

services and gendered mobility conducted in other Asian societies such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

In all, this insightful and powerful ethnographic study is strongly recommended. The book will prove useful for scholars and students of Vietnamese studies and even for a broader readership in anthropology, gender studies, human geography, sociology and social work.

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Women and Sex Work in Cambodia: Blood, Sweat and Tears. By Larissa Sandy. London: Routledge, 2014. xv+140 pp.

Arriving for the first time in Phnom Penh in early 1998, I found that Cambodia's capital city was leading Cambodia's recovery from genocide by offering an array of cheap thrills, low-wage labour opportunities and a circus of international development activities. Opium dens, brothels and bars, stories of illicit arms dealing and an army of white four-wheel-drive vehicles — with prominent organizational logos that advertised their role in the county's "reconstruction" — characterized the socio-economic landscape of the war-torn nation. Sex was for sale everywhere, and HIV was

on everyone's mind. The first national prevalence study (Ryan et al. 1998, p. 1175) suggested that Cambodia had the highest rate of infection outside of Africa, at about four per cent of the adult population. International funding and public health professionals, including me, poured in, and much of our focus was on sex workers and their clients.

Larissa Sandy describes a remarkably similar encounter with Sihanoukville when she started her fieldwork about five years after my initial visit to the country.

Veering right on the red dirt road behind the port ... bright fairy lights ... adorned the wooden shanties, twinkling in the night. Ear-splittingly loud karaoke music not only bombarded the senses but also drew customers to the area. In this bustling entertainment district, brothels, karaoke shops, massage and coin rubbing places and one of the town's biggest nightclubs added to the cacophony.... Sex workers dressed in sexy tight jeans or slinky short skirts ... competed with each other to catch the attention of the men passing by. (p. 66)

While little appeared to have changed during that half-decade, in the early 2000s hysteria over international sex trafficking was about to subsume the panic over HIV. *Women and Sex Work in Cambodia* ably demonstrates the ways in which Cambodia's sex industry responds, reacts, and adapts to the shifting sands of social policy. Taking a historical perspective, the book shows that sex work not only persists but also repeatedly refashions itself against the often misconceived efforts to regulate the industry and control or "rescue" individual sex workers.

The book is divided into two parts. The first half presents an excellent historical investigation into commercial sex in Cambodia from the 1870s through the present. The author deftly traces attitudes, practices, and regulatory policies across numerous political regimes during Cambodia's turbulent history: French colonialism, hereditary monarchy, the Khmer Rouge, Vietnamese occupation, UN oversight, and, most recently, a nascent democratic state. The second part of the book presents an ethnography of the transition between two

competing policy agendas towards sex work: *harm reduction*, meant to address the country's burgeoning HIV epidemic in the late 1990s, and *abolition*, meant to combat human trafficking in the 2000s. Sandy's accounts of interviews with sex workers provide invaluable understanding of the reasons that women sell sex, their perception of their work and their feelings about the various laws, policies and programmes that target them.

History repeating itself is a theme that emerges from the book. The mandatory registration in the colonial era of *filles publiques* meant to reduce "contamination" (p. 35) among men, re-emerged in 2001 with the introduction of the national 100 Per Cent Condom Use Policy that made sex worker registration through brothels compulsory. Khmer Rouge attempts to eradicate sex work because it did not fit the movement's view of an ideal communist society echo in violent crackdowns and arrests following the criminalization of sex work in 2008 — also justified on moral grounds — when *all* sex work was categorized as human trafficking.

Just as the geopolitical conflicts of the Cold War played out in a local proxy war in Cambodia, so, Sandy argues, the introduction there more recently of various HIV prevention and anti-trafficking initiatives made the country an arena in a wider ideological debate unfolding in the boardrooms of USAID, UNAIDS and other international development agencies. Indeed, sex workers appear almost incidental to the political dramas around them, and the resulting skirmishes took place on Cambodian soil largely because the country had a weak government that was heavily dependent on foreign aid.

Women and Sex Work in Cambodia reads well, but it could have benefitted from better editing to remedy the numerous cases of repetition across chapters and the overuse of academic prose. I also take issue with Sandy's relativist stance; she appears to imply that all the regulatory policies enacted under various political regimes had the same disruptive effects on the sex workers' lives. It is incorrect, for example, to compare Pol Pot's eradication of sex work with the 100 Per Cent Condom Policy, under which HIV prevalence among the adult population dropped to 0.7 per cent by 2010 (UNICEF 2010).

The book correctly notes that terms employed by public health practitioners at the time, such as “vectors of disease” or “core transmitter”, further stigmatized sex workers and placed the blame on them for their infection with HIV and for its onward transmission. On the other hand, the first surveillance statistics in the late 1990s found that up to sixty per cent of sex workers in some sites were already HIV-positive, indicating a very serious epidemic at a time when antiretrovirals were not yet available. Describing sex workers as a “risk group” is epidemiologically accurate, regardless of the sentiments conveyed. Yes, language matters and reflects deep-seated anxieties about female sexuality and gendered double standards of behaviour. But a serious health threat in a county just picking itself up after several decades of genocide, occupation and military incursions is not something to be brushed under the carpet until social attitudes become more equitable. Furthermore, there are many dedicated and effective programmes that *do* take a “bottom-up” approach, working with sex workers to address their own needs rather than acting on their behalf. I would also have appreciated a more detailed account of the author’s life and work in Cambodia. She clearly achieved a good understanding of the language, and gained the trust of the significant number of sex workers who were willing to share their stories with her. Greater detail about her research methods and relationship to the local environment and people would have helped enliven many of her insights.

This book provides an interesting historical account of women and sex work in Cambodia, and of the persistence of the industry and livelihood strategies of the women involved throughout the many political changes of the past century. The book comes at a good time, as the policy pendulum is swinging back and “key populations” — including sex workers — are returning to the top of the list of priorities for HIV interventions.

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The Malaysian Islamic Party PAS 1951–2013: Islamism in a Mottled Nation. By Farish A. Noor. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014. 260 pp.

The Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) is Malaysia’s most important opposition party. This book is a welcome follow-up to *Islam Embedded* (2004), Farish A. Noor’s epic two-volume account of PAS from the time of its origins to 2003.

The book’s analysis is complex and compelling. PAS emerged from the religious wing of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1951. It began with little more than an ill-defined commitment to an Islamic state, but moved decisively towards Islamic internationalism under former Malay Nationalist Party leader Dr Burhanuddin al-Helmy. It burst on to the national scene in 1959 with electoral victories in Kelantan and Terengganu, and it was one of the first Islamist parties in the world to attain power — albeit at the sub-national level — through constitutional means. PAS moved away from the pan-Islamism of Burhanuddin under the ethno-nationalist leadership of Mohammad Asri Muda (party leader, 1970–82). It joined forces with UMNO in a relationship formalized in the National Front in 1974. However, the two fell out over PAS’s mishandling of affairs in Kelantan, and PAS lost power in Kelantan in elections held in 1978.

The subsequent reorganization of PAS as a conservative *ulama*-led party was not an instant success; the party won only one Federal