



I Was Kathoei, Now I Am Father: Kathoei & Kalatesa
ฉันเคยเป็นกะเทย ตอนนี้อันเป็นพ่อ: กะเทยและกาลเทศะ

Chitsanupong Nithiwana
ชัชฎพงษ์ นีธิwana

Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University
คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

Received: 18th May 2021

Revised: 21st November 2021

Accepted: 14th December 2021

Abstract

The article aims to understand the diversity of Kathoei considering different and dynamic gender performances in each context in time and space throughout a Kathoei's life. The concept of doing gender suggests that gender is done as interactions through a wide variety of activities (West and Zimmerman, 1984). Undoing gender focuses on gender derived from performativity, or countless performances (Butler, 2004). Both concepts emphasize the same structure of heterosexual discourse dictating gender performance. Butler points out that a gender trouble has a way of moving beyond that naturalized binary of discourse (Butler, 2004). Qualitative methods including in-depth interview and participatory observation were applied to understand Kathoei's gender performance in different aspects of their life cycle. Kathoei could acknowledge gender inequality from the discourse. The diversity of Kathoei is not only a challenge to the Western sex/gender/sexuality concept, but it resists also the local concept of Phet.

Keywords: Kathoei; Kalatesa; Thailand

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งเน้นทำความเข้าใจความหลากหลายของกะเทย โดยพิจารณาการแสดงทางเพศที่แตกต่างและมีพลวัตในแต่ละบริบทของช่วงเวลาและพื้นที่ตลอดช่วงชีวิตของกะเทยคนหนึ่ง แนวคิดการกระทำการทางเพศภาวะ (Doing Gender) แสดงให้เห็นว่าเพศภาวะหมายถึงการกระทำในลักษณะปฏิสัมพันธ์ของปัจเจกบุคคลที่สามารถปรากฏแตกต่างกันไปได้ในแต่ละบริบท (West & Zimmerman, 1984) ส่วนแนวคิดการไม่กระทำการทางเพศภาวะ (Undoing Gender) เน้นว่าเพศภาวะนั้นไม่ได้มีอยู่จริง แต่เกิดจากการกระทำซ้ำ ๆ จำนวนนับไม่ถ้วนจนกลายเป็นปกติ (Butler, 2004) ทั้งสองแนวคิดเน้นว่าเพศภาวะนั้นเป็นสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นจากการกระทำ โดยเฉพาะภายใต้โครงสร้างเดียวกัน คือวาทกรรมรักต่างเพศ ต่อมาบัตเลอร์ชี้ให้เห็นว่าการหลุดพ้นจากวาทกรรมรักต่างเพศสามารถทำได้โดยเพศผสมผสาน คนข้ามเพศ คนแต่งข้ามเพศ (Butler, 2004) ทั้งนี้ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจถึงการต่อสู้ของกะเทยต่อวาทกรรมรักต่างเพศ การศึกษาที่ใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกและการสังเกตการณ์แบบมีส่วนร่วมเพื่อทำความเข้าใจการแสดงทางเพศของกะเทยในแง่มุมต่าง ๆ ของช่วงชีวิต ผลการศึกษาพบว่ากะเทยยอมรับความไม่เท่าเทียมทางเพศที่เกิดจากวาทกรรมรักต่างเพศ ความหลากหลายของกะเทยไม่เพียงแต่เป็นการท้าทายต่อแนวคิดเพศ/เพศภาวะ/เพศวิถีของตะวันตก แต่ยังต่อต้านแนวคิดเรื่องเพศในสังคมไทยอีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ: กะเทย; กาลเทศะ; ประเทศไทย

