



Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750-1880 (World Social Change)

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Water Frontier focuses principally on southwest Indochina (from modern southern Vietnam into eastern Cambodia and southwestern Thailand), which it calls the Lower Mekong region. The book's excellent contributors argue that, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this area formed a single trading zone woven together by the regular itineraries of thousands of large and small junk traders. This zone in turn formed a regional component of the wider trade networks that linked southern China to all of Southeast Asia. This is the "water frontier" of the title, a sparsely settled coastal and riverine frontier region of mixed ethnicities and often uncertain settlements in which the waterborne trade and commerce of a long string of small ports was essential to local life. This innovative book uses the water frontier concept to reposition old nation-state oriented histories and decenter modern dominant cultures and ethnicities to reveal a different local past. It expands and deepens our understanding of the time and place as well as of the multiple roles played by Chinese sojourners, settlers, and junk traders in their interactions with a kaleidoscope of local peoples.

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