, despite sharing the same language and even the same dialect. The unfamiliar social environment, combined with the lack of language proficiency and human capital, adds to the difficulties faced in terms of social orientation. It is the ethnically familiar physical site that can bring new immigrants together, providing them with opportunities to interact with members of their own group and to re-build social networks and a sense of community. These newly built social networks may be qualitatively different from what is commonly understood; they may not be as intimate and homey, yet they are instrumental. Secondly, ethnic social structures differ from other multi-ethnic or mainstream social structures in that they operate under common cultural parameters, most importantly, language (Zhou and Lin 2005: 262-3).

Ethnicity plays an important role in the lives of the Burmese in Chang Klan, which is why they make a living in the migrant community there. Without the support of their network, such as the grocery shops, some migrants could not survive on the low incomes they earn each month. It is not only the grocery shops that provide support for the Burmese migrants - they also help each other when they get into trouble; for example, when someone dies, the migrants will pull together to help at the funeral - collecting money and donating to the family of the deceased. As well as funerals, they also support new migrants into the community who have no money - sometimes donating money or offering help to the newcomers. These forms of help may include offering money, accommodation, food or information about job opportunities. They do this not in a formal way, but as a normal practice, since they feel they need to help each other, being as they are in the same situation.

Being Burmese migrants in Chang Klan community, those migrants who are not citizens of Thailand face many difficulties in their daily lives. The Burmese female migrants to be found in this community normally come from poor families, have little or no educational background and also lack Thai language skills. These women do not have many choices in terms of work, so normally end up working in low paid jobs such as domestic work. In order to help them make a living in this community, the Burmese have created a formal network and make good use of it. In Chang Klan community, there are several grocery shops, and these shops act as support sites for the migrants. In the grocery shops, one can find many Burmese items for sale, including household items, local food and local ingredients. These grocery shops are run by Burmese Muslims, and some of the owners were once themselves domestic workers when they first arrived in Chang Klan. However, once they had accumulated the requisite money and skills, they were able to achieve upward mobility and become self-employed.

The items in these shops are not expensive; the owners tend to choose cheap products in order to serve the needs of their Burmese migrant customers. However, some migrants still cannot effort to buy these items. As a result, the owners of these grocery stores normally allow the Burmese Muslim migrants to buy their goods on credit, so they can pay at the end of the month or when they receive their pay. Many migrants rely heavily on this process to buy goods, as the little income they receive makes it hard for them to use their money over a whole month. Credit therefore acts as an important support mechanism for the migrants – helping them to buy food to eat and the household items they need over the course of a month.

As the owners of the grocery shops are Burmese, their customers also tend to be Burmese, and this same ethnicity links them together. In Chang Klan Muslim migrant community, the grocery shops are located at the heart of the migrants' residential area, and this makes it easier for the shop owners to keep an eye on those migrants who have taken credit with them. In terms of location, each of the areas in which the grocery shops are located is made up of migrants from the same place of origin, so that many know each other before they arrive in Chang Klan community, and this fact means the shop owners are less at risk of losing their money.

The female migrants help each other to find domestic work, for although Thai people think that domestic work is very bad, having this work is still much better than having no job at all. Some women have to work as beggars, and these female beggars are the poorest of the poor in this community. These women cannot speak Thai at all, since they are not permanent in Chang Klan but move back and forth between Thailand and Burma. These Burmese Muslim female beggars normally travel across the border from Burma into Chang Klan community during Ramadan, because during Ramadan Muslims donate money to the poor, according to their Islamic beliefs. Domestic workers also give support to the beggars in many ways; sometimes they give food to the female beggars and their children, while at other times they give them money and sometimes help them to communicate in Thai. Being Burmese in a host society, the women feel they need to help each other, as they feel they belong to the same ethnicity as the other Burmese, and this ethnicity maintains and sustains their relationships in the resettlement area. In Chang Klan Muslim migrant community; therefore, these women have turned their Burmese ethnicity into social capital.

