Journal of Human Rights and Peace Studies

journal homepage: https://www.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/HRPS/index

Born Into Hostipitality – Are Second-Generation Refugees[1] Temporary Guests or Residents "at Home"?

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: *01-Jul-2024*

Revised: *10-Dec-2024*

Accepted: *31-Dec-2024*

Keywords:

Borderland, Deep South, Hostipitality*, Refugees, Rohingya*

ABSTRACT

While the focus on Rohingya refugees in Thailand tends to be on those who fled from Arakan/Rakhine State due to their violent persecution by the military regime, this paper focuses on the second generation of Rohingya born and/or growing up in Thailand. Based on an ethnographic inquiry, I argue that despite the state's hostipitality towards refugees, migrants, and stateless people, second-generation Rohingya create routes of home in Thailand. Focusing on the life story of Shafak, I show that second-generation Rohingya's sense of home is forged through floating intimate ties that allow them to secure their lives in Thailand and remake their homes elsewhere if needed. Though constructed as a 'national security threat' and perceived as unwelcome guests by the government, second-generation Rohingya act as residents and become residents at the margins of the nation-state where its sovereignty over territory and people remains challenged. I will demonstrate this specifically in Thailand's so-called deep South. In the end, I claim that second-generation Rohingya's routes of home along the thresholds of the nation-state beg the question of whether they can still legitimately be viewed only as 'temporary guests.

[1] The term 'refugee' is used in a broader sense to describe persons who have experienced flight (involuntary and forced movement due to discrimination, persecution, and conflict) or who were born into contexts of displacement and flight, i.e., being children of refugees and forced migrants. The term is not used based on official status determination.

ISSN (Online): 2697-3804

Introduction

This paper focuses on the situation of second-generation refugees in Thailand, specifically Rohingya refugees. Rohingya are a (mostly)[2] stateless ethnic minority from Arakan/Rakhine,[3] who have experienced exclusion and violence based on their ethnic and religious identity. The Myanmar government has continuously labeled and recodified Rohingya as 'Bengali,' denying them not only their ethnic identity but also their national belonging to Myanmar (Cheesman, 2017; Prasse-Freeman, 2023). As a consequence of the violent ostracization experienced, Rohingya have fled their homeland in Myanmar for Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand. In 2012 and 2016-2017, Rohingya were even subjected to campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide by the military, while Buddhist extremists employed hate speech and rumors targeting Muslims in general and Rohingya in particular (Subedi & Garnett, 2020). Based on these events, The Gambia raised a complaint against Myanmar in front of the International Court of Justice in 2019, and the Court issued an Order in 2020 (International Court of Justice, 2023).

However, in this paper, I will not focus on the persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar. Instead, I will trace the life story of Shafak – a young Rohingya man born in Thailand - to raise not only the question of whether Rohingya, like other refugees, should simply be accepted as temporary guests who need to be sheltered, but, whether second-generation Rohingya refugees (born and/or mostly growing up in Thailand), do not intrinsically have a right to residence. With this in mind, I challenge demands for refugee protection under the premise of the law of hospitality and instead understand Rohingya born and/or mainly growing up in Thailand as "at home" - despite them being treated as 'illegal' immigrants and a potential 'national security threat' by the Thai government. I argue that second-generation Rohingya forge and foster routes of home inside and outside Thailand as they navigate the hostile terrain of Thailand as a home (country). Finding routes of home in Thailand through floating, intimate ties at the margins of the state, they uncover and use gaps in the state's claim to sovereignty over land and people. Referencing the refugee literature, I will address the juxtaposition between hospitality and home in denying and claiming belonging in supposed exile. Underlying this juxtaposition is the state's politics of 'hostipitality' (Derrida, 2000). Derrida argues that within hospitality there is always hostility. Hospitality as a concept includes thresholds, conditions, and limitations. The welcoming of a guest always encompasses its opposite, the finiteness of hospitality. As hospitality always includes the roles of

[2] Rohingya who hold citizenship do so without their ethnic identity recognized.

[3] I use Arakan/Rakhine to acknowledge what Rohingya call their homeland versus the province's official name.

host and guest, stretching hospitality beyond its boundaries questions the host's sovereignty. In fact, Shryock (2012) argues that hospitality is "a test of sovereignty". The stretching of hospitality towards a more equally shared space could be used to constitute a right to residence by the guest and dissolve a person's status as a guest.

In the end, I claim that second-generation Rohingya are de facto residents of Thailand, despite the Thai state portraying them as unwelcome and undesirable guests. Rohingya are not only unwelcome in Thailand because of their generally ostracized status as refugees within the region but also because second-generation Rohingya no longer behave as ‘good guests’. They are unable to behave as guests because Thailand is their home. However, the Thai state denies and/or restricts this claim to Thailand as ‘home’ so that second-generation Rohingya remain caught at the thresholds of hospitality. In effect, second-generation Rohingya must create homes through 'floating ties' (Wilding, 2017) - intimate and familial relationships that are fluid and flexible yet offer the opportunity to emplace themselves across space, or in other words, floating ties are "intangible and binding forces that tie people together, despite the pressures of separation" (Wilding, 2017). Home is understood as a network of intimate social ties that create opportunities for finding and feeling belonging in a supposed ‘exile.' This understanding does not mean that place is not significant in making a home. In contrast, the lives of second-generation Rohingya in Thailand demonstrate the tension between the potential of finding a home in space and also always being at risk of losing a home in place. Floating intimate ties do not make a material home (a house, a place of dwelling) obsolete, but it is through intimate ties that an emplaced home is created. Second-generation Rohingya develop a sense of home through routes of home (Gilroy, 1993). As a diaspora, they root by giving meaning to unfamiliar and un-homely places.

