

on the necropolitical and biopolitical aesthetics of Duterte’s regime that will shape future scholarship in Philippine studies.

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*Riverine Border Practices: People’s Everyday Lives on the Thai-Lao Mekong Border*. By Thanachate Wisaijorn. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 204 pp.

While projects to dam the waters of the Mekong move forward, infrastructures of crossing expand to facilitate and regulate movement. The fifth Friendship Bridge connecting Thailand and Laos is slated for completion in early 2024, ready to change the flow of people and goods across this winding water border. The many meanings of “border crossing” in the lives of local people living along the river is taken up by Thanachate Wisaijorn in this book, with particular interest in understanding how people practise mobility around quasi-official border points.

Wisaijorn employs Homi Bhabha’s notion of the Third Space, stressing the importance of hybridity in the expression of transitional identities in this borderland area. Central to his argument is the assertion that people’s daily lives encompass a plurality of connections and frictions as they experience the national border drawn by the

Mekong. Mixing theoretical and ethnographic perspectives, the analysis addresses the question of unofficial crossings amid the politico-administrative landscape of official border regulation in the Khong Chiam-Sanasomboun cross-border area of Ubon Ratchathani (Thailand) and Champassak (Lao PDR). This is the northeastern area of Thailand, known as Isan, which remains a linguistically and culturally Lao space even as it has been integrated into the administrative structures and political ideologies of the modern Thai state. Wisaijorn examines the layered ambiguities of the border area, painting a picture of interwoven spatial-temporal negotiations and political subjectivities of the local people.

As the book's subtitle suggests, Wisaijorn's concern is for how local people understand, encounter and live with the Mekong River as a national border flowing through their networks of kin, communication and trade. This is a wonderful ethnographic project, especially as mobility bounces back after the pandemic, yet remains changed. In its political reality, however, the Thai-Lao border is a sensitive area, and the informal crossings that Wisaijorn follows occur in the fuzzy zone of licit-illicit. The local voices that he draws on to build his story are interesting in their substance, but as a body of lived experience they are not enough to present a compelling narrative. Wisaijorn is transparent about the practical challenges of ethnography in this area and provides thoughtful, reflexive insights on the difficulties faced by a Thai researcher in transboundary Mekong studies. Unfortunately, the limited scope of the ethnography means that the thick and repetitive theoretical material struggles to stay grounded.

One unique contribution of the book is the author's exploration of the temporality of Mekong crossing practices. Wisaijorn constructs a framework of "chronos" and "chairos" as the opposing official and unofficial registers of temporality along the border. The meaning of the border and people's modes of crossing change according to the opening times of the official checkpoint. People make decisions about their movements based on how they read the time-space dynamics performed at institutions regulating border crossings. Personal

relationships with border officers, fellow border crossers and people in Laos show how perceptions of time are an integral part of the ambiguity between the official, the quasi-official and the unofficial. Wisajorn asserts that “[o]nly rarely do state officers challenge the *thai ban* indulging in personal temporal judgments and crossing the border” (p. 139). This temporal angle on local negotiation could have been drawn out more creatively to enhance our understanding of the local practices.

The author uses several local concepts that are salient in border people’s articulation of their positionality. For example, Wisajorn takes up the tricky question of how to refer to “local people” in a way that is meaningful in their lived spaces. The term *thai ban* adopted here is a common Lao reference indexical of community as a group of individuals living in a village. The term presents an interesting complication in the shared Lao linguistic culture that crosses the Mekong. Speakers of the Lao language in Laos and Isan use the word *thai* to refer to “person” as a member of a group, without ethnic implications. In his discussion of how local people may refer to *khon lao* (Lao people) as opposed to Lao citizens, the notion of *thai ban* adds another element of cross-border liminality and political-cultural subjectivity. The other local term used frequently is *dan prapheni*, glossed as “quasi-state checkpoint”. A more nuanced discussion of this term—literally “customary or ritual outpost”—and others could have deepened the notion of ambiguous meanings and grounded the analysis more firmly in this Third Space of liminal Laoness that is lived between the Thai and Lao states.

Despite a few shortcomings, *Riverine Border Practices* identifies many questions that will inform ongoing ethnographic research on the complex dynamics of mobility and borders in the Mekong region. Those with interest in the interdisciplinary dynamics of geography and political science will find much engaging material here.

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*Why We Can't Have Nice Things: Social Media's Influence on Fashion, Ethics and Property*. By Minh-Ha T. Pham. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. 176 pp.

Don't read the comments. For many a news article, that simple advisory serves to caution liberal readers that egregious voices, cloaked in ethereal anonymity, have already spewed their vitriolic misogyny, racism or homophobia into the response section. But what about social media posts and comments ostensibly motivated by good intentions? Can everyday internet practices expose wrongdoing and ultimately effect positive change in the consumer marketplace? These are some of the questions that underlie Min-ha T. Pham's compelling book.

This book is centred on the global fashion market, exploring recent controversies on the internet. Pham's lucid analysis describes how these battles to enforce ethical boundaries regarding production are wrought through the veins of advertising and (anti-)marketing by unwaged social media participants. Following the introduction, the volume contains four chapters weaving through topics of fashion, intellectual property (IP) and copyright, and persisting racialized stereotypes of Asian fashion that extend to colonial ideologies about culture writ large as derivative. The book articulates some of the value-laden understandings of concepts like innovation and inspiration, seeing these as legal and therefore cultural legacies of empire. Today these are materially reinforced by IP machinations, and now these volunteer armies of keyboard warriors. As such, the internet and the very communities that police some of these ethical boundaries serve to perpetuate these stereotypes and inequities into new corners of the marketplace.