



Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand

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Many foreign observers of the "Land of Smiles" are familiar with a narrow range of gender relations and sexual practices in Thailand, from the fanciful portrayal of 19th-century harem life in *The King and I*, to recent media coverage of sex tourism and AIDS. Yet serious study of patterns of sexuality, femininity, and masculinity in Thailand is relatively new. This book is a rare collection by scholars from around the world and across social disciplines who are tackling these issues. The essays urge the reader to look beyond fantasies of Thailand as an "oriental sexual paradise" or "land of sexexploitation" to historical and contemporary forms of gender and eroticism. Studies of the changing opinions and practices among villagers and urbanites, the creative expressions of novelists and aristocrats, and the concerns of early women's magazines and recent AIDS-prevention campaigns, reveal the extraordinary diversity of debates about gender and sexual issues in 20th-century Thailand. Avoiding simplistic approaches to gender studies and sexuality research, the authors discuss how interpretations of gender roles, marriage, and intimate relationships differ between men and women; cultural regions; Thai and immigrant Chinese communities; and heterosexually and homosexually active groups--as well as between residents of Thailand and their foreign observers. By questioning accounts of Thailand as a place where gender is fluid and sexuality is free, the book unravels the complex processes by which Thai men and women understand themselves, appealing to both general readers and scholars of Thai society. Peter A. Jackson is fellow in Southeast Asian history at Australian National University. Nerida M. Cook is lecturer in sociology at the University of Tasmania.

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