

摘要

音樂可被視為社會關係的衡量準則 (DeNora 2000:126)。這項研究透過整合既有資源，旨在將基隆印尼移工與臺灣居民的需求納入 2019 至 2024 年的音樂研究設計中，以梳理其中的社會關係網絡。作者掌握多重語言 (印尼文、英文、中文與臺語) 的優勢、以及和印尼社群之間多重的中介位置，用以進行半結構式訪談和參與式行動研究，並從臺灣現行政策、離散族群認同、音樂與社會正義、實體與虛擬空間，以及研究者與社區的關係等理論框架下，探討基隆印尼移工的音樂歌單。

藉由共同創作和水平知識流的運用，臺灣印尼移工個人之間、與他們和基隆在地人之間創造出得以多向溝通的音樂互動。本研究主張，音樂作為移工的「藝術靈魂」(*jiwa seni*)、生命詩歌、情感容器和交流空間，同時又匯聚移民文化以及臺灣社會，突顯出印尼移工社群在基隆的一席之地。

關鍵詞：應用民族音樂學、印尼移工、藝術靈魂、水平知識流、音樂與社會正義、基隆

Abstract

Music may be viewed among other perspectives as a ‘touch stone of social relations’ (DeNora 2000:126). This research collected data about social relations by integrating available resources with the goal of including the needs of Indonesian migrant workers and Keelung residents in the research design from 2019 to 2024. Multilingual research and mediation with multiple positions in Keelung Indonesian community were used for semi-structured interviews and participatory action methodologies, building theoretical framework in Taiwanese current laws, diaspora identity, music and social justice, physical and virtual spaces, and relationships between researcher and community.

Through co-created events and horizontal knowledge flow, interactive music activities built multi-directional communications among individuals and connected local Keelung Taiwanese and Indonesian lifeworlds. This research argues that music, as migrant workers’ *jiwa seni* (artistic soul), life poetry, container for feelings and communicative spaces, is essential for negotiating among immigrant culture and host society while making migrant activities meaningful in communal and social relationships in Keelung, Taiwan.

Keywords: Applied Ethnomusicology, Indonesian migrant worker, *jiwa seni*, horizontal knowledge flow, music and social justice, Keelung

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謝謝所有不確定我過著什麼生活，卻依然給我時間且陪伴我的人。

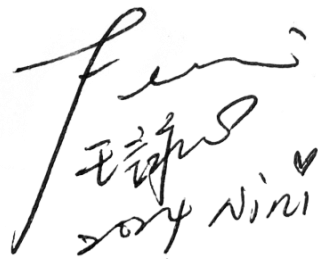
謝謝彼浪的寶寶們：筠、昱文、B4，那些一起在基隆熱血淋雨、被風吹爛，卻還是堅持寫計畫以及定時定點去印尼店教中文的時光，是我至今都不停懷念的；謝謝被我拜訪過的基隆各單位不藏私地分享真實看法，尤其是非常有緣分的基隆市嘻哈文化推廣協會，還有後來熟絡的吉鼓拉音樂工作室和阿洛，是你們帶我走進了基隆的音樂社群。

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Feni
王詩
2014 Nini

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Statistical data from the Ministry of the Interior regarding the classification of blue-collar migrant workers who do ‘manual work’ are collectively refers to them as ‘migrant worker’. Blue-collar workers are separated in the data from white-collar migrant workers such as teachers and business people (Ministry of the Interior 2024:1). Migrant workers are mainly divided into two big categories: social welfare migrant workers and industrial migrant workers. The jobs that social welfare migrant workers engage in include: domestic helpers, domestic caregivers, and institutional caregivers. The jobs that industrial migrant workers engage in include: marine fishing, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, aquaculture among others.

According to statistics from the Ministry of the Interior from the end of 2014 to the end of 2023, the number of migrant workers increased by 126,920 (+24.10%) and is still increasing (Ministry of the Interior 2024:3). It only decreased from 2020 to 2021 owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of the latest statistics, the number of alien residents¹ living in Taiwan with valid resident certificates² at the end of 2023 totaled 851,932, of which 653,498 (76.71%) were migrant workers (Ministry of the Interior 2024:2). Broken down by nationality, Indonesian migrant workers were the largest number at 244,002 (Ministry of the Interior 2024:2), accounting for 37.3% of

¹ The alien residents in Taiwan referred to in the statistics of the Ministry of the Interior do not include Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau.

² According to the provisions of the Immigration Act of the Republic of China (R.O.C. /Taiwan), ‘Visit’ means a visit in the Taiwan Area for the period of less than six months, and ‘Residence’ means residing in the Taiwan Area for the period of six months or up.

the total number of foreign migrant workers.

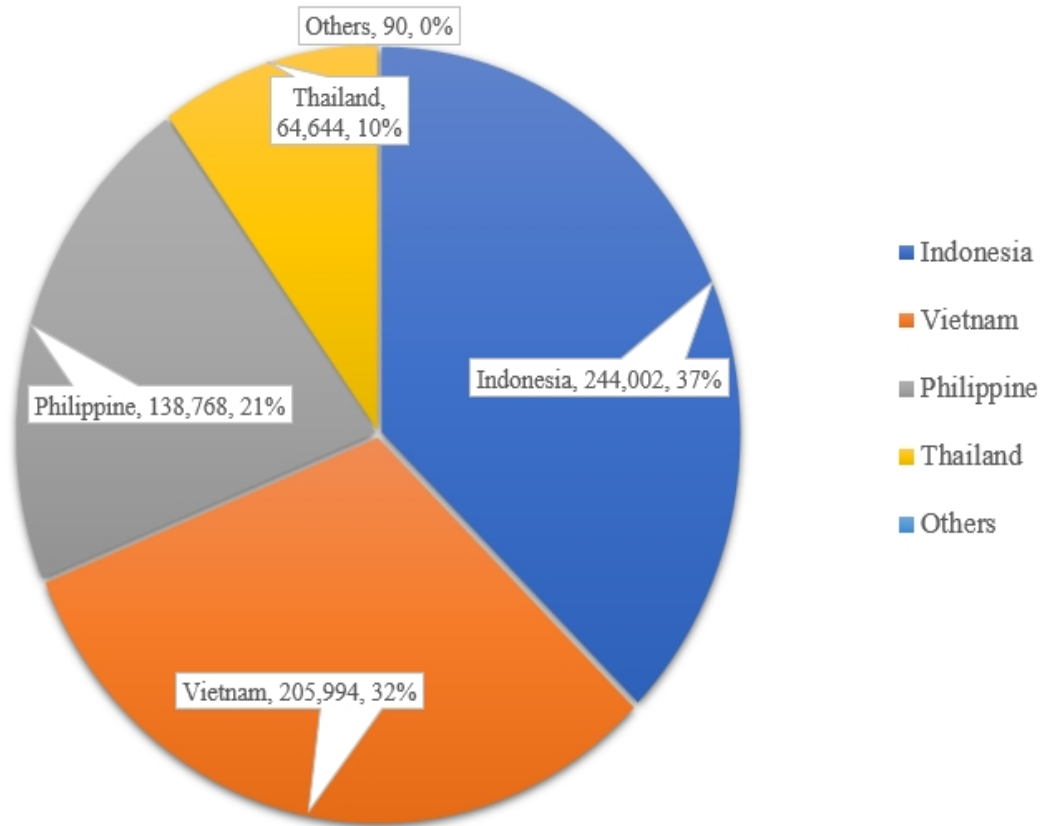


Fig. 1.1 The number of migrant workers in Taiwan holding valid ARC by the end of 2023 (Unit: person) (Created by the author) (Reference:https://www.moi.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=2905&s=314291)

In the statistics of the same year in Keelung, migrant workers accounted for 67.24% of the total number of foreign migrant workers holding valid resident certificates (Ministry of the Interior 2024:5), far more than half. There were 3,709 Indonesian migrant workers, accounting for 73% of the foreign migrant worker population in Keelung by the end of 2023.³ Of course, the above statistics do not include the dark figures that are not calculated due to various controllable or uncontrollable factors but are still living in Taiwan.

There is ambiguity in the regulations that govern migrant workers. Here, I have two questions that relate to intermediate workers and foreign students: First, once a migrant worker has resided in Taiwan for more than six years and achieve the certain qualification, he/ she can apply for the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program (移工留才久用方案) and turn to be an intermediate skilled foreign worker (外國中階技術人才).⁴ The benefits for intermediate skilled foreign workers are increasing salary and permanent residence. After this program was implemented in April 2022, “what exactly is the so-called ‘intermediate skilled foreign workers’ in official statistics by the end of 2023? Are they still calculated as migrant workers or foreign professionals?” Second, foreign students in the New Southbound International Program of Industry-Academia Collaboration (新南向產學合作國際專班) mostly worked in the manufacturing, hotel, catering or hairdressing industries while they were studying. Here, they served as operators, room attendants, counter staff, and hairdressing assistant to complete internships and part-time jobs. After graduating, they continued to work in the same company and transitioned to full-time jobs. Currently, the regulations have not clarified whether the status of foreign graduates of the New

³ <https://statdb.mol.gov.tw/statiscla/webMain.aspx?sys=100&kind=10&type=1&funid=wqrymenu2&cparm1=wq14&rdm=I4y9dcli>. 勞動統計查詢網 Electronic document, Accessed May 10th, 2024.

⁴ Introduction to the Long-term Retention of Skilled Foreign Workers Program. Electronic document, <https://fw.wda.gov.tw/wda-employer/home/mid-foreign-labor/index/2c95efb386de05e90186dedd24840359?locale=en>. Accessed May 10th, 2024.

Southbound International Program of Industry-Academia Collaboration will be included in the classification of migrant workers.

These two questions were directed in a telephone interview to the staff in the Long-term Retention of Migrant Workers Service Center, Ministry of Labor. First, intermediate skilled foreign workers are mainly to fill the urgent labor shortage in Taiwan, so the job contents are the same as blue-collar migrant workers. Intermediate skilled foreign workers remain blue-collar migrant workers. Second, foreign graduates from New Southbound countries are classified as blue-collar or white-collar workers according to their employment status. If they are engaged in blue-collar jobs, they also fall into the category of migrant workers.

Nonetheless, in accordance with the provisions of the Employment Service Act (就業服務法), service industries such as the hotel, catering, and hairdressing industries have not yet opened qualifications for hiring migrant workers, yet foreign students from New Southbound countries can be legally employed after graduation. The employment of migrant workers is an area of ambiguity in regulations.

I have observed the daily lives of Indonesian migrant workers in Keelung since 2019 and co-founded *Bilang*⁵ which organizes Mandarin classes, promotes migrant issues in Keelung and co-designs several cultural interactions with local Indonesian restaurants and organizations. Through field research, I became curious about how work affects migrant worker's leisure time and mental and emotional wellbeing. I participated in several activities. As a multilingual speaker (Chinese Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, English and Indonesian), I have worked as a mediator between Taiwanese and Indonesian communities and served different roles among the events. My degree of involvement is totally dependent on the orientation of activities.

⁵ *Bilang* was established by Wang Yu-Wen, Wang Yun, Peng Chien-Yen and Wang Yung-Hsin in 2020. It is devoted to bridge Taiwanese society and Indonesian community and create bi-directional communication in Keelung.

This research developed through the close relationship between me and the Indonesian community in Keelung. In 2019, I became affiliate with this Indonesian community through the volunteer program of Rerum Novarum Center, a social welfare organization.⁶ The program was first located in a *Toko Indonesia*, also known as *Toko Indo*, which is Indonesian shop. *Toko Indo* usually serves Indonesian cuisine, daily necessities, telecom services, remittance services, cargo delivery, and space for Indonesian customers to gather. In the same year, a Mandarin class supported by *Toko Indo* Mega Store, Rerum Novarum Center and General Learning and Education Center of National Taiwan Ocean University (NTOU) became the foundation for my interpersonal relationships with migrant workers in Keelung.

A lack of multi-directional communication causes stereotypes and hostile discourses which often come from the stereotype of migrant worker's 4D working conditions: Dangerous, Difficult, Dirty and Demeaning⁷/ Distance⁸. Hostile discourses from misunderstandings about migrant workers have even negatively influenced Taiwanese impressions of most Indonesians. Misunderstandings and discrimination ultimately caused worsening exploitation of migrant workers' freedom during the Covid-19 pandemic, in early 2020. Because the translations of virus prevention measures did not keep up with rapid changes, many foreigners hardly understood the precautions and quarantine regulations. When an illegal Indonesian caregiver became 32nd Covid-19 confirmed case, it aroused widespread negative discussions in the

⁶ I translated some basic Indonesian and looked for needs of fishermen by questionnaires. Meanwhile, Rerum Novarum Center coordinated the resources of a *Toko Indo* and General Learning and Education Center at National Taiwan Ocean University (NTOU). The former provided space, and the latter provided a Mandarin teacher. However, there was no Mandarin teacher available to participate in this program at that moment. NTOU suggested me to attend their intensive TCSL (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) Teacher Training Courses so that I could teach after the training. My position switches several times during these years. I will explain in details in the positionality statement (See page 10).

⁷ Djelantik, Sukawarsini. 2016. Regional Cooperation and Legal Protection to Indonesian Women Migrant Worker. *Indonesian J. Int'l L.* 14: 82.

⁸ Qiu, Fengxian, & Kong, Qingyang, & Fan, Dongjun. 2023. Cumulative Health Disadvantages: An Empirical Study of the Health and Mobility of the First Cohort of Migrant Workers in China. *Frontiers in Public Health* 11.

Taiwan society.⁹ The caregiver had turned on live streaming on her personal Facebook account and showing the environment of the hospital. During 2020 to 2022, the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) disclosed the background and footprints of confirmed cases to trace the contacts every day, yet the location and name of the hospital were disclosed as sensitive information. Under a tense social atmosphere, some Taiwanese regarded the migrant-worker community as an epidemic prevention flaw which caused much discrimination, especially directly to the people who wore *hijab* (or *kerudung*, means Muslim women's veil). While other Taiwanese have begun to pay attention to the information equality of foreigners and the medical problems of escaped migrant workers, there were still examples of employers being excessive panic and depriving migrant workers of their rights. In order to avoid the risk of being infected, many employers prohibited foreign domestic workers from going out and even cut their days-off in case that 'their' foreign domestic workers would hang around or even 'fool around' and bring the virus back home. For examples, like all other classes, our physical Mandarin class in Keelung had no choice but to stop face to face teaching. However, this happened before the government announced the ban on group gatherings. Another discriminatory personal experience related to migrant workers was when I was fired from my English cram school part-time job in New Taipei City through an online phone call. The reason to be fired: along with Indonesians too frequently.

I have collected biographies and anecdotal evidence through extensive interviews with several Indonesian migrant workers during these dynamic five years. This research

⁹ 《疫線生機 2.0》報導-台灣移工逾 71 萬人 防疫資訊仍相對缺乏【客家新聞 20200529】YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vbXySwAtD4&t=55s>. Accessed June 1st, 2020.
外勞怎麼都在直播？— 在直播的世界裡，還有聲音 Electronic document, <https://visionproject.org.tw/story/1970>. Accessed March 12th, 2020.
逃逸移工是「防疫破口」？正視移工處境，真正的破口，來自不被看見 Electronic document, <https://npost.tw/archives/54950>, Accessed May 15th, 2024.
衛生福利部疾病管制署：公布第 32 例確診個案，為案 27 外籍看護。Electronic document, <https://www.cdc.gov.tw/Bulletin/Detail/ra20bYUzTRZoZGSg9LbpeA?typeid=9>. Accessed May 15th, 2024.

thesis investigates how music has become indispensable for many migrant workers who are either musicians being passionate writing songs about their bittersweet lives or avid listeners without tuning in often to tune out the daily grind. Musical activities of Indonesian migrant workers in Keelung are varied and diverse. Yet, most people view music as a therapeutic way to heal the hurt when they are all alone and far away from home. Sometimes, music simply plays a role as an ‘icebreaker’ to warm up the initial awkward social atmosphere, other times it is exactly the reason to gather. This research also revealed that space and weather are also two crucial elements for ‘musicking’ (Small 1998). Both are unpredictable in the life of migrants. Although the playlists from person to person are of course not the same, projected diaspora sentiments in the songs still resonate personal struggles, discriminating abuse and other private experiences that are shared by Indonesian migrant workers. Researchers have demonstrated that migrant workers see, “...music as a resource for emotional solidarity in communities that have been subjected to extremes of violence and for the narrative coherence of traumatized selves” (Stokes 2020:11). For those treated unjustly or who have shared disappointments, they individually create music to share their collective experiences.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

This study will utilize participatory action research and horizontal knowledge flow to examine issues surrounding migrant workers in Keelung Indonesian music scenes. In order to do this, this research proposes questions that relate to long-term relationships, decision making processes, and hidden sentiments behind the public and virtual performances of Indonesian migrant workers.

Research Questions

1. How can long-term relationship building between migrants and researcher bridge multi-directional communication in Keelung Indonesian music scenes?
2. What are the decision-making processes that inform political, practical, self-achievement and reward functions of creative expression for and by Indonesian migrant workers?
3. What hidden sentiments inform both public and virtual performances of music and dance among Indonesian migrant workers?

Research Objectives

1. To bridge multi-directional communication through long-term relationship building between migrants and researcher in Keelung Indonesian music scenes;
2. To examine the decision-making processes that inform political, practical, self-achievement and reward functions of creative expression for and by Indonesian migrant workers;
3. To explore hidden sentiments that inform both public and virtual performances of music and dance among Indonesian migrant workers.

1.3 Methodology

As a multilingual researcher, I have collected data by integrating available resources to mediate the needs of Indonesian migrant workers and Keelung residents in the research design from 2019 to 2024. Data collection research design is informed by a theoretical framework in current laws, diaspora identity, music, social justice, physical and virtual spaces, and the researcher's multiple positions in the community. Semi-structured interviews, multi-sited ethnography, participatory observation, and participatory action methodologies were used in this qualitative study.

My previous experience as a Taiwanese member of the Indonesian migrant worker community in Keelung laid the fieldwork foundation through established long-term relationships built on trust and understanding. Leisure time together, exchanging languages, clarifying policy issues, dealing with scam cases, and co-designing events prior to data collection was critical to field subject selection. Observation and making connections with Keelung Taiwanese were done in local spaces such as open squares, restaurants, night market, schools, fishing harbors, and music studios. Through the participatory action research method, this study designed interactive music activities by triggering co-created events with horizontal knowledge flow among Taiwanese and Indonesian musicians and connecting local Keelung Taiwanese and Indonesian migrant workers' lifeworlds with multi-directional communications.

In order to understand the trajectories of migrant workers, data was triangulated in Keelung and cities in Indonesia by using multi-sited ethnography. Fieldwork was conducted in Keelung for six months during 2022 and in Indonesia for one year during 2023. The researcher's methodology used the 'following' technique (Marcus 1995) working as an agent to move around spaces with Indonesian migrant worker informants and their personal network across national borders.

For the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of data and assessing the reason for working abroad, I interviewed my informants' personal networks, including close friends, owners of *Toko Indo*, employers, and family in their hometown. When I resided in Indonesia in 2023, I got permission to collect personal anecdotes in their hometowns across Java Island, from Cikancung and Rancaekek in Kabupaten Bandung (West Java), Jayamulya in Kabupaten Indramayu (West Java), Gebang Kulon in Kabupaten Cirebon (West Java), Kalipancur and Pakintelan in Kota Semarang (Central Java), Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (Central Java), Sumber and Bungkal in Kabupaten Ponorogo (East Java), Dasri in Kabupaten Banyuwangi (East Java). Even without my informants, I visited their extended family and stayed with them. Through this multi-sited methodology, this research outlined the contours of the migrant workers' lives from their current location of employment in Taiwan extending to their family in Indonesia because even though they are spatially disconnected, they managed to simultaneously and continuously stay united through media.

Considering research ethics, the names of informants are kept anonymous in this paper. Personal data and pictures, including family and event photos, are used with aural and written permission from my informants.

1.4 Positionality Statement

As a female multilingual Taiwanese (Chinese Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, English and Indonesian) member of the Keelung Indonesian community, my initial motivation in approaching this research issue stem from music and social justice among migrant workers. Being a part of a migrant worker family provide me an aspect to closely watch what a long-distance family relationship suffers and how they make decisions in different places but for one goal. My partner of six years, who was born and grew up in an Indonesian farming village in East Java, worked as an operator in a

plastic factory from 2018 to 2024 in Northern Taiwan. My partner's mother has been working as a domestic caregiver overseas since he was seven years old. I have been to his hometown several times with him or without him, from taking cold shower at the first visit to taking hot shower which built by their salaries from working years as migrant workers in Taiwan. As a cross-cultural young couple, we went through a hard period to persuade our families for accepting our relationship. On my family side, they gained new perspectives to break the negative stereotypes of Islamic religion, economy status, and education background of Southeast Asian migrant workers. On his family side, they overcame a pressure of explaining local etiquettes (*sopan santun*), such as outfit and body gestures, again and again with a non-Muslim foreign city girl.¹⁰ Fortunately, through 'mix-language' communication and frequent meeting, we are accepted by both of our families.

My relationship with this study over time has enable me to switch roles multiple times to gain insight into social justice issues. I have gained exposure to social issues as a volunteer, a Mandarin teacher, and a graduate student researcher in Ethnomusicology. Throughout these multiple roles have gained perspectives on the Indonesian community as having a strong organizational power yet it does not meaningfully connect to the Taiwanese community. Switching among all these multiple roles has influenced how I cooperate and negotiate with the Indonesian community and how I am received and perceived by its multiple stakeholders.

¹⁰ Alhamdulillah. I converted to Islam in April 10th 2024, the Eid al-Fitr of 1445AH. My partner's family selected my official Islamic name: Raaya Lafatunnisa.

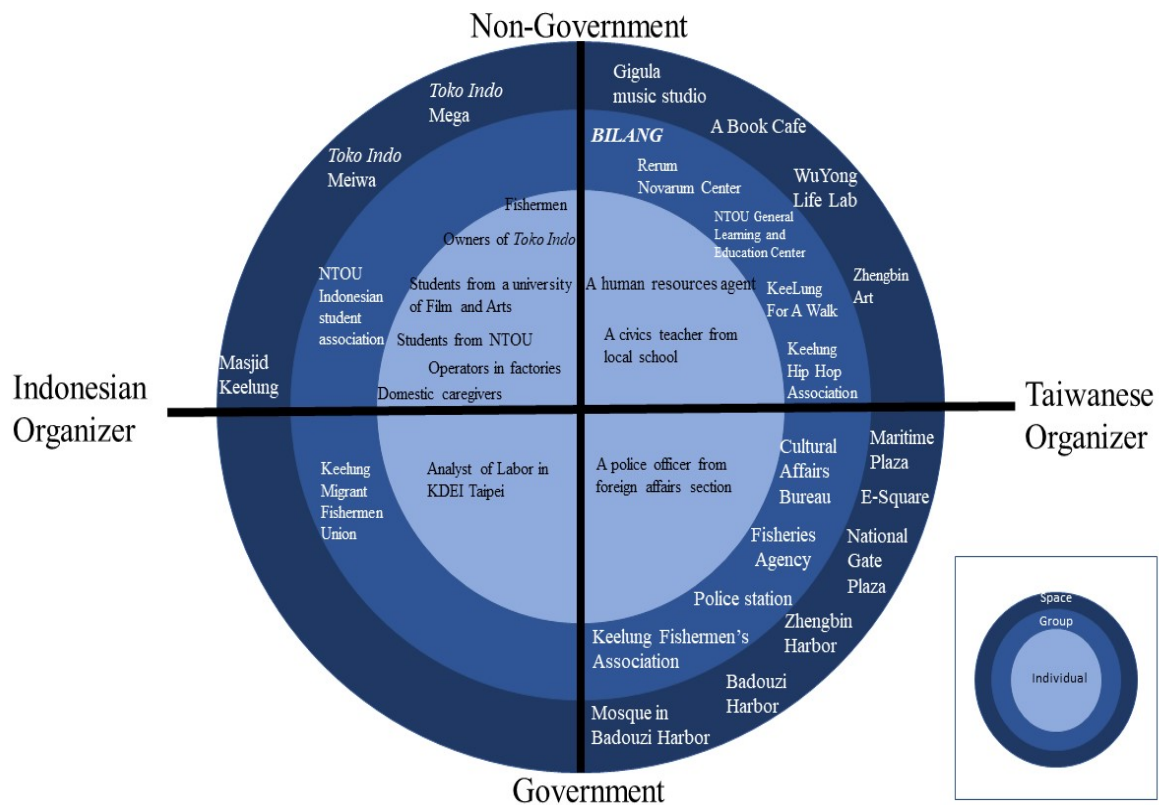


Fig. 1.2 The author's personal network mapping to this research.

