

Title: Eudemonia and Economy in Queer Life: Expressions of the Khmer Gay Male in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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Abstract:

Resulting from a series of conversations with individuals within a Khmer (Cambodian) gay male community in Phnom Penh, a number of oft repeated role models surface as dominant expressions of gay male Khmer identity in contemporary Cambodian life. [1] The artist/the dancer; [2] the money-boy (as self-identified specific type of sex-worker) [3]; the barang-buddy (the ‘foreigner’ friend/the socialite); [4] the entertainer; [5] the educated – Cambodia’s resurgent intelligentsia; [6] the Khmerican (or other foreign born Khmer largely post-Khmer Rouge diaspora and returned); [7] the service-oriented gay Khmer (tourism & hospitality related worker).

Their identities are expressed, explored and conveyed via the perspective of the community, of which they form and are part of. The research is presented as a montage of bite-size videos, recorded and stylized by the community members themselves. While the community narrate, express and visualize their identities, the researcher acts as translator and draws some signification and meaning from the video-content. Eudemonia (spiritual wellbeing) and economy (monetary need and gain) act as key drivers or pathways that inform queer identities in Phnom Penh, and are taken variously as divergent and convergent in creating the identities herein expressed.