1. Introduction

What does Kathoei really mean? Thailand's Office of the Royal Society defines 'Kathoei' as a person with both male and female genitals, or a person with mentality and action which are opposite to sex. In Thai society, Kathoei means a person with both female and male genitalia or has a sexual relationship with other men. Kathoei is not only considered as a behavior, but also considered as a sexual imperfection, a person who performs out of the gender norms of men and women. Regardless of the negative meaning, some people still identify themselves as Kathoei. The definition of Kathoei is diverse and complex. It could mean ambiguity, and not belong to any group, or any type, or any category (Duangwises, 2013). Currently, there is a variety of newly invented self-identification and terms describing gender and sexual diversity and LGBTQ+ community in Thailand, apart from Kathoei, since the community starts to have more visibility and complexity. These terms include Saopraphetsong (สาวประเททสอง), Phuying kham phet (ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ), Sao siap (สาวเสียบ), Kathoei-Les (กะเทยเลส). Although there were previous researches focused on the visibility of a Kathoei with openly feminine, funny, outstanding images as well as their relationship with a male partner. On the other hand, there is still a limitation of diverse portrayals of LGBTQ+ community. This includes lack of visibility and representation of Kathoeis who have different appearance, sexuality, class, age. The article selects the 50 years of life experience of Bow (pseudonym). She is a Kathoei that had a relationship with a woman, a man, a Kathoei, and become a parent. These show the possibility of gender and sexual fluidity and the various shades of characters of a Kathoei. To understand the diversity of Kathoeis, 'Kalatesa' is balanced according to politeness, appropriateness, or context in time and space. Kalatesa helps to understand the life experiences of a Kathoei in different times and spaces to fulfill the diversity of Kathoeis.

2. Kathoei

Kathoei is a Thai term describing a person within LGBTQ+ community. Even though there are newly emerging terms describing gender and sexual diversity in Thai society. The definition of LGBTQ+ terms and identities had been shifted throughout the times. In Thailand, there were several studies demonstrating the gender performance of Kathoei through different ideologies.

Firstly, in pre-modern, androgyny and the lack of differentiation between men and women were considered as a lack of civilization in the Western point of view. Thus, Thailand discarded flexible gender identity and sexual orientation or the androgyny expression such as Kathoei (UNDP & USAID, 2014). In modernity, after the transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. The prime minister, Marshall Phibun Songkhram, imposed Thailand's nationalism through reinforcing concepts of gender. This included binary uniforms that caused androgyny expression as inappropriate. After World War II, Thailand's rapid economic development since the 1960s, the openness in Thailand caused visitors to mistakenly conclude that homosexuality and transgenderism are accepted and normal in Thailand. Nevertheless, male and female homosexuality remain unacceptable behaviors as psychologically based on legal or religious (Jackson & Sullivan, 1999). Interestingly, the emergence of LGBTQ+ community had taken place in Thailand throughout the years, it had caused limitations of gender diversity that fixed and differentiated the definition of each identity. For example, Gay and Kathoei are offended when others refer to them vice versa (Käng, 2012).

Additionally, there are studies showing that gender binary does not only plays a good role to gain social and self-acceptance of the understanding of the image of Kathoei community. However, there are several examples of the sexuality of Kathoeis influenced by the gender binary. For example, a Kathoei in Thailand referred a relationship as 'Khu Phua Tua Mia' (คู่พี่ตัวเมีย) reproducing gender binary of husband-wife relationship under heterosexuality (Sangganjanavanich, 2003). Previously, Kathoeis of the sex industry in Thailand and overseas who sought the prestige and privilege as a career was common image and generalized into 'Lady-boy' term. According to the previous studies, Kathoeis indicated they preferred a 'real' man, so they seemed to be 'real' women (Ten Brummelhuis, 1999). Also, Kathoeis' migration

to Europe was not only for economic factors but also for fleeing from discrimination in homeland. After migrating, some of them reproduce socially controlled feminine gender roles and identities as real and good women, as well as the feminine roles in a romantic relationships and sexual practices and performativity (Pravattiyagul, 2014). Interestingly, a newly emerged LGBTQ+ group called Thai trans-lesbian group led by Piyadhorn Suvarnvasi was widely broadcast on TV in 2014. The controversial debates on Thai society and social media led to Kathoei-les community experiencing social exclusion. Heterosexual Kathoei communities double-stigmatize Kathoei-les as a group of transgender women. The entire Kathoei community would be affected negatively, essentialist identity-politics exacerbate discrimination (Pravattiyagul, 2014).

Lastly, there are several evidences showing the differences of acceptance towards multiple groups within LGBTQ+ community. This caused discrimination within and provided a privilege over others, the point where Kathoeis had classified each other among Kathoei community by the different means such as cosmetic surgery, body, as well as the SRS. This also played a role in advocacy as well. Hua Boonyapisompan, Thai transgender activist, mentioned another Thai transgender activist