I entered my research field, the Keelung Indonesian community, in February 2019 with the purpose of practicing the Indonesian language in a volunteer program that needed some multilingual interviewers in the Rerum Novarum Center. In the name of service for Indonesian migrant workers in Keelung, this program extended their service to language learning and cooperated with the General Learning and Education Center at the National Taiwan Ocean University (NTOU); I taught in this program. My status changed from a volunteer multilingual interviewer at Rerum Novarum Center to a Mandarin student teacher for Indonesian migrant workers in *Toko Indo* Mega in June 2019. However, this program was only sponsored by Rerum Novarum and NTOU until the end of 2019. With the passion for teaching these 'Indonesian friends' every week, my teaching partners and I decided to continue teaching without payment after we got

permission from the owner of the *Toko Indo*. We established our team, *Bilang*, to promote bi-directional communication between Taiwanese and Indonesian with equal languages in Keelung. My status changed from a Mandarin student teacher at NTOU to a volunteer Mandarin teacher and a Changemaker in *Bilang* at the beginning of 2020.

Besides teaching Mandarin in *Toko Indo* Mega, we started a series of experimental interactive activities with government grants in Keelung. For example, we improvised a song in Taiwanese Hokkien and Indonesian languages in a local space, shared Indonesian cuisines with the owner of *Toko Indo* and local Taiwanese in an old community ready for demolition, and held a board game event about ‘Migrant Workers Life’ in a book store. However, during 2020-2021, we gradually reduced physical events and started to teach Mandarin online. The attendance dropped due to Covid-19. We reflected that the one of the functions of physically meeting for migrant workers was a feeling of oneness with others (Huang & Wang 2019). They poured out their feelings in person while having class or eating together, which a virtual event often cannot achieve. However, owing to the different career planning of *Bilang* partners, in 2022, I went back to Keelung alone as a student researcher and started Mandarin classes in two different *Toko Indo*. This is another turning process in my position: From a group member to an individual participant in the Keelung Indonesian community. In addition to teaching language and culture, I participated in various activities during the same period. For example, I accompanied an injured fisherman to the police station, translated for events held by the local government and Indonesian community, built connections between a Taiwanese musician and an Indonesian caregiver musician, and discussed solutions to union disputes with a social worker, police officers in Foreign Affairs Division and the director-general of Keelung Migrant Fishermen’s Union (KMFU, 基隆市漁工職業工會). I was regarded as a part of the Keelung Indonesian community because of building long-term trust, a goal of any ethnomusicologist

wanting to do in fieldwork. At the same time, I noticed that the Indonesian community, especially the Indonesian migrant workers community, was distant and removed from local Taiwanese lives although there are several annual Southeast Asian cultural staged entertainments from new immigrant groups and the local government. The lack of multi-directional understanding between migrant workers and Taiwanese nationals causes hostile resentment against migrants and is often projected on all Southeast Asian immigrants living in Taiwan.

Moreover, I have been immersed in the music scenes with extraordinary Indonesian migrant worker musicians in Taiwan since 2020. I participated in the performances of Uniband (an Indo-pop music band) in the concert at Taipei Main Station, the Batik Festival at the Taiwan Museum, and the Indonesian Month opening at the National Palace Museum in Chiayi. I headbanged with Jubah Hitam (a Metal music band) at Taipei's bar and music studio and the Tainan May Jam Music Festival. I also accompanied Southern Riot (a Punk music band) to perform on the international stage at the Kaohsiung Music Center. Following in the footsteps of these Indonesian migrant bands performing in Taiwan, I wondered how the Indonesian community in Keelung would fare. As I have known the Indonesian community in Keelung since 2019, I was curious about what Indonesians in Keelung listen to and sing.

Thus, as a female multilingual Taiwanese ethnomusicologist and active member of the Keelung Indonesian community, I became concerned about the hidden sentiments behind migrant workers' voices, 'gains and sacrifices' of migrant workers' lives, and how building equal connections through music is possible between the Indonesian and Taiwanese communities in Keelung.

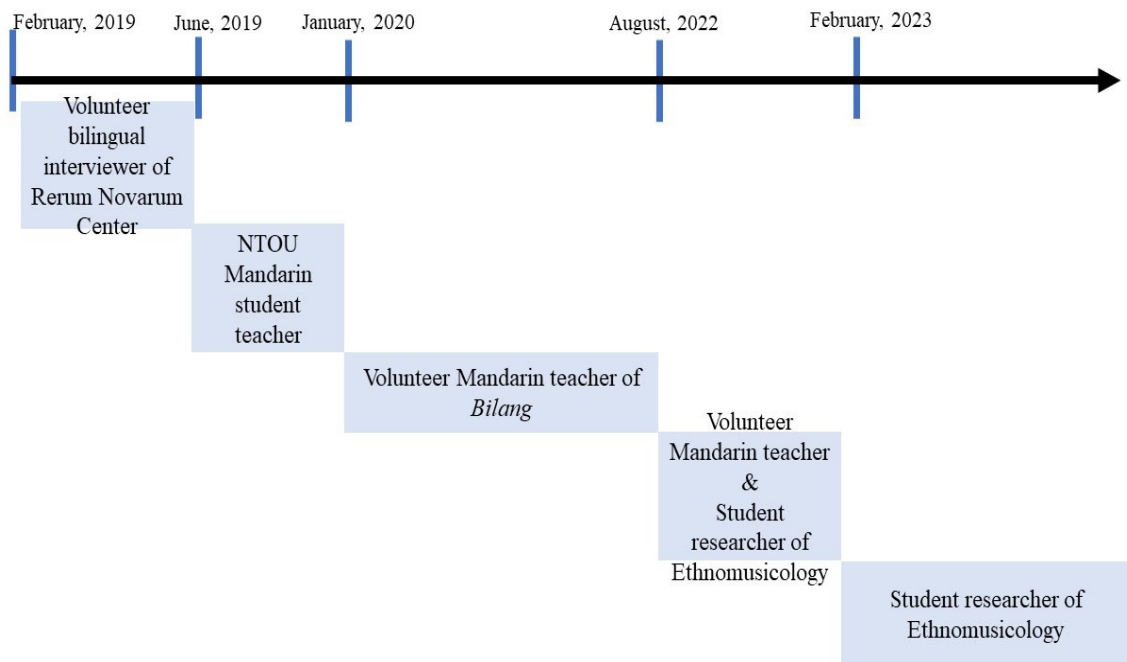


Fig. 1.3 The author have switched multiple roles in this research since 2019.

1.5 Limitations

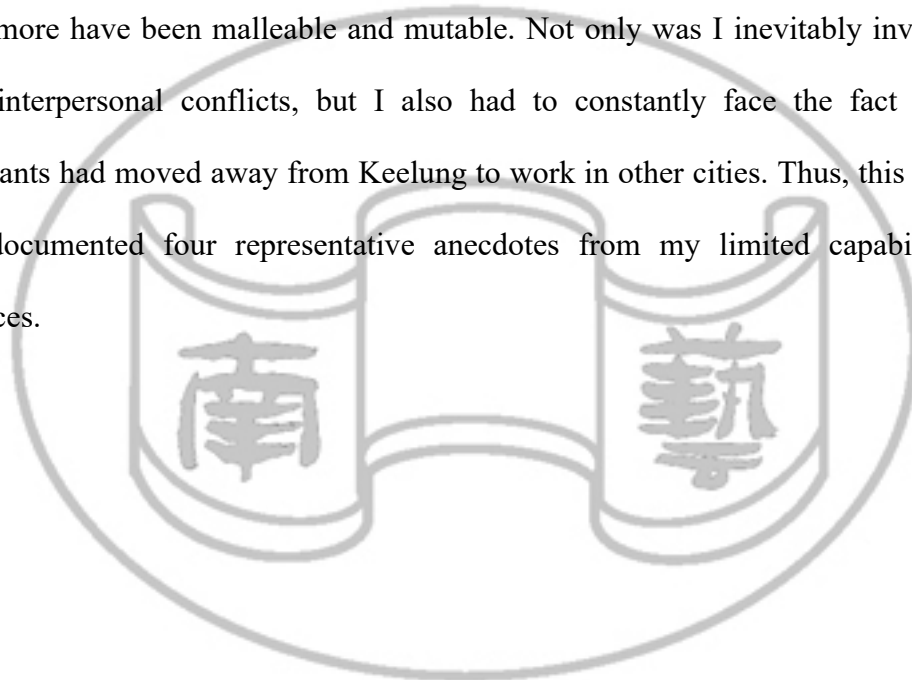
First, this research is based upon accumulated experiences cooperating with the Indonesian community and several Taiwanese units in Keelung over several years but does not represent the entirety of the Keelung community. Instead, it is limited to the geographical range of Keelung’s downtown and east coast: the Renai, Zhongzheng, and Xinyi districts.

Second, Indonesians participating in this study are but a small sampling of an enormous archipelago with hundreds of ethnic groups. During the past five years, Indonesians from Medan, Lampung, Maluku, Lombok, and the cities of Java Island in Keelung have been included in this study. Even though the official language is Indonesian, it is beyond the scope of this study to comprehend views and opinions expressed in Javanese, Sumatran or other languages and dialects. The customs of various ethnicities differentiate regional dialects. For example, the pronunciations of ‘e’

in Indonesian differs in Maluku and Java. Also, Javanese tend to pronounce the written alphabet 'a' as 'o', which is influenced by Javanese language usage. Moreover, some Javanese people from Cirebon are used to saying 'mah' (more common in Sundanese) instead of 'ya' in an expressive tone.

Third, as a female researcher, I did not subject myself to male-dominated work spaces to collect interview data. For example, I avoided fishing boat cabins or entering male migrant workers' rooms based on politeness and personal safety.

Finally, while several key informants remain as stable interpersonal relations many more have been malleable and mutable. Not only was I inevitably involved in some interpersonal conflicts, but I also had to constantly face the fact that my informants had moved away from Keelung to work in other cities. Thus, this research only documented four representative anecdotes from my limited capability and resources.



Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Current Laws

For many, singing is a personal daily event, yet for migrant workers the freedom to sing is complicated. Singing on public stages requires cross-departmental restraints. According to the Ministry of the Interior, Indonesian industrial and social welfare migrant workers number approximately 244,002 people in the end of 2023 (Ministry of Labor 2024). The difficulties that new residents have to overcome in Taiwan include an ‘administrative system lacks multicultural thinking’, ‘regulations disrespect the performing arts of new residents’, ‘time of members are hard to match’, and ‘practicing spaces, economic support and professional teachers are not enough’ (Tsai 2021:13-18). The Employment Service Act of the Ministry of Labor, Article 42 clearly stipulates that no employment of foreign workers may jeopardize nationals’ opportunity in employment, their employment terms, economic development or social stability for the purpose of protecting nationals’ right to work. Article 43 goes on to stipulate that no foreign workers may engage in work within the Republic of China (R.O.C.) should his/her employer have not yet obtained a permit via application. However, as foreigners have frequently come to Taiwan to engage in multicultural exchanges, laws have been opened up. Migrants bring their cultures to Taiwan, so national regulations must be adjusted as society changes. Nowadays, the issues of ‘whether migrant workers can legally receive remuneration for arts, culture and other performing activities’ has continually received more attention after the promotion of ‘The New Southbound Policy’ in 2016. According to the statutory interpretation of the Employment Service

Act from the Ministry of Labor in the year of 2018¹¹ and 2021¹², specific extra-contract activities do not need to be applied to the Ministry of Labor, including ancillary services: A foreigner holding a work permit, in addition to his/her contract work, he/she spontaneously and non-recurrently engages in artistic or performing arts activities without equivalent quid pro quo and the supervision relation between the event organizer or venue manager (Ministry of Labor 2018). For example, a migrant worker is invited to serve as a curator or performer in a multicultural event such as a migrant worker celebration. The migrant worker does not have a supervision relation with the event organizer in such a non-recurrent cultural event. Then, it does not fall within the scope of Article 43 of the Employment Service Act (Ministry of Labor 2021). The latest regulation is that the Ministry of Culture issued a letter in 2022 specifically explaining whether migrant workers can legally receive remuneration for arts, culture and other performing activities.¹³ It amended the ‘Case Analysis of Migrant Workers Engaging in Related Activities in Taiwan’ issued by the Ministry of Labor in 2021, and one new ‘Judgment Flowchart’ was added.

¹¹ The number 1070507378 statutory interpretation of the Ministry of Labor on November 27th, 2018. (勞動部 2018 年 11 月 27 日勞動發管字第 1070507378 號函)

¹² The number 11005117021 statutory interpretation of the Ministry of Labor on September 13th, 2021. (勞動部 2021 年 9 月 13 日勞動發管字第 11005117021 號函)

¹³ The number 1113011890 announcement by the Ministry of Culture on May 5th, 2022. (文化部 2022 年 5 月 5 日文源字第 1113011890 號)

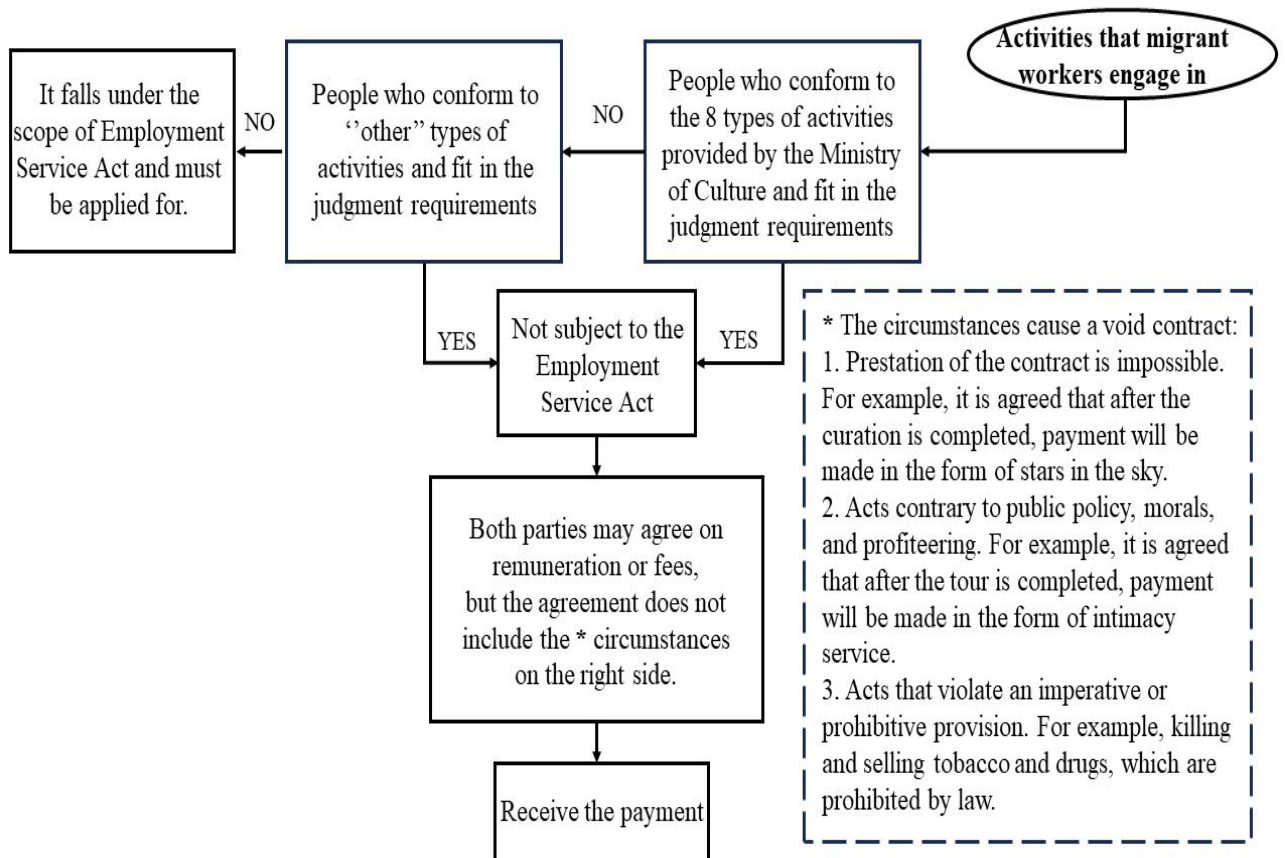


Fig. 2.1 Judgment Flowchart in the Statutory Interpretation Issued by the Ministry of Culture on May 5th, 2022 (Translated by the author)
 (Reference: https://gueiren.tainan.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=13988&s=7894182)

2.2 Diaspora Identity

Migrant workers usually depart from a developing village to a comparatively developed urban area for supporting their family or achieving personal career goals. Before migrant workers settle down in Taiwan, they have to face a transition process from meeting middlemen to Taiwanese placement agencies. It is not just about transitioning between two points but overcoming a series of challenges, even a complete transnational industrial chain. The unknown process is full of risks for migrant workers. A single unemployed local worker urgently seeking a job to survive has to trust such an international system based upon an enormous profit/loss market model. What holds them together to trust are their beliefs and often the previous experiences

of their friends or relatives. Prusinski paid attention to the destiny that Indonesian migrant women workers relied on and noted female migrant workers often believe in fate and trust the agency that is devoted to recruiting workers abroad (Prusinski 2016). This belief system was not only constructed upon religious beliefs itself but also abused by the local leaders who should have taken responsibility for optimizing the migration process. They did not, so migrant workers leave the responsibility to God (Prusinski 2016: 500).

However, migrant workers come to Taiwan for multiple and varied reasons. If they are taking the responsibility to support their family economy status, they would minimize their own expenses and prioritize their family's needs. However, if they are more independent pursuing personal city-life experiences, then budget controlling will not be their first consideration (Qiu, Kong & Fang 2023).

Although harmonious equilibrium among migrant workers is difficult to achieve, it is clear that the performative act of collective music making helps contribute to a better quality of life and general reduction in stress in the challenging world of migrant workers. *Tanah Airku* is an Indonesian patriotic song written by Saridjah Niung, also known as Ibu Soed (Dyrness, W., & Syeed-Miller, N. 2014). Although *Indonesia Raya* is the official national anthem of Indonesia, *Tanah Airku* appears more often in public music scenes. It is a song that crosses ethnicity, religious, and hierarchical boundaries to evoke varying degrees of nationalism among Indonesian diaspora (Huang 2019: 53, Wu 2013: 51). While *Tanah Airku* does create an imagined community (Anderson 2016) immediately upon being played, it has the capacity to bring out the collective memories and shared experiences of diaspora as compatriots far from their homeland, Indonesia, and their families.

In addition to anthem group singing for their nation/state, it is helpful to release built-up tension through popular music. People moderate themselves as aesthetic agents,

as feeling, thinking and acting beings in their everyday lives through music (DeNora 2000:62). Diaspora share their collective sentiments of country, hometown and family as they squeeze in a small KTV room singing in their mother tongue. For example, in Indonesia, singing popular songs is very common in Chinese Indonesian communities in Java Island. Karaoke sessions happen under various conditions such as family reunions, family associations, restaurants, ceremonies, night markets, and competitions. It is not only for entertainment but also for connecting social networks (Tsai 2017:36). As Lum emphasized, karaoke establishes a sense of 'harmonious yet dynamic equilibrium' for recognizing unitary identity as an individual and togetherness as a group (Lum 1999:176). In Taiwan, karaoke devices are provided in the spaces within several Southeast Asian consumptive ethnoscaapes (Appadurai 1996, Wang 2006), including Burmese Chinese restaurants on HuaXin streets (Lu 2011:26), *Toko Indo* around major traffic nodes (Wu 2013:77), Thai restaurants near Taoyuan railroad station (Xu 2013:109, Wang 2006:165), Filipino communities in *ChungShan* (Wu 2003:42), Vietnamese karaoke pubs in Yonghe district (Fan 2014:16), and diners with private rooms in Taichung ASEAN Square (Liao 2019:78).

2.3 Music and Social Justice

Warren deduced that the ethical responsibility involved in music is created by 'interpersonal relationships' (Warren 2014:12). Here, human relationships are a central concern to the experience and meaning of music. Music as a resource for communal stability is clearly a kind of binding agent that helps pull people together in times of hardship. Migrants are physically 'displaced' people who must negotiate all facets of life and mark their identity. However, identity is a dynamic process negotiated between self-selection and being labeled. Migrants from the same country but of different ethnicities may use art to 're-draw their group boundaries along regional and religious

lines' (Winarnita 2014:232) and regard music as a shared space where people interact and moral duties emerge (Warren 2014:15). One of the principal ways individuals mark their identity is through language, song and the embodied musical instrument, the voice. Although dislocated from their family and culture, a migrant's voice can "[...] carry the border with their timbres. Voicing presence in displacement is courageous as well as creative" (Western 2020:304).

Reasons for advocating for migrants' rights often stem from gross injustices from their employers and in many instances even forms of extreme violence. Music and other expressive art forms help individuals cope with injustice and violence in the workplace as 'a container for feelings' (DeNora 2000:74). As Stokes emphasized, the music created by migrants can be viewed as 'a resource for emotional solidarity in communities that have been subjected to extremes of violence and for the narrative coherence of traumatized selves' (Stokes 2020:11).

In Taiwan, considerable reportages and academic papers documented the disadvantages and extreme violence in the long-established foreign labor system. A significant report series called 'Fraud, Exploitation, and Blood on the High Seas' (The Reporter 2016) was about investigating the death of an Indonesian fisherman in distant water fisheries with Tempo Magazine in Indonesia. The report series was then contained in the 'Blood on the High Seas' (Li, Lin, Jiang & Zheng 2017). The undocumented and objectified histories of the migrant workers' sacrifices for the Taiwanese 'national good', for example, was documented when countless Thai construction workers suffered from diver's disease while constructing the Taipei MRT; pseudonyms were used instead of actual full names of Thai victims on their Kaohsiung MRT labor memorial (Ku 2019). These injustice cross-nation cases reflect the humanity of the subaltern is sacrificed from the recruitment system to the judicial system in the interlocking commercial benefit and industry reality.

However, injustices are not only committed through physical abuse or when it touches the death threat but also through what may be called a migrant worker's 'living nightmare' that takes place largely out of sight. ILO (International Labour Organization) concluded eleven leading indicators of forced labor: abuse of vulnerability, deception, restriction of movement, isolation, physical and sexual violence, intimidation and threats, retention of identity documents, withholding of wage, debt bondage, abusive working and living conditions and excessive overtime (ILO 2012). While migrant workers are currently exposed to precarious living conditions and oppressed by regulations, the position gap (Ku 2010), informative inequality, privacy loss (Lan 2003), and language and culture barriers can cause 'mental torture', which is the precursor to many tragedies. When in a situation where they do not know if it is possible to pay an unimaginable price due to a potential or unnoticed mistake, people can feel threatened by the sense of isolation and the frustration of precarity in every single breath.

