

region, along multiple themes, as a deeply interwoven component of much larger stories — and through encounters, interactions, and influences, that were far from linear, or one way, or predictable. This is a useful perspective for all regional students to bear in mind, and the inclusion of Southeast Asia in its own right marks both its impact on this period of world history and the maturing of the literature that, over the last half century, has done so much to place it on this largest of maps. Students of Southeast Asian history can read this volume with profit.

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Under bright lights: Gay Manila and the global scene

By BOBBY BENEDICTO

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. Pp. 248. Notes, Bibliography, Index.

There goes the gayborhood?

By AMIN GHAZIANI

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. Pp. 350. Appendix, Notes, Works cited, Index.

Sex and sexualities in contemporary Indonesia: Sexual politics, health, diversity, and representations

Edited by LINDA RAE BENNETT and SHARYN GRAHAM DAVIES

New York: Routledge, 2015. Pp. 346. Index.

doi:10.1017/S002246341700039X

One of the effects of globalisation on LGBT identities is the compression of queer space and time, and of the mental proximity of the queer here and there. Globalisation also throws into sharp relief the starkness of inequalities that polarises LGBT struggles here in the global south and the provision of Western-style gay rights over there. Three new books illuminate this unevenness created by globalisation and the transient quality of lesbian and gay spaces of belonging while at the same time remap the theoretical terrain of sexuality studies and its political potential. Bobby Benedicto offers a thrilling account of nighttime Manila in search of gay clubs and party circuits in *Under bright lights*, an anthropological study of the gay nightlife and desires for approximations to Western-style LGBT rights and freedoms. *Under bright lights* is sumptuous in its evocation of the sweaty sensuality, hopes and despair from the margins of a liberal metropole. Based on a discontinuous study across ten years, the author examines the development and decline of a gay collective imaginary bound by space and time. With great skill and sensitivity, Benedicto captures how 'gay life in a city like Manila bridges the near and far; how gay space is carved out at the interstices of the city and the world, producing ironic juxtapositions

that might be taken as manifestations of a capacity to play with notions of here and there' (p. 69).

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, gay Filipino men emerged from the hidden corners of nondescript bars into the bright lights as a new market who wielded the 'pink peso'. Magazines, bars, online dating websites, and party circuits mushroomed to meet the desires of a viable clientele. It was a period of rapid change, as one of Benedicto's interlocutors says, 'something was happening, that we were in something'. Change was happening and the gay scene was becoming more 'world class'. Above all, change was occurring under the 'bright lights of Manila', a hermeneutic device for examining the queer geography Benedicto uses to describe 'sites where dreams of globalness rub against the invincible facticity of location' (p. 2). *Under bright lights* also discusses the classed effects and affects of internationalised gay identities in the Philippines, on which Dennis Altman has written in his classic essay ('Rupture or continuity? The internationalization of gay identities', *Social text* 48 [1996]: 77–94) on indigenous non-normative identities such as the *bakla*. Aspirations for Western-style gay rights and identities do not eliminate the *bakla* but rather relegate it to obsolescence through a discriminatory filtering of the scene for desirable markers of class, language ability and mobility. The *bakla* may well be both a palimpsest of Filipino queer identity or its Other through the 'world-making practices of gay men [that] reproduce the cultures of domination that govern present-day Manila' (p. 3).

One of the most fascinating sections of *Under bright lights* is Benedicto's examination of race and mobility. The reality of race and racism threatens to slow down the speed with which the privileged middle-class Filipino gay moves from local to transnational (gay) spaces. Although privileged to travel to more liberating hubs of the Western gay scene, Filipino gay men are reminded that their ethnic identity pushes them to the margins even on the dance floor. They also find that race precedes class in the discourses of transnational migration. Being an affluent middle-class Filipino in the Philippines counts for little in the West as all Filipinos in the global imagination are domestic and care workers. Benedicto illustrates this with the story of middle-class Alex who is mistaken for being a nurse in a gay club in New York. Another informant, Eric, a cosmopolitan gay Filipino man, recalls sleeping with a Filipino nurse he had met in London. But upon a chance re-encounter in a club back in Manila, where class boundaries re-emerge, Eric dismisses any memory of knowing his one-time lover/nurse. He could not arrive at an explanation for his classist brush-off, except that 'it was instinct, I guess' (p. 111).

