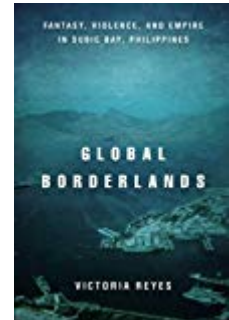




**Victoria Reyes.** *Global Borderlands: Fantasy, Violence, and Empire in Subic Bay, Philippines.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. 312 pp. \$30.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-5036-0941-9.



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In her recent work on the global borderlands of Subic Bay, Philippines, and its surrounding environs, sociologist Victoria Reyes examines the processes and negotiations of sovereignty within spaces where there are overlapping claims of dominion. For Reyes, it is important to focus on the human experiences within these juridical grey areas, spaces which she calls “global borderlands.” This focus, Reyes argues, allows us to see the mundane as well as the extraordinary contests and negotiations of law, legality, and life. Reyes does not attach a value judgement of “good” or “bad” to power and empire in this historical sociology monograph. Rather, Reyes presents both the structures of power as well as the ways that individuals navigate these structures. Such a focus, she asserts, allows us to see that sovereignty is never absolute but rather often contested. At times these contestations are from Philippine state actors. Other times, it is activists and ordinary citizens who confront the murky legal structures in what she calls the global borderlands.

The central contribution of the work is its collation of geographies, many of them related to former US bases, in which multiple claims to authority exist. Reyes refers to these as “global borderlands” and defines the term in the following manner: “Global borderlands are *legally plural*, places where two or more legal systems coexist. That is, they are places where there are competing and intersecting jurisdictions over people, rules, norms, and expectations and where the rule of law increasingly depends on the context of the crime and the identities of individuals and governments. In this respect, global borderlands are ‘unsettled’ places where sociocultural and legal strategies of action are continually negotiated and contested” (p. 3).

The former US bases at Subic Bay, now known as the Subic Bay Freeport Zone (SBFZ), is a fitting example. After the landmark 1991 vote in the Philippine Senate rejected a base renewal treaty with the United States, the subsequent Republic Act 7227 led to the formulation of the SBFZ after the US withdrawal from the bases in 1992. This transfor-

mation, however, did not result in the full removal of foreign influence in the archipelago. In the SBFZ, the Philippines, the United States, and multinational corporations all make competing claims over the space and the people that inhabit the nearby environs. Because of these competing claims, Reyes contests, individuals around the SBFZ negotiate meaning and power in their everyday lives. While we might assume that the United States operates with unchecked power, Reyes suggests that there are moments when the Philippine state is able to force compromise in terms of the laws governing the SBFZ and their application. In the global borderlands, the law and authority are not solely defined by text but also by their differential application, and how that changes over time. Reyes asserts the processual nature of power and shows that the Philippine state is not a helpless actor in its diplomatic entanglement with the United States. Sources such as legal documents, ethnographic observation, and interviews help Reyes chart these processes. Her argument ultimately opens up ways for scholars to consider the very nature of empire. As Julian Go has suggested in his 2012 work, *Patterns of Empire*, rather than contradicting our understanding of empire, contestations and navigations between the US and the Philippines may demonstrate how empire reacts and adapts to local realities.

The main chapters of Reyes's text track different sites of competing sovereignties, including tax law, sexual violence, intimacy, citizenship, work, and consumption. In chapter 1, Reyes maps out the fiscal administration of SBFZ. She suggests that the ways that taxation operates in the area is a type of continuous negotiation of the agreement between the United States and the Philippines. In moments of confusion about taxation policy, Reyes sees some fluidity in terms of administrative sovereignty where Philippine authorities are able to exercise some power or success in negotiations against the United States. The use of taxation, a central component of the administration of SBFZ, allows Reyes to note how the very foundations of

the freeport zone actually allowed room for maneuver. During negotiations in spaces of overlap, Reyes notes, all parties look for ways to claim victory. This chapter sets the stage for the complexities that Reyes examines throughout the rest of the book as she pursues both a bottom-up and a top-down perspective through attention to the text of the law as well as how people understand, experience, and engage authority in the SBFZ.