4.4 Religion as Social Capital

It is clear from the above section how ethnicity is used as social capital by the Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers in Chang Klan. However, as an intersection with their identity, their religion is also an important factor that can be seen as social capital. Parreñas (2001: 204) mentions about the importance of churches for migrant Filipina domestic workers in Rome, Italy. According to her, two important private spaces for these female migrants are their apartments and their church centers. In their daily life, these migrant workers often spend their time in parks or at train stations, but removed from the dominant society, the private space created by church centers and apartments give these Filipinas a safe place to meet. An apartment provides the migrant Filipinas with an intimate environment in which they can spend their leisure hours watching Filipino moves, playing cards and cooking Filipino dishes, while church centers provide the opportunity to join in with spiritual activities. These centers also support the migrant workers in terms of social issues; providing a variety of social services such as legal assistance, free medical care, job placement referrals and Italian-language classes. In addition, the migrant workers can

take part in cultural group activities such as choirs, dance troupes and theater groups (Parreñas, 2001: 205).

Dwyer et al., (2006: 17) also see religion as social capital, studying how young British Pakistani women and men can achieve an education, with religion being particularly important for young Pakistani men. According to them, for these young men their religious practice and particularly their reading of the Qur'an give them a strong impetus to pursue an education and perform well academically. Not only does their religious devotion encourage them to confirm to parental norms and values, but they actively construct their own values, those which see education as an appropriate Islamic activity, such that "although, these young men are not always high achievers or particularly ambitious, their religious commitments keep them in school, college or university". The authors see these men's Muslim identity as a form of ethnic identity which provides a strong motivation for educational achievement and advancement.

This section talks about Chang Klan migrant community as social capital for the Burmese Muslim migrant workers. Chang Klan Muslim community has been home to Muslim Burmese migrants for more than 30 years; however, not all the migrants choose to remain in this community, as their migration patterns are quite diverse. Some of them have lived in the community for almost 30 years, whilst others have moved on to other areas, places where they believe they can find better paid jobs. Some of them have moved back to their place of origin, while others still move back and forth between Chang Klan and other places in Thailand or Burma.

Since 30 years ago, when the first group of Burmese Muslim migrants migrated to the area, Chang Klan community has developed into an enclave migrant community, home to more than 2,000 migrant men, women and children. Chang Klan community has become a place for migrants to live in and find work, and while women tend to work as domestic workers, men can often work as wage labor or construction workers. Children can go to school (modern Thai education and Islamic education), while those migrants who are old and sick can go to government hospitals where they are provided with health care services (if they have the proper documents). Across all circumstances, Chang Klan community seems to be the perfect place for migrants to live and for family reunions to take place.

Moreover, Chang Klan Mosque acts as the support site for the poor Burmese migrant worker in this community in many ways. Socio-economic aspects are the key factors driving migrants to live in Chang Klan, but more important in this community is the religious enclave community that exists for Muslims migrants. Chang Klan Mosque is located at the heart of the community and is the key holy place and center for all Muslims who live in the area. The Mosque is surrounded by the dormitories of the Burmese Muslim migrants, so it is easy for them to go there - it is only a short walk. Migrant men can easily go to pray at the Mosque; however, the Mosque is not only important for religious reasons, for it also provides support for the migrants in many ways. As with the Shan migrants, who use their Buddhism as social capital, when the Muslim migrants move to Chiang Mai city and have nowhere to go, they go to the Mosque and stay there while searching for a job. The Burmese Muslim migrants in the past used to rely on the support of the Mosque; when they first moved to Chang Klan area and had no contacts, they would use the Mosque as social capital, stay there and ask people there about jobs. Nowadays not so many new migrants stay at the Mosque, because they are sustained by their networks across time and space.

The Mosque helps to facilitate the lives of the migrants, but not only the men; the poor women use the support provided by the Mosque also, especially during holy festivals such as Ramadan. Chang Klan Mosque during Ramadan is full of Muslims who go there to pray and eat in the evening. However, the space inside the Mosque is divided very strictly at this time. In front of the Mosque, on the left hand side of the gate, is the space for Burmese Muslim beggars who sit on the floor – a space normally used as a parking lot for motorcycles – in fact, local people sometimes complain that these women take away their parking spaces. The open hall is the men's dining room, while the women's dining room is inside. Men and women pray in separate spaces. Apart from the public space, there is also private/hidden space in the Mosque – a space in which the Burmese Muslims (both men and women), those who work as wage laborers and domestic workers, clean. It is not a surprise to find out that all the cleaning and laboring jobs are taken by the Burmese Muslim migrants; not one Thai Muslim takes care of this work.

