

The final chapter provides us with a profound example of Filipino Time through *e-burol*, the ritual of digital mourning that has been a phenomenon in the Philippines since 2009. Through participant observation of an e-burol for ‘George’, Isaac demonstrates the sociality that comes with grief across time zones, through live-streaming, the e-burol chat board, and text messages between family in the Philippines and abroad, using the Tagalog terms *pakiramdam* as ‘affective exchange without immediate proximity at all’, and *kapiling* as ‘be[ing] in someone’s proximity or vicinity but does not necessarily include or demand any interaction between the two parties’ (p. 117). Both *pakiramdam* and *kapiling* are used to describe the process in which Filipino migrants can be felt without being seen or present, regardless of their time zone, while also attending to their lives. In researching Filipina domestic workers in New York I reflected that Skype had changed the relationality between separated family members. With what Isaac offers, I am able to reflect back and agree that the digital interactions were not just about real-time communication, but so much about the affective exchange of ‘being with’ one another through technology. As scholars of the Filipino diaspora consider the changing ways in which migrants make meanings of their lives while abroad and with their families, we can all take from the multiple sites and examples in *Filipino Time* to build on Isaac’s aim: ‘to name and make legible possibilities for meaning making and lifeways generated alongside capital relations’.

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The Philippines

Drugs and Philippine society

Edited by GIDEON LASCO

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President Rodrigo Duterte’s 2016 election marked the beginning of a brutal war on drugs in the Republic of the Philippines, a war which has taken tens of thousands of lives. This book, consisting of chapters written by artists, ethnographers, historians, public health experts, sociologists, and drug users themselves, adds to literature on the war on drugs as the Duterte administration winds down. Edited by the anthropologist and medical doctor Gideon Lasco (possibly *the* expert on methamphetamine in the Philippines), it consists of a foreword by Sheila Coronel (from the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism), an Introduction by Lasco, and twenty-one chapters (six by Lasco). Four of the chapters are republications: Ricardo Zarco’s chapter on the history of drugs in the Philippines, Emma Porio and Christine Crisol’s chapter on the involvement of children in the drug trade, Lasco’s chapter on methamphetamine use by underclass male youths, and Jayeel Cornelio and Erron Medina’s chapter on Christianity amid the war on drugs. Placed between the chapters are photographs

taken by Raffy Lerma, a member of the ‘night crawlers’, a group of photojournalists documenting the war on drugs. Lerma was described by Vicente Rafael, in his 2022 book *The Sovereign Trickster: Death and Laughter in the Age of Duterte*, as ‘one of the best-known photojournalists in the country’ (p. 111).

Asking how one makes sense of Duterte’s drug war, the book aims to locate drugs in Philippine society while moving away from discussing a particular regime and moving towards a broader understanding of drugs and their users in the country. The book does not claim to be a full account of drugs in the Philippines and provides no detailed accounts of the drug trade, an activity controlled by agile transnational criminal syndicates. As Lasco cautions in the Introduction, ‘we do not have detailed insider accounts of the “supply side,” and we do not have ethnographies of drug lordship, the organisational structure of the drug trade, and its “shadow economies” in the Philippines’ (p. 18). An acceptable omission, as few publications can thoroughly assess drug transportation, production, and trafficking (see William N. Holden, *President Rodrigo Duterte and the War on Drugs: Fear and Loathing in the Philippines*, 2021, p. 56).

The book’s first part consists of seven chapters presenting ethnographic and historical accounts of drugs in the Philippines. The second part consists of eight chapters, the first four of which foreground the effects of the drug war on the most affected individuals and communities, while the final four examine the role of various institutions, such as churches, local governments, the media, and the police. The third part contains six chapters putting forth policies, paradigms, and perspectives looking beyond the drug war and approaching drug issues in more effective, humane, and empowering ways. This volume covers numerous aspects of the Republic’s war on drugs such as the history of drugs in the Philippines, the influence of American colonial drug policy, the ongoing moral panic surrounding drugs, the war on drugs as a securitisation campaign, prison overcrowding, the lack of knowledge about drugs in the Republic, evidence planting by the police, the recycling of drugs seized by the police, intravenous nalbuphine use in Cebu, drug use as a vector for HIV transmission, the closure of Cebu’s needle exchange programme, the media’s role in perpetuating misconceptions about drugs, the dysfunctional Philippine legal system, drug wars in other Southeast Asian countries, and how drug use should be perceived as a public health issue instead of as a criminal justice issue.

Two themes dominate the book. First, how the war on drugs is overwhelmingly waged against the urban poor while the war needing to be fought, as Coronel writes in the Foreword, ‘is the one against poverty’ (p. xii). The defining aspect of Duterte’s governance, states Vivcen Yu and Kristine Muslim in chapter 18, has been ‘the unfettered and lethal use of state forces against poor people’ (p. 365). Second, Philippine methamphetamine use is not *recreational* drug use, rather it is done as an aid to livelihoods for the urban poor who consume methamphetamine to provide energy for working long, hard hours at low-paying jobs. Lasco argues in chapter 5 that ‘If drug use is a response to an economic problem policy makers need to consider an economic solution’ (p. 88). Mary Racelis affirms in chapter 8 that the state ‘has failed in its responsibility to solve the drug problem and killed many innocent people in the process without addressing the underlying reasons for its existence’ (p. 171). With the war on drugs carried out overwhelmingly against the urban poor, their communities

have become inundated with dread, mistrust, and a lack of cohesion; as Racelis writes, ‘communities are gripped with fear and mired in violence under the “new normal” of continued killing with impunity’ (p. 168).

The Philippines’ war on drugs has been profoundly violent. Patrick Winn, in his 2019 book *Hello, Shadowlands: Inside the Meth Fiefdoms, Rebel Hideouts, and Bomb-Scarred Party Towns of Southeast Asia*, declared the war on drugs to be ‘among the bloodiest massacres in recent Southeast Asian history’ (p. 25), ‘racking up a body count seldom seen outside large-scale land battles’ (pp. 128–9). Lasco’s book is an excellent contribution to scholarship on the Philippine war on drugs and, as Maria Fernandez and her coauthors state in chapter 6, ‘It may take at least a generation to reverse the effects of this devastating drug war’ (p. 131).

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Thailand

Wayward distractions: Ornament, emotion, zombies and the study of Buddhism in Thailand

By JUSTIN MCDANIEL

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Justin McDaniel’s new book, *Wayward Distractions: Ornament, Emotion, Zombies and the Study of Buddhism in Thailand*, is a compilation of nine articles written between 2018 and 2021. Seven of them were originally published in scholarly journals (for example, *Journal of the Siam Society* and *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*), one in an anthology (*Material Culture and Asian Religions: Text, Image, Object*, ed. Benjamin Fleming and Richard Mann), and one was written for this volume. What makes this book special is that it covers not only a wide range of topics on Thai Buddhism and Buddhist texts, but also encompasses traditional and contemporary art, art history, and cultural anthropology. Even though this book is published in a scholarly series, the Kyoto Series on Asian Studies (Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University), the articles are written in a casual narrative style, and include descriptions of McDaniel’s personal experiences. Thus his arguments are easy to follow and serious subject matter is made accessible to a wide range of readers: scholars, students, and anyone who is interested in Thai religion and culture.

The book showcases McDaniel’s diverse interests and deep knowledge of the featured Buddhist topics. McDaniel draws on his wide experiences, including teaching at a school in Thailand and time spent as an ordained monk in the northeast near the border with Laos during his fieldwork. As a result, he gained deep knowledge and insight on Thai and Lao lifeways, languages, Buddhism and its rituals (including meditation, and chanting in Pali).