Chapter 2 moves toward two high-profile cases of sexual violence around the bases. Lance Corporal Daniel Smith's prosecution for rape in 2006 and Joseph Pemberton's murder of Jennifer Laude in 2014 are the focal points. As the chapter is primarily interested in the negotiations of sovereignty around the cases, the documentary *Call Her Ganda* (dir. PJ Raval, 2018) would provide readers a helpful complement in discussions of sexual violence and US empire in the Philippines. Reyes is interested in the ways that US authorities, Philippine authorities, activists, and locals approached these particular cases. Between the US and Philippine states, Reyes sees a negotiation of national meaning and boundaries, particularly in the cases of jurisdiction where the case would be tried and eventually where criminals would be held. Reyes tracks how activists used these cases to accuse Philippine authorities of being beholden to the United States through agreements like the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement and the Visiting Forces Agreement. Reyes also mentions some ambivalence among locals regarding the Laude case as a way of pointing out the complicated ways that people understand justice in the global borderlands. Overall, this chapter underscores how high-profile cases are both spaces of state-to-state negotiation of sovereignty as well as moments where individuals reveal their complex engagements with the global borderlands.

The next two chapters examine everyday intimacy and citizenship in the Subic Bay/Olongapo area. Chapter 3 turns to intimate relationships and sex work. Reyes points out how relationships be-

tween American servicemen and Filipinas are primarily seen through either the lens of the exploitative sex myth or the heroic love myth. She convincingly demonstrates that both narratives overlook the possibility of the Filipina as anything other than a passive victim. In this particular chapter, Reyes is critical of moralizing discourses around sex work, particularly on the part of feminist activists. For example, she draws attention to a 1990 report by Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization (WeDpro), which she asserts adopts an overly moral perspective on sex work (p. 85). This is an important critique, and it perhaps opens up spaces to consider the ways that activists speak in different venues (reports, situationers, official statements, media appearances, etc.) versus the ways they act on the ground. As Reyes suggests for how military agreements are "*continually* negotiated, contingent, and contested [*italics original*]," perhaps the same is true for activist statements and sentiments (p. 27).

The following chapter moves toward a discussion of Amerasians, the children of American citizens born in the Philippines. Excluded from the benefits of the 1981 Amerasian Act, children born of American soldiers in the Philippines can only obtain American citizenship through the legal recognition of paternity. Here Reyes shows the reader how citizenship, rights, and responsibilities are not guaranteed in the global borderlands. Reyes's important contributions complement works such as the documentary *Left by the Ship* (dir. Emma Rossi Landi and Alberto Vendemmiati, 2010). Overall, chapters 2-4 deal well with issues of sex, labor, and power in the Subic Bay/Olongapo area, making note of shifting state understandings of authority and intimacy as well as the uneven distributions of power in each of the topics (sexual violence, sex work, and Amerasian citizenship).

The final two chapters look at work and consumption. The fifth chapter looks at labor within the SBFZ to further articulate the contradictions laid bare in the global borderlands. Reyes suggests

that ideas about other nationalities are understood through what she terms labor imaginaries. That is, workers define other nationalities according to their experiences and understandings of particular corporations. In the case described in the chapter, Harbor Point Mall stands in for an American modernity and Hanjin Shipping stands in for notions of Koreans as "rude" or unjust in their treatment of Filipinos. This chapter, in particular, highlights the mundane practices of world-making that individuals within the global borderlands engage. Personal interactions inform a perception of the world because of the ways that numerous nation-states make overlapping corporate and juridical claims on the SBFZ.