I begin this article by demonstrating the politics of hostipitality towards Rohingya in Thailand. I then turn to narrate the life story of Shafak, a second-generation Rohingya living there. It is from this narrative that I will show how second-generation Rohingya establish homes through floating intimate ties in Thailand and that Rohingya are indeed guests in Thailand. While Rohingya in Thailand are still perceived as an 'Other' by the state, they are often already de facto integrated (Jaehn, 2022), along with and yet set apart from other minorities.

Methodology: Breaking with Overgeneralizations on Rohingya

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork and data collected with Rohingya in Thailand for seven months in 2019 and two months in 2023. I conducted semi-structured interviews and participant observation with Rohingya refugees in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area,

at the Thai Myanmar border, and in Thailand's South. I usually received their contact details through referrals from activists who had gained their trust or Rohingya with whom I had previously spoken. To not put any Rohingya at risk, I have anonymized not only their names but also the locations where we met. During the fieldwork, I also let them take the lead on where, when, and how to meet, as my priority was that they felt and were safe. Knowing the places they lived in better than I did, I trusted their decisions in structuring our encounters and meetings. Before every interview, I explained to them the reason and topic of my research and asked for my interviewee's oral consent. I also emphasized that they could refuse to answer questions or stop the interview at any time.

I will center my analysis on my ethnographic encounter with Shafak, a young Rohingya man, and his life story.[4] I focus this article on Shafak's life story for three reasons. First, his life story is exemplary and representative of other young second-generation Rohingya living in Thailand whose parents are stateless and/or undocumented Rohingya refugees.[5] His life story is representative of how he has made himself at home through intimate ties and negotiations between national discourses and localized practices of belonging while lacking citizenship in Thailand. His emplacement in Thailand's most Southern provinces is illustrative of its particularity for similar yet distinct processes that second-generation Rohingya experience along the Thai-Myanmar border or elsewhere in Thailand. In this context, the focus on Shafak's story does implicate limitations on drawing out how second-generation Rohingya in other locations in Thailand negotiate their belonging, which entails other distinct and complex dynamics of marginalization, conflict, and in-between-ness.[6]

Second, in the media and academic literature, Rohingya often experience overgeneralization. While representing themselves as an ethnic minority indigenous to Arakan, Myanmar, they should not be understood as a monolithic people. Rohingya's experiences are diverse and particular. This paper reflects the tension between Shafak's life being representative and yet personal. Narrating Shafak's story and my encounter with him, I hope to humanize (second-generation) Rohingya's experiences by illuminating the intricacies of one person's life. It also demonstrates the limits of rigid definitions and categories used in the context of forced

[4] Shafak is a pseudonym that is used to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of his identity.

[5] This distinction is necessary as there are also a few second-generation Rohingya who have one parent who is a Thai citizen (often the mother) and are thus born as citizens. While facing challenges in navigating their dual identities as Thai and Rohingya, they have fundamentally different chances in life than their co-ethnics whose parents are both refugees (forced and undocumented), migrants and/or stateless.

[6] Discussing the issue of belonging along the Thai-Myanmar border or in the North of Thailand would have, for example, necessitated a broader discussion of the issue of statelessness within Thailand, which I did not include here as Malay-Muslims of Thailand are marginalized but legally hold Thai citizenship.

migration so that some readers may vehemently disagree with how I have applied some of these categories.

Third, interviews with second-generation Rohingya have proven to be rather difficult as they generally view themselves as not of interest to researchers and do not necessarily disclose their identities. Some of them also do not wish to participate in research studies. Shafak was also surprised when I asked him to tell me about his own life. He had assumed that it was not his story that sparked the interest of the author but that he would serve as a mediator to other Rohingya who fled Arakan/Rakhine, Myanmar. During my field trips, I have heard multiple times that I should speak to a specific person because they were a 'real' Rohingya or that I do not need to talk to this person because they are not a 'real' Rohingya (of mixed descent and/or not born in Arakan). Speaking with and of second-generation Rohingya serves to break and question the label of a 'real' Rohingya.

After Shafak's initial confusion regarding my request to interview him about his life, he agreed to the interview, and he led me around his city to meet some of the people who are part of his daily life in Thailand. My encounter with Shafak began as he picked me up from an eatery with his motorbike. We drove to his house, where he invited me to have a coffee/tea and a snack. After returning from the kitchen, I had a semi-structured interview with Shafak (as I have done with most other Rohingya on our first encounter), during which his wife joined us for a while. We spent the rest of the day together as he led me around his village/town and a neighboring city. We went shopping and had lunch together; we met up with other Rohingya and Burmese Muslims (who just identified themselves as Burmese Muslims, not by a specific ethnicity) at multiple locations. I interviewed some of them and conversed casually with the rest as we shared meals. After a few hours of spending time like this, Shafak invited me to hang out with his wife and one of his friends in a nearby park, where we shared more snacks and chatted about cultural differences, future dreams, economic/financial struggles, and education opportunities. From this encounter and Shafak's narrative of his life, I illustrate my analysis of second-generation Rohingya's routes of home and residence in Thailand, specifically in its Southernmost provinces.