The difficulty for Filipino men to reconcile their experiences of racialisation in the Western gay scene run up against the lack of a public discourse on race in Manila. The category of race or ethnicity does not exist as a formal marker of Filipino identity. 'Filipino' is an unstable signifier that conflates race and nationality which itself is historically derived from the category of Spaniards born in the Philippines during the colonial period. Post-independence, references to racial ancestry that underpin the Filipino identity receded to make way for imperial constructs that were modelled after American whiteness. As a book that engages with the 'problem of third world queer complicities' (pp. 13–14), its greatest strength lies in its reflexive approach that avoids reinforcing the linearity of modernity and the binary of West and the rest by foregrounding the ruptures and assemblages that make up

the tableau of experiences under the sign of globalisation and postcolonial capitalist modernity. In what might come across as post-postcolonialism, his analysis complicates and adds ambiguity to the binaries that create subjects who are 'oppressors' and the 'oppressed' or 'colonisers' and 'colonised'. The author's intersectional analysis also brings to light the temporalities of homosexualities in the Philippines and its relation to the West. Middle-class gay Filipino men in Manila yearn to be elsewhere and live in the gay 'present' where gay rights have been achieved, just not in the Philippines yet.

By contrast, the 'post-gay' era had already arrived in Amin Ghaziani's *There goes the gayborhood?* The decline of traditional gay neighbourhoods in the United States is emblematic of the post-gay sensibility whereby gayness has become mainstream. In the post-gay context of the United States, where non-discrimination based on sexual orientation is now largely institutionalised, being gay not only has become less stigmatised and more mainstream but, as the American writer Nate Silver says, people like him are 'sexually gay but ethnically straight' (p. 44). Gayborhoods like the Castro in San Francisco, Greenwich Village in New York, Midtown in Atlanta, and South Beach in Miami are defined as areas with a high concentration of same-sex households, shops, bars, health and community centres catering to gay and lesbian communities. They provide a sense of community and a 'safe space' from hate crime, bigotry and bias. In his richly researched sociological study of the decline of gay neighbourhoods across major cities in the United States, Ghaziani captures a myriad of voices who have moved in and out of such places. His study is corroborated by demographic data which show that traditional gay neighbourhoods are 'desegregating' and becoming more dispersed across North America. The first gay neighbourhoods were established when ex-military service women and men settled in their thousands in places like San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago after being discharged for real or presumed homosexuality during the post-war years. Such communities helped agitate the 'coming out era' which reached its climax with the Stonewall riots in 1969. However, between 2000 and 2010, census data found that same-sex partner households, particularly women, have become less isolated in the United States. Provided that certain states offered a favourable legal environment, many couples are choosing to move to smaller and rural towns, outside the traditional gay imaginary.

Ghaziani looks for more answers in two lesser-known gayborhoods in Chicago, Boystown and Andersonville. The author himself had been a resident of Boystown and has despaired over and resisted the arrival of heterosexuality into his neighbourhood. The transformation of a traditional gayborhood is a process of gentrification; the closing of sex shops and congestion of push chairs on pavements signal the settlement of high-income heteronormative families. Many of his gay informants, however, do not share his anxiety about the heterosexual invasion. This is because they are leaving and assimilating into wider America where 'we don't live our whole lives as gay' (p. 43). Furthermore, those who are older find gayborhoods less appealing and yearn for bucolic lives away from the hustle of the city. Younger gay people who grew up when homosexuality was no longer taboo or deviant may find sexuality-based segregation absurd. They are also helping to remap queer geographies through the use of social networking websites to connect with one another. Gay chatrooms and online hook-up apps have made gay bars less important as sites for meeting men, to the