Domestic migrant workers, as the 'intimate Other' in a household, have no choice but to mix their work responsibilities with their private lives most of the time, negotiating 'boundary work' (Lan 2003:526) that involves social class and personal areas with/by the employers. In the 'semi-liberal market of migrant labor' (Ku 2010), migrant workers were regarded as commodities and struggled to choose between 'legal servitude' or 'free illegality' (Lan 2006).

While 'Freedom to Change Employer' is still difficult for migrant workers in Taiwan, migrants express their homesickness, disappointment and sense of deprivation through work and advocate for their rights by reshaping the dominant discourse (Mintarsih 2019). Trans/Voices Project published 'Nyanyian di Perantauan- Kumpulan Lirik Lagu Pekerja Migran Indonesia & Laporan Skena Musik di Taiwan 2021 (Music Collection of Indonesian Migrant Workers & Scene Report in Taiwan from 2021)' for

documenting the delicate sentiments of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan.¹⁴ The notion that the voice is not only creative but courageous points to the embodied notion of self-expression and emotional release. For example, Southern Riot¹⁵, an Indonesian migrant worker Punk band, created a protest song ‘Lagu Cinta Dari BMI (Love Song from Indonesia Migrant Labors)’ in 2022 for a Migrant Workers Rally which claimed to amend the injustice law, Paragraph 4 of Article 53 in the Employment Service Act¹⁶. On the stage of the rally, Southern Riot shouted toward the cruel agencies and ‘slavery system’ from the government and repeatedly roared, “AGENSI 亂七八糟 (chaotic), AGENSI 沒有用 (useless), AGENSI JANCUK (fuck), AGENSI KIRIK (son of a bitch)” as the chorus (Southern Riot 2022). Through music, Southern Riot aroused the anger and solidarity of the crowd and issued an appeal of ‘Freedom to Change Employer’. This example evidenced what Keil mentioned that people could temporarily achieve ‘happiness, feeling real and good, strong and in control of some new power’ through song and dance, and then believe that people reflected their desire to take control of their lives in music after feeling frustrated in losing control in their routine lives every day (Keil 1982:47).

2.4 Physical and Virtual Connections

Rice visualized a three-dimensional model of ‘location, time, and musical metaphors’ (Rice 2003) for analyzing the implicit meaning of people’s social and musical behavior based on time and place. Moreover, inspired by the Imagined

¹⁴ Trans/Voices Project is an art and cultural action platform connecting Taiwan and Indonesia. Their extraordinary works are assessed online (<https://www.transvoicesproject.com/>).

¹⁵ Southern Riot is an Indonesian migrant worker band composed of three migrant workers and one student from the New Southbound International Program of Industry-Academia Collaboration in Taiwan. This band has run since the Migrant Worker Rally in 2022 and now is still active for promoting migrant workers’ labor right and humanity.

¹⁶ “Unless otherwise authorized by the Central Competent Authority on account of the respective circumstances as referred to in Paragraph 1 of Article 59, a foreign worker who has been employed to engage in work as referred to in Subparagraphs 8 to 11 of Paragraph 1 of Article 46 may not shift to a new employer or new work” (Paragraph 4 of Article 53 in Employment Service Act).

Community (Anderson 2016), Yang and Lu organized the spatial construction of the community involved in any type of musical participation, including the ‘place’ which is an actual spot, ‘space of agency’ that carries subjectivity, and ‘location’ in which the community exists and creates sociocultural context (Yang & Lu 2007:17-18).

Distance is one of the shared issues migrant workers have to continually overcome. When people migrate, they physically disconnect from their native hometown and must resettle in a new place. Cabalquinto proposed that mobile devices create a ‘communicative space’ (Cabalquinto 2019), which includes ‘transnational space’ (Paragas 2005) or ‘technoscape’ (Appadurai 1996), for transnational family networks in Australia and the Philippines (Cabalquinto 2019:58). However, there are pros and cons to managing digital media as a crucial tie among the transnational household. The time schedule, trust issue, and ‘quality of connectivity’ are all related to the opportunity to approach the tools and the capability of using the technology (Cabalquinto 2019).

2.5 Relationships between Researcher and Community

“A researcher is never fully an insider” (Winarnita 2019:109). Self-identification, background experiences, and social privileges a researcher stands out for are all associated with the researcher’s multiple positions (Narayan 1993). These positionalities are focused on the ‘shifting identifications’ carried by researchers instead of the dichotomy between insider and outsider (Narayan 1993:671-672). Examining the power relations in applied ethnomusicology research means adapting a participatory model where stakeholders are involved in the planning and producing of action-oriented outcomes. Participatory action research (PAR) is defined as “an approach to research that prioritizes the value of experimental knowledge for tackling problems caused by unequal and harmful social systems, for envisioning and implementing alternatives” (Cornish, Breton, Moreno-Tabarez, Delgado, Rua, Aikins, Hodgetts 2023:1). As Tan

Sooi Beng writes, “Through the participatory way of working, the stakeholders are empowered to make positive decisions about their lives and turn these decisions into action. Stakeholders collectively gather data through research, analyze the data, discuss and take action to improve their conditions” (Tan 2015: 114). Tan was dedicated to participatory action research (PAR) in order to balance the needs of researchers and communities. In this way, creating a performance sees the emphasis on process rather than just the outcome.

In addition, the research model is co-designed rather than exclusively determined by the researcher. The community has a say in determining research outcomes based on individual and group needs. Collectively gathering data means outcomes are not just obtained at the end of a project but may occur in the process of research. In the example of Heritage Celebrations in Penang, Tan mediated all the stakeholders, including the community groups, to contribute to the events and highlighted the community’s participation, demonstrating that residents can actively play roles in making decisions and taking actions, facilitating the diversity of voices instead of being described as ‘the Other’ (Tan 2015: 127-128).

Applied ethnomusicology as ‘a type of social intervention’ (Harrison, Mackinlay, and Pettan 2010) is expected to provide strategies and alter social resources by offering platforms, which is respectful, equal and reciprocal among the research participants, for the subaltern or the marginalized to speak out and represent themselves (Hofman 2010: 26). Intervention in the public arena is also a part of creating social change through applied ethnomusicology. It is not enough for academics to present papers and debate issues in universities. Rather interventions in the public arena require knowledge be put to practical use in the communities researched. As Jeff Todd Titon writes, “Those of us who practice applied ethnomusicology, also feel a responsibility to help put knowledge to practical use [...] we also involve ourselves in interventions into musical

communities, for public benefit” (Titon 2015: 9). Practical use in ‘horizontal knowledge flow’ (Tan 2015) designed projects make research outcomes meaningful and useable. Public benefit means there is an application built into the research design so that our interventions benefit musical communities.

Honestly said, being a researcher, a community resident, an advocate and mediator all at the same time is not easily accomplished. Applied ethnomusicology and establishing trustful partners towards ‘horizontal knowledge flow’ (Tan 2015) depends on long-term relationship building. The dilemma is similar to what Hemetek encountered when she needed to avoid publishing sensitive information that might damage her informants’ reputation or private details that her informants did not want to be revealed (Hemetek 2006). Summit also emphasized the importance of transparent communication among research participants, especially fund allocation and resource distribution which can destroy long-term trust overnight (Summit 2015:209). Here, Dan Bendrups mentioned, as a researcher, the struggle and ‘vulnerability’ that is not so much perceived as a weakness or flaw, but as a certain state of being where “the discursive barriers we erect around our personal and professional selves are revealed and made permeable” (Bendrups 2015:72).

However, this kind of research still runs the risk of robbing informants of the right to self-promotion and self-representation. When researchers act as agents representing the observed, we tend to unintentionally push a kind of subordinate positionality upon our partners. Therefore, it is important to establish “long term relationships with the groups we work with, become accepted as members of the community, and view informants as partners, not objects” (Hemetek 2006: 39). By breaking down knowledge flow barriers and becoming community members, and not just university researchers, we create lasting partnerships with meaningful outcomes beyond published papers and conference presentations to include the needs of our informants.

Chapter 3

BIOGRAPHIES BEYOND IDENTITY

In this chapter, I would like to reveal several Indonesian migrant workers personal stories in biography, beyond common identity: What struggles and sentiments are they sharing? Owing to the variety of occupation categories, there is no fixed day in the week where migrants can consistently gather people together. There are a number of factors including the weather contributing to the inconsistencies in group events. The cycle of rest time is not regular either. For example, the rest or break time of fishermen depends on the fishing seasons and waxing and waning of the moon. The leisure time of domestic caregivers is constrained by the care of recipients' health condition. The rest time of factory workers is relatively stable and regular. They have days-off on weekends but may work overtime depending on factory orders. Those who work in warehouses, restaurants and hotels are assigned shifts every month and some also need to work different shifts.

For example, Ciel and Anton were undergraduate students from a university of Film and Arts in Keelung. However, they were from a Film and Arts University but were excluded from any art discipline training. Their obligation is to work-study and follow the Taiwan New Southbound International Program of Industry-Academia Collaboration. Ciel, Anton, and their classmates from the same program have experience working in a sushi restaurant with a chain sushi brand in Taiwan. In addition to shared identity markers as migrant workers, this chapter examines individual narratives about hardships and struggles to examine how music, arts and virtual and physical shared spaces inform the view of music preferences and migrant workers realities in Taiwan.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Labor at the end of 2023, the number of Indonesian migrant workers in Keelung was 3,709, including domestic and industrial workers (Ministry of Labor 2024). Indonesians work and live in various fields in Keelung, including factories, warehouses, restaurants, hotels, on boats or by the harbor, work-study, in graduate or PhD degrees, as care workers, shop owners and in an unstable condition of finding a job. All these people are in the approximate range of 18 to 55 years old, male and female, single and non-single. Some are negative and pessimistic about their situation. Many others tend to be more positive thinking.

During fieldwork in Keelung since 2019, I observed that the majority of Indonesian communities are not amateur or professional musicians. Most of the migrants do not ‘play music’ nor are they from a musician family. Most do not even play Indonesian forms of Gamelan, which are well-known traditional musical ensembles in Indonesia. Yet, no one can deny music does exist in their daily lives. Many identify as avid listeners, enthusiastic audience, members and regularly participate in a physical or virtual music festivals. What music they usually consume when they are alone starts with putting the earbuds, scrolling their music playlist, tapping the beat even grooving with their body, and humming the melody. This personal embodiment is complemented by group shaping. If there are a group of people, they turn on Bluetooth speakers and share each other’s playlist, which mixes dialects and creates shared aesthetic experiences memories, and communication as migrants in Taiwan.

For the purpose of assessing why migrant workers come to Taiwan and what makes them stay, I inquire about **where they are from and, especially, for whom they work**. After a few years building trust with my informants in Keelung, in 2023, I collected deeper personal anecdotes in their hometowns across Java Island, from Cikancung and Rancaekek in Kabupaten Bandung (West Java), Jayamulya in Kabupaten Indramayu (West Java), Gebang Kulon in Kabupaten Cirebon (West Java),

Kalipancur and Pakintelan in Kota Semarang (Central Java), Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (Central Java), Sumber and Bungkal in Kabupaten Ponorogo (East Java), Dasri in Kabupaten Banyuwangi (East Java). In this multi-sited study, I will focus on four personal ethnographies from Ratu from Yogyakarta, Joko from Cirebon, Anton from Bandung, and Ciel from Ponorogo.

When I visited respectively the extended family of Joko, Anton and Ciel, we exchanged life stories: I was curious about their past; they were caring about their family's current life in Taiwan. I stayed with the families without a particular schedule but just stayed with them, had meals, and wandered with them. I was literally available to go anywhere they took me anytime, including morning market, night market, juice shop, wedding, fishery village, harbor, school, campus, mosque, and so on. It was impressive that the family of Joko, Anton and Ciel that I met for the first time, yet they were skillful in introducing to me in their dialect to their neighbors and friends in the village. Introductory conversations were like, "She is a Taiwanese friend of Ciel and has been studying in Bali for a few months. She can speak Indonesian very well and taught Ciel Mandarin. That's why they know each other. She comes here for a visit and wants to know where Ciel lived and grew up." I rarely introduced myself in person outside the core family members, but my informant's family members claimed my identity for me making fieldwork more accessible by bridging social interactions.

Sitting behind my informant's family members on motorbikes on the bumping roads, I toured along daily routes. I was showed the village views my informants had been dreaming of for years. When I sent these hometown-corner photos to my informants, they felt more homesickness and deeper stories of longing. I appreciated their care and treat of me. The phrase *kembali kasih* (return, you're welcome) summarized my visit and the *salam* (greetings) I brought from their beloved. The tie we shared was my informant working hard for them in my country.

The fieldwork experience in Java reversed my misunderstanding of Joko, Anton and other informants' mental state and well-being staying in Taiwan: Homesickness is a real concern living abroad, and it must be overcome financial gains and achieve one's life goals. Despite sacrifice, going to Taiwan to study and work is still a necessary and worthwhile decision. There are many reasons to leave home, but it is a deliberate and voluntary choice often governed by financial needs. Migrant workers are often managing long-distance relationships through poor internet signals (Cabalquinto 2019), missing home, and still having some reasons to survive in Taiwan. Those who stay in Taiwan missing home, yet return to Indonesia only to miss life in Taiwan.¹⁷



¹⁷ The music playlists of the following biographies are accessed in Appendix 1 (Page 152).

3.1 Music as Artistic Soul: *Jiwa Seni*

A Caregiver: Looking For Freedom while Looking After, ‘Creating Self’ between Virtuality and Reality

In this section, I exam the concept of ‘creating self’ through music, arts and other means of expression as a necessary coping mechanism for migrant workers. I focus on the personal struggles of Ratu, a veteran caregiver who has worked in Taiwan for many years. Ratu’s respite of singing and dancing at her place of employment is exemplary of migrant workers’ need to carve out physical or virtual spaces to mediate between feelings of depression self-doubt and personal struggle, and the harsh reality of generating income and supporting families back home. At the crux of ‘creating self’ is the steadfast comforting music that accompanies migrant workers like a soundtrack for survival.

Keeping what she calls *jiwa seni* (artistic soul) is the salvation of life while Ratu has worked in Taiwan for sixteen years as a domestic caregiver. She is now in her 50s and works on the third floor of a severely damaged apartment next to a historic landmark in Keelung. The wall cracked even more severely after the big earthquake on April 3rd, 2024. Her limited private space, a small guest room where some family miscellaneous objects are stored, is next to the main room where her employer rests. She laughed and said she often rolled out of her bed when sleeping.



**Fig. 3.1 The wall of Ratu's working place after the big earthquake, 2024
(Photo by the author)**

Ratu first came to Taiwan to raise money for her husband's medical expenses. I have known Ratu since 2019 in my Mandarin class, which was located in the *Toko Indo* Mega Store. We spoke in Chinese Mandarin, mixing Taiwanese Hokkien and Indonesian. However, we texted each other only in Indonesian. Ratu and I became closer because of an online hacker case involving Ratu and her good friends in 2020. This case lasted for more than a month, and the hacker used her name to cheat more than 100,000 NT from her friends on Facebook. Even though we reported this to the police, the case was not solved because the cash flow was in Indonesia.

As a female domestic caregiver, she could not have a day-off randomly and even got in trouble. She did not have an opportunity to vindicate herself in person. Losing

the trust of her social community gradually depressed Ratu a lot. Before this case, Ratu owned four Facebook accounts and often uploaded her singing and dancing videos during her free time at home. It was vital for her to relieve her stress from 24-hour indoor work. After the fraud, she deleted all her accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic and shut herself off from social media for a long time. It took her many months to recover from that mental torture. Nowadays, Ratu is back and active on social media again. She creates many temporary virtual social spaces on her own account every day. However, Ratu told me consistently, “Now, I trust nobody.”

Because of the death of Ratu’s husband, she had to support the family’s financial burden by herself, supporting her mother and two children. Ratu’s current care recipient is an elderly grandmother. In addition to care work, she has to be responsible for trivial housework: sweeping the floor, mopping the floor, cleaning the toilet, cooking, and cleaning the home. The day-and-night work and the pressure caused by the care recipient’s nonsense have made Ratu exhausted, physically and mentally, want to escape many times.

Ratu has achieved good savings by working abroad for many years and receiving a much higher salary in Taiwan than in the Indonesian countryside back home. Unfortunately, when she bought land to build a house in her hometown, she aroused jealousy from her family and neighbors. Even her so-called friends or partners became swindlers and took advantage of her because she would never refuse to help the needy. Many friends lost contact after borrowing money and never returned it.

After working away from home for many years, Ratu saw the fickleness of people’s hearts after being seduced by money and material things. To overcome the tortures, she decided to rely on the ‘destiny of faith’ like many other Indonesian Muslim migrant women workers do (Prusinski 2016). Ratu closed her eyes and ears, trying not to care about the criticism and rumors of others because she was the only one who had

personally experienced the pain of physical and mental torture. In addition to believe in faith, Ratu intended to focus only on the life goals she cared about and the family for which she was truly responsible.

Just when I thought we had already built a strong friendship, she rejected my request to visit her family member in Yogyakarta when I was in Indonesia. Ratu and I had phone calls very frequently. If she would like to have someone to share her happiness and frustration, she called me directly. The conversation usually lasted for hours. However, it was uncommon for her to reply to my message passively and refused my visit without a reason. I knew there must be something that she was concerned about. After this case, I hardly got her message for months.

One day, I called to inquire about Ratu's condition, and she apologized for the previous months of distance. Then, she told me there was a big family chaos in her house. Her family was jealous because it was Ratu who got the chance to buy land from her uncle, not another cousin who also worked abroad and could afford the land (Personal conversation, January 7th, 2024). Ratu was concerned about my personal safety if I went to her house alone. She could not trust her family and neighbors then because everyone was talking badly behind her due to this heritage allocation. She was disappointed in her family and, at the same time, confused about the money for her house construction. Ratu was struggling, so I visited her at her employer's house in Taiwan after returning from Indonesia. She showed me a picture of the new house she had built in Indonesia. Ratu already had an experience of her previous house where she paid an enormous amount of money, but the result was not satisfying.

Ratu once again shared her frustrations with the elderly grandma in her care in Taiwan had brought to her. She spent time alone with the grandma daily, but the daily suspicion and provocation of that grandma made the relationship between Ratu and her employer very awkward. For example, the grandma drank all the Yakult in the

refrigerator one day. However, when Ratu's employer asked about it, that grandma blamed Ratu instead. Fortunately, this was not the first time. Ratu had learned how to record videos at home all the time in order to collect evidence and protect herself. When Ratu showed the video of that grandma drinking Yakult to her employer, the employer could only try to save himself from embarrassment, saying, "I did not know my mother loved to drink Yakult. I would buy more to keep in the refrigerator." **Trivial housework like this is a severe labor dispute for Ratu.** It is not that she has never thought about changing jobs, but her agency said that Ratu is too old and it will be challenging to change. Ratu, who is over fifty, often dreams that she will be twenty years younger and get a better chance of changing jobs. Now, her responsibilities are too heavy, and she cannot leave at will.

She emphasized to me that what prevented her from being overwhelmed by mental pressure and life pressure was the successful result of the house construction in Indonesia. Thus, she borrowed money from a bank to force herself to continue working hard. She can only bear the pain of working day and night, her family's rumors about her, and the pressure of bank loans to build a house. Every month, a salary of 24,000 NT is used to pay the debt of 18,000 NT, which does not include the money needed to support the family. Even though she is almost out of breath in pain, Ratu still refuses to return to Indonesia. Once her financial resources were cut off, her years of accumulation would soon be hollowed out. Her two children have reached the age of entering the workforce but still rely on Ratu's financial aid. Just thinking about losing their father when they were little, she still could not make up her mind to force her children to be independent and self-reliant. She could only continue to pamper them with a sense of guilt while moving forward alone. Ratu repeated, "I am borrowing money from the bank now to work harder and survive. Many migrant workers come back to Taiwan to

make money again after returning to Indonesia” (Personal conversation, January 7th, 2024).

Now, Ratu’s only respite is singing and dancing at her employer’s house, where she works and rests. Fortunately, keeping what she calls *jiwa seni* (artistic soul) is the salvation of life. She does not trust any friends and relatives to comfort her. All she needs is to entertain herself by singing and dancing alone. The greater the pressure, the more she sings and dances. Ratu told me in person, “The more *siáu-siáu* (crazy in Taiwanese Hokkien) I show, the worse my mood is” (Personal conversation, April 10th, 2024). People from her village deeply believe she has a rich and happy life in Taiwan. Nevertheless, the truth is the opposite.

Ratu is a regular contributor to the migrant workers’ events and is well-known in the singing contests in Taipei and Keelung. Ratu is a multilingual artist who speaks Indonesian, Javanese, Chinese Mandarin, and Taiwanese Hokkien. Ratu practiced singing Chinese Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien songs on YouTube Karaoke channels. The videos transcribe the lyrics spelled in Hanyu Pinyin, even special spelling from Indonesian alphabet without Chinese intonation. Sometimes these channels also translate the lyrics into Indonesian. These karaoke videos are important resources for her daily singing practice and even for the singing contests. Ratu’s experienced singing voice and dynamic life stories are very infectious. When she sings sentimental ballads, such as the Hokkien song ‘Wo Wen Tian (我問天)’ and the Mandarin song ‘Xiao Wei (小薇)’, audiences’ emotions can be affected by her whining accent. However, when she performs Dangdut songs, like ‘Bimbang’ and ‘Acuh Tak Acuh’, she *goyang-goyang* (sway, gyrate), swings her hips, shows her sexy body curve, and stirs up the crowded atmosphere very skillfully.



Wa Meng Thi _Hokkien song (Wo Wen Tian) 我問天 karaoke mandarin no vocal

Fig. 3.2 Lyrics of ‘Wo Wen Tian’ spelled in Indonesian alphabet (Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdmL8aB7h98>)

Ratu is proud to be a native artist from Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (also known as Jogja), a special region in Central Java where traditional and modern arts are actively developed. She was influenced by her father who worked in a milk factory but was active in art performances, such as *Kuda Lumping*, *Wayang Orang* and *Ketoprak*. Ratu’s father expected her to be a successful artist. However, Ratu lamented that she was not born into a wealthy family, so her education level was only junior high school, and she could not learn whatever she desired even though she had various interests in her childhood (Personal conversation, October 26th, 2022). What’s more, Ratu had two throat operations when she was young. Fortunately, she has recovered and continues to create music and improvise *pantun* (a Malayic poetic form) and short Mandarin poems with a rhyme in the middle of the conversation. Ratu is a very highly productive artist,

as seen on her social media, including Facebook, TikTok, and Smule.¹⁸ Her online karaoke sessions help her to release daily tension by performing in front of virtual fans. As Lum emphasized, karaoke establishes a sense of ‘harmonious yet dynamic equilibrium’ for recognizing unitary identity as an individual and togetherness as a group (Lum 1999:176).