In the concluding section, I will refrain from making specific policy recommendations. Nevertheless, I believe that the study is valuable to human rights discussions in Thailand and globally that seek more durable and innovative solutions to refugees' and (forced) undocumented migrants' experiences and challenges in finding homes.

Politics of Hostipitality: Hosts, Guests, and Refugees

Over decades, Thailand has shown a mixed approach to receiving refugees that goes

beyond an ad hoc approach and a refusal to sign the 1951 International Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The Thai government has always equivocated between receiving refugees and fearing to create incentives for a refugee influx. The Thai government's approach to refugees generally emphasizes the 'temporariness' of refugees' stay, excluding the solution of local integration (Moretti, 2015). This "temporariness" of refugees' stay is reinforced by the country's self-definition as a 'transit country' for refugees based on two developments. First, the debate surrounding refugees in Thailand has shifted from Indochinese and Burmese refugees[7] living in camps at Thailand's eastern and western borders towards urban refugees and Rohingya boat refugees whose primary destinations are understood to be in countries of the so-called global north or, in the case of Rohingya, in Malaysia.[8] Second, the term 'transit country' has been increasingly used by politicians and media of the global north, iterating a growing hostility and panic about masses of refugees wanting to 'illegally' immigrate. In reaction, these countries have outsourced the deterrence of refugees to 'transit countries,' keeping refugees and migrants at bay (Coddington 2023; Missbach & Philips 2020). While countries of the global north continue to exude a moral superiority by signing the 1951 International Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the same countries actively work towards avoiding abiding by the protocol's statute, shifting the responsibility for refugee protection to countries like Thailand and Malaysia. In effect, by defining refugee protection as temporary and itself as a transit country while refusing to sign the International Refugee Convention, the Thai state avoids submission to an international refugee regime that attempts to shift responsibility to countries of first arrival and underlines its sovereign right to define asylum. Thailand's self-definition as a temporary host signifies a grasp on sovereignty, which the international refugee regime challenges.

However, the Thai state's sovereignty over the right to define asylum is also constantly challenged by its behavior as a 'bad host' and refugees who behave like 'bad guests,' uncovering not only the limits of hospitality but also that hospitality is indeed a test of sovereignty (Derrida, 2000; Shryock, 2012). A good host is supposed to provide and protect guests from harm, to

[7] The term Burmese refugees refers to those who have fled Myanmar due to conflict (I use 'Myanmar' instead of 'Burma' as it is the country's official name). In the term, I include persons from various ethnicities, such as Shan, Karen, Karenni, Kachin, and Burman. While I also consider Rohingya 'Burmese refugees' in general (meaning refugees from Myanmar), it must be noted that the Thai government does specifically distinguish between 'Burmese refugees' and 'Rohingya.' The discourse surrounding Rohingya in Thailand is often set apart from that of other Burmese refugees due to their ostracization in Myanmar, Thailand's bilateral relations with Myanmar, the Andaman Sea Crisis, and Rohingya's Muslim identity. I will explain the latter point in more detail below. Furthermore, the vast majority of residents in the refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border are Karenni, Karen, and Shan by ethnicity.

[8] Since the military coup of 2021 in Myanmar, the focus of refugee discussions has, to some extent, shifted back again to the displacement of Burmese refugees along the Thai-Myanmar border.

provide them with the best they have. A good guest, in contrast, is supposed to leave in a timely manner and remain within the space the host has designated for them. In Thailand, the space to enact hospitality and manifest the unequal relationship between the state as host and refugees as guests have for long been the refugee camps at the Thai-Myanmar border. Refugee camps are supposed to be a designated stage of Thai hospitality in which refugees are, like proper guests, '"prisoners of their hosts.' Burmese refugees' admission to the camps meant they could not leave without permission from the Thai authorities (Saltsman, 2014). As 'proper' guests, they are thought to have no right to move freely and must depend on the state and its associates for their protection. The Thai government provides the space (stage) for the performance of hospitality in coordination with some I/NGOs and community-based organizations, whereby the Thai government mostly acts as sovereign (host) in keeping a watchful eye on the provision of services delivered to and by refugees. Nevertheless, the Thai government does not act as too generous a host. Instead, it allows and provides aid only at a subsistence level (Thabchumpon et al., 2014).

The problem with this somewhat reluctant and shrinking provision of hospitality towards Burmese refugees in Thailand is that it creates a vicious cycle of bad hosts and bad guest behavior. In general, Burmese refugees in Thailand have a hard time abiding by the rules of being a 'good' guest. As the conflict is protracted, they have little choice but to indefinitely extend their stay in Thailand. If they were to return, many refugees risk death, and if they were to move on, they would risk other forms of harm, such as becoming victims of human trafficking. The expansion of temporary to permanent stay of Burmese refugees in Thailand further challenges the Thai state's willingness to provide protection and its role as a good host, halting refugee registration of Burmese refugees and shrinking services and resources available to refugees (Oh, 2013; Thabchumpon et al., 2014). This fact then results in Burmese refugees violating another rule of hospitality: they begin to leave the hospitality stage. As refugees struggle with life limited to the camps by solely relying on the Thai state's hospitality and the international refugee regimes' provision of services, many have left the camps and joined the (irregular) labor force (Nillsuwan, 2023; Oh, 2014).

