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## <Book Review>

**JPaul S. Manzanilla**

Thy Phu. *Warring Visions: Photography and Vietnam*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2022.

*Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, August 2023, pp. 384-387.

**How to Cite:** Manzanilla, JPPaul S. Review of *Warring Visions: Photography and Vietnam* by Thy Phu. *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, August 2023, pp. 384-387. DOI: 10.20495/seas.12.2\_384.

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In terms of balance, the book intends to criticize the efforts made by ASEAN and its member states to resolve the human rights issue of marginalized groups. However, the contributors fail to consider that resolving human rights issues is a long process that requires years, and that ASEAN and its member states are still young compared to the United States and European countries, which have been dealing with such issues for hundreds of years. While ASEAN and its member states lack proper implementation, they have at least put the issue on the table for discussion. Furthermore, most of the contributors clearly express strong support for liberal democratic values while deeply criticizing the more conservative “ASEAN values,” which they say form the core constraint. However, they do not consider how the proponents of such values have at least made the discussion a priority despite ASEAN’s incapacity to forcefully ask its member states to implement some mechanisms related to marginalized groups.

Overall, *Marginalisation and Human Rights in Southeast Asia* provides a critical examination of the human rights violations faced by marginalized groups in Southeast Asia. The book features case studies that offer a comprehensive overview of the complex and diverse challenges faced by marginalized groups in the region. The contributors offer policy recommendations that include greater awareness-raising efforts, a more liberal approach to human rights implementation, and a strong commitment to implementing plans of action at both the regional and national levels. The book highlights the need for change in addressing the ongoing human rights abuses experienced by marginalized communities in the region. It discusses the issues of statelessness, refugees, minority groups, migrant workers, disabled persons, children, and academics. For those interested in comprehending the present state of human rights in Southeast Asia and seeking feasible remedies to enhance them, the book is an essential read.

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### ***Warring Visions: Photography and Vietnam***

THY PHU

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2022.

At long last, a book-length study of Vietnamese multi-genre photography! Vietnam commanded the world’s attention with its spectacle of violence and destruction during its war years. Viewers then, who are now well advanced in years, were bombarded with photographs of bodies writhing in pain. The photos initially helped in generating international support for the cessation of disastrous military intervention (mainly American, which is why the war is called the American War by

the North Vietnamese) and recognize the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination; but over time they accustomed the public to gory images which led to apathy. *Warring Visions* analyzes these staple images and all the contending visualizations of nation, state, politics, person, and family rendered through photography.

Thy Phu's attention to form wonderfully explains the chromatic possibilities of photographic assemblies. Using colored photographs fabricates "as-if" and "what-will-be" scenarios of a socialist future with specific contrived styles for designing agricultural scenes, women, and children. Phu strongly argues against the dismissal of socialist photography as "mere propaganda" as this attitude prevents us from probing essential issues such as the "themes of suffering" that are contrary to images of "physical strength" connoting "political vitality" (p. 55). If aesthetics becomes a problem when it reigns over ideology, it can be resolved by "amplifying the message of socialist uplift" (p. 58). Phu's engagement leads us away from the stultifying methodology of proving ideology as false consciousness. It is no longer essential to assign a cultural production to a set of ideological and political beliefs—in this case, "communist"—and prove that they mislead and fail, but to examine how photographers and viewers make images, respond to them, believe and disbelieve them, and more importantly, appropriate them to suit various purposes. For example, the "colonial," "bourgeois," and "decadent" legacies of French artistic influences were recalibrated in the portrayal of the Vietnamese landscape as an arena of collective struggle.

In an informative assessment of the changing nature of photographic creations during *Doi Moi*, or Vietnamese economic liberalization, Phu addresses photographer Nguyen Minh Loc, whose "idea of beauty centered on the smoke, rubble, and ruin of a factory where there are no bodies to be seen" (p. 76)—an approach that alters photos and therefore falsifies historical occurrences. For Phu, such "aesthetic flourishes" "give visual form" to the task of reconciling market liberalization and socialism in ways that "commodify revolution and aestheticize socialism" in which the messy past becomes "clearer, cleaner, and neater" (p. 76). The past, in this case, is not a foreign country but an acceptable image of a similarly ever-beautified present. Phu also decisively asks about the implications of practices of manipulation on "the historical record and the politics of memory" (p. 79). Simply dismissing socialist ways of seeing as manipulative and propagandistic ignores the more significant fact that "re-viewing the past" and "re-visioning history" are not merely state-led endeavors but also involve photographers and photo enthusiasts worldwide. People offer contradictory views of the revolution, and repurposing photographs reflects the dynamics of revising the revolutionary past and contemporary socialism. This is relevant to all debates surrounding the recall of historical events where the photographer's presence, the aesthetics and technology of documentation, and the politics of witnessing and remembering determine the event's value itself.

Competing representations of women warriors also offer fascinating insights into how the civil war redefined women and was redefined by them. Both North and South Vietnamese female

leaders appropriated the traditional *ao dai* dress in their depictions of a “modest and dignified socialist statement” and “more modern, salacious South Vietnam” (p. 96). Phu expounds that where “militarized motherhood” (p. 96) proved to be a bane for South Vietnamese First Lady Madame Nhu’s efforts to project a fighting image (as she only exhibited her alienness from lower-class Vietnamese women conscripted to fight and revealed her half-hearted promotion of women’s rights in the Family Code controversy), the “martial vision of revolution” offered by the North contradicted the liberal North American women’s movement view of a naturally pacifist woman (p. 105), something that impaired international revolutionary work. Indeed, the Vietnamese militant woman’s warring vision became the definitive line separating liberals from the radical left that trumpeted “martial maternalism,” using revolutionary violence to oppose state violence in order to realize a future characterized by freedom for women and children (p. 112). After the war ended, it was worrying that the socialist state claimed to have achieved the emancipation of women when, in fact, there has been a continuing struggle to achieve women’s rights. We may also infer here that various ideological-political projects claim that their achievement (liberal democratic order, Communist Party-ruled state, etc.) is “the end” (in the sense of a goal or a final destination) of their country’s (and possibly the world’s) history.

The most revealing parts of the book are the ruminations on war reenactment and family photographs. Phu deftly explicates the manifold contradictions of An-My Lê’s reenactment photos: the convolutions of history and memory (“the imagined past” “experienced as ‘real’” because of the photograph’s indexical capacity [p. 137]), the uncanny collaboration between the bodies of white Americans and diasporic Vietnamese reenacting the war, the American South as a reenactment setting when it itself is troubled by the legacies of the American Civil War, the quiet quality of photos gainsaying the loud spectacles of photojournalistic works of the 1960s and 1970s (a hint of the “humdrum intervals and restful interludes” of the violent war [p. 139]), and the interpretation of fitful sleep as trauma symptom, the most enduring corporeal and psychological legacy of the Vietnam War. Geographies, bodies, histories, and memories are battlefields of war fought repeatedly.

The author explores how family photographs play out the contradictions of the Vietnam War. Against the politicization of the family, family photos may even defy state ideologies. They may be assembled from other institutional contexts, such as refugee ID photos. It is possible to resist statist and statistical objectification and, in the process, humanize the subjects of refugee ID photos by accounting for their personal journeys. In the process, one creates individual stories out of surveillance projects, paradoxically forging subjectivities out of human subjection. A soldier’s album evincing the absence of family and a homosocial association with fellows is queering traditional family concepts. “Orphan images” (those “separated from their original owners and stories” because of death, destruction, the avoidance of incrimination, separation, and countless other reasons [p. 148]) may be visually reunited with their owners or mingled with others in myriad ways

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*