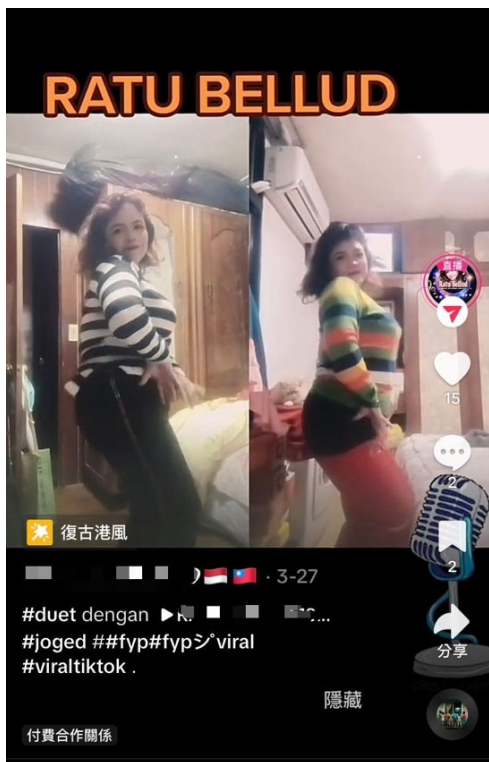


Fig. 3.3 Ratu’s typical dance movement: *goyang* (Photo by Ratu)



Fig. 3.4 Ratu performed in a migrant worker event in Keelung, 2023 (Photo by Ratu)

¹⁸ Smule is a music application that provides an international virtual platform to perform and sing duets with artists.



Fig. 3.5 Ratu participated in the singing contest in the Fishermen Caring Event in Keelung, 2022 (Photo by the author)

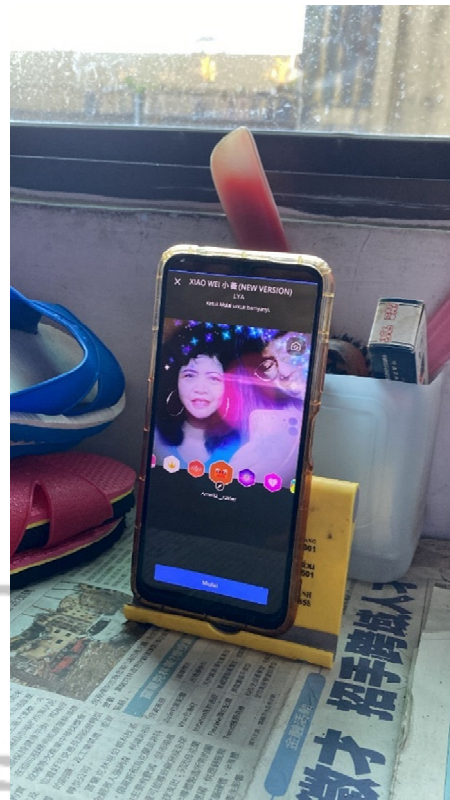


Fig. 3.6 Behind the scene of her filtered recording on Smule (Photo by the author)

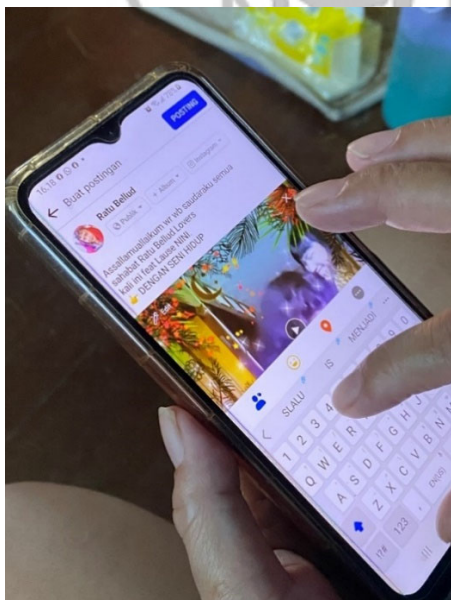


Fig. 3.7 Ratu posted the Smule video on Facebook (Photo by the author)

Ratu rarely refused singing an encore. But Ratu was very unconfident singing a popular style of Indonesian music called Dangdut Koplo of *sholawat* (a prayer for praising Islamic prophets) entitled ‘Tombo Ati’ with her *kerudung* headdress on the Eid al-Fitri religious event. The organizer asked her to sing another song after her performance, she held my arms and said she want to leave. I asked her why, and then she just answered, “*Kurang PD* (unconfident). I don’t feel right to perform in this costume” (Personal conversation, April 10th, 2024). This example demonstrated the cultural tension of misunderstood migrant worker music preference on the part of public performance by event managers and the ‘creating self’ narrative of personal preference while struggling to survive.



**Fig. 3.8 Ratu performed at the Eid al-Fitr event in Keelung, 2024
(Photo by the author)**

Every day, Ratu still uploads her performance clips on social media accounts to share positive energy rather than despair so that people online can see she is still smiling,

even though this always leads to many misunderstandings. As Stokes emphasized, the music created by migrants can be viewed as ‘a resource for emotional solidarity in communities that have been subjected to extremes of violence and for the narrative coherence of traumatized selves’ (Stokes 2020:11). However, she does not care and has nothing to do with how people think because now she feels imprisoned everywhere; whether she returns to her home in Indonesia or stays in Taiwan to continue working, she still cannot be truly free. Ratu is still praying. Only through music and her singing voice can she ‘create self’ and a safe space in her migrant world reality of hardship and struggle.



3.2 Music Onboard the Life of a Fisherman

Live by the Moon, Rest by the Waves, Balance through the Swings

In this section, musical expression parallels positivity in migrant workers in the fishing industry. A die-hard singer who shares jokes, laughter and his passion for singing Dangdut has a stern disposition and an enduring demeanor which inspires other workers in the fishing industry. In the analysis that follows, I conduct ethnography of the individual in two geographic locations connected by families in a Cirebon fishing village and a Northern Taiwan fishing industry. Bound through the internet, fishermen display humor, laughter, and positivity on their TikTok and Facebook posts, performing their personality for family and friends while enduring rough seas, unpredictable weather onboard the musical life of a migrant fisherman. Although dislocated from their family and culture, a migrant's voice can "[...] carry the border with their timbres. Voicing presence in displacement is courageous as well as creative" (Western 2020:304).

Joko is an Indonesian Muslim. He is a Javanese, originally from Gebang Kulon in Cirebon in West Java, but moved to Trenggalek in East Java after marriage. Joko got married at thirty years old and had two children. He has worked in Taiwan since 2009 and is almost forty. Joko has worked as the first chairman of the Keelung Migrant Fishermen's Union (KMFU) since 2020. Now, he is regarded as a highly valued fisherman by his employer in Keelung Zhengbin Fishing Harbor and works with his younger brother.



Fig. 3.9 Joko (with glasses), his fisherman co-workers and the author (left) at Zhengbin Fishing Harbor (Photo by the author)

In 2022, Joko joined my Mandarin class in *Toko Indo Meiwa*, where we met each other. *Toko Indo Meiwa* provided a space on the second floor, the meeting site for KMFU for our Mandarin class. Before the weekly Mandarin class started, Joko and his friends went by bus from the fishing harbor to have dinner in *Toko Indo*. However, due to unstable weather, the fishermen's time could not match the regular class schedule. If the moon and wave conditions were suitable for catching fish, there would not be any students coming to Mandarin class. Alternatively, if the rain was too heavy and it was inconvenient for the fishermen to come to the *Toko Indo* in downtown Keelung, they would skip the class that day. Since Joko had a good interpersonal network in the fishing harbor, I would ask him weekly if people would come downtown to take the class. We usually spoke primarily in Indonesian, mixing Chinese Mandarin, but only texting in Indonesian. Joko has always been a happy character within his friend circle. No matter

how hard his work overseas, he always encourages himself with an inspiring quote, “Positive thinking and never give up!”

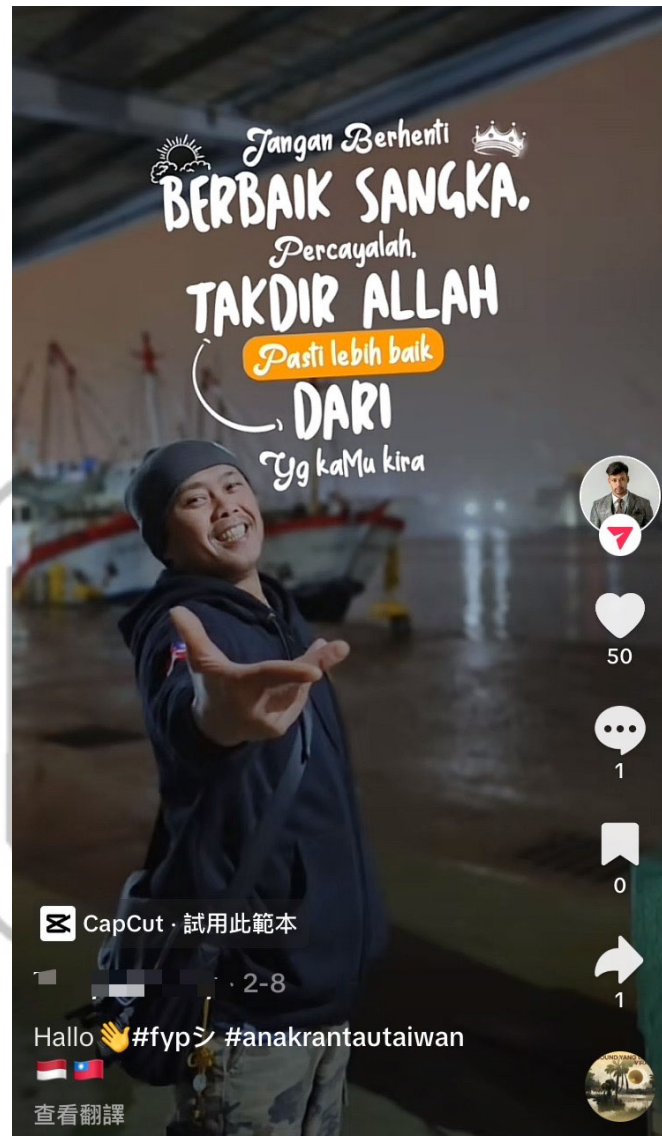


Fig. 3.10 Joko shared positive life quote on TikTok (Photo by Joko)

In *Toko Indo* Meiwa, Joko often picks up the microphone to sing or dance intoxicatedly to the music. His favorite music genres include Dangdut, Dangdut Koplo (For example, ‘Pecah Seribu’ covered by Arnetta Julia), and Pop Melayu (For example, ‘Satu Rasa Cinta’ by Arief and ‘Ngelabur Langit’ by Vita Alvia). When Joko listens to music, he is used to going directly to YouTube to find music playlists continuously

playing for several hours. For example, ‘Dangdut Koplo Full Album Terbaru 2022’ and ‘Happy Asmara Feat. Gilga Sahid Full Album Terbaru 2024’.

Joko’s Facebook and TikTok are full of his funny videos all the time. He often turns on live-streaming while going out to the ocean or cooking. He would live broadcast in front of the screen, swaying his hips, using AI face fusion, or playing along with trending popular music and filters on TikTok. The hashtags are often ‘anakrantutaiwan (Taiwan outlander)’, ‘keelung_taiwan’, ‘trending’, and ‘fyp (for your page)’. His jokes are always natural and unpretentious. Whenever he comes to the *Toko Indo*, he is always well-dressed, wearing branded outfits or bright fancy jerseys. Joko likes to express himself in many ways.

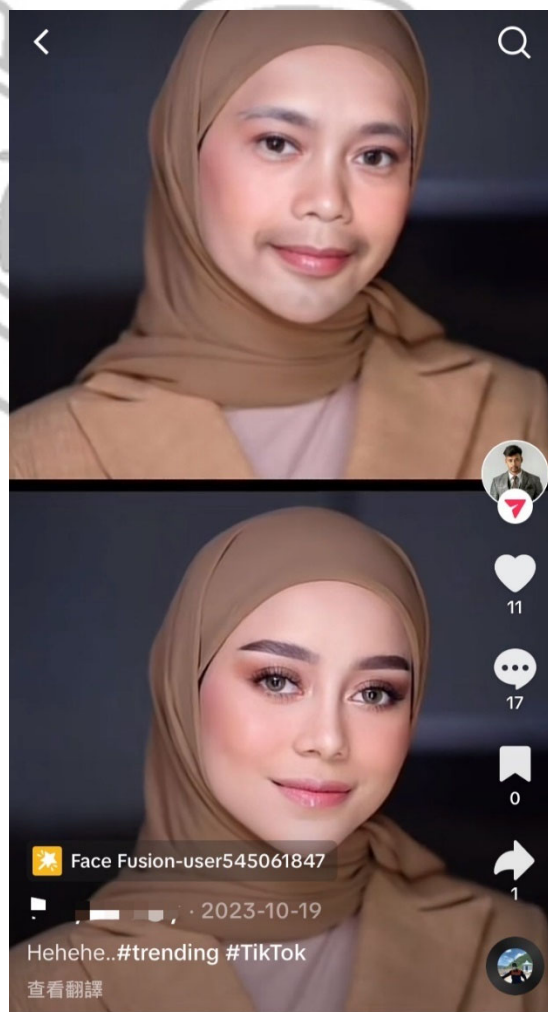
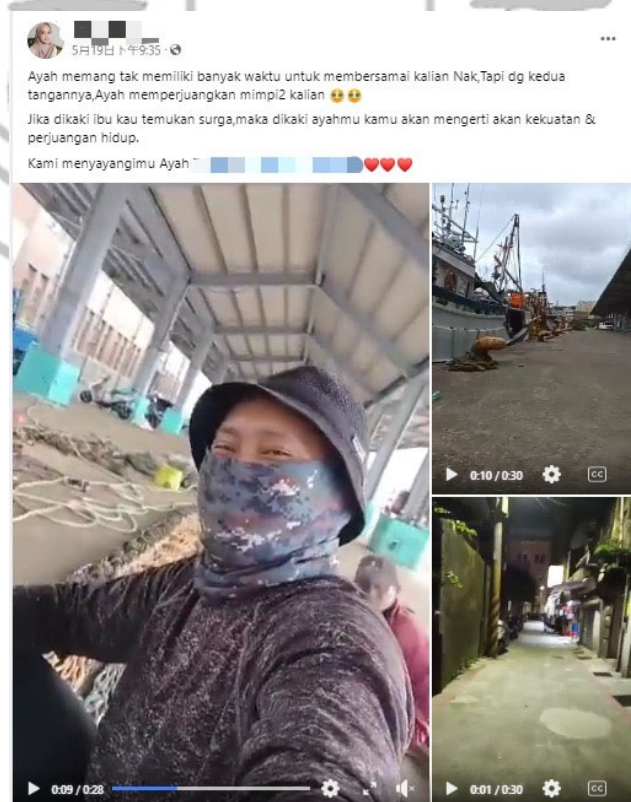


Fig. 3.11 Joko (top) with AI face fusion effect on TikTok (Photo by Joko)

Joko came to Taiwan to work in 2009 and got married at the age of thirty. He has been managing long-distance family relationships for years. During the Eid al-Fitr in 2024, Joko returned to his hometown for a few weeks for family reunions after a five-year long-distance family relationship. Finally, He had a live broadcast with his wife in the same frame on his social media. His accounts were filled with family photos. However, happy times always pass quickly. Before Joko returned to Taiwan, his family took him to the airport to say goodbye. Once again, Joko and his wife had to *salim* (Indonesian salute) each other to leave. In the long-distance family relationships of migrant workers, much helplessness comes from the fact that those left behind have to look forward endlessly to the return of their loved ones. When people finally meet each other, they anxiously count down the days of separation and have to adapt to ‘Say goodbye’ again. Joko and his wife are constantly sending online messages to encourage and remind each other, “Take care, Daddy, we love you so much.”



**Fig. 3.12 Joko’s wife missed him and sent him regards on Facebook
(Photo by Joko)**

In November 2023, I went to Cirebon, Indonesia, for fieldwork and interviewed Joko's family of origin in Gebang Kulon. I stayed with Joko's mom and his older sister Yanti's family. Joko's youngest brother, who was the same age as me, lived beside Yanti. One afternoon, I heard a lively sound in the alley. Yanti immediately knew it was *Burok* (a traditional art form from Cirebon) and told me *Burok* is one of Cirebon's specialties. Many villagers gathered at the scene, including some relatives from Joko and Yanti. She took me to a relative's house to chat. They both were curious about Taiwanese culture, living costs and industries, suddenly the relative sighed and said,

Di sini ikan banyak tapi harganya murah. Di Taiwan ikannya sedikit tapi mahal...Indonesia itu kaya, lautnya ada, sawah-sawahnya ada, harganya murah...Tapi ada banyak yang jadi TKW, aneh ya! (Here, fish is in big amount but low price. In Taiwan, fish is in small amount but high price...Indonesia is rich of resources, there are oceans and many fields, and the prices are low...But many people become women migrant workers, so strange!) (Personal conversation, November 3rd, 2023, Cirebon)



**Fig. 3.13 Burok in Gebang Kulon, Cirebon, West Java, 2023
(Photo by the author)**

After that, Yanti shared with me that she was the first person in her family to work abroad. She went to Saudi Arabia when she was seventeen years old. The large and functional house she lives in now results from her thirteen years working abroad. When we talked about her marriage life, she said that marrying at the age of thirty was considered a late marriage for her generation. She then told me,

Anaknya orang tua gak punya harus kerja dulu, orang tua kita gak punya rumah, Alhamdulillah belajar mandiri...Di sini orang kuliah cari kerja susah. Yang kuliah jarang dapat kerja yang bagus (Children from low-income families must work first; our parents did not own a house. Thank God, we learn to be independent...Here, people going to college have difficulties finding a job. People going to college hardly find a good job) (Personal conversation, November 3rd, 2023, Cirebon).

Now, Yanti's husband earns money as a fisherman in Taiwan, and Yanti is taking care of three kids in her hometown.



Fig. 3.14 An afternoon with Joko's youngest brother (left), Yanti and her daughter (middle) and their mother(right) at Yanti's home (Photo by the author)

Many of the villagers from Gebang Kulon are fishermen. Joko's family has been fishermen since his father's generation. Joko, his younger brother and Yanti's husband, all work in the fishing harbor in Taiwan. The shipbuilding industry is also significantly developed in the neighborhood. Because of the high demand for ships and long-time consumption, people must reserve the product well in advance.



**Fig. 3.15 The unfinished boat in front of the neighbor's house
(Photo by the author)**

Joko's youngest brother took me to the fishing harbor where his father and two brothers worked in the past: Baro Gebang. The boys from the fishing village neighborhood had been learning about the fishing industry before going to school. The family used to use a sampan boat for fishing. What caught my eye was that the fishing boats by the harbor were painted with various patterns. Some were named after their family members, while others were given names full of blessings. The fishermen showed their creativity on the fishing boats. Each boat had a name. The 'warship' that the Joko's family used to own was called *BANGUN JAYA*, hoping for a successful harvest. Unfortunately, a shipwreck took away Joko's father many years ago. Because the family business suffered a disaster, *BANGUN JAYA* was sold.



Fig. 3.16 A boat entered the Baro Gebang Harbor (Photo by the author)



Fig. 3.17 Colorful sampan boats docked by Baro Gebang Harbor (Photo by the author)

One night, while having dinner and chatting in front of Joko's relative's house, I discovered that Joko's family members have a lot of experience working abroad. They have worked as caregivers in Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia and as fishermen in Taiwan. Everyone chatted about past work experiences, shared photos, and laughed about the

foreign languages they learned in other countries. While sharing passionately, I contacted Joko, who had just finished work and was resting on the boat. On the one hand, I reassured him that my presence had not made the atmosphere at his home awkward. On the other hand, I wanted him to participate in the conversation while he was far away. Joko's family passed the phone around, excitedly greeting him and telling jokes during the video call.



Fig. 3.18 A family dinner in front of a relative's house yard (Photo by the author)



Fig. 3.19 Joko joined our dinner online (Photo by the author)

It turns out that what we Taiwanese call a ‘blue-collar migrant worker’ is just an ordinary job in Joko’s village. In this rural village, every beautiful house was built bit by bit over five, ten, or even fifteen years after working hard abroad. ‘Being a migrant worker’ is just a natural choice to seek a better life as many people from village go abroad to work. However, some people are still sighing, “*Indonesia itu kaya, aneh ya, kenapa banyak TKI/TKW?* (Indonesia is rich, so strange, why so many migrant workers?)”

Reflections on the reasons why migrant workers from Indonesia leave, indicate economic struggles supersede cultural, religious or social priorities for migrant workers

coming to Taiwan for work. In the case of Joko and his family, their lineage as fishermen preceded his occupation as an employed migrant worker in the Taiwan fishing industry, giving him a foundation for enduring the rough seas of life as an overseas worker. Keeping his personality bright, cheerful and positive, music and social media help broadcast his optimism to co-workers in Keelung, but more importantly to his long-distance family back home.



3.3 Singing for More than Money

From a Student to Migrant Worker: Love Songs and Distant Relationships

In this section, songs of love and long-distance relationships are examined interrogating anecdotes about a newly married migrant who work for more than money. Often depicted as the principal motivation for migrant workers going abroad, money is not always the principal motivation that keeps a worker going in difficult times. ‘More than money’ encapsulates the will and drive of individuals who despite everything, sing love songs, send beautiful photos and write reassuring text messages in the hope to use love as a way to endure the hardships of distance beyond the motivation of financial gain. Music and other expressive art forms help individuals cope with injustice and violence in the workplace as ‘a container for feelings’ (DeNora 2000:74). The notion that the voice is not only creative but courageous points to the embodied notion of self-expression and emotional release. In this section, we meet an undergraduate student who became a migrant worker in Taiwan, returned home to get married and returned to Taiwan a few days later. We hear his songs of longing and understand the lyrics he chants to keep the fires burning in his heart until he can return to his newlywed wife in Indonesia.

Anton was born in 1998 to a Muslim family in Cikancung, Bandung, West Java. He speaks Sundanese as his native language. There are six brothers and sisters in his family. Anton is the second child and the eldest son. Anton studied in the Department of Business Management at a university of Film and Arts in Keelung, enrolling in September 2018 and graduating in June 2022. I have known Anton from the *Toko Indo* Mega Store Mandarin class since 2019. We usually met once a week for the class and the *Yasinan* (reading the Yasin chapter of Quran) every Thursday night. However, he gradually could not spare time to join the weekly event because of his heavy working schedule. In 2022, I resided in Keelung for six months and a few of my old friends lived

with Anton then, so we gathered, frequently chatting in their living room and having meals in the *Toko Indo*. Anton and I usually speak and text in Chinese Mandarin, mixing Indonesian. We both are interested in English pop music, so we sing together sometimes.



Fig. 3.20 Anton (left) and the author covered an English song, ‘Heather’ by Conan Grey, Keelung, 2022 (Photo by the author)

In 2023, when I went to Java for fieldwork, Anton’s second brother, Endi, rode a motorcycle to the city to pick me up. On the same day, we passed through the downtown area from the center of Bandung, then to the fields, and finally climbed a hill. Arriving at Anton’s home took more than an hour of bumpy driving. The temperature difference between day and night on the mountain in Cikancung was huge, and it was pretty chilly when we arrived at night. Anton’s family’s old and new houses are adjacent to each other. One is an old house with a rubble roof, bamboo woven walls, and bamboo-arranged floors. It is the home where Anton grew up. The other has modern building

materials with a seated toilet, which is not so common in the Indonesian countryside. But the phone signal in the mountains was weak. My telecommunications company was *Telekomsel*, one of the best telecommunications companies in Indonesia. But there was no signal inside his home, and the signal outside the house was almost zero. I could only keep borrowing hotspot sharing from Anton's family and use the poor Internet to communicate with the outside world. Such inconvenient communication has been Anton's daily life with his family for more than five years.