Despite this development, the Thai state is unwilling to expand the boundaries of hospitality toward refugees. Instead, it tries to reaffirm control and sovereignty by defining strict limits on hospitality.[9] This reaffirmation of authority is expressed in Thailand's design of its own

[9] Nillsuwan (2023) argues that the Thai government has altered migration restrictions and policies to reinforce control vis-a-vis the global refugee regime, especially in terms of providing healthcare and education to refugees and migrants. However, it continues to prioritize national security over human rights.

National Screening Mechanism (NSM). While this screening mechanism is influenced by the nation-state's long-term engagement with the international refugee regime and human rights defenders, it also reemphasizes boundaries in its engagement with it (Jittiang, 2022). First, Thailand still rejects the application of the term 'refugee.' The Thai government fears that official acceptance and usage of the term might be interpreted as a concession to the international refugee regime and that it would pave the way for the Thai state's subsequent submission to the regime's hegemony in defining who is a welcome guest, and who has the right to become a resident (i.e., pushing the Thai state for the durable solution of local integration). Hence, even the NSM speaks of 'protected person' rather than 'refugee' and 'person under screening' rather than 'asylum seeker' (Jittiang, 2022). Despite its short existence, the NSM has been criticized for the suspicion that admission of refugee status will most likely not follow international standards and might be used to exclude certain refugees, such as those from Myanmar (Fortify Rights, 2022; Stothard, 2023). Both suspicions constitute moments of drawing boundaries to hospitality that express and become an exercise of hostility towards those defined as unwelcome. Rather than applying a generous, unconditional approach to hospitality, which would emphasize moral power, the Thai government prefers to apply a concept of hospitality that underlines the authoritative power of exclusion and limitation.

While the Thai government has displayed some hospitable practices, it has, as much as possible, limited the definition of refuge as a form of hospitality - especially towards Burmese refugees, who constitute the most significant refugee population in the country, and among whom Rohingya take a 'special' place in the Thai politics of hostipitality.

The Thai government has approached Rohingya people with a sense of disdain and mistrust.[10] Rohingya have been designated as a potential 'national security threat' (Chantavanich, 2020; Jittiang, 2023). Among others, the Royal Thai Navy has executed the Andaman Protection Plan, guiding both official and unofficial government responses, such as providing stranded boats with fuel and food and then towing these boats loaded with refugees back to sea outside Thai waters (Jittiang, 2023). These boat pushbacks are framed as a strategy of helping Rohingya refugees along the way to their intended destination, reinvoking the country's supposed 'transit' function. During the Andaman Sea crisis in 2015, the practice finally came under greater scrutiny as refugees' desperation and suffering on the fishing boats were broadcast around the world. In the end, some refugees and migrants on these boats were rescued, while mass graves of others were found along the Thai-Malaysia border. The Andaman Sea crisis set forth a series of

[10] Coddington (2023) argues that this dislike of and suspicion toward Rohingya as genuine refugees extends to scholars, I/NGO workers, and policy-makers within Thailand based on the perception of them as 'different' from 'ideal' refugees.

investigations and trials regarding the human trafficking networks involved in the crisis. Despite the investigations and a subsequent change of the anti-human trafficking law in Thailand, forced migration and flight of Rohingya to and through Thailand did not stop, and networks were revived (Chantavanich, 2020; "*Sold like fish: Crimes against humanity, mass graves, and human trafficking from Myanmar and Bangladesh to Malaysia from 2012 to 2015*," 2019).

However, most Rohingya in Thailand are understood to be neither eligible to be registered as refugees nor human trafficking victims but are categorized as 'illegal migrants.' Rohingya have not only been singled out in Myanmar but also ostracized in Thailand. Most Rohingya live outside refugee camps. While they are generally excluded from refugee registration (under their ethnicity), many Rohingya also have not sought to register in the camps along the border or request help from the UNHCR. At the time of their flight, they were either unaware of the structures of refugee protection in Thailand (especially the very first Rohingya) or were uninformed that they had little chance of being accepted as refugees. As a result, most Rohingya fled to and settled in other parts of Thailand, where they hoped to blend in and create a better life for themselves at the margins of the nation-state. As a result, most Rohingya currently live among other migrants and have de facto integrated into local society while remaining largely undocumented or semi-documented (Jaehn, 2022). However, despite their local integration, Rohingya usually remain at risk of arrest, deportation, and human trafficking as they are also positioned at the thresholds between hospitality and hostility. Shafak, a second-generation Rohingya, was born into these conditions of life.

