



# Toms and Dees: Transgender Identity and Female Same-Sex Relationships in Thailand (Southeast Asia: Politics, Meaning, Memory.)

*Megan Sinnott*

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A vibrant, growing, and highly visible set of female identities has emerged in Thailand known as tom and dee. A "tom" (from "tomboy") refers to a masculine woman who is sexually involved with a feminine partner, or "dee" (from "lady"). The patterning of female same-sex relationships into masculine and feminine pairs, coupled with the use of English-derived terms to refer to them, is found throughout East and Southeast Asia. Have the forces of capitalism facilitated the dissemination of Western-style gay and lesbian identities throughout the developing world as some theories of transnationalism suggest? Is the emergence of toms and dees over the past twenty-five years a sign that this has occurred in Thailand? Megan Sinnott engages these issues by examining the local culture and historical context of female same-sex eroticism and female masculinity in Thailand. Drawing on a broad spectrum of anthropological literature, Sinnott situates Thai tom and dee subculture within the global trend of increasingly hybridized sexual and gender identities.

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