During Anton's leisure time, he liked to play music with his friends. When I resided in Keelung in 2022, Anton once took me to a rehearsal room in YouDo Music studio, where he sometimes played guitar with a group of boys who could compose and arrange music. We practiced two songs: a Chinese song, 'Only You (你啊你啊)' by Waa Wei, and 'Ojo Dibandingke' covered by Farel Prayoga. I sang the vocals, and Anton played the guitar. 'Ojo Dibandingke' was one of the most popular Javanese Dangdut songs then, but Anton preferred to adapt it for reggae rhythm. Anton told me that his father had previously played guitar and taught him basic chords. Anton expected to play guitar with his father one day. When I asked about his campus life, Anton jokingly answered that he chose the wrong major. As Anton first saw business management, he thought it was related to business practice and that he could do business in the future. However, in the end, he had yet to learn what business and management was, unlike the tourism and leisure departments, which have more practical courses. Most of his studies were outside the campus, not on campus, because Anton preferred to learn by doing and had difficulty absorbing theory (Personal conversation, November, 2023).



**Fig. 3.21 Anton practiced guitar in a rehearsal room in Keelung, 2022
(Photo by the author)**

While in Indonesia, Anton learned about working and studying in Taiwan through his senior vocational school. He originally wanted to apply through the principal but was unsuccessful. Later, Anton learned through a senior student who had already come to Taiwan that ‘Pak Peheru’ was also assisting in this plan to study in Taiwan. Anton hoped to get assistance from him. However, apart from the name Pak Peheru, Anton and his mother did not know any other information, so they asked everywhere where Pak Peheru lived. Later, they learned that he lived in Rangaekkek district, several kilometers from home. Anton and his mother went to Pak Peheru’s home. They immediately went through the procedures to go abroad: applying to go abroad, several

interviews, applying for a passport, health examination, and payment for the official departure. Pak Peheru brought together students who wanted to participate in this international working-study program. At that time, Anton and several good friends from high school who went abroad through this program together. The whole process only took about five weeks. Eight family members, including his paternal grandmother, maternal grandmother, parents, and aunts, squeezed into one car and took Anton to the airport in Jakarta.



Fig. 3.22 Anton’s college graduation photo (Photo by Anton)

In Anton’s college life in Taiwan, he worked as a staff in a sushi restaurant, a staff in a Taiwanese breakfast shop, and a factory operator. Even if he worked only at a sushi restaurant, the salary would not be enough for him to support his family. Now, he works simultaneously in a Taipei sushi restaurant and a Keelung breakfast shop. He supports a family of nine with two salaries. Except for going to the Taipei Grand Mosque in Daan, for *Sholat Ju’mat* (Friday Prayer), an obligation for male Muslims, he works full

time. Anton would even use his vacation time to find more part-time jobs.

Anton returned to Indonesia in April 2024 for the first time after working in Taiwan for five and a half years. This trip only gave him about twenty days at home. His central purpose for going home was to get married and celebrate Eid al-Fitr with his big family. Anton and his wife have known each other since they were teenagers. However, they started their relationship in 2023, managing their relationship virtually via daily calls. The two discussed their next life chapter online. Anton met his girlfriend again after many years, and she became his newlywed wife. Nevertheless, after they married, Anton returned to Taiwan immediately to earn money.



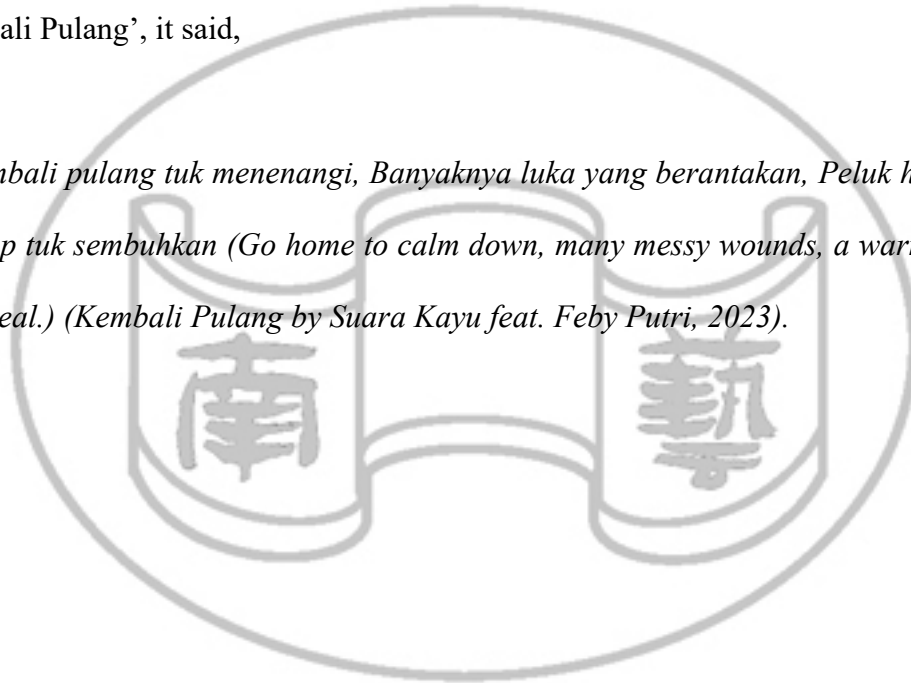
Fig. 3.23 Anton's family, 2024 (Photo by Anton)

Now, all of Anton's heart is still in his hometown. He is experiencing a long-distance relationship with his newlywed wife. These days, his wife frequently posts

their wedding photo and their video call screenshots on Instagram, and Anton usually retweets the posts.

Anton, who left home almost six years ago, has a playlist of songs about going home or longing for love. His music taste is more of a sentimental ballad. Because Anton plays guitar, many songs he prefers are played by guitar and acoustics. Now, the music in Anton's playlist are 'Penjaga Hati' by Nadhif Basalamah, 'Bercinta Lewat Kata' by Donne Maula, 'Ruang Rindu' by Letto, 'Komang' by Raim Laode feat. Novia Bachmid, and 'Kembali Pulang' by Suara Kayu feat. Feby Putri. From the lyrics of 'Kembali Pulang', it said,

Kembali pulang tuk menenangi, Banyaknya luka yang berantakan, Peluk hangat sikap tuk sembuhkan (Go home to calm down, many messy wounds, a warm hug to heal.) (Kembali Pulang by Suara Kayu feat. Feby Putri, 2023).





**Fig. 3.24 Anton read Quran through video call with his newlywed wife, 2024
(Photo by Anton)**

Anton's nuclear family lived in the same village as his maternal relatives. During the day, some family members go out to work and school. The others do not watch TV because the signal around the house is not good. They can occasionally use their mobile phones to scroll through TikTok. Otherwise, when the housework is done, everyone usually gathers at an aunt's house to chat, eat, and play with the children.



Fig. 3.25 Anton's family daily gathering at noon (Photo by the author)

It is a familiar concept for Muslims to 'give a hand to the needy'. Anton's parents are currently unemployed. Anton's sister, three years older than Anton, works in a factory with a monthly salary of 1.5 million Indonesian Rupiah (approximately 3,000NT). Anton's sister raises two children who were born with her ex-husband. She once consulted to Anton that she wanted to go to Taiwan to work as a caregiver. However, Anton promised he would assist her and suggested that his sister stay with the children at this stage, when they needed maternal love most.

Anton's eldest brother, an Indonesian domestic immigrant, works away from home in another island of Indonesia. Anton's second brother, Endi, is also studying Chinese Mandarin hard for preparing to work in Taiwan. At the same time, he works as an operator in a Chinese food factory during the day, earning a very meager monthly salary. Even though Anton and Endi knew that working away from home would face significant challenges and homesickness, Anton still used his own experience to

encourage Endi to work-study in Taiwan. Anton knew very well that saving money to support a family with a typical salary in an Indonesian factory would be difficult. Without enough savings, it will not be easy to get married and start a family. Anton still has two younger sisters, one in junior high school and one in elementary school. Anton earned two salaries from Taiwan for supporting almost ten of his beloved family members.



Fig. 3.26 Anton's original house (Photo by the author)

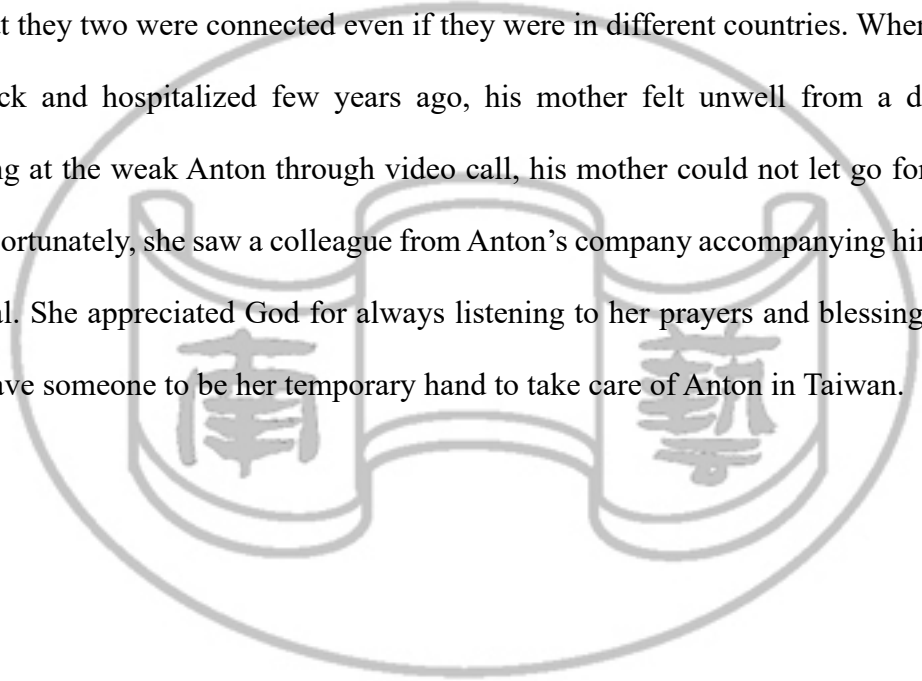


Fig. 3.27 Anton's new house next to his old house (Photo by the author)

When Anton was preparing to go abroad, his mother was reluctant to let her child go to a distant place. Anton was diligent and considerate at home and performed very well in school. The principal, therefore, gave him many learning opportunities. Anton has been learning tailoring with patience since he was in elementary school. After years of practice, his skills have become proficient. In the past, after Anton came home from school, he helped his mother with tailoring if he had time and even stayed up late to make clothes until midnight. When Anton's mother talked about him, her tone was prideful. Even though she was very heartbroken, considering the accumulation of Anton's future life experiences, she could only pray for him and pray that God would give Anton the best path for him to pursue.

Mom often shed tears when sharing Anton's experience abroad to me. Her eyes were red, listing down Anton's advantages. Mom always reminded Anton that the most essential moral for a human being was *kejujuran* (honesty) and he did this very well.

She kept emphasizing that Anton was *besar hati* (tolerant), *sabar* (patient), *jujur* (honest), *rajin* (diligent), *mandiri* (independent), *tekun kerja* (persistent in work). No other child was like Anton (Interview Anton's mother, October 30th, 2023, Bandung). His mother recalled that Anton went to college abroad in 2018, which was like a dream. She could not believe that her child had successfully graduated from college in Taiwan and continued to work hard for his family. Mom kept saying '*bangga, bangga* (Proud, very proud)' and also mentioned that maybe Anton saw the hard work of the parents in his eyes, so he worked so hard. Because of Anton's thoughtfulness, his mother always felt that they two were connected even if they were in different countries. When Anton was sick and hospitalized few years ago, his mother felt unwell from a distance. Looking at the weak Anton through video call, his mother could not let go for a long time. Fortunately, she saw a colleague from Anton's company accompanying him to the hospital. She appreciated God for always listening to her prayers and blessing Anton. God gave someone to be her temporary hand to take care of Anton in Taiwan.





**Fig. 3.28 Anton's mother was doing *sholat* (Islamic prayer)
(Photo by the author)**

I asked Anton, “What is your reason for staying in Taiwan? Why is it enough for you to endure the fatigue and homesickness and continue living in Taiwan?” Anton said he thought nothing was worth staying in Taiwan, but he tried to think how worse his parents would live in Bandung if he did not earn money. He suddenly became emotional and shouted, “I really want to go home. I really miss all of my family, but now I cannot! I am not very tolerant; I just have no choice! If I had a lot of money, I would return to Indonesia right now!” (Phone conversation, October 30th, 2023, Bandung).

These various factors are just because of money. However, the main reason that overrides money is ‘Love’: He is worried about the financial pressure of his parents, the life of his older sister and little nephews, the unstable job of his brother, and his younger sisters’ future education. Anton later said calmly, “But, I have already gotten used to it. I am not very tired when seeing them in the video call, and feeling, Wow! so

happy!” (Phone conversation, October 30th, 2023, Bandung). Finally, Anton humorously said that if he assists Endi in going abroad, he can go home if Endi works in Taiwan in the future. Anton is still working hard and preparing to apply for permanent residency, so he can work in Taiwan permanently.



3.4 Sister Music and Poetry for Life

A Student Room Keeper: Music Playlists in Various Languages as Her Companions

A Caregiver: A Foreign Daughter of the Employer and the First Daughter of the Family

Ciel was born in 2000 into a Muslim family in Sumber, Ponorogo, East Java. She is a Javanese and speaks East Javanese at home. Ciel and I usually speak and text in Chinese Mandarin but only a little in Indonesian. When I resided in Keelung in 2022, Ciel, her best friend and I were roommates. In 2023, I visited Ciel's family in Ponorogo in November.



**Fig. 3.29 Ciel (middle), her best friend from high school and the author (right)
(Photo by Ciel)**

Ciel's family lives on the mountain. Whether they go to school or the market, they have to ride or drive through winding mountain roads with occasional construction. Most of the residents on the mountain all know each other, so they are used to honking their horns to say hello when they pass by each other on motorbikes. If they commute on a sunny day in the late afternoon, they will also see shades of green hills and orange sunlight shining through the trees. On the driveway connected by asphalt, sand and stones, and on the top of the hill, the village where Ciel grew up, her father worked as a *kepala dusun* (village leader) for more than 25 years before retiring in 2023.



**Fig. 3.30 The winding road heads to Ciel's house
(Photo by the author)**

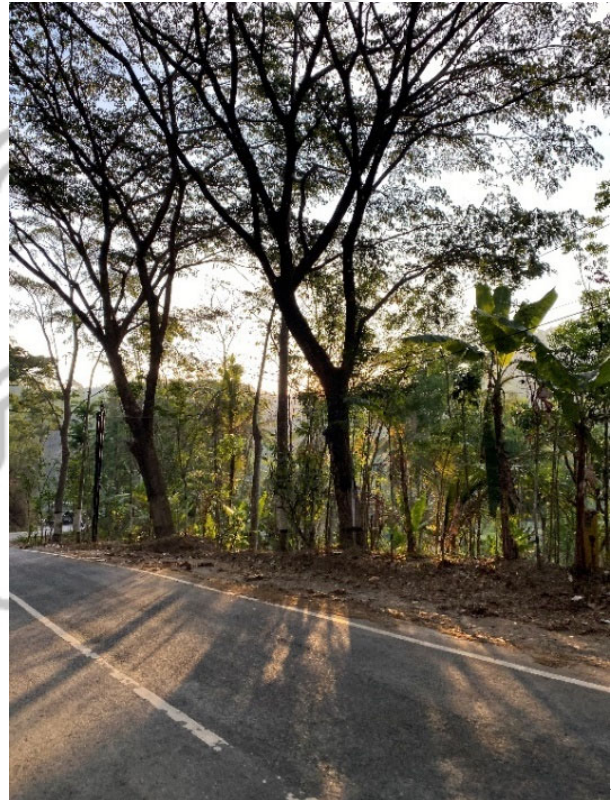


Fig. 3.31 The shades of green hills and orange sunlight shining through the trees besides the way to home (Photo by the author)

There was a Gamelan ensemble in front of their home yard. In the old days, the nearby residents would gather once a week to play the Gamelan ensemble at home. Ciel's mother was a *sinden* (singer) when Ciel was very young, often going out from the village to sing with the ensemble.

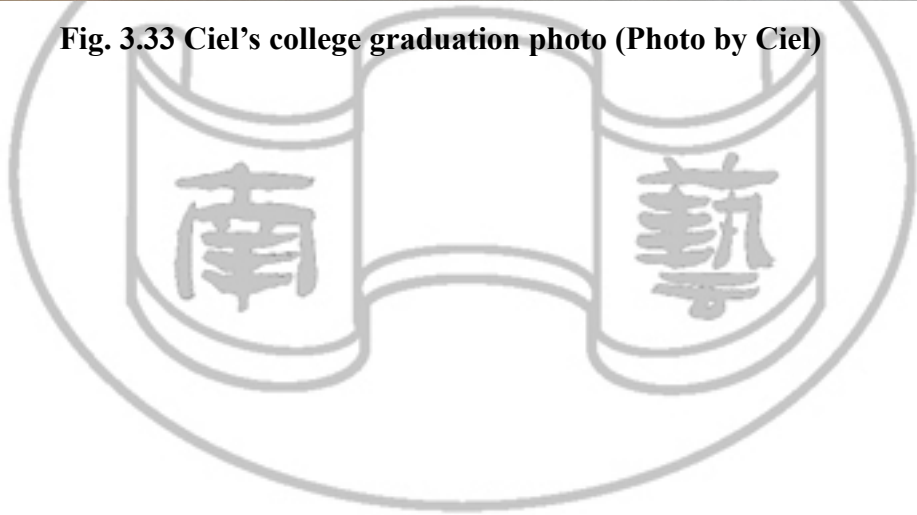


Fig. 3.32 Gamelan Slendro Ensemble at Ciel's house (Photo by the author)

Before Ciel went abroad, her brothers and sister had worked abroad, so their family's financial burden was not solely dependent on her. When Ciel decided to go to Taiwan to work and study in college, her family showed their support. In October 2018, Ciel's Taiwan journey started. She enrolled in the Department of Tourism and Travel at a university of Film and Arts in Keelung with her best friend from high school. She graduated in June 2022. On campus, she worked as a roomkeeper at a hotel, a part-time job found by her teacher, a staff at a sushi restaurant during the pandemic, and a roomkeeper at a well-known Resort. After graduating, she continued to work as a roomkeeper at the same resort with her best friend.



Fig. 3.33 Ciel's college graduation photo (Photo by Ciel)



Ciel's hobbies are reading, listening to music, learning languages from other cultures, and visiting the natural scenery. Ciel likes the imagination that foreign cultures bring to her, and because she is proficient in Chinese, she often reads inspirational Chinese books and positive quotations. With the development of TikTok, TikTok short clips are important sources of Ciel's playlist. Her playlist contains many Chinese lyrical popular songs, which contain classical Chinese texts with profound Chinese meanings adapted from ancient Chinese poems and some with dramatic accents, such as 'Qing Hua Ci (青花瓷)' by Jay Chou, 'Su Mu Zhe (蘇幕遮)' by Zhang Xiao-Tang¹⁹, 'Jingwei (精衛)' by 30 Years Before, 50 Years After²⁰, and 'Mo Wen Gui Qi (莫問歸期)' by Snow J. Ciel may not understand the meaning of the lyrics, but she feels that she likes the style of Chinese music. Other lyrical songs include English songs, like 'Dark Paradise' and 'Young and Beautiful' by Lana Del Rey, 'Ceilings' by Lizzy McAlpine. Some Indonesian popular songs, like 'Bertaut' by Nadin Amizah, 'Bercinta Lewat Kata' by Donne Maula, and 'Kembali Pulang' by Suara Kayu feat. Feby Putri, arouse her homesickness and make her cry when she listens to them alone. When asked about songs in her mother tongue, Javanese, she highly recommended 'Welas Hang Ring Kene' by Suliyana, Syahiba Saufa, 'Lamunan' by Niken Salindry, and other popular songs of Dangdut and Campursari that are well-known in Indonesia in 2024. Ciel's music preferences are diverse, and she chooses songs according to her mood.

Ciel landed in Taiwan to study in 2018. After a five-year lapse, she did not return to her hometown until 2023 for the first time to attend her eldest brother's wedding. At the end of March 2024, she took three weeks of leave from the company again to return to her hometown to celebrate Eid al-Fitr.

¹⁹ This song is adapted from the Song poem- Su Mu Zhe (蘇幕遮) - written by Fan Zhong Yan (范仲淹) in the Northern Song Dynasty.

²⁰ This song inspired by the Chinese idiom: Jingwei fills up the sea (精衛填海).

When Ciel mentioned to her mother that she wanted to study in Taiwan, her parents gave positive support because they trusted Ciel's choice and should support it unconditionally. Even parents would still miss her, however, now that there are mobile phones, managing long-distance family relationships is much more secure.

Ciel's Taiwan journey was actually prepared from high school. She was studying computer and network engineering at a senior vocational school. She studies computer maintenance, network settings, network engineering, and other courses in her class schedule. However, the principal then actively developed industry-academia collaboration domestically and abroad. The original intention was that the principal expects students would find employment immediately after graduation. The Taiwan New Southbound International Program of Industry-Academia Collaboration in which Ciel participated was also promoted by the principal at that time. Therefore, with her family's support, Ciel quickly applied for the opportunity to study in Taiwan with other classmates from her school who were preparing to go abroad through an education agency (approximately 60,000NT). The process started from the application to landing in the third year of high school. The whole process took her almost a year. During the process, she had to go to Solo, Central Java, to apply for a passport.

At the same time period as Ciel, many students came from all over Indonesia and were preparing to go abroad. Before Ciel came to Taiwan, the agent said there were English courses in Taiwan, and most people could communicate in English (even though this is not the case). Finally, in September 2018, Ciel went abroad and came to the university of Film and Arts in Keelung, Taiwan, and was assigned to the Department of Tourism and Travel Management which was a different field from her senior vocational school major. Even though she comes to Taiwan successfully, the real life here is different from her thought. There is a big gap between the agent's promise and her original imagination. Ciel was still grateful because, at that time, not everyone could

study abroad as they wished. Ciel's school friend needed a suitable major after waiting for a semester. Due to the expired passport, Ciel's friend was unable to go abroad. Finally, thanks to the campus, Ciel entered Taiwan's workplace through part-time work and internship opportunities, where she remains working today. However, Ciel is the fifth child in her family. She has one older sister, three older brothers, and a younger sister.

Ciel's older sister, Tini, just finished working as a caregiver in Taiwan for fifteen years in 2023 and remarried in the same year. Tini lives with her daughter, who is from her ex-husband, and her current husband in a duplex, which she earns from her savings from working in Taiwan. Ciel's oldest brother got married in 2023. Her second brother, whose house is still under construction next to the parents' house, is also working in Taiwan. There was a time when Ciel, her older sister, and her second brother were all in Taiwan simultaneously. Due to the vast age difference, Tini often acted like a mother and would lovingly cook for her younger brother and sister when they met. Ciel's third brother used his talent in painting to hand-painted three-dimensional totems on the walls of their home. Ciel's only younger sister is studying in a *pondok* (Islamic boarding school), which she has dreamed of since she was a child.