Shafak's Life Story: A Thick Description

Shafak, in his twenties, was born in the South of Thailand – a province visited by foreign and local tourists. He was born around the turn of the millennium when attention on Rohingya in Thai politics was low. His parents, like many other Rohingya, did not go to a refugee camp after crossing the border into Thailand but settled further from the borderland, close to the Gulf of Thailand. Shafak's father fled to Thailand after finishing his lower secondary education (*mathayom*), whereas most of his relatives fled to Bangladesh. Shafak's mother also came to Thailand (Shafak did not further explain when or how) and married his father.[11] Although both of

[11] While Shafak framed his father's leaving Arakan/Rakhine as a flight situation for his father's whole family (most of them fleeing to Bangladesh), this was less obvious with his mother leaving Yangon. As such, one might argue that his mother could have been a 'migrant' rather than a 'refugee'. However, I will refrain from asserting such a distinction. First, distinctions between migrants and refugees are often problematic given people's multi-faceted motivations for leaving their home country, especially as Myanmar has been riddled with conflict and violence towards not only Rohingya but also other (stateless) ethnic and religious minorities and political opponents for decades. Second, her marriage with a stateless Rohingya refugee has negatively influenced

his parents are Rohingya, their background is quite different. Whereas Shafak's father fled from Arakan and has no citizenship, his mother is a Rohingya from Yangon with citizenship. After a few years, the family moved away from Shafak's birthplace in Thailand. When Shafak was just four years old, his father wanted to try his luck in Malaysia, and his mother decided to return to Myanmar with their children. Shafak had to follow his parents' decision as he was a child and dependent on them, so he stayed with his mother in Myanmar for six years, learning Burmese (but not Rohingya language).

When Shafak was around ten years old, the family decided to reunite again in Thailand after Shafak's father had been arrested and put in a Malaysian detention center. His father's arrest made the family feel that Thailand may be a safer place than Malaysia. The family reunion must have taken place a little bit before the first Rohingya exodus in 2012, but just at the moment when Thai government officials started to push back boats of Rohingya arriving at its shores. For Shafak, the return to Thailand was a challenge. At age ten, he had learned to express himself fluently in Burmese but had forgotten how to speak Thai. He had to relearn everything. Trying to settle in the deep South of Thailand, his parents sent him to a Thai madrasa (Islamic school) to become a hafiz (a student in the recitation of the Quran) and only later to a Thai public school.[12] His public education afforded him not only the ability to speak Thai fluently but also to read and write Thai. This gives him an advantage in navigating life and helping other Rohingya with less education in Thailand.

When he had just finished school, Shafak was eager to start working and decided to move to Bangkok to live with a relative. For a while, Shafak enjoyed his life in Bangkok. It was lively and busy, and he met his first wife there – a Buddhist woman of a different Burmese ethnic minority. They lived as a couple, and his wife gave birth to a son. They lived as a nuclear family, apart from Shafak's biological family and relatives, for a few years. However, when Shafak's family learned about his wife, they were not particularly happy about the couple's union as they had not sought prior approval from his family nor sanctified the marriage by a nikah (Islamic wedding ceremony). Shafak's new little family was not off to a good start. When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, things took a turn for the worse. Shafak could not stay any longer in Bangkok due to the lockdown and the impossibility of finding work. He had to seek support and protection from his biological family, who were still living in Thailand's so-called Deep South. Hence, Shafak returned to live with his parents and brother while his wife and child moved back to Myanmar.

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the security and safety of Shafak's mother and her children as well. Third, I will refrain from any assertion because I have not talked to her myself but only know of her through Shafak.

[12] Shafak does not mention having learned Yawi or Malay, which is common at some *madrasa* or *pondok* in the Southernmost provinces of Thailand (Malyrojsiri, 2020).

Struggling to remain a couple, Shafak and his first wife ended their relationship after a period of physical separation. Eventually, according to Shafak, his wife found another partner in Myanmar.

No longer with his son and first wife, Shafak was once again reunited with his biological family, living under one roof in Southern Thailand. Soon after, his parents and older brother decided to move to a neighboring province. They found that it was too difficult to earn enough money at their location at that time. But Shafak decided not to move again. Instead, he decided to stay on his own in a small house until he remarried. His second wife is a Muslim Burmese woman from a small village in Myanmar whom he met online. He married her in 2022 upon her arrival in Thailand. His wife came to Thailand just to marry him, crossed the border into Thailand with her older brother, and stayed with some of their relatives before the wedding ceremony. Shafak's parents approved the marriage this time, and the couple had a nikah in a local mosque. As with his first wife, Shafak lives alone with her, taking frequent trips to other family members living in a neighboring province or across the border to Malaysia to visit relatives and friends. They do not have children yet.

From Floating Intimate Ties to 'Routes of Home' in Southern Thailand

Shafak's life, which is embedded in his family's movements across Southeast Asia, can be described as a process of 'routes of home' rather than 'roots of home' (Gilroy, 1993). Being a member of an emerging diaspora, Shafak is at "home" that is not one; but it becomes. Shafak's sense of home has been remade throughout his life through involuntary movements across bordered spaces along floating intimate ties. Home-ing for Shafak appears as "a fluid and evolving process" (Sirriyeh, 2010) that is not without place but that shifts between displacements (through coerced, forced, and voluntary movements) and emplacements (through intimate ties and familiarization).[13] Shafak was born in Thailand and has been rooted there. Yet, as an infant born to refugees without legal documents, his roots are under question, and his status is marked by (economic and legal) insecurity. His parents' decision to split temporarily was intended to mend this insecurity. While Shafak's father sought greater economic security in Malaysia, his mother tried to provide Shafak and his brother with legal security in Myanmar.