detriment of traditional gay community life. In Boystown, straight male and female residents whom Ghaziani interviewed are remarkably indifferent to their gay neighbours living around them, holding hands or publicly displaying affection. One very telling reason for why gays have become so acceptable to the heterosexual sensibility is the rebranding of gay culture such as leather bars into something more 'respectable' and non-intimidating by displaying fewer identifying markers of sexual subversion. Thus the process of assimilation and integration into wider society is not an equal one. Post-gays assimilate into a capitalist heteronormative society of major league sports, children, and upscale bars and eateries without middle-class straight families needing to adopt gay culture. By this point, the neoliberal thread that connects the winning of legislative rights to marry, owning a property and aspirations for homonormativity in the story of gayborhoods becomes the most apparent. It is painfully clear that the portrait of the post-gay who is 'culturally similar to straights' (p. 103) rests on the exclusion of race and class. Ghaziani often writes about sexual orientation, race, and class as if they are mutually exclusive which renders his statement that post-gays are 'culturally similar to straights' intellectually bland and a little suspect.

Since they emerged only after the Second World War, it is perhaps too soon to declare that gayborhoods are irrelevant to gay and lesbian communities. It is more likely that, as Ghaziani argues, the idea of the gayborhood itself is changing. Gayborhoods are not just streets but may encompass an entire city like West Hollywood and for some of Ghaziani's informants, any place in the United States can be a home and refuge for gays and lesbians. Although gay neighbourhoods are important to some residents, many feel indifferent about its purpose while straight people who are drawn to bohemian and gentrified real estate are moving into gayborhoods. Others reject being relegated to gay ghettos, of being geographically isolated because of their sexuality. From a socio-geographical perspective, gay and lesbian residents are like the Filipino men discussed above — subjects participating in new world-making practices that do not necessarily rely on the fixity of place. Ghaziani's text has a propensity to be repetitive and though he asks many important questions about the link between geography and sexuality, his text lacks the momentum to arrive at satisfying arguments and conclusions. He also makes few apologies for his androcentric focus. Although lesbian women who live in their own enclaves make regular appearances in Ghaziani's text, he concedes that gay neighbourhoods are overwhelmingly white and male. There is, however, a momentum in Ghaziani's analysis towards a feeling of homogeneity for middle-class straight and gay experiences of privilege, affluence and social mobility. This gradual homogeneity is interesting and invites questions as to whether similar patterns can be found elsewhere outside the United States. However, the book's lack of even a cursory attention to queer geographies outside North America, as if they do not exist, is a major weakness and indicative of a US-centric privilege that tends to dominate queer studies.

Societies in Southeast Asia irrevocably touched by US ideological, economic and military intervention are not privileged to ignore the latter's influence on gender and sexuality. The timely publication of *Sex and sexualities in contemporary Indonesia* edited by Linda Rae Bennett and Sharyn Graham Davies emerges during a new wave of moral panic about non-normative genders and sexualities in Indonesia as being more threatening to the nation than terrorism. LGBT and queerness are seen as part of a

Western imperialist onslaught on the nation's morality and the Islamic faith of the majority. Consisting of contributions by the who's who of the scholarship on gender and sexuality in Indonesia, the edited volume engages with issues hitherto unexplored within Indonesian studies, such as intersexed bodies, the biocapital of sex workers, and female sexuality of Papuan women living with HIV. The book also boasts a thematically-appropriate cover featuring a photograph of colourful phallic bottle openers which are cheerfully decorated with flowers and whimsical swirls.

Bennett and Graham Davies's edited volume marks an important shift in the study of gender and sexuality in Southeast Asia; one that engages with health practitioners and medical anthropologists as a means of configuring sexuality rights as rights to physical, emotional and mental health. However, as Saskia Wieringa discovers in her study of intersexed individuals in Indonesia, the wisdom of not pathologising intersexuality from a social science lens is largely unwelcome within the medical community in both the Netherlands and Indonesia. As infants and adolescents, intersexed individuals are 'normalised' into the gender binary through surgical and hormonal procedures. Wieringa also notes the disconcerting tendency of medical specialists to obfuscate and conceal information from intersexed people and their families for their own benefit (p. 177). Unpredictably, confusion, unhappiness and disappearances result from a discourse that does not privilege the agency and feelings of intersexed individuals.