**Fig. 3.34 Ciel's home with family photos and her brother's hand-painted wall
(Photo by the author)**

While I did my fieldwork at Ciel's village, I stayed with her older sister, Tini. Tini just came back from Taiwan after her fifteen-year caregiver life there. I had several conversations with her while she cooked or did house chores. Impressively, our story time always started with a sweet and warm 'Tini's specialty' which was a cup of sweet hot coffee or tea whenever a guest visits or starts a conversation. Compared to the thick, pure Javanese black coffee with few spoons of sugar or the three-in-one coffee bags from several common local brands, Tini combines pure Javanese black coffee powder with half *sachet* (pack) of palm sugar latte three-in-one coffee. Brewed in a small coffee cup, carefully served on a small plate, and covered with a lid. Tini said, "I know Taiwanese rarely drink too sweet" (Personal conversation, November 15th, 2023). The Taiwanese habits still impress her.

From Tini's tears, I could feel her dilemma between her past family life and the deep bond of the elder whom she cared. Roughly fifteen to sixteen years ago, Tini was the first girl to go to Taiwan from her neighborhood. Most people would go to Malaysia if they wanted to work abroad, and there were relatively few examples of girls going abroad then. Tini went to Taiwan when her daughter was only two and a half years old. She has returned to Indonesia four times during her fifteen years working in Taiwan. She worked in a nursing home in New Taipei City for the first three years of her working life in Taiwan. After that, she cared for two grandparents near Songshan Airport for twelve years. They were as close as family. The 87-year-old grandma passed away twelve days after Tini returned to Indonesia. Tini said, "Grandma only ate the food I fed. We slept on the same bed. Grandma ignored everyone else, even her own children. Grandma only recognizes me. Grandpa is now in his nineties, in good health, and can still care for himself. The only problem is that his children are scattered in Hsinchu, Canada, and Singapore" (Personal conversation, November 15th, 2023). However, after Tini returned to Indonesia and Grandma passed away, the family worried that it would be dangerous for Grandpa to live alone, so now they hired another Indonesian caregiver to accompany him.

As Tini talked about marriage, she was happy all the time and said, "Now, I have two daughters." Tini and her current husband, who worked in Malaysia at the time, met each other on Facebook. They fell in love and began a long-distance relationship. In 2023, they returned to Indonesia together after finishing their work abroad, and they were officially married in September of the same year.

The songs that remind Tini her Taiwan life are all published in the 2010s. For example, 'Ru Guo Mei You Ta Ni Hai Ai Wo Ma (如果沒有他你還愛我嗎)', 'Ai Ni Dao Zui Hou Yi Ke (愛你到最後一刻)', and 'De Dao Ni De Ren Que De Bu Dao Ni De Xin (得到你的人卻得不到你的心)'. Nowadays, while Tini is in Indonesia, her

music playlist follows the trend and her favorite artist is Fauzana, a Minang singer, ‘Janji Ka Janji Nanti Ka Nanti’, ‘Marindu Rindu Surang’, ‘Uda Ka Adiak Pakai Lamo’, and ‘Tarumik Parasaan’ are Tini’s recent single loops of Fauzana’s YouTube channel.

Ciel and Tini represent the majority of Indonesians in their daily musical experiences; most of the people are not from musician families. They are not musicians, but music is central for them to get through the day, to calm themselves, to get them all together. Ciel attended the Taiwan New Southbound International Program of Industry-Academia Collaboration and works as a roomkeeper in a resort with her bachelors’ degree. She remains single and has a passion for learning new knowledge. Ciel’s self-image on social media shows her elegance, but, at the same time, she can dress up in a cool and boyish outfit. She is inspired by foreign culture at a very young age. Her playlist combines Javanese, Indonesian, English, Korean, Indian and Chinese. Music is her friend, her strength, and her life poetry. A girl is in her twenties, still imagining love and her future, and cannot wait to explore herself. She can be quiet and crazy, and she believes she has the potential to build a bright future. Although Ciel and Tini grew up in the same family, their music tastes are dissimilar. Tini worked in Taiwan for fifteen years as a caregiver and experienced two marriages and separation with her child. Now, she is finally in her hometown. However, owing to the strong bond with her previous ‘Taiwan family’, certain songs still remind her of the old days in Taiwan, where she spent her youth.

From the Chinese music playlist that Ciel and Tini collected, these two sisters with a fifteen-year age gap relatively represent preferences of a decade by their different birth order, personalities, and life experiences. Migrant worker sisters from the same family come to Taiwan for dissimilar reasons. If people are taking the responsibility to support their family economy status, they would minimize their own expenses and prioritize their family’s needs. Yet, if they are more independent pursuing personal city-

life experiences, then budget controlling will not be their first consideration (Qiu, Kong & Fang 2023). Ciel and Tini came to Taiwan at different periods and were influenced by Chinese music from different generations and different platforms. These Chinese songs they listened to repeatedly will become a piece of their memory of life in Taiwan. However, when Tini was in Taiwan, she missed Indonesia, yet she is now missing Ciel and her Taiwan life in her hometown, and so is Ciel.



Fig. 3.35 Tini and Ciel in their hometown, Ponorogo (Photo by Ciel)

3.5 Summary

Once people are ‘*Perantau* (Outlanders)’, whether they are domestic immigrants or foreign immigrants, people who leave home have a collective resonance. For Taiwanese, blue-collar migrant workers help fill the industry’s workforce shortage. These migrant workers in the eyes of their hometown neighbors are considered extremely fortunate. While on the outside the life of a migrant workers looks to be very profitable, only those involved are most aware of the difficulties of coming to work in Taiwan. No matter how flawed the migrant labor system is, and how helpless workers are in the system, these people still choose to continue to face challenges and strive to survive. However, while they are facing challenges, music and media have always been an indispensable respite and emotional outlet in their lives. The lyrics narrate their moods and help solidify abstract feelings that are hard to explain. For non-musician listeners, the criteria for selecting a song are not the complexity of the performance but rather the personal association made to the singing ability, lyrics, and the emotion it creates for the listener. Ciel and Anton, in their twenties, are emotional about Indonesian popular songs ‘*Kembali Pulang*’ and ‘*Bercinta Lewat Kata*’, published in 2023. The soft and sentimental ballad relates to their long-suppressed emotions. Two youths who grew up from different backgrounds shared homesickness and longed for love while working-study and then switched to migrant workers in Taiwan. Joko shared his positive energy and strength from performing on a virtual stage. However, Ratu, the caregiver, told me, “The more *siáu-siáu* (crazy) I look, the worse my mood is” (Personal conversation, April 10th, 2024). People from her village deeply believe she has a rich and happy life in Taiwan. Yet, the truth is the opposite.

Nowadays, reels on Instagram and TikTok go viral very quickly. While music is applied in reels, it is constantly shown and played. It is very brainwashing. It is a quick and easy source for updating playlists. From my informant’s stories and posts on their

personal social media, I can see ‘part of them’ actively expressing themselves, such as inspiring quotes and self-representation of the beautiful side of life. Ratu looks for freedom while looking after, ‘creating self’ between virtuality and reality. The ‘destiny of faith’ (Prusinski 2016) for many other Indonesian Muslim migrant women workers helps to overcome the tortures. Music is her *jiwa seni* (artistic soul) in her imprisoned caregiving daily work. As analyzed above, karaoke builds a sense of ‘harmonious yet dynamic equilibrium’ (Lum 1999:176) contributing to the establishment of unitary identity as an individual and togetherness as a group. Ratu’s music can be regarded as a binding agent in communities that have been ‘subjected to extremes of violence and for the narrative coherence of traumatized selves’ (Stokes 2020:11). For Joko, who lives by the Moon, rests by the waves, balancing through the swings, music onboard the life of a fisherman becomes the sustenance. Although Joko dislocated from his family and culture, he is able to voice his ‘presence in displacement’ both courageously and creatively (Western 2020:304). Social media allows migrant workers like Ratu and Joko to sing and dance in a private and cross-boundary space to express themselves, more so to hide themselves behind the filter. They jump into a virtual character they desire to be, though it is already part of them. Then, Anton switches from a student to a migrant worker and sings for ‘more than money’. The love songs connect his distant relationships with his newlywed wife. Music helps Anton to face injustice in the workplace as ‘a container for feelings’ (DeNora 2000:74). Finally, Ciel and Tini are sisters with different life encounters: Tini, as a caregiver, deeply bonds with her Taiwanese employer, and Ciel works as an undergraduate roomkeeper. The migrant workers manage their budget according to their relative independence (Qiu, Kong & Fang 2023). The sisters, Ciel and Tini, demonstrate this budget management strategy where the younger, Ciel, is not as burdened as her older sister. Yet, music is still their

poetry of life. Migrant workers moderate themselves as aesthetic agents, as feeling, thinking and acting beings in their everyday lives through music (DeNora 2000:62).



Chapter 4

FINDING SPACES FOR PLAYLIST EXCHANGE

This chapter will map physical and online spaces where Indonesian migrant workers, local Taiwanese and other stakeholders encounter each other as part of the importance of exchanging playlist in Taiwan. Indonesian migrant workers mainly gather in spaces that offer food, religious support, and a sense of personal freedom from otherwise structured and dictated study and work environments. ‘Location, time, and musical metaphors’ (Rice 2003) implicit meaning of people’s social and musical behavior based on time and place. Physical and virtual connections are created through their encounters with their compatriots, host society, and the larger world. Music become ‘shared spaces’ (Warren 2014) where people interact and moral duties arise.

4.1 Creating Indonesian Ethnoscapes

Toko Indo, Musalla, Mosque - Mental Anchors and Political Arenas

Southeast Asian consumptive ethnoscapes (Appadurai 1996, Wang 2006) are created as a complete zone in central traffic nodes and industrial areas such as Little Southeast Asia within ASEAN Square (also known as Pyramid Taichung) and Little Indonesia Street in Taipei Main Station. For the Indonesian community in Keelung, *Toko Indo* also creates the most representative ethnic spaces inhabited by stakeholders in the work and study network of migrants. *Toko Indo* is mainly concentrated in downtown Keelung; however, due to the geographical location in Keelung, the Indonesian communities are scattered throughout the area, often making meetings infrequent and inconsistent when weather, work schedule and other factors hamper occupying these spaces. That said, the consumptive ethnoscapes are centered on the

tangible affective output of each *Toko Indo*, located in different blocks; some just a distance of less than 200 meters.

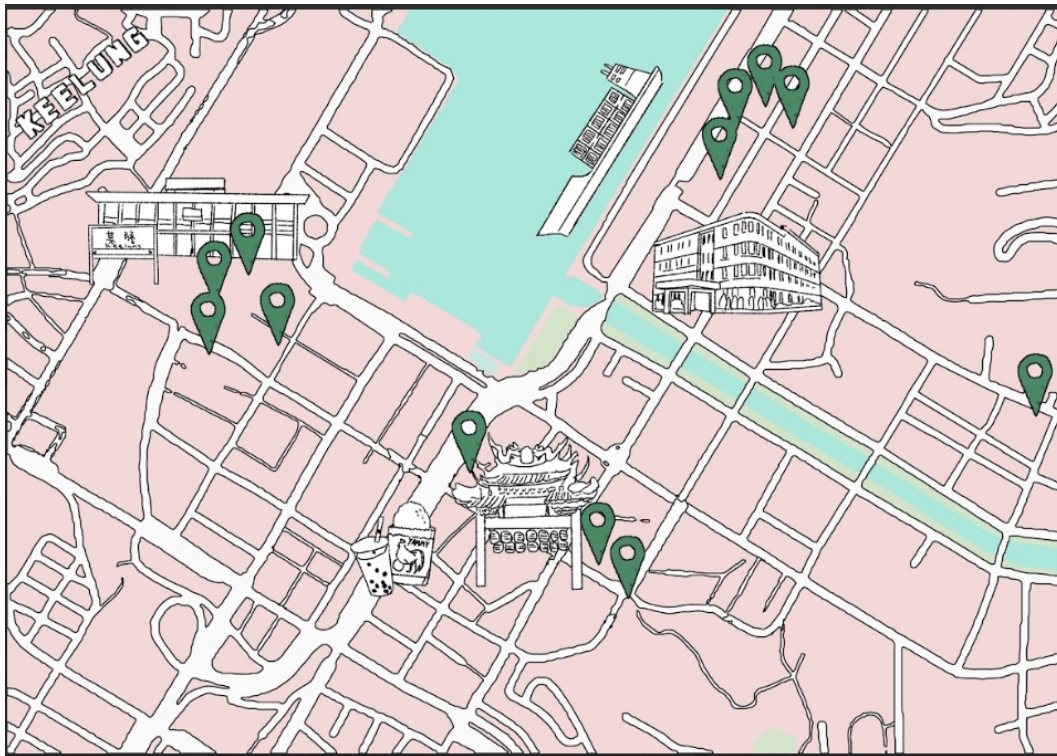


Fig. 4.1 The map of *Toko Indo* in downtown Keelung (Authorized by *Bilang*, illustrated by Peng Chien-Yen in 2020, supported by Youth Development Administration, MOE)

Toko Indo offers multiple services, including Indonesian cuisine, groceries, telecom services, remittance services, cargo delivery, and space for Indonesian customers to gather. For example, the upstairs room in *Toko Indo* Mega was offered for *Bilang*'s Mandarin class, where I met Ratu, Ciel, and Anton (See Chapter 3). By the way, many Indonesian migrant workers are familiar with enjoying karaoke sessions in a private room in *Toko Indo* while having meals, drinking, or smoking with friends. Music as a resource for communal stability is clearly a kind of binding medium tying people together in times of difficulty. Karaoke systems are variously designed in *Toko Indo*. Some *Toko Indo* provides the coin-operated karaoke machine with a thick book

of song list numbers and wired microphones, and customers enter song numbers with a remote control. Some *Toko Indo* modify the ordinary coin-operated karaoke machine into one connected to the YouTube application so that the customers are able to look for songs freely on the Internet without generation, language, and music version barriers. In the karaoke session, ‘interpersonal relationships’ (Warren 2014:12) becomes the core of music’s meaning.



Fig. 4.2 The modified coin-operated karaoke machine connected to online application (Photo by the author)

Besides entertainment services, in some *Toko Indo*, musalla (*musholla*, Islamic prayer room) are arranged to fulfill the religious needs of Indonesian Muslims, whether for daily prayer or any Islamic reunion. The Indonesian community in Keelung has

diverse religious faiths that inhabit both the archipelago such as Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism and other belief systems. Constructed by the Indonesian nation/state ideology ‘*Pancasila* (The Five Principles) (Sukarno 1945)’ and ‘*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity)’, Indonesian society negotiates a delicate balance to embrace, manage, and balance its religious, social and ethnic diversity. However, the number of Muslims still far exceeds other religions. In ‘Indonesian spaces’, besides the national symbols: *Sang Merah Putih* (national flag), *Garuda Pancasila* (national emblem) and the portraits of the President and the Vice President hung on the wall, Islamic cultural symbols are particularly prominent, such as the secrecy of alcoholic beverages, and the Halal certification of food products, and the arrangement of musalla. Unlike building an official mosque, a musalla is a clean and tidy sacred place with a lower threshold for establishment.



Fig. 4.3 A dinner after weekly Yaseen at the *Musholla Al-Ikhlas* upstairs in *Toko Indo Mega Store* (Photo by the author)

Typically, a *Toko Indo* owned by a Taiwanese husband and managed by his Indonesian wife. These types of ‘Taiwanese new residents’ are multilingual, speaking Chinese Mandarin, Taiwanese Hokkien, Indonesian and Indonesian dialects, or even English.²¹ Thus, *Toko Indo* is a key stakeholder in the ecosystem and a stable anchor that provides such cultural comforts as home country food and more intangible value such as mental and social support in a foreign land for Indonesian *perantau* (outlanders).

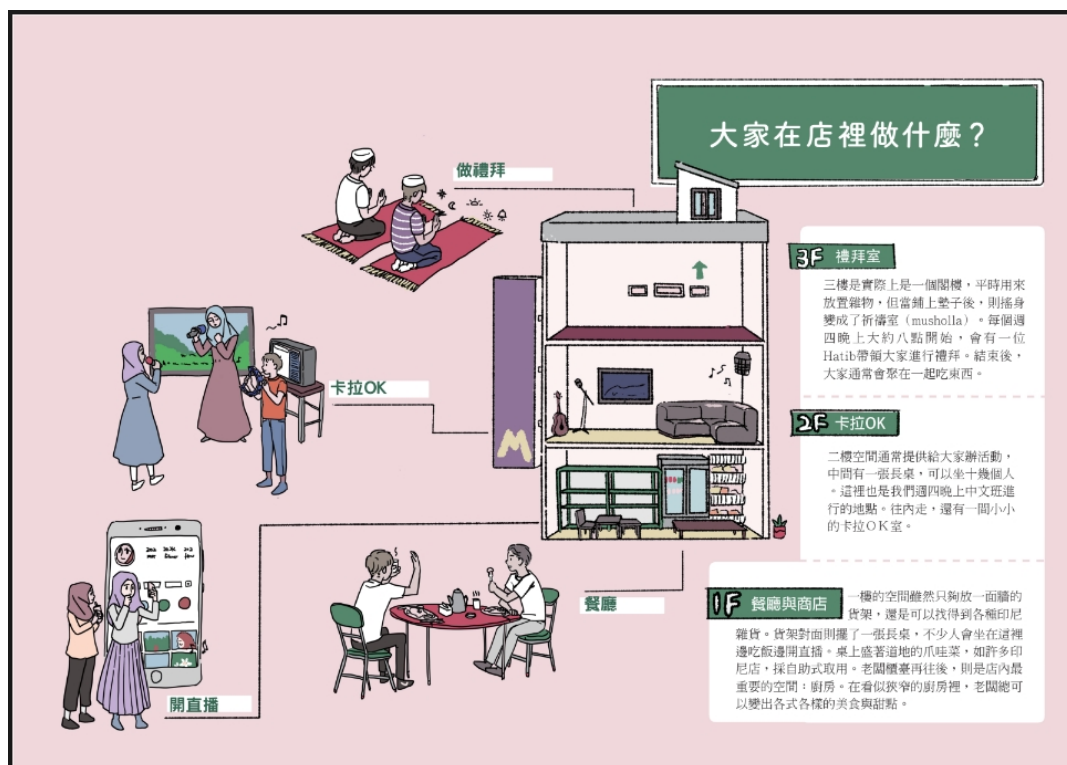


Fig. 4.4 The arrangement of *Toko Indo* Mega Store (Authorized by *Bilang*, illustrated by Peng Chien-Yen in 2020, supported by Youth Development Administration, MOE)

While social relations usually develop in *Toko Indo*, interpersonal social networks become the key effect on customers’ preferences. In addition to the quality of the products and taste of the food, choosing where to go can be more interpersonal or even in some instances a political preference. *Toko Indo* is more than a restaurant; it is a

²¹ Taiwanese new residents (台灣新住民) are foreign spouses.

combined 'location' where the community exists as a socio-cultural and contextual negotiation (Yang & Lu 2007:17-18). For example, the second floor of a *Toko Indo Meiwa*, which includes the non-Muslim owner's family room, an Islamic prayer area, and spaces for Mandarin class and association meetings, can all be provided in the living room. Meanwhile, it is the official site of the Keelung Migrant Fishermen's Union (KMFU).



Fig. 4.5 The official site of KMFU located on the second floor of *Toko Indo Meiwa* with an Islamic prayer area (Photo by the author)



Fig. 4.6 The official site of KMFU used as a Mandarin classroom and meeting room for associations (Photo by the author)

Gossip, disagreements and arguments are inevitable in shared spaces like *Toko Indo* where Indonesians meet, encounter and negotiate their compatriots. Coteries do exist in the Indonesian community. People avoid going to specific *Toko Indo* owing to interpersonal relationships, especially in downtown Keelung, where many *Toko Indo* options are provided and favored among various factions within the migrant community. For example, Ratu said she preferred to go to a *Toko Indo* near the hospital instead of the one closer to the shopping plaza because the owner could not stop gossiping and looked down on her. From my personal experiences, since I frequently visited different *Toko Indo*, my migrant worker friends reminded me to be very aware, “Don’t tell the owner you just came from another *Toko Indo*. Just say you went to the Miao Kuo Night Market!”

For fishermen working in the harbors near Zhongzheng Road, the main road to fishing harbors in Keelung’s East Coast, only one small *Toko Indo* is not big enough to accommodate many people. If they do not have time to go to the city center, *Gedung miring* (The leaning building), an open space with a slanted roof shelter without a light system in Zhengbin fishing harbor, will be the fishermen’s choice. Due to the working nature and the distance of the fishing harbor in Keelung, the musalla located in downtown *Toko Indo* does not always match the religious needs and working schedule of Muslim fishermen. As more and more governmental and non-governmental organizations address the needs of foreign fishermen, ‘Improvement on Living Conditions and Social Protection’, including musalla construction, has been one of the implementation strategies of the ‘Action Plan for Fisheries and Human Rights’ announced by R.O.C. Executive Yuan in 2022. The Keelung Fishermen’s Association (基隆區漁會) officially provided a self-managed space for establishing *Musholla Darul Iman* so that Muslim fishermen can pray near the workplace instead of inside a tiny boat cabin under the initiative of N.G.O.s advocating for human rights.

It is worth mentioning that Islamic culture is a majority in Indonesia but a minority in Taiwan. In April 2021, the first official mosque in Keelung, *Masjid Al-Hidayah*, was established thanks to the efforts of all parties. *Masjid Al-Hidayah* is composed of the NU, an Islamic organization in Indonesia. Since NU is the Islamic organization with the largest population in the world, international religious leaders can be invited to preach at this mosque in the name of NU. The core leaders among them are primarily migrant workers and Taiwanese new residents. The Indonesian *Ustad* (Muslim religious leader) also works full-time as a factory migrant worker. *Ustad's* voice is loudly broadcasted around the mosque and believers all get up and do *wudu* (Islamic ritual purity for daily prayer). Muslims follow the soundscape, which was most indispensable and familiar with when they were in their hometown.

However, due to the international power of the NU, the core team, composed of factory workers, caregivers, and Taiwanese new residents, has connections to the headquarters of the NU. Religious leaders from Indonesia, such as *Kyai* and *Gus*, are invited to preach at *Masjid Al-Hidayah*. The mosque, organized by cross-national religious leaders, has no doubt existing connections to the governments. Sub-communities appear when it comes to religion, politics, and other factors that influence interpersonal preferences. Again, where people prefer to pray is also affected by interpersonal relationships.

In fact, due to increasingly convenient transportation, Keelung City has frequent interactions with Taipei City and New Taipei City. As long as the condition permits, Indonesian Muslim migrant workers in Keelung can choose a place to pray based on personal preferences and other considerations such as distance, time, weather, and so on. For example, every Friday near noon, many male Muslim migrant workers or international students, including Anton, will take a one-hour bus from Keelung Bus Terminal directly to Taipei Grand Mosque in Daan for *Sholat Ju'mat* (Friday Prayer).

This commuting route is especially popular in the evening of *Ramadan* (the ninth month of the Islamic calendar). Many Indonesian Muslims in Keelung will go to the Taipei Grand Mosque to celebrate the *buka puasa* (Iftar) with Muslims from all over the world.



Chapter 5

LET'S EXCHANGE OUR MUSIC PLAYLIST

Because music may be viewed among other perspectives as a 'touch stone of social relations' (DeNora 2000:126), this chapter examines the 'chemistry' co-created in music scenes built by Indonesians and Taiwanese. This chapter involves two examples from diametrically opposed research perspectives: a top-down perspective of a bureaucrat-sponsored staged event; a bottom-up perspective of a grassroots event. The top-down view stems from the Fishermen Caring Event and the bottom-up event involves TKW Taiwan Recording which centered around the involvement of an Indonesian caregiver artist and a Taiwanese guitarist. Among these two co-created events, participatory action research (PAR) was involved, and music functioned as an essential bridge to initiate interaction as well as a medium that assisted migrants and locals temporarily cross social classes and national borders.

