



Sinophone Meets Siamophone: Covert Migration, Pirated Ethnicity, & Audiovisual Intersubjectivity in Midi Z's Thailand Films



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Since 2010, the Sino-Burmese director Midi Z has established himself as a compelling Southeast Asian independent auteur. The films *Poor Folk* (2012) and *The Road to Mandalay* (2016) are distinct in his oeuvre for being shot and set in Thailand. Integral to Midi Z's transnational portraits of a marginal yet mobile Sinophone community traversing the borders of Myanmar, Yunnan, Thailand, and Taiwan (reflecting the director's own life trajectory) are the Siamophone conditions these two films highlight in their accented audioscape. Midi Z's covert videography mirrors his protagonists' illicit migration to Thailand, their purchase of forged documents to secure work in Thailand or to exit the country, and their need to conceal their Burmeseness from official surveillance to avoid arrest and deportation. Focusing on how these protagonists draw on bicultural Sino-Thainess and the indigenous "Zomian" milieu of Thailand's upland terrain to "pirate" their ethnic covers and author the terms of their intersubjective legibility under state regimes of census and surveillance, I argue that Thailand serves as a critical departure point from which Midi Z evokes interlinked Sinophone and Siamophone conditions to audio-visually refashion and reimagine Sino-Burmese intersubjectivity.



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