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Rosalie Stolz. *Living Kinship, Fearing Spirits: Sociality among the Khmu of Northern Laos*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2021.

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to tell profound stories of how the war wrought immeasurable destruction. Other pictures facilitate a “kinship with strangers” when the photographic content shows a shared environment in Vietnam of the past among viewers (p. 179). Those who have not survived mythically appear with loved ones as a complete family, if only through photographs.

It must be emphasized that Phu is writing from the side of the war’s “losers,” coming from a South Vietnamese family who became refugees and migrants in North America. People cope with depredations through photographs that embody not only history but memory and sublimate the acute impacts of ideology and politics on the individual and the family. This is best exemplified in the photo-weaving trilogy project of Dinh Q. Le where the reparative acts of collecting and archiving ameliorate loss, destruction, separation, and pain. One critiques—and conquers—the limits of state and official archives in collecting family photos and telling and listening to their intimate narratives. Pictures elicit stories and memories, and the process of identifying orphan images surprisingly enables “stranger intimacy” when “multiple claims from unexpected sources” emerge (p. 174). These are some of the profound ways a visual document of inequity makes justice possible, if only through visual recollection and reunion.

Today, Vietnam astounds the world with its gleaming skyscrapers, bountiful agricultural plantations, and fancy spaces of consumption, and it seems that the world has forgotten the war. The Benjaminian saying “There is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism” is relevant here and becomes even more necessary to be applied in the present, as the country relentlessly wages a new war in and through the market, producing new inequalities. A combat of affections suffuses this condition of “silent” violence, and Phu’s work provides an illuminating instance of how it can be studied.

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Living Kinship, Fearing Spirits: Sociality among the Khmu of Northern Laos

ROSALIE STOLZ

Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2021.

At one point in Rosalie Stolz’s fieldwork in Laos, the people of Pliya village told her “*Paa hooc nij eem, nij khəəy*” (You now know the wife-givers and the wife-takers) (p. 25). The notion of knowing kinship is an entry point into a fascinating ethnographic study among the Khmu of Luang Namtha Province. “Knowing kinship” also reflects the field approach, narrative positionality, and analytical rigor that make *Living Kinship, Fearing Spirits: Sociality among the Khmu of Northern*

Laos such a lively and engaging encounter for scholars of upland society in Southeast Asia. The anthropology of a Khmu village is presented in rich detail, interweaving the many facets of village research—personal relationships that go beyond the researcher-informant dynamic, contested voices of local people speaking in different registers, glimpses of the extraneous aspects of fieldwork that inevitably influence a research experience, navigation of cross-cultural life, and the ongoing interplay between empirical and theoretical interpretations of the experience. Stolz has given us a wonderful account that stimulates our thinking of upland society and provides a framework for reflection on our own fieldwork.

Living Kinship, Fearing Spirits is an ambitious but sophisticated engagement with some of the fundamentals of anthropology. An investigation of kinship in a contemporary upland community could easily fall into the established channels that have supported the field for generations. Such a study in Laos could also get mired in the local ideological articulations of national community in a development state. This book is instead a deliberate and thoughtful response to the recent tendency toward “taking for granted” (p. 3) the dynamic complexity of kinship. Stolz undertakes to examine the role of agency amongst all the structures of kinship, searching for empirically derived elaborations of how these structures are not just “miraculously” reproduced by themselves (p. 5). To do this, she observes the many meanings and workings of kinship as practiced in the village she calls Pliya. The result is a refreshing, enlightening, and enjoyable story that is told from the inside out and delivered with elegance and honesty.

Stolz brings together the multiple threads of ethnography with the idea of the “efficacy of kinship” (p. 47). Her experience points to the fact that the people of Pliya make constant investments to ensure that their kinship is efficacious, seen not only in the formalized complex rituals conducted for ancestor and other spirits but also through the daily articulations of kinship that may be overlooked or assumed. In her analysis, “living kinship” is evident in practices surrounding gifts, food and work support, life cycle, and the daily entanglements of prosperity and production. Importantly, the work of kinship includes creating and managing relations with non-humans and takes us into Khmu relationships with their dead. “Doing” or feeding spirits is thus an ongoing effort to reduce spiritual risk through the practice of kinship. In relating these narratives, the text makes a special effort to provide detail in a reader-friendly way. Footnotes offer useful expansion points. Setting out the flow of a marriage ritual in a table enhances the reader’s access to the ethnography without losing the flow of analysis. Together with well-selected photos and diagrams, Stolz’s book opens an engaging window on her field experience.