For Shafak, this meant setting out on a journey of routes to home. Attached to the biological and intimate ties of his mother as he was still a child, he had to leave the country in which he was born and whose language he had slowly learned. Shafak's movement away from Thailand was first a moment of displacement. No close intimate ties were left behind in Thailand

[13] Emplacement occurs through the performance of life rituals and transitions in space and the mundane, habitual routes and activities of daily life (Taylor, 2013).

at that age; his roots in Thailand seemed to have been severed while he built new familiarity and attachments in Myanmar. Living in Yangon throughout the second half of his childhood, it turned from a strange space into a more familiar place. But after having emplaced himself slowly in Myanmar, Shafak's routes of home were yet again to take another turn towards Thailand. Shafak's routes constantly shifted with the intimate ties on which he depended and relied. After his return to Thailand, Shafak began a journey of routing and rooting himself more strongly than ever. Being sent to a madrasa to become a hafiz allowed him to rebuild and strengthen not only his Muslim identity but also his identity as another Thai (even though he is ethnically Rohingya). The place of the madrasa allowed Shafak to foster intimate ties with Thai and Malay Muslims of Thailand. While Shafak's early childhood was split between Myanmar and Thailand, closely linked to his intimate ties with his mother, his youth and early adulthood took place and placed Shafak in Thailand. Shafak feels, or better is, 'at home' in (the South of) Thailand because it is where his habitus has developed.[14] He has found orientation and familiarity in this space, turning it into a place of meaning. Shafak has been shaped by this inhabited space, and the inhabited space has been shaped by Shafak (Simonsen, 2012; Taylor, 2013). The South of Thailand has mostly been where he could develop a secure base for his identity.

This is not to say that Shafak did or does not continue to experience insecurity in Thailand. Shafak remains awkwardly placed at the threshold of insecurity as he cannot claim citizenship and only holds a temporary identification document, the 'pink card' starting with the number 7 (Laungaramsri, 2020)[15] which he received for the first time around 2015-2017.[16] While Shafak is theoretically eligible to apply for Thai citizenship, his naturalization is not guaranteed and involves tedious bureaucratic processes. His future citizenship has potential and is possible; but it is not secure(d). At the moment, he remains ascribed the status of a guest by the Thai state, held in a space between future rejection or acceptance. But despite the in-between-ness of Shafak's legal

[14] Bourdieu defines habitus as "a system of dispositions" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27), i.e., permanent manners of behavior that have developed in a social space, a field. Bourdieu rejects interpretations that claim that *habitus* is static and argues that *habitus* is acquired and reproduced, constantly changing "within certain bounds of continuity" (2002, p. 31).

[15] Those who are in possession of the 'pink card' are in "a category of 'Immigrants with Unregistered Status" (*Bukkhon Phu Mai Mi Sathana Thang Thabien*), which were classified into six different groups including (1) ethnic minorities who have long settled in the border but their names are not yet registered, (2) students who hold no ID documents, (3) those who are unable to present a formal proof of origin or nationality (4) illegal immigrants who contributed to the Thai nation, (5) illegal immigrants from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar who were unable to return to home countries, and (6) alien Other outside the registration system" (Laungsaramsri, 2020, p. 8). In the footnote Laungaramsri further clarifies that the "card still used numbers to differentiate the status of the card holders. Numbers 6 and 7 are for those eligible to apply for citizenship while 0 is for those whose status is undetermined or 'alien Other'".

[16] Shafak's ID number starting with a '7' indicates that he is the child of a person who is of category '6'. Category '6' denotes people who are foreign nationals who live in Thailand temporarily and illegal migrants.

status, his life in Thailand is inscribed with a sense of home. Growing up in the South of Thailand Shafak's identity is formed by being a member of one othered Muslim minority - Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar - that finds himself amidst an-other-ed Muslim minority - Malay Muslims in Thailand (Jaehn, 2022). Living in the South of Thailand, Shafak's experiences of insecurity vis-a-vis the Thai state directly relate to the experiences of Thai citizens living in the Thai-Malaysia borderland.

State violence and armed conflict in the Southernmost provinces of Thailand have undergone a long process of normalization, producing long-term insecurity for its civilian population. Part of the long-term conflict is based on ethnic and religious tensions, socio-economic inequalities, and divergent narratives of national and regional history that constitute a competition over sovereignty between the Thai Buddhist state and a large part of the Malay Muslims living in the South who desire greater autonomy. As a result, the Thai state has continuously struggled to legitimize its authority in its Southernmost provinces (Aphornsuvan, 2007; Engvall et al., 2020; McCargo, 2009).[17] Shafak (as a Rohingya) and the deep South's (civilian) population have met a similar fate: Both have been stylized and dealt with as concerns for the state's 'national security' in disregard of their human security (Chachavalpongpun, 2023; Jittiang, 2023). In effect, Rohingya have become enveloped in the Thai state's 'national anxieties' surrounding its Southernmost provinces (McCargo, 2011).

While, at first glance, this situation may be a less than favorable point of departure for Shafak, the tension and conflict over sovereignty also raises questions about the Thai state's authority in claiming the status of the host and in defining who is and is not a welcome guest in Thailand's Southernmost provinces. The conflict in the South creates a gap, an in-between of potentiality, in which the guest status of Rohingya can be reimagined and reframed. While the Thai state chooses to interpret the presence of Rohingya as a potentially dangerous contestation to the state's attempts to secure sovereignty (Jittiang, 2023), Rohingya may find a sense of solace and belonging in its Southernmost provinces - not despite but because of the similarity of Rohingya's struggles in Myanmar with those of Malay Muslims in the South. This struggle does not mean that they will participate in the violent struggle and conflict. Indeed, there is no empirical evidence for such claims (Jittiang, 2023), but the dynamics and ruptures in the South allow Rohingya to identify with civilians struggling in the South through one's ascribed outsider status, creating a sense of alikeness, familiarity, and connection. The Thai-Malaysia borderland, in its

