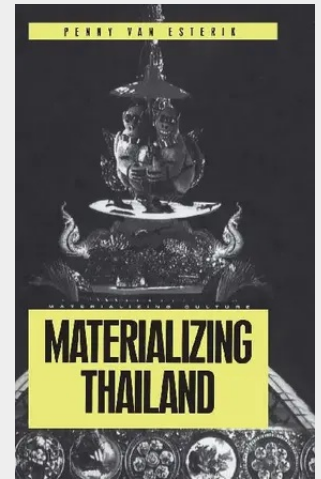


## Materializing Thailand

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Thailand has become well known throughout the world for wonderful cuisine, great package holidays, sumptuous temples and textiles. Noticeably absent from glossy tourist brochures but equally well known throughout the Western world is Thailand's seedier side - the world of child exploitation, rampant prostitution and AIDS. Thailand maintains its appeal by slipping the ugly and painful out of sight and by promoting women as exotic visual icons through beauty contests, state rituals and the sex trade. This book explores the construction of gender in Thailand and in particular the role Bangkok plays in establishing gender relations for the whole of the country. It examines the historical and cultural processes underlying Thai public culture, including historical theme parks. The author demonstrates how the materiality of the Thai world shapes gender relations and how Buddhism discourages essentialisms, including fixed binary gender identities. Throughout the book, appearances are shown to be critically important, and the essentialism of gender is maintained through display, public presentations, and everyday material practices. Anyone wishing to understand the complexity of Thailand will find this book provides a highly readable and insightful analysis.

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**Artikelnummer:** 9781859733066  
**Medium:** Buch  
**ISBN:** 978-1-85973-306-6  
**Verlag:** Routledge  
**Erscheinungstermin:** 01.03.2000  
**Sprache(n):** Englisch  
**Auflage:** 1. Auflage 2000  
**Serie:** Materializing Culture  
**Produktform:** Gebunden  
**Gewicht:** 599 g  
**Seiten:** 286  
**Format (B x H):** 161 x 240 mm

