

Reeves, Madeleine. 2014. *Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press. 292 pp. Pb.: \$29.95. ISBN: 9780801477065.

Beyond attempts to demarcate space and authority, borders generate social relations and identities, and propagate effects through which the state constantly develops. As Madeleine Reeves explores, this is particularly relevant in the Ferghana Valley, where people live in a space intersected by different state borders and modes of existence. She explores these issues in superb detail and makes an important contribution to anthropological work on borders and Central Asian studies. Her long-term fieldwork produces intimate accounts of people's lives and their experiences living in a complex and little-understood part of Central Asia.

Reeves begins by describing the area, which includes parts of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. She discusses the intricacies of everyday life while drawing attention to how borders impact relations and contribute to the perceptions of authority and the state. She then focuses on the history of the border area. She does not examine the state-like formations from before the Russian colonization. Instead, she focuses predominantly on the legacy of the Soviet national-territorial delimitation and people's memories of the changing landscape in the region. She underscores how lines on maps do not acknowledge the complexity of life in the area. This has led to ongoing challenges as Reeves notes, 'The production of never-quite-national "national" republics discursively reinscribed the very "international contradictions" that were supposed to have disappeared with the 1924 delimitation' (p. 89).

She then follows this by tracing connections between remote parts of the Ferghana Valley to Russia. Despite the creation of national republics, Russia created its own distinct, local presence. For example, some mining towns received provisions direct from Moscow, the 'centre in the periphery' (p. 114), and created different modes of existence and senses of connectedness well beyond the immediate space. For others, the historical connection between the Central Asian states and Russia has disappeared, and migrant labourers are forced to hide themselves to avoid detection or find ways to obtain (real or fake) working papers to remain in Russia. These experiences, Reeves explains, represent practices and technologies that facilitate and limit connectedness.

Creating and crossing borders brings into focus the licit and the illicit, Reeves notes, as being '*constitutive* of a particular modality of power that thrives on the pervasive reproduction of uncertainty over the location of sovereign law' (p. 145, original emphasis). Her analysis examines transporting dead bodies over borders and being denied entry based on ethnic identity, using *chernyi vkhod* (black entrance) to get goods across the border, and inflatable rafts to carry people across rivers that act as borders. Rather than seeing the border as strict boundaries of state sovereignty, they are 'zones of possibility' (p. 165) where the borders are common spaces encountered by people and the soldiers 'manning' (a hint to the gendered relations of policing) borders.

Reeves argues this is quite different from accounts of borders and territorial security and this leads her to discuss those that impersonate the state and how sovereignty

is created through their actions. Whether it is someone travelling in an official car or the way they dress (or even influential criminals), they receive recognition of their role and their representation of authority. In this way, Reeves turns her attention to the border guards themselves and the ways in which they become agents of legitimate state violence that they have embodied through often painful hazing (*dedovshchina*) by older members of their units. In many places in the Ferghana Valley, however, soldiers are not isolated from residents, who sometimes complement the soldiers' meagre rations. This interaction breaks down formal roles and creates further complications for how and when authority is established.

The intense personal connections between communities that borders are meant to separate are particularly evident during conflict. Reeves recounts a case in which two Tajik school boys were beaten by border guards in Kyrgyzstan. The violence that ensued and a blockade between parts of a bazaar that spanned the border highlighted the ways in which debates sought to increase border security and increase the *étatization* of space through the establishment of clear boundaries. Through this, ethnicity came to the fore as a matter of distinction to explain the violence and to reinforce the need for stricter borders.

These issues provide a number of important areas for expanding our understanding of borders. However, one area that Reeves does not touch on is tax, which is central to creating a vision of the state. Taxes are imposed at different rates and across borders through export and import tariffs. The ways in which people transport goods across borders – as Reeves mentions through a *chernyi vkhod* (back entrance) or wrapped around people's bodies – are ways to evade tax and state authority. By subverting the official authority, they are appealing to another authority, one of locally driven needs overcoming administrative obstacles.

Another area of further examination relates to development activities. Reeves discusses the ways development organizations address conflict in the border region. She notes, however, 'When border as cartographic reality becomes the primary index of risk, interventions come to concentrate around it' (p. 99). This is an entirely valid critique and underlines the ways in which development can increase challenges to reducing conflict. Nevertheless, she does not discuss how the lack of state support, in some cases, creates parallel structures through the provision of development assistance.

Reeves' examination of borders in the Ferghana Valley offers a range of perspectives that contribute to ongoing debates and expand our views of how borders can be personal and demonstrate how licit and illicit blend to produce varying conceptions of authority and sense of space. This important contribution challenges views on sovereignty and territorial boundaries. It moves beyond debates that take borders and state power for granted and provides an engaging view through people's everyday lives.

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