[17] This struggle does not mean, however, that the Muslim-majority population is homogeneous. In contrast, there is a significant divergence among the local Muslim population regarding religious practices and local politics (McCargo, 2009). Equally, Rohingya who moved to the South are often divided over their language abilities, time of settlement, etc. Shafak, for example, does not possess many language skills in Rohingya or Malay, whereas other Rohingya in the South lack language skills in Thai or Burmese. As a result, Rohingya living in the Thai South are not necessarily able to communicate with one another.

contestations over sovereignty, allows Rohingya a moment to suggest themselves as members of a greater Muslim community (ummah) in Thailand that is bound not only by faith but also by the struggles and hardships of marginalization and demonization. The deep South as a borderland accommodates the in-between identity of second-generation Rohingya - their status as an unwelcome, potentially dangerous alien 'Other' and guest. The borderland appears more welcoming to Shafak because Shafak's identity resonates with the identity of Malay Muslims. His identity as a second-generation Rohingya has developed in recognition of the people living in this volatile borderland and Rohingya's struggles in Myanmar. Whereas the Thai state continues to try to enforce its ideology of Nation, Religion, and King onto the borderland, Shafak's habitus and sense of self have been shaped in interaction and negotiation with borderland identities, not against them.

Despite a purported peacebuilding process (in which the success and failure of the field of Conflict and Peace Studies plays a significant role (Chachavalpongpun, 2023)), many Thais living outside the Deep South of Thailand still perceive the borderland as another region - set apart from and hostile to the Thai nation-state. During my visit, Shafak tried to rectify and contest this image of a hostile and dangerous Deep South by emphasizing a sense of security and enacting belonging in this region. Whereas the South's ethnic and religious differences from the imagined national Thai community are portrayed as a threat to the state's security, these differences present an opportunity for Shafak to embed himself. Shafak is not only familiar with living in the South but he finds comfort in it. He does not fear border checkpoints, 'terror' attacks, or 'taxation' by security forces despite their looming presence. His confidence is born from a sense of being at home even though he lives in one of the most violent areas of the region.[18] This sense of home has been "constructed out of movement, communication, social relations" (Massey, 1992). It has been created in negotiation with those living in the borderland and enduring the consequences of marginalization and conflict. He has created a home through connection with and along intimate ties in the borderland, which resist and stretch beyond the confining boundaries of the imagined Thai nation-state.

Acting as a Resident, Dreaming of Citizenship

Shafak's strong (desire for and) sense of (legal) belonging in the South of Thailand has been particularly palpable in his dream of owning a house. This dream is not entirely imaginary. In contrast, Shafak's dream house is a reality. He has lived in this house before (by renting it

[18] Engvall (2020) has categorized the most violent conflict areas by different factors. Shafak comes from one of the areas that rank as most violent, and, as a young man, Shafak does belong to one of the groups most at risk.

with his family). When I was talking to Shafak, he spoke of the house with regret as they had to move out. Since then, he has been longing to live there again and owning it. Shafak's dream house is not far from the small row house he currently rents. It is an orange-painted, free-standing, two-story house made of cement and terracotta roof tiles. Located along the main road, it is only a stone's throw away from the local mosque. In the front yard, a durian tree bears fruits with golden flesh. The house symbolizes Shafak's ideal of a permanent home in place and time. It represents a dream of living in security in a place that allows him to be a Muslim, a Rohingya, and a Thai. As Nelson (2020) writes about Bhutanese resettled refugees, house ownership after resettlement stands for the recovery of ghar (household, family, and home), for an end to homelessness and displacement. House ownership represents a sense of security and a moment of nostalgia for one's house left behind. House ownership allows one to recover a sense of home in a place without negating the importance of familial, intimate ties across space. This is no different for Rohingya in Thailand. Although Shafak himself never left behind any property in Myanmar (being born stateless in Thailand), house ownership holds significant meaning to him. Only citizens of Thailand have the right to buy and own land and/or a house. Hence, the desire to own a house and create a permanent home represents the desire to access citizenship (Kellett & Moore, 2003), of achieving de jure and not only de facto integration. House ownership is a right of a resident and host, with which Shafak identifies.

Such ownership would not only reaffirm his sense of belonging but also allow him to claim the status of a host (instead of a guest). Yet, his current assigned status as 'guest' by the Thai government does not stop him from claiming the status of a generous host already. Despite my more secure legal status, Shafak welcomed me as an honorable guest when visiting him. He picked me up from a meeting point so I would not get lost on the way to his home, he invited me to his house - a small one-story row house (more humble than the dreamed house), showed me the guest room, introduced me to his wife who was getting ready in their bedroom, and finally led me to the kitchen before he told me to sit and wait in the guest room while he prepared coffee and snacks for me. During my whole visit, Shafak showered me with hospitality, constantly offering the best he could provide. When I tried to reject his generosity, it was either not accepted or met with an alternative offer. When I tried to act independently, I was asked to sit down and let him help me. In treating me as an honorable guest and trying to fulfill all my needs and wishes, Shafak acted as a generous and meritorious host. Shafak consistently looked after my safety and protection while I was in his company. He shared his knowledge about daily life in the South, its potential tourist attractions, and its centrality to knowledge and learning with Muslims in Southeast Asia. Shafak made an effort to rectify the region's image as dangerous and unsafe, assuring me

that the media exaggerated the violence. He continuously advertised the immense beauty of this Southern province - having no less to offer than Phuket or Krabi - and sought my comfort while showing me around. No matter where we went during that day - a restaurant, transportation hub, market, mall, or park - there was no instance in which his belongings seemed to be questioned, nor in which he displayed insecurity or fear in navigating this supposedly 'dangerous' terrain. The whole time, Shafak acted as someone with sovereignty, as someone who was entirely at home.