At the Mosque I met two Burmese beggars who could not speak Thai or English, but with the help of other Burmese Muslims who offered their time as interpreters, I was able to speak to them. Every year during Ramadan, many Burmese Muslims cross the border to Muslim communities in Thailand. In Chang Klan Mosque during my research work period, many beggars had come to live in the area temporarily during this one important month. Those beggars who are newcomers and go back and forth across the Thai-Burma borders every year cannot speak Thai, but in a sense language is not a problem. The fact they cannot speak Thai somehow differentiates them from the other migrants, and means they cannot find another way to earn money. However, they use their flexible/multiple identities as tactics of negotiation, or "weapons of the weak" - using their economic identities (as poor), ethnic identities (as Burmese) and religious identities (as Muslims) to receive donations from other Muslims in the Mosque. During Ramadan, according to a religious rule, Muslim people must donate money and food to poor Muslims. In this sense, time (the Ramadan month) and space (the Mosque as a religious space) give the poor an opportunity to benefit.

Another related case is that of Panu Husdi, who is now an Imam at Chang Klan Mosque and has managed to use his identity as an Imam as social capital. He originally comes from Mae Sam Laep in Mae Hong Son Province, following his mother to Chang Klan community, as she already worked in the area. He arrived in the community around nine years ago. His mother and relatives work in the community as Roti sellers and wage laborers, and his mother has lived in the area for more than ten years, and his wife also sells Roti. They do not have their own children so have adopted a boy from Mae Sot, because they know the parents of the boy. The boy is now two years-old. Panu came to the area to become an Imam at Chang Klan Mosque (an Imam is an Islamic leader, often the leader of a mosque and the Muslim community). Similar to other spiritual leaders, the Imam is the one who leads Islamic worship services, and often a community will turn to an Imam if they have a religious question, and in smaller communities, an Imam may also be the community leader. Panu studied Islam in Mawlamyine, Burma for ten years and studied for a few more years in Mae Sot. The Islamic schools in Mawlamyine and in Mae Sot each have

more than 100 students. Now Chang Klan Mosque has a Thai Imam - the leader, with Panu Husdi as his assistant. When the Thai Imam is not available, Panu leads prayers at the Mosque, plus he teaches the Qur'an to around 25 children at an Islamic school nearby. The months of March and April are the summer break, so during this time children study everyday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Of these 25 children, more than twenty are the children of Burmese Muslim migrants, and it is interesting to note that only a few Thai Muslims study at the Islamic school. He still has contacts at the mosque in Mae Sam Laep (a new mosque), and before moving to Chang Klan Mosque, was an Imam there. He told me there are many Burmese migrants from Mae Sam Laep in Chiang Mai, who also pray at Chang Klan Mosque. According to him, some Burmese Muslim migrants used to stay at the Mosque when they first arrived in Chang Klan, but now not so many people ask for assistance from the Mosque since they may have relatives or friends in the area. He has thus used his religious education as capital, and this has allowed him to attain a privileged status in Chang Klan Mosque, as well as in Chang Klan community as a whole. It is also important to note that nowadays, since many families are able to send their children to modern Thai schools, not so many study at the Muslim school. His case shows that the Burmese are not only in demand for their cheap labor on the labor market in Thailand, but that also a religious space like Chang Klan Mosque is in great need of an educated religious person to continue the religious leadership role.

Using the concept of intersectionality can help explain the situation in which one person may have different, multiple and flexible identities (in the case of Panu Husdi, as a Muslim and as a Burmese). Each identity can bring benefit to a person in space and time. In terms of space, at the Chang Klan Mosque they needed an expert in Islam, so allowed Panu to set himself up as the Imam. In terms of time, the Thais' lack of interest in religious education has allowed him to turn his own religious education into social capital also.

4.5 Summary

Bourdieu's work, The Forms of Capital (1986), raises the possibility that people who lack economic capital may be able to use other forms of capital to achieve

their needs. Based on this, this chapter has attempted to show the ways in which the Burmese Muslim female domestic workers have been able to use their gender as women, their ethnicity as Burmese and their religion as Muslims as capital - to achieve their goals. The social capital held by them has allowed subordinate groups like the Burmese Muslim female domestic workers to achieve upward mobility in their host society of Chang Klan in Chiang Mai.

This chapter has linked the concept of intersectionality with social capital, and explained how the Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers have used their intersectional identities based on gender, ethnicity and religion as social capital. Many scholars who have studied the issue of female migrant domestic workers have highlighted the inequality inherent in the work, as rooted in gender, class, ethnicity, age and migration status. However, I argue that the Burmese Muslim female migrant domestic workers have been able to turn their marginalized identities as women, as Burmese and as Muslims, into their own form of social capital.