

Comparative queer Southeast Asian studies

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Abstrak

Outsiders have long remarked on a relative tolerance of nonnormative gender and sexuality in lowland Southeast Asian societies. Appreciating the way hierarchical assumptions inflect all social relations in the region helps make sense both of Southeast Asia's long-standing gender binarism and of the ability of people of nonnormative gender and sexuality to find, at least at times, specialized roles for themselves. Those roles are based on enjoying not equal rights with their fellow citizens but rather distinctive obligations and privileges. Outside observers must be willing to suspend their egalitarian commitments long enough to recognize the significance of hierarchical assumptions for queer as well as other Southeast Asians if they are to understand common patterns in the behavior of, and responses to, the nonnormatively gendered in the region. Reports from several Southeast Asian societies are adduced to support this claim, complementing the author's own research in Burma and Indonesia.