Yet it is critical to remember that the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA), and not the foreign authorities and corporations, has the power to grant and deny privileges in the SBFZ. In the final substantive chapter of the work, Reyes traces the consumption practices of individuals on the bases, suggesting that people's decisions regarding what to buy and where to buy it are an extension of what Marco Garrido has described as the production of a sense of place and the segregating practices therein. The chapter invites further examination of the extent to which Garrido's insights (in *The Patchwork City*) on class difference and proximity are part of the production of the borderlands of consumption. It also invites readers to further consider Reyes's suggestion that sovereignty is multidirectional. Though it may seem that multinational individuals, authorities, and corporations have free rein over a tax-free zone, Reyes argues that the discretionary power held by the SBFZ is critical to understanding the complex nature of power in the quotidian settings of Subic Bay.

The author bookends her work with keen methodological insights. Again, Reyes is working toward an analysis that combines both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. She discusses the challenges of such an approach in detailing how she is sometimes critiqued for being too critical or

not critical enough, reiterating her sociological investment in how structures, culture, and agency interact. At the end of the work, she discusses her methodological tool kit, the ways that her position affords her particular forms of access at the same time that it limits some of what she is able to do. She also reiterates her refusal to see people as “cartoonish villains” or to focus only on the “negative consequences—of the sex work, the exploitation, and the United States’ undue power” (p. 184).

These insights into her orientation are critical factors in an assessment of the text. Reyes is primarily interested in the processes and navigations of everyday life in the SBFZ. This sustained focus allows her to examine the state-to-state negotiations of sovereignty as well as the ways regular people experience overlapping jurisdictions. The result is an insightful examination of the different layers, gaps, and overlaps in sovereignty. Reyes’s work on the global borderlands, however, also provides ample pathways for future scholars to pursue. First, there is an opportunity perhaps to examine the ways that indigeneity informs/disrupts Reyes’s notion of a global borderlands in the Subic Bay/Olongapo region. Indigenous peoples such as the Aetas have long inhabited the land, have sovereignty claims of their own, and have even been the subject of SBMA administrative efforts. Second, there is some opportunity to examine the complex histories of activism in these global borderlands. Activists are far from monolithic. Individuals and organizations often have different aims, strategies, and tactics as well as varying capacities to adjust approaches depending on the audience. Third, Reyes’s research shows us that there is an affinity to US empire that scholars must seek to better understand. Reyes attends to these orientations by noting nostalgia for US formal presence in public comments, interviews, and the otherwise banal practices of everyday life. Though it is perhaps outside the scope of Reyes’s study, she has provided interesting material for considering

whether the imperial allure is predominantly related to access to capital or other factors.

The recent work of sociologists on the Philippines has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the negotiations of class, race, and place in the archipelago, and this work by Reyes certainly adds to that rich and burgeoning subfield.[1] *Global Borderlands* is a text that opens up a great deal of possible questions in the context of borderlands studies, international relations between the United States and the Philippines, and the everyday act of place and meaning making in spaces where sovereignty may be questioned or where there may be multinational influence. *Global Borderlands* would make an excellent addition to upper-division undergraduate or graduate syllabi. This work can and should be read by transnational historians, historians of the US and the Philippines, those interested in the US bases, and finally, scholars interested in the complex and contingent navigations of everyday people.

*Mark John Sanchez teaches in History & Literature at Harvard University. He is working on a monograph tracking the making of a transnational opposition to the regime of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines (1965-86).*

#### Note

[1]. This list is by no means exhaustive, but examples of recent monographs about the Philippines and its diasporas from the field of sociology include: Marco Z. Garrido, *The Patchwork City: Class, Space, and Politics in Metro Manila* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019); Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, *The Labor of Care: Filipina Migrants and Transnational Families in the Digital Age* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018); Anthony Ocampo, *The Latinos of Asia: How Filipino Americans Break the Rules of Race* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016); Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the*

*Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Anna Romina Guevarra, *Marketing Dreams, Manufacturing Heroes The Transnational Labor Brokering of Filipino Workers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Julian Go and Anne L. Foster, eds., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

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