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Citizenship of "Children without a Homeland" in Vietnam The Case of the Mekong Delta Region

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In recent years, in Vietnamese society, children with "foreign roots" (có yếu tố nước ngoài), for example, children from Taiwan or Korea, are facing serious social problems. The plight of these "unrecognized children" (không được thừa nhận) has drawn a great deal of attention. In this paper, we focus on various issues concerning the citizenship of children involved in cross-border divorces and how their access to full citizenship has been restricted, especially their education rights, due to transmigration. The citizenship problems of border-crossing children are greatly influenced by the decision of their parents and families who trigger their transmigration, especially mothers who account for a majority of marriage migrants. I embrace the concept of feminist citizenship as a valid theoretical framework for examining the survival rights of "children without a homeland" affected by the transnational divorce of their parents. This discussion is based on the results of fieldwork in the Mekong Delta Region in 2016 and 2017. We found that these children are allowed to attend schools as "non-regular students" (học gửi) based on humanitarian considerations. However, this term is closely connected to "children without a homeland" who grow up in a complex environment. (196 words)

Biographical Note

Professor Misaki Iwai is a sociologist whose area of interest is cross-border marriage and divorce in Asian countries, especially in Vietnam, Taiwan, and Korea. Her primary research field is the rural communities in the Mekong Delta region of southern Vietnam, home to many marriage migrants. She also conducts fieldwork vigorously in several areas in Taiwan. In her paper "Global Householding' between Rural Vietnam and Taiwan" (2013), she discusses the formation of a horizontal network by crossborder marriages. She interviews marriage migrants' families (parents and siblings) regarding their homeland in Vietnam and their newly formed families in Taiwan. Currently, her focus is on how maternal families and local communities in Vietnam accept "children with foreign roots." Studying the children in Taiwan whose "roots are in Vietnam" and the children in Taiwan with "roots in Vietnam," she examines cultural interaction and the social significance of cultural identity.