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Married by Angkar: Marriage under the Khmer Rouge revolution Insights from a rural community

Lany Trinh (lany.trinh@anu.edu.au)
The Australian National University

Abstract

War and Revolution, as any other social disruption have immediate and long lasting effects upon marriage and family. Cambodia has experienced drastic social upheavals, especially the genocide resulted under the Revolutionary regime of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) from 1975 to early 1979. The DK targeted all form of traditional structures of Cambodian society. As part of their population policy, was the organization of collective weddings, in which couple were randomly paired. According to the last Cambodian Demographic Health Survey (CHDS), 19% of marriages of women aged 35-49 in 2000, occurred under the DK. This paper is a first attempt to shed the light on these particular marriages, their prevalence among women, their patterns and their outcomes.

Due to the limitation of CDHS regarding marital history data, I used my own primary retrospective data of the 2003 Cambodian Marriage Survey and narratives and a secondary data set on the rural community, the MIPoplab on 1,937 women's marital histories.

This paper analyses life experiences of 3 women and excerpts from the focus groups held by the author in the community. Discrete-time multivariate survival method is used to analyse the risk of divorce of these particular marriages with the pre-Revolution marriage controlling by marriage duration and other individual characteristics.

Despite the fact that the marriages performed under the KD regime were more likely to end by divorce than those from the pre-Revolution, most of the couples married by Angkar did stay together nowadays, showing their attachment to family and marriage values.

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