Hence, taking on the role of my host constituted an instance in which Shafak challenged claims of sovereignty in the Thai South, questioning where the boundaries of his belonging and identity lie. It posed the question of if and how a so-called guest can be a host and therewith a resident (speak: citizen). Shafak's role as my host and his treatment by the Thai state as a guest in the Thai-Malaysia borderland are in stark contrast to each other. Although Shafak is aware of his insecure positioning at the threshold of the Thai state's politics of hostipitality, he is also confident of his belonging - of being part of two communities that experience othering and state violence. In the end, the contestations over sovereignty in the Deep South allowed Shafak to find some fertile ground to create roots of home through routes of home. However, as the state still does not acknowledge his belonging, Shafak's floating intimate ties continue to spread across space, reminding him of the chance that he might need to find another home elsewhere.

Conclusion: Contesting Hostipitality

> "Bad guests and hosts come in many dramatic forms, but [...] they are first of all people who refuse to accept the proper role of host or guest. This refusal is most likely to occur when guests and hosts cannot agree on who controls the space of interaction, who is sovereign, and who belongs." (Shryock, 2012).

One could argue that Rohingya like Shafak acted like 'bad guests.' But they are only so because they are unable to accept the 'proper role' of a guest assigned to them by the Thai state while it does not fulfill its 'proper role' of a 'generous host.' In effect, second-generation Rohingya like Shafak have negotiated their home in Thailand in recognition and acknowledgment of local habitus. In contrast to many first-generation Rohingya who express a need to 'blend in' and perform a Thai national identity based on Nation, Religion, and King (Jaehn, 2022), second-generation Rohingya living in the Thai-Malaysia borderland show less of a prevalence and need to perform a Thai (national) identity that is skewed towards Buddhism and the monarchy. Rather than needing to assimilate to a prescribed national identity, their belonging comes from making

themselves ‘at home’ through ongoing negotiation (Sirriyeh, 2010) with local communities marginalized within the nation. The sense of home and habitus of second-generation Rohingya is shaped and formed in connection and communication with, not against, those living in borderlands and at the margins of the state, finding “homely space[s]” within the “unhomely” (Sirriyeh, 2010). Shafak’s floating ties served him in beginning his journey on home routes and continued to provide him with the opportunity to create a home through movement and negotiation. It is his floating intimate ties that allow connection and protection by understanding "home [as] an emotive space" (Easthope, 2004) that is located at the same time in the South of Thailand and in the intimate ties forged through social transitions in time and space. While living in the South for most of his life, Shafak holds onto the floating intimate ties of a Burmese and Rohingya community, always on the move to find a better life - economically and legally. Shafak visits his parents, relatives and friends, he meets and helps Rohingya and Burmese people who pass through his province to find their routes home. The South of Thailand serves as a nodal point while his floating intimate ties continue to stretch across borders into Myanmar and Malaysia. These ties serve as a safety net and a home across space, as the Thai state holds Shafak at the thresholds of hospitality and hostility in the Thai-Malaysia borderland.

Shafak’s life centered around the Thai-Malaysia borderland shows that the creation of home is not an either/or but that it is embedded in the roots and routes of the home of a diaspora (Gilroy, 1993). It highlights the tension between floating intimate ties and access to residence. Though floating intimate ties are important to create a home, access to house ownership symbolizes legal, and not only de facto, belonging in a society that attaches privileges to roots and hinders routes of home. While refugees' families are held at the thresholds between hospitality and hostility by the state, second-generation Rohingya in Thailand question the sovereignty and moral power of the state at its margins in determining where home is and who owns the legitimacy to define it. As the Thai state continues to struggle to assert its sovereignty in the Deep South and its role as a reluctant host towards refugees, it willfully and negligently ignores the fact that second-generation refugees like Shafak (despite being made stateless and generally categorized as ‘illegal’ and a ‘national security threat’) are already at home. Rather than remaining displaced, Shafak has negotiated a home by finding routes at the borders and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. Shafak and other second-generation refugees show that rooting is an active process of becoming, and as such, "the experience of home [i]s an unsettled, changing, open, and more mobile entity” (Brun & Fabos, 2015).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all Rohingya participants who have shown incredible hospitality and openness to me, inviting me into their lives but most importantly Shafak, who allowed me to spend so much time with him. I also specifically thank Siwawong Sooktawee, who always willingly shares his pool of knowledge and contacts with me on the situation of refugees and forced migrants in Thailand. I would like to thank the JSPS Grant-in-Aid for their financial support for JSPS Research Fellow 22KF0229 (“Rohingya Refugees ‘Doing’ and ‘Remaking' Family in South and Southeast Asia”). This article results from this project with Decha Tangseefa as the host professor and CSEAS, Kyoto University as the hosting institution.

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