In Applied Ethnomusicology, 'Social intervention' (Harrison, Mackinlay, and Pettan 2010) provides strategies and alters social resources by offering platforms, which are respective, equal and reciprocal among the research participants. This allows the subaltern or the marginalized to speak out and represent themselves (Hofman 2010: 26). As a mediator, the scale and degree of my individual impact on migrant activities are related to my activities designed through various groups and my relationship with informants. Researchers like me in the context of an applied approach tend to stand out for multiple positionalities associated with self-identification, background experiences, and social privileges (Narayan 1993). These positionalities are highlighted on the 'shifting identifications' (Narayan 1993:671-672) carried by researchers. Other powerful effects include the sponsor's power, the event's purpose, the participant's

mobility. Although I was a mediator, the orientation of activities and relationships with stakeholders affected the degree of my involvement.

5.1 Fishermen Caring Event

According to statistics provided by Foreign Affairs Division of Keelung City Police Bureau, by the end of 2022, among 617 or more foreign domestic fishery fishermen in fishing harbors located in the Keelung area, 517 were Indonesian.²² The Fishermen Caring Event, officially named Foreign Crew Caring Event with Knowledge-and-Ability Enhancing (輔導外籍船員提升知能暨關懷活動), was held at Badouzi Fishing Harbor in 2022.

People reflected their desire to take control of their lives in music after feeling frustrated in losing control in their routine lives every day (Keil 1982). Through song and dance, migrant workers can temporarily achieve satisfaction, stability and ‘in control of some new power’ (Keil 1982:47). According to the 2022 program instruction of this caring event provided by the Keelung Fishermen’s Association (KFA), the purpose of this event was to enhance foreign crews’ knowledge and abilities to work at sea and living on land, promoting work safety and labor rights, and appreciating the hard work of leaving home. As the Fisheries Agency of the Council of Agriculture in Executive Yuan advised, the issue has been settled to match the international issue: the humanity of foreign fishermen. In response to frequent international concerns about the

²² The police in Foreign Affairs Division of Keelung City Police Bureau mentioned the statics for ‘Indonesian Fishermen in Keelung’ had not been announced in public but ‘Indonesian in Keelung’, ‘Foreign Fishermen in Keelung’ and ‘Indonesian Fishermen in Taiwan’. The police looked for the amount of 517 from police interior system and emphasized that the registered residence data was difficult to represent the actual number of fishermen in the area because the nature of fishermen’s work is quite special. Then, she took Kaohsiung and Pingtung for example, the actual foreign fishermen number was much more than the registered one. (Personal conversation, January 11th, 2023) Another police in Foreign Affairs Division of Keelung City Police Bureau told me even the use of official statistical names is vague, with the term fishermen (laborers on fishing vessels) and seafarers (crew members of merchant ships or cargo ships) being used interchangeably in government agencies, as long as the officers know what they were talking about (Personal conversation, January 11th, 2023).

rights of fishermen, the Fisheries Agency supervised the improvement of basic human rights facilities such as fishing port restrooms and Muslim prayer rooms. This was the first Foreign Crew Caring Event with knowledge-and-ability enhancement that the Fisheries Agency had provided subsidies and appointed the KFA Department of Promotion to organize.

Furthermore, in order to meet the needs of the theme, the KFA Department of Promotion collaborated with the Rerum Novarum Center, which has been providing on-site services at the fishing port for a long time, and the Keelung Migrant Fishermen's Union (KMFU), which had primary experiences of Indonesian fishermen's current condition.²³ In addition to co-organizing the event and inviting fishermen to join, Rerum Novarum Center and KMFU were also have networks of agents. One agent even drove fishermen from other fishing harbors to join the 2022 Caring Event. Other co-organizer from governmental and non-governmental units included the Ministry of Labor, Keelung Local Office of Bureau of Labor Insurance, the Department of Social Affairs of Keelung City Government Bureau of Environmental Protection in Keelung City, Tri-Service General Hospital Nei-Hu Branch.

²³ Importantly, this was not the first collaboration among the KFA Department of Promotion, Rerum Novarum Center, and KMFU. The director of the KFA Department of Promotion revealed that several years ago, KFA, upon the recommendation of the Fisheries Agency, discovered that the Rerum Novarum Center had been defending local fishermen's rights for many years, and KMFU was actively advocating for Indonesian fishermen's rights in Keelung. Since then, the three parties have consistently distributed food, winter clothes, quilts, and other materials at the fishing port to support the foreign fishermen in Keelung District during significant annual seasons or in the cold winter (Interview, April 2nd, 2024).

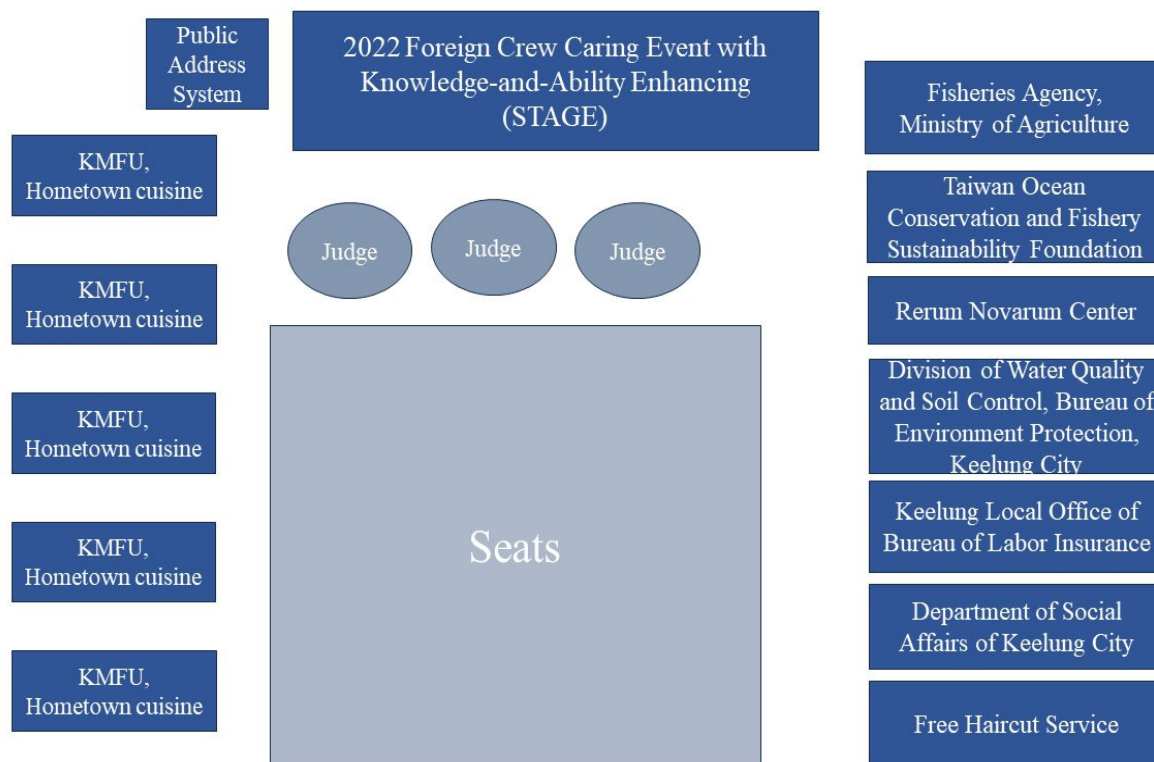


Fig 5.1 The arrangement of the Fishermen Caring Event (Illustrated by the author)

The rundown of the Fishermen Caring Event was as follows: opening, basic life support and life-saving skills education, break time with decree advocacy and free haircut service, singing contest, lottery and award time, and then closing.



Fig. 5.2 The poster of 2022 Fishermen Caring Event

KFA used this caring event to promote the rights and regulations of foreign fishermen and also used paper questionnaires to survey fishermen's opinions on the working environment and daily life in Taiwan. The police office explained the issue of human trafficking, and the Environmental Protection Bureau promoted the concept of maritime environmental protection. The Fisheries Department publicizes channels for seeking assistance and appeals. However, KFA also explained that the fishermen were more focused on having fun in this kind of entertainment and caring activities, and the filling rate of the questionnaire was supposed to be higher. However, even so, it did not matter. The primary aim of the caring activities remained to comfort the fishermen. KFA was unwilling to force too much on the fishermen to line up and fill out the questionnaire when everyone was happy and relaxing.



Fig. 5.3 People enjoyed Indonesian cuisine and desserts prepared by the *Toko Indo* and KMFU (Photo by the author)



Fig. 5.4 The Department of Social Affairs and a human resources agent promoted electric bike regulations to a fisherman at the event (Photo by the author)

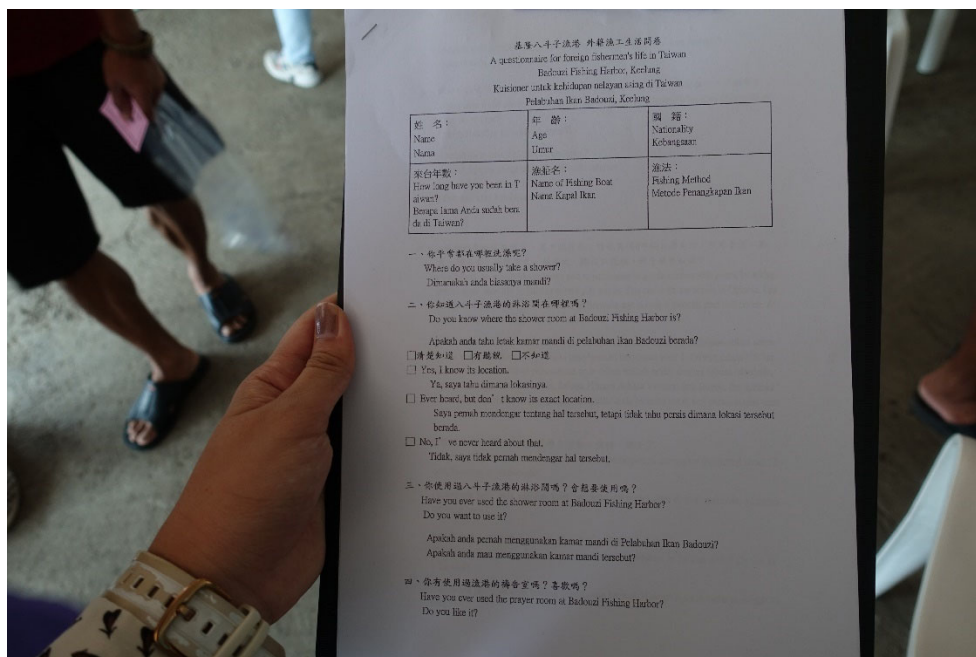


Fig. 5.5 A trilingual questionnaire for foreign fisherman's life in Taiwan, Badouzi Fishing Harbor, Keelung (Photo by the author)

At the beginning of the caring event, many officers and journalists appeared, including the chairman and officers of KFA, the governors of the Fisheries Agency at Council of Agriculture in Executive Yuan, the director-general of KMFU, a social worker from Rerum Novarum Center, teachers from National Ocean University and nurses and doctors from Tri-Service General Hospital Nei-Hu Branch. However, after the opening ceremony and some group photos, the officers and governors, the main decision-makers and resource allocators, took little time to participate in the fishermen's caring event. They came to the event to gain media exposure. Once the press interviews were done, the officers and governors left. On the spot, I confirmed to the staff from KFA whether he was satisfied with the process of today's event, and he said,

Not bad, the journalist got most of the photos they need (Personal conversation, September 7th, 2022).



Fig. 5.6 Group photo after the opening ceremony (Photo by KFA)

Because of the sunny weather that day, many fishing boats went out to sea to engage in fishing; like Joko (an Indonesian fisherman in Zhengbin Fishing Harbor, see Chapter 3) and his colleagues from the same boat did not come to the event. The actual number of participants was less than the amount expected by the organizer. The KFA Department of Promotion director mentioned, “Because I often see foreign fishermen singing on fishing boats, it seems like they love to sing very much.” After that, she and her colleague consulted the director-general of KMFU and the social worker of Rerum Novarum for their opinions and finally decided to use a lottery session and singing contest as the main focus of this activity.²⁴ KMFU invited me to be a multilingual host

²⁴ After further investigation, I discovered that the fishermen’s singing contest was not a regular theme for the caring event. In the 2023 caring event, KFA changed the theme to ‘Caring Party’. At the party, the lottery session of the previous event was continued, and singing equipment and stage were still prepared, but this stage was no longer competitive. Instead, KFA built a playground next to Badouzi Fishing Harbor, equipped with a human body claw machine and ring toss on the bollard. In the 2023 Caring Party, the bad weather that was not suitable for sailing became an advantage, and the number of

for this event and a translator for the posters. As this was my first time to be an official multilingual host in an Indonesian-based event, I was trained to host in an Indonesian Muslim way by friends from *Toko Indo*. It was challenging for me to speak the Islam prayer *Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh* for greeting and blessing.

The attractive highlight was the singing contest; fifteen contestants registered on the spot, including Indonesian fishermen, human resources agents and caregivers such as Ratu (an Indonesian caregiver, see Chapter 3). The sound system they applied was the karaoke channel from the YouTube website. Songs are chosen to contest, including ‘Joko Tingkir’, ‘Oji Dibandingke’, ‘Buta Tuli’, ‘Celurit Cinta’, ‘Kangen’, ‘Mangkelaken’, ‘Satru 2’, ‘Madu dan Racun’, ‘Nafas Cinta’, ‘Jangan Pernah Berubah’, ‘Prahu Layar’, ‘Jangan Tutup Dirimu’, ‘Akhirnya Kumenemukanmu’, ‘Sejujur Bangkai’ and ‘Bimbang’. The music songs from this contest were mainly Dangdut, an Indonesian-origin music genre with a distinctive drum rhythm. If the songs were Dangdut Koplo, an innovative branch of Dangdut with a more flexible arrangement, and the singer *bergoyang-goyang* (sway, gyrate), the atmosphere would instantly heat up. This contest was entertainment-oriented; with an open stage, the audience was able to jump up to the stage and dance with the singer, therefore demonstrating that migrants from the same country, but of different ethnicities, may use art to ‘re-draw their group boundaries along regional and religious lines’ (Winarnita 2014:232).

The three judges of this singing contest were: first, the owner of a *Toko Indo* Meiwa who was also the director-general of KMFU; second, the social worker from the Rerum Novarum Center who had serviced migrant fishermen for about four years then;

participants was much higher than in 2022. KFA also promoted the laws and regulations of foreign fishermen through events and surveyed fishermen's opinions on the working environment and daily life in Taiwan. At the same time, Fishery Agencies promoted the ongoing construction website of the ‘Interactive Service Platform for Foreign Crews’ (<https://www.happyfisherman.tw/>). The multilingual website covered a variety of services, such as marking restrooms with hot water at the fishing harbors, providing life maps of prayer rooms and shops, listing fishing vessel information, and publicizing channels for seeking assistance and appeals.

and last, the director of KFA Department of Promotion. The contest winners would get bicycles, wireless Bluetooth earbuds, and power banks. The event ended with a joyful award ceremony and a lively lottery session.



Fig. 5.7 The judges and a fisherman contestant (Photo by the author)



Fig. 5.8 Ratu *bergoyang-goyang* with an agent (Photo by the author)

While KFA organized the Fishermen Caring Event under the jurisdiction of the Fisheries Agency at the Council of Agriculture in Executive Yuan, I analyzed this bureaucrat-sponsored event from four angles with a top-down research perspective as follows. First, **Political function**. The KFA built a stage to coerce, manipulate, and placate foreign fishermen. The association showed their care with material prizes and provided a platform for fishermen to show their voice as they could say what they wanted to express, as the government really cared. This was in response to international concerns about the human rights issues of foreign fishermen. Another example of bureaucrat-sponsored event with political manipulation in Keelung was the twin festivals of Eid al-Fitr in 2024. The ‘official’ celebration of Eid al-Fitr was organized by the Keelung City Government, NGOs, and human resources agents in the National Gate Plaza with multiple activities, including *Salat Id* (Eid prayer), official speech, decree advocacy, questionnaire, gifts, and *Sholawat* (a prayer for praising Islamic prophets) performance (See Chapter 3). At the same time, another ‘official’ ceremony of Eid al-Fitr was held by NU Keelung in *Masjid Al-Hidayah* (also known as *Masjid Keelung*) only with *Salat Id* (Eid prayer) and provided home-cooked meals. A female Muslim from the core team of the *Masjid Al-Hidayah* said, “The city government invited us to unite the celebration in National Gate Plaza. However, it is impossible to empty our Islamic sacred space on this most important day of the year” (Personal conversation, April 10th, 2024).

Second, **Reward function**. Foreign fishermen clearly must work hard away from home as laborers. In response to frequent international concerns about the humanity and labor rights of fishermen, the government provided budget to create a joyful event filled with free hometown cuisine, haircut service, and expensive gifts. It aimed to enhance foreign fishermen’s knowledge and abilities to work at sea and live on land, promote work safety and labor rights, and appreciate the hard work of leaving home.



**Fig. 5.9 A fisherman won wireless Bluetooth earbuds with his lottery ticket
(Photo by the author)**

Third, **Practical function**. Staged entertainment has the practical function of gathering people to educate about safety knowledge and vital legal decrees and providing income for the staff. Nurses and doctors from the hospital provided basic life-saving skills. The social worker assisted migrant fishermen in every cultural, linguistic, religious, and legal condition and was a mediator in fishermen's working life. The KMFU director-general, a Taiwanese new resident and the owner of a *Toko Indo*, sold Indonesian cuisine and desserts to the event. Moreover, the event provided an opportunity to exchange information among participants. In this way, practical applications for events for migrant workers clearly have value and worth functioning at the practical level.

Last but not least, **Self-achievement function**. Personal accomplishments play a significant role for migrant workers who support families back home, work for a demanding boss, and have little time for themselves. As a function of self-achievement

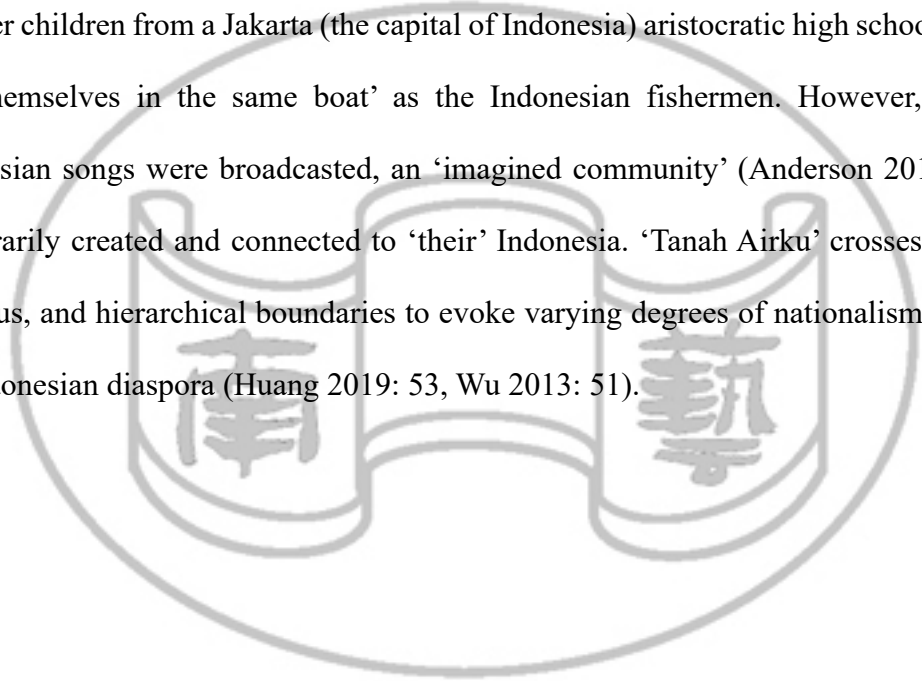
these events provide a brief moment for themselves to accomplish a sense of satisfaction. Fifteen contestants, including Indonesian fishermen, caregivers, and human resources agents, registered for the singing contest on the spot. The audiences are Indonesian fishermen, domestic workers, Indonesian wives (Taiwanese new residents), and non-Indonesian foreign fishermen. Everyone was excitedly taking photos, videos, and live broadcasting on their personal social media.

At that moment, singing popular songs in Indonesian and Javanese became mainstream and built a ‘national pride’ in the event. Indonesians ‘re-drew their group boundaries’ (Winarnita 2014:232) and negotiated their identity status with the Taiwanese by the fishing harbor. The winners would get bicycles, wireless Bluetooth earbuds, and power banks. However, besides the material gains, those who used to have a super-star dream now got peer praise. The winners felt satisfied and proud to be surrounded by the applause. On the other hand, the staff of KFA shared his innermost thoughts about this Fishermen Caring Event,

As far as I am concerned, I feel a sense of achievement. I was studying in fishery majors, and being able to organize fishery-related activities to help people gave me a sense of achievement. I was very happy to be able to use my knowledge and abilities. However, due to (the language) barrier, I have not been able to become friends with the fishermen. However, it made me very happy to see them riding the bicycles won by the event lottery by the fishing harbor (Interview, April 2nd, 2024).

Here, I would like to highlight an example of awkward encounters during another fishermen event. The Migrant Worker Community Service, a cultural exchange activity organized by Taiwanese and Indonesian Catholic high schools, proved music could temporarily bridge people from different social classes and nationalities. International

high school students visited Indonesian fishermen in Keelung Badouzi Fishing Harbor. I was invited to be a translator for the event because Taiwanese students and Indonesian students from Jakarta explained their purpose for visiting in English. At first, the fishermen were very embarrassed to be stared at by a large group of *orang kuliah* (intellectuals) from private city schools. Instantaneously, the atmosphere was warmed up when the kids turned on the music button and sang well-known songs ‘Tanah Airku’, ‘Ojo Dibandingke’, and ‘Apuse.’ Music is a bridge to initiate interaction and as a medium that temporarily crosses social class and national borders. It is doubtful whether children from a Jakarta (the capital of Indonesia) aristocratic high school really ‘put themselves in the same boat’ as the Indonesian fishermen. However, as the Indonesian songs were broadcasted, an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2016) was temporarily created and connected to ‘their’ Indonesia. ‘Tanah Airku’ crosses ethnic, religious, and hierarchical boundaries to evoke varying degrees of nationalism among the Indonesian diaspora (Huang 2019: 53, Wu 2013: 51).



5.2 TKW Taiwan Recording

Migrants express their homesickness, disappointment and sense of deprivation through work and advocate for their rights by reshaping the dominant discourse (Mintarsih 2019). Reshaping her own discourse, Ratu wrote a song, TKW Taiwan, in the first person about the difficulties and expectations of being a female Indonesian migrant worker working in Taiwan: *TKW (Tenaga kerja wanita)* means female migrant worker or women working laborer, especially working abroad. Ratu has resided in Taiwan for sixteen years as a domestic caregiver. Because her husband died of illness, she had to support the family's financial burden alone, supporting her mother and two children. Besides caring for an elderly and gossipy grandma, she has to be responsible for trivial housework: sweeping the floor, mopping the floor, cleaning the toilet, cooking, and cleaning the house. Ratu has been tortured mentally and physically by the 24/7 work and the pressure caused by Grandma's nonsense (See Chapter 3).

Moreover, she unfortunately aroused jealousy from her family and neighbors when she bought land to build a house in her hometown. Distant family disputes that she could not handle in time were like adding fuel to a fire burning her down and suffocating her. Finally, she could only convince herself to close her ears away from the rumors, keep her eyes on the current properties, and believe in the destiny of faith in her imprisoned life.

