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The Middle Path: Reorientations of Desire among Middle Class Gay Men in Thailand

This paper focuses on how gay men in Thailand experience and negotiate romantic partner preferences in a globalizing world. While there is a body of scholarship that addresses Western influences on Thai gender and sexuality, little is known about the impact of East Asian nations. Following Ara Wilson's work on "intimate economies" that show how political economy affects gender/sexual subjectivity and her call for studies addressing connections within Asia, I use ethnographic data to argue that Thailand's geopolitical position, situated between wealthier and poorer countries in the region, constrains and enables new partner preferences. Specifically, there is a reorientation of desire among middle class Thai gay men toward East Asians. The project examines the context in which desires for East Asian partners are created and how Thai-Asian partnerships affect local ways of thinking about and experiencing the self amidst regional economic change.