What does knowing kinship tell us about Khmu society? Through her analysis, Stolz arrives at the notion of sociality, which she employs to discuss the dynamicity of Khmu social relations. For her, this term also captures the emotional and sensual aspects of daily life. Importantly, sociality also allows for discussion of how non-humans, including spirits, animals, and others, can share the same “relational matrix” (p. 223). The qualities of the relations included here allow us to see,

hear, and feel how a village is located within a broader fabric of intimacies. At the same time, *Living Kinship, Fearing Spirits* is a valuable contribution to the growing body of scholarship on this area of northwestern Laos focusing on the Tha River basin. The area is characterized by high ethnolinguistic diversity, a complex (and yet incompletely resolved) history of conflict and reconciliation, dynamic landscapes where rubber and ecotourism tussle with each other, and rapidly transforming spatial patterns of social organization. The Khmu are demographically and socially an important part of the local social fabric, and this book is a welcome addition that complements previous works of scholars such as Kam Raw (Damrong Tayanin), Olivier Évrard, and Angela Cincotta-Segi. There is potential for continued engagement with work on the Lamet/Rmeet started by Karl Izikowitz and expanded by Guido Sprenger. Other smaller groups in the area have close relationships with the Khmu as well: for example, Eva Sevenig describes the Samtao social mobility, while I have focused on the linguistic culture of the Bit. Aside from these Austroasiatic groups, the works of Jacob Cawthorne and Joseba Estévez on the Kim Mun (Lanten) offer another angle on a *muang* (unit of Tai political organization) created by mountain people. Thus Stolz's story of Khmu sociality is an integral part of an organic and long-term area studies project. The author offers novel ways of looking at kinship across the living-dead divide and understanding the role of multilayered agency in dealing with the insecurities of daily life in these mountains that are shared by diverse peoples.

Throughout the book, Stolz is in conversation with Kam Raw, a Khmu villager-scholar who left a wealth of ethnographic knowledge about Khmu life in his village. Access to much of Kam Raw's work was facilitated by the Swedish scholar Kristina Lindell, and the work provides an insight on Khmu society that is informed by the aesthetic of storytelling. Kam Raw's voice is a fantastic resource in our knowledge of upland Laos. Stolz shares with the reader a story about squirrel stew that exemplifies the "moral ideology of sharing" (p. 225), comparing the similarities between the text she heard in the village and that recorded by Kam Raw. In this way, she does not simply check her theoretical position or assess social change but tries to moderate a discussion between Kam Raw and the villagers of Pliya over the telling and interpretation of a folk story that has central importance to Khmu cultural life. It is in such exchanges that cultural meaning is created. Stolz suggests through her writing that we should engage more openly with oral tradition in our ethnography, but perhaps too much of her conversation with Kam Raw takes place in many of the useful and interesting footnotes rather than in the main text where the contemporary Pliya village narratives are heard. Stolz's telling of kinship in Pliya demonstrates how the writing of theory can, and should, be an area where field mentors—more than informants—make direct contributions to our big-picture understanding and the way we communicate it (Briggs 2021).

It is appropriate that in a text so rich in local voices, Stolz takes the language of her fieldwork seriously. She uses Khmu terminology for many social phenomena she discusses, which is very useful for future work in this area. She includes a glossary, covering primarily words directly

related to kinship, even though the text has many more important references to the cultural lexicon of the Khmu. The notation she uses for Khmu terms is for the most part consistent and based on the work of linguists. Longer narratives introduced in the text are not usually accompanied by the original Khmu, perhaps a reasonable decision given the amount of material this would add to the book, maybe a reflection of the diminishing space for serious treatment of local language in much of the anthropology mainstream. The original Khmu text would be a valuable complement to the ethnographic detail and readable free translations given, in recognition of the explanatory power of ethno poetics in conversation with anthropology.

My first interaction with Stolz's work in Luang Namtha came through a WhatsApp call with my best friend in another village in the area. He told me that he had met my "Khmu-speaking younger sister [Bit ງາຍ] from Germany." He and others in the village were very pleased that they could speak with another foreign researcher in Khmu, a language that they have used as a lingua franca for generations. Stolz was visiting the Bit village as part of a wedding party, and the villagers were fascinated with how she "knew kinship"—the details of wife-giving, wife-taking, and the many practices that allow Khmu people to produce efficacious kinship. With intermarriage becoming increasingly common in contemporary Laos, this anecdote suggests the possibility and necessity of looking at how kinship is made efficacious across ethnic groups. My friend who reported Stolz's visit to his village has since welcomed a Khmu daughter-in-law into his family, asking us to think about how this book's insights on Khmu sociality can be brought into conversation with others working in the area.

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The Patchwork City: Class, Space, and Politics in Metro Manila

MARCO Z. GARRIDO

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.

The work of Marco Z. Garrido has served as a foundation for understanding Metro Manila and has inspired many young scholars, myself included. Focusing on the spatialized symbolic boundaries of class identity, Garrido clearly explains through the lens of sociology why Metro Manila is so