TKW Taiwan was written by Ratu, composed by Edo Yahya, and arranged by Orkes Melayu Sahabat Smule NKRI, produced on October 4th, 2021. Ratu believed TKW Taiwan would relate to many foreign female caregivers about painful feelings; coupled with her strong desire to perform, she desperately wanted to spread this masterpiece widely from her *jiwa seni* (artistic soul) to the broader Indonesian community and Taiwanese society. For her, the song still had yet to be perfect with two improvements: lyrics translation and song recording.

Ratu made positive decisions in her life and took action rather than simply giving up. As Tan Sooi Beng upholds, “Through the participatory way of working, the stakeholders are empowered to make positive decisions about their lives and turn these decisions into action. Stakeholders collectively gather data through research, analyze the data, discuss and take action to improve their conditions” (Tan 2015: 114). Continuing her action of positivity, in order to advertise TKW Taiwan to cross-national audiences, Ratu expected the song should be multilingual and understandable for Indonesian and Taiwanese audiences. She needed an assistant to translate her Javanese dialect lyrics into written Chinese Mandarin. Ratu spoke fluent Taiwanese Hokkien, mixing Chinese Mandarin. She could try to translate the Javanese into Mandarin by speaking and listening, but her vocabulary was limited in accurately translating the lyrics. Thus, Ratu asked my help for her valued music work based on trust and limited resources in 2022, although she knew I understood nothing about her dialect from Central Java.

We started by translating Javanese into Indonesian, Indonesia’s official language. Meanwhile, we asked my partner for four years then, who was a Javanese from East Java and spoke Indonesian, Chinese Mandarin, and English, to join and complete the translation together. Due to the differences in regional Javanese usage, the three of us exchanged opinions back and forth several times. Regarding translation accuracy, we discussed it in Indonesian, Javanese, Chinese Mandarin, and Taiwanese Hokkien through Chinese text spelled in the Indonesian alphabet, online calls, voice messages, and Google Translation. Finally, I translated the lyrics and wrote them down in Chinese Mandarin. The final check was that I had to read out and, again, translate the ‘multiple-translated’ Chinese Mandarin version of TKW Taiwan in spoken Taiwanese Hokkien and Chinese Mandarin so that Ratu could make sure whether the Mandarin translation

‘almost fully’ matched her Central Javanese lyrics meaning. A multi-translated process with multiple ethnicities, languages, and media produced the Chinese Mandarin version.

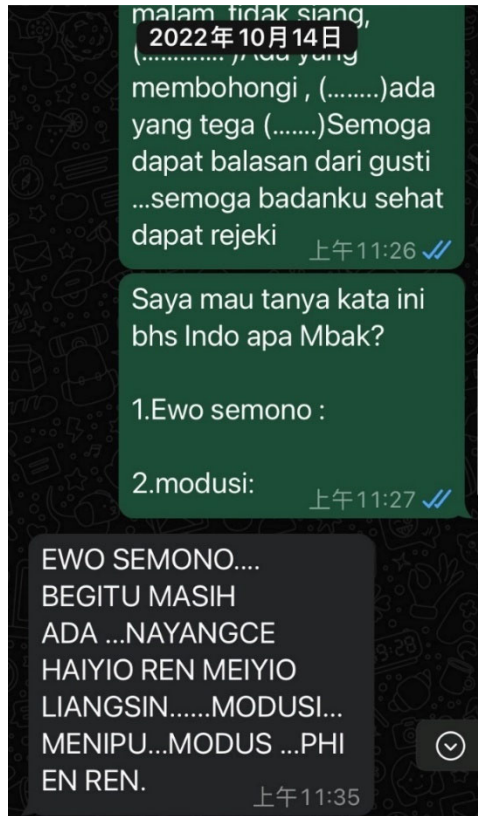


Fig. 5.10 Text discussions mixed with Indonesian, Central Javanese and Chinese Mandarin spelled in Indonesian alphabet between Ratu and the author



Fig. 5.11 Voice messages mixed with Indonesian, Chinese Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien between Ratu and the author

Ratu also wanted to improve her original record because for her, the quality was below average. The first version of TKW Taiwan was recorded from Smule, an online singing application. Edo Yahya composed the music. Then, Ratu met Orkes Melayu Sahabat Smule NKRI, the online arranger team, in Smule and paid one million Indonesian Rupiah (approximately 2000 NT) to the team for arranging and recording TKW Taiwan. Ratu recorded the vocal with her wired earphones in her employer’s house. All these works were online.

The first time I listened to TKW Taiwan was at Ratu's workplace. Ratu showed me the recording result with frustration because her singing voice was barely heard, and said, "If you know any recording studio, please let me know. We can go to the studio together when I get a day off. I want to re-record it and make it perfect" (Personal conversation, October 3rd, 2022).



Fig. 5.12 TKW Taiwan recorded from Smule (Photo by Ratu)

As Jeff Todd Titon claimed, "Those of us who practice applied ethnomusicology, also feel a responsibility to help put knowledge to practical use [...] we also involve ourselves in interventions into musical communities, for public benefit" (Titon 2015: 9). In my capacity as a mediator, I tried to bring benefit to my informants. As a domestic caregiver, Ratu had a minimal holiday to go out. She constantly asked if I knew of a close and affordable recording studio in Keelung. I had zero experience of formal recording in a studio. While I was confused and looking for related musical information,

‘Arnold’ came to mind. Arnold was my guitar teacher working at Gigula Music Studio in Keelung (See Chapter 4). I contacted Arnold to ask if he knew any information about recording, and the miracle happened. I knew Arnold was a guitarist in a band, but I never expected he was also a sound engineer and owned a home recording studio. Notably, he was willing to cooperate with Ratu’s time after knowing she was a caregiver.

Ratu found it hard to believe and was thrilled at this exciting news. However, it took a lot of work. We inevitably canceled our first recording appointment because Ratu’s employer did not allow her to take a leave that day. After rearranging the time, we decided to record TKW Taiwan on a Wednesday afternoon and kept praying it would happen at our will. In the end, it came true, though it was a fluke. On that Wednesday afternoon, Ratu’s employer went out, so she could evade his supervision and get permission to leave from her care recipient, Grandma.

Arnold’s music studio was in his house in a private community on the hill in Keelung. Avoiding getting lost, Ratu asked me to take her to the studio. The distance between Ratu’s place and Arnold’s studio was approximately fifteen to twenty minutes by motorbike. Once we arrived, Ratu observed the equipment and decoration of the recording studio with excitement and surprise. Although it was her first time recording in an equipped home recording studio, she was very comfortable in the room and confident in herself in fancy costumes and make-up, which were necessary for her performance.



Fig. 5.13 Ratu changed into her performing costume and put on eyelashes before the audio recording (Photo by the author)

Ratu and Arnold were both outgoing, so it took little time to warm up the atmosphere. During the preparation, they passionately shared life stories with each other, Ratu acted out her past working experience and said aloud,

I have taken many elders in Taiwan. Once, I took care of a grandpa; he played with his poop like clay and made it bread-shaped. I even tasted it and was shocked. However, if I were to compare a stupid grandpa with a picky grandma, I would choose the former. I have met many dilemmas and difficulties while working in Taiwan, but I am always thinking positively (Ratu, October 26th, 2022).

Ratu shared everything in Taiwanese Hokkien, mixing Chinese Mandarin. Arnold was not only amazed by her life philosophy but also split by the difficulties happening to him during this time,

I am very exhausted today because of some family issues. I am teaching guitar and playing in music bands, but I need to take care of four family members all alone (Arnold, October 26th 2022).

While talking about their difficulties, they even sang a classic Taiwanese Hokkien song ‘Ai Pin Cai Hui Ying (愛拼才會贏)’ together as a strength to overcome the storms in life.

人生可比是海上的波浪，有時起有時落，好運歹運總嘛要照起工來行，三分天註定，七分靠打拼，愛拼才會贏。*(Life is like waves on the sea, sometimes up and sometimes down. Good luck and bad luck all come from hard work. Thirty percent depends on fate and seventy percent depends on hard work. Only by working hard will you win.)* (Lyrics of Ai Pin Cai Hui Ying, sung by Ye Qi-Tian, published in 1988, translated by the author)

Arnold appreciated Ratu’s language skills and multiple unique talents, saying, “It is too pitiful for you to be a caregiver. You are supposed to be a singer!” Ratu felt a sense of achievement to be spotted and listened to by a young Taiwanese musician. After that, she cannot help singing to Arnold her favorite songs, such as ‘Wo Wen Tian (我問天)’



**Fig. 5.14 Arnold and Ratu were singing ‘Ai Pin Cai Hui Ying’
(Photo by the author)**

The recording ran very successfully and only took two rounds. Ratu was delighted with Arnold’s result. After the recording, Ratu rushed to go back home and take care of Grandma. Arnold had to hasten to his next guitar class as well. While we were packing, Ratu encouraged him,

You are from a rich family. All your concern is not about food and clothing. Not like me. Don’t overthink! If you think too much, you will get sick, and things will get worse. Everything will be all right! (Ratu, October 26th, 2022).

Arnold charged Ratu 1,500 NT for audio recording and subtly editing, a reasonable price for both. In the end, Arnold said to me,

I think you are doing something very good. It is a win-win work for her and me. Today must be a special experience for Ratu. She works every day and finally has time to play and sing in a studio. I am also very happy for today’s talk. If there is

an opportunity, I would like to invite Ratu to see our band rehearsal next time
(Arnold, October 26th, 2022).



Fig. 5.15 Arnold documented Ratu's singing (Photo by the author)

Before we stepped out of the studio, we saw Arnold's baby sleeping in the coach alone. Ratu reflexively took a chair to block the baby from falling. We looked at each other smiling and said to Ratu, "When it comes to taking care of people, you are a professional!"²⁵

²⁵ The lyrics of TKW Taiwan is attached in Appendix 2 (Page 153-155).

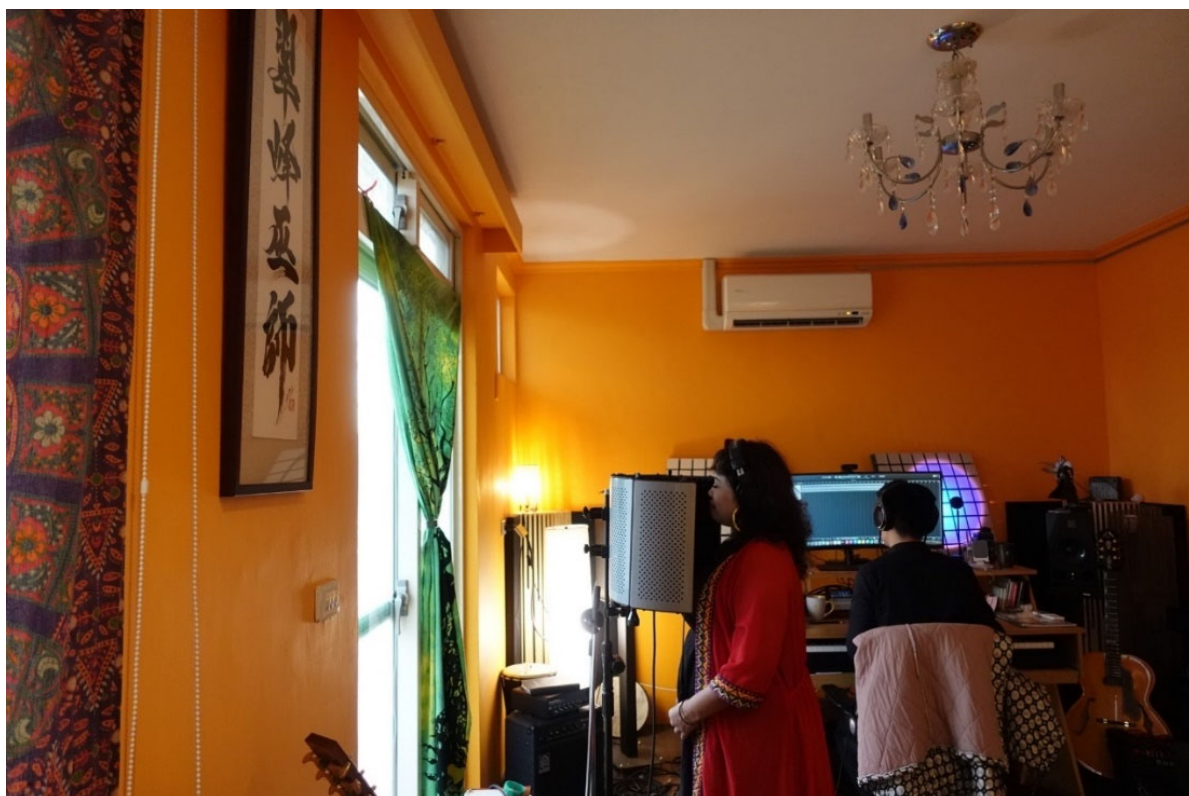


Fig. 5.16 TKW Taiwan recording in Arnold's studio (Photo by the author)

Practical use in 'horizontal knowledge flow' (Tan 2015) designed projects make research outcomes meaningful and useable. Public benefit means there is an application built into the research design so that our interventions benefit musical communities. While this home recording was initiated by Ratu and collaborated with Arnold and me, I analyzed this grassroots event from three angles with a bottom-up research perspective as follows,

First, **Practical function**. For Arnold, music was not only his hobby but also an earning tool. It was challenging for Arnold to support his family on salaries as an indie band musician and a music teacher. Being able to take cases through recording is an advantage for him. On the other hand, Ratu, as a self-media singer, had to record her artwork in a studio that was within a reasonable distance and budget and, most importantly, matched her limited leisure time.

Second, **Self-achievement function**. Musicians worked together based on each

other's musical skillset. Ratu was well-dressed and did make-up for this audio recording as her ritual going 'on stage'. For her, this formal recording was once in a blue moon, and the result reached her standard as well. Moreover, Arnold appreciated Ratu's musical talent from the viewpoint of a young Taiwanese musician. Meanwhile, Ratu encouraged Arnold and protected his baby with her caregiver's life experiences.



Fig. 5.17 Discussion during the recording (Photo by the author)

Finally, **Multi-directional communication function**. This recording event was more similar to a personal appointment among friends. The small studio provided a closed, private space to let people open their minds and 'communicate by music'. People from interdisciplinary backgrounds built deeper understanding and exchange information through face-to-face interaction. The event was co-designed by a student researcher, caregiver and a musician demonstrating what Ursula Hemetek notes as it is important for a researcher to establish 'long term relationships with the community, and

view informants as partners, not objects' (Hemetek 2006: 39). By breaking down knowledge flow barriers and connecting community members, participatory action research (PAR) led to the process of building sustainable partnerships.

In a personal conversation in June 2024, Ratu updated me that she entrusted an Indonesian YouTuber to upload a new arrangement of the TKW Taiwan karaoke version to expose her songs in the karaoke version. She told me, "I paid 500 NT to the Banyuwangi YouTuber for the karaoke version so that I can use it for the singing contest next time." (Personal conversation, June 12th, 2024). For Ratu, this song is part of her *jiwa seni* (artistic soul), so she still continues to find ways to improve her work. In Ratu's prison-like life, she has spent much time and communication costs to overcome these fragmentary difficulties in order to achieve her desire to perform. All the costs she spent were for her reputation and, most importantly, for 'setting herself free' even just temporarily.



**Fig. 5.18 Ratu re-recorded TKW Taiwan in Arnold's studio
(Photo by the author)**

5.3 Summary

In this chapter, people co-created live music scenes and exchanged music playlists, which worked as a bridge to initiate interaction and as a medium that ‘temporarily’ crossed social classes and national borders, most importantly, for setting themselves free in restrained, controlled and restricted lives as migrants.

Political, reward, practical, self-achievement functions were revealed in the bureaucrat-sponsored Fishermen Caring Event organized by the officials. As a multilingual translator, I viewed and analyzed a top-down perspective in this event. The official decision-makers provided a platform for fishermen to show their voice as they could say what they wanted to say, yet the officials left without listening fishermen’s music playlists after the press exposure. However, migrant fishermen did reflect their passion to sing and groove, taking control of their lives in music after feeling a sense of losing control in their routine and tedious working lives. By singing various popular songs, migrants from the same country but of different ethnicities may use art to ‘re-draw their group boundaries along regional and religious lines’ (Winarnita 2014:232). However, the Indonesian songs were played, an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 2016) was immediately created and connected to their homeland, Indonesia. Migrant fishermen temporarily achieved satisfaction, stability ‘in control of some new power’ (Keil 1982:47) through their voice and dance.

The TKW Taiwan Recording was a grassroots event which included practical, self-achievement and multi-directional communication functions. I assisted the recording as a translator and mediator based on friendships, viewing from a bottom-up perspective as a grassroots event by Ratu and Arnold. With a mutual way of cooperating, we translated TKW Taiwan which express Ratu’s homesickness, disappointment and sense of deprivation through work by reshaping the dominant discourse (Mintarsih 2019) with her own voice. It is essential for a researcher to sustain ‘long term relationships

with the community, and view informants as partners' (Hemetek 2006: 39). The TKW Taiwan recording was co-designed by a student researcher, caregiver and a musician by breaking down knowledge flow barriers and connecting community members with participatory action research (PAR). Practical use in 'horizontal knowledge flow' (Tan 2015) designed projects make research outcomes meaningful to the musical communities. Social intervention (Harrison, Mackinlay, and Pettan 2010) offers strategies and allocate social resources by offering equal and reciprocal platforms among the research stakeholders, for the subaltern or the marginalized to speak out and represent themselves.

Among these events and networks, I worked as a researcher, translator, staff member, and friend; I mediated and inevitably had to negotiate with every stakeholder. My multiple positions as researcher related to self-identification, background experiences, and social privileges (Narayan 1993) where everyone was from a different background, bringing diverse perspectives and their personal considerations. The orientation of activities and relationships with the stakeholders I encountered among key stakeholders in Keelung and beyond affected the degree of my involvement and the weight of my words.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Music and media have been an indispensable respite and emotional outlet for many migrant workers who are facing challenges far away from home. Music lyrics narrate mood, sentiment and help solidify abstract feelings that many may find hard to explain. For many migrant workers, who are not necessarily practicing musicians, the criterion for selecting a song is not its complexity of the performance but the ability of the song to resonate personally through lyrics, and the emotion it creates for the listener.

Occupying both private and public cross-boundary spaces to showcase themselves, migrant workers who use social media such as Ratu and Joko, sing, dance and momentarily hide themselves behind a filter effect from daily life. Music is Ratu's *jiwa seni* (artistic soul) in her imprisoned 24/7 caregiving employment environment. Ratu looks for freedom while looking after, 'creating self' between virtuality and reality, and believes 'destiny of faith' (Prusinski 2016) which helps her to overcome the stress, strain and psychological tortures of migrant work. She sings karaoke online to build a sense of 'harmonious yet dynamic equilibrium' (Lum 1999:176) contributing to the establishment of unitary identity as an individual and togetherness as a group with her virtual community. Ratu's music can be regarded as a binding agent for migrant communities in Taiwan and beyond who have been subjected to 'extremes of violence and for the narrative coherence of traumatized selves' (Stokes 2020:11).

For Joko, music onboard the life of a fisherman becomes a dependable and reliable comfort. He is able to courageously and creatively voice his 'presence in displacement' (Western 2020:304) while dislocated from his family and culture. Music helps Anton

to face injustice in the workplace as ‘a container for feelings’ (DeNora 2000:74). As he switches from a student to a migrant worker, Anton sings love songs connect his distant relationships with his newlywed wife and family for ‘more than money’. Ciel and Tini are sisters with different life experiences but shared struggles: Tini is a caregiver, and Ciel works as an undergraduate roomkeeper, both maintain their migrant-ness and manage their budget according to their relative independence. Yet, music is still their poetry of life because migrant workers moderate themselves as aesthetic agents, as feeling, thinking and acting beings in their everyday lives through music (DeNora 2000:62).

Indonesian migrant workers create physical and virtual connections with their compatriots, host society, and their extended network back home. ‘Location, time, and musical metaphors’ (Rice 2003) imply the meaning of Indonesian migrant workers’ social and musical behavior based on time and place. Music appears in shared spaces where people interact, and ethical responsibility arises, making ‘interpersonal relationships’ the center of music’s meaning (Warren 2014). In *Toko Indo*, it is a combined ‘location’ where the community exists as a socio-cultural and contextual negotiation (Yang & Lu 2007:17-18). Mental and emotional support parallels religious support for Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan who regard faith as a central survival mechanism when facing and enduring challenges abroad. While conflicts among people are inevitable, it is not easy to define arbitrarily that a place works as a mental anchor, political arena, or spiritual sanctuary.

In the public squares open to everyone, I found that not only migrant workers have to adapt to Taiwanese society, but also the Taiwanese. The Internet creates a communicative space where media portrays migrant workers virtually and Taiwanese encounter them face to face. In transnational family relationships and work relationships, I witnessed how interpersonal networks combine in different

permutations as an interactive social system in an individual's life supported by passive and active engagement with music, a dynamic negotiation process from the inside out while living, encountering and experiencing new cultures.

Finally, people co-created live music scenes and exchanged music playlists, which worked as a bridge to initiate interaction. Music as a medium 'temporarily' crosses social classes and national borders, setting themselves free in retrained lives as blue-collar migrant workers.

Political, reward, practical, self-achievement functions were revealed in the bureaucrat-sponsored Fishermen Caring Event organized by the officials. As a multilingual translator, I viewed and analyzed a top-down perspective in this event. Although the official decision-makers prioritized the media exposure to listening fishermen's music playlists, migrant fishermen still reflect their passion to sing and groove, taking control of their lives in music after feeling frustrated in their routine and tedious working lives. Migrants from the same country but of different ethnicities re-draw their group boundaries along regional and religious lines (Winarnita 2014:232) by singing different Indonesian popular song playlists. However, the Indonesian songs were played in the Taiwanese fishing harbor, an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2016) was immediately created and connected to 'their' homeland, Indonesia. Migrant fishermen temporarily achieved satisfaction, stability 'in control of some new power' (Keil 1982:47) through their voice and body.

The TKW Taiwan recording was a grassroots event which included practical, self-achievement and multi-directional communication functions. I assisted the recording as a translator and mediator based on friendships, viewing from a bottom-up perspective as a grassroots event by Ratu and Arnold. With a mutual way of cooperating, we translated Ratu's song for narrating her homesickness, disappointment and sense of deprivation through work (Mintarsih 2019) with her own voice. Social intervention

(Harrison, Mackinlay, and Pettan 2010) offers strategies and allocate social resources by offering equal and reciprocal platforms among the research stakeholders, for the subaltern or the marginalized to speak out and represent themselves. It is essential for a researcher to sustain long term relationships with the community and view informants as partners (Hemetek 2006: 39). My multiple positions as researcher related to self-identification, background experiences, and social privileges (Narayan 1993) where everyone was from a different background, bringing diverse perspectives and their personal considerations. By breaking down knowledge flow barriers and connecting community members with participatory action research (PAR), the TKW Taiwan recording was co-created by a student researcher, caregiver and musician. Practical use in 'horizontal knowledge flow' (Tan 2015) designed projects make research outcomes meaningful to the musical communities.

Through the approach of Applied Ethnomusicology, this research contributes to more nuanced perspectives of Keelung Indonesian music scenes, highlighting migrant workers 'voices' and their public and hidden sentiments in performances. By attracting more attention to the needs of migrant worker stakeholders, including religion, language, mobility, space and equal right issues, migrant workers can finally be considered as part of Keelung residents.