Two other medically-oriented chapters also stand out in this volume. One ethnographic study, by Nurul Ilmi Idrus and Anita Hardon, is on the generation of biocapital by cis and trans male and female sex workers through the use of dubious cosmetic products and addictive substances. The authors gained access into the biographies and working lives of the sex workers and found stories of debt racked up from purchasing a broad range of soaps, gels, creams, skin-whitening products and mood-enhancing drugs. Such products cost more than the market rate because they are unregistered by the Indonesian government and purchased from bar and club owners at marked-up prices. The chapter is interesting in its portrayal of sex workers in South Sulawesi and their agency to negotiate the consumption of psychoactive drugs and skin-bleaching products as a means of enhancing their looks and confidence at work. Despite the damaging effects of drugs and rogue cosmetic products, the sex workers operate through a discourse of 'informal survivalism' to get by everyday struggles (p. 129). In a sociocultural context in which sex work makes many of the interlocutors feel dirty and insecure, skin-whitening creams provide them with 'physical control over their own lives and their identities' (p. 144).

Leslie Butt's chapter concerns the lived realities of Papuan women living with HIV. The easternmost Indonesian province of Papua is one of the least developed parts of the country. However, since 2001, Papua has seen the development of new roads, bureaucracies and institutions that boost the education of girls and employment of women. It also has the highest infection rates of HIV in Indonesia. In Butt's study, women from the extreme ends of the spectrum of Papuan society live a life silenced by the stigma of HIV. The sexuality of Papuan women, as Butt argues, is 'often associated with violence, betrayal, discrimination and stigma' (p. 110). Butt compares and contrasts the lives of a female sex worker and a widow of a famous politician, both of whom are HIV positive, and finds that a culture of shame and stigma

in Papua affects women from all backgrounds in a relatively homogeneous way. Rather than something unique to Papuan women, Butt contends that contemporary Papuan society, one marked by racism and violence, continues to unleash ‘multiple mechanisms of disempowerment [that] keep women down’ (p. 124).

The edited volume ends with a powerful afterword by Dédé Oetomo, Indonesia’s pioneering gay rights activist, and Tom Boellstorff, a prolific anthropologist of sexuality in Indonesia. Structured as a dialogue, Oetomo and Boellstorff discuss the challenges and limitations of studying sexuality in Indonesia. Although high levels of scholarly publications about sexualities in Bahasa Indonesia indicate intellectual interest and a relative lack of restriction, Oetomo notes that voyeurism and prurience still dominate the tone of such scholarship. While there are a rising number of gay and lesbian authors commenting on non-normative sexualities in Indonesia, transgender or waria scholars writing about trans experiences and histories remain nonexistent. Both agree that scholars from within and without are working in a volatile society where the state is unwilling to apprehend violent threats towards LGBTQ communities. As Boellstorff argues, a deeply sinister irony exists in Indonesia when extremist Islamist groups are not unrestrained from harming and scapegoating LGBTQs as terrorists. Such logics can prevail in the discursive power struggle over identities and religion within and beyond the limits of the nation-state — a fitting topic for future scholarly consideration. When reviewed together, the three books discussed in this article underscore the critical significance of rejecting the linearity of modernity and sexuality. Sociology, anthropology, gender and queer studies today have brought into closer contact sexualities from disparate and distant places to foreground interconnected inequalities and struggles.

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British economic development in South East Asia, 1880–1939

Edited by DAVID SUNDERLAND

London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014. 3 vols. Pp. lvii + 356, 486, 468. Notes, Sources, Index.

doi:10.1017/S0022463417000406

British economic development in South East Asia, 1880–1939 is an impressive, three-volume set of primary sources, covering the countries that are now Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Singapore and Thailand (Siam). The eighty selected documents deal with a broad range of issues related to British economic policies and their impact during the late colonial period. These texts are organised into broad thematic groups. With its focus solely on agriculture, Volume One includes sources on the mainstays of the export-oriented economies such as rice, rubber and timber but also finds room for some exploring of the roles of fishing and hunting. Volume Two, meanwhile, showcases documents related to mining (such as that of tin, gold and coal), trade (local, intra-regional and international), and manufacturing