
Border Preferred People:
Ethnic Minorities Migrating from Northern Thai Border to Southern Thai Border

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Abstract

Aim of this presentation is to reconsider meaning of national "border" in the global era by analyzing cases of minority migrant workers in Thailand. Sociologists have discussed whether the nation-state system has strengthened or weakened after the globalization. Most of such works share the premise that the nation-state system encompassed the world by the beginning of the globalization process. However, is that truth for cases in Asian border area?

This presentation is to describe how ethnic minority people who were once marginalized in the nation state try to devise strategies to gain their new social space in the globalized world. More precisely, this research will show that these communities and people now occupy the globalized social space directly—not by going through a nation state but by circumventing it. This research results will show that the nation-state system has never been the strictly rigid framework of society as it has been defined, in some area. Methodology taken for this research is a formal Interview and a non-formal Interview. Both interviews were done in District A (Southern Thai Border Area), and Mae Sai District (Northern Thai Border Area). The interviews are done during 2011 July-August(2 days), 2012 February(8days) and 2012 August(4days).

Results show that interviewed minority migrant workers and their family's life space expand across border areas avoiding the main social and geographical body of nation states. Why does she avoid the main social/geographical body of the Thai nation state and prefer the other border area? Suggested results are (1) opportunity for and permissiveness of anonymity in the border area, (2) comfort of its ambiguity and complexity, (3) or possibility of "laundering" their marginalized status. We need to further examine this reasons.

It is concluded that minorities at the periphery of nation states build up their social network by connecting "border areas," avoiding the mainstream of the nation state. The reasons should be pursued in future research.