

Family, Gender, Identity and Citizenship: Cross-border Marriage within the Mekong Frontiers

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The chief purpose of this paper is to explore the social consequences of the rise of the modern nation states as well as the opened economic policy after the cold war period, for the people living in the frontiers of the Mekong River. How did the incorporation of the frontier zones into the nation state interfere with the everyday reality in which many people lived? Did the incorporation prevent large numbers of young men and young women, living in border villages, from seeking potential husbands and wives in the neighboring villages across the river? Did the Mekong River as a national border cut off the people from cross-border livelihoods in which the people have been familiar with for a long time? What was in general the impact of boundaries on cross-border mobility and migration? The paper focuses especially on cross-border marriage in the Thai-Lao borderlands. It examines how did the demarcation of the border, cold war as well as the end of cold war affect border crossings in the frontiers of Mekong River, hence affecting the pattern of cross-border marriage, family structure, kinship, gender relations, cultural identities and citizenship as well as other aspects of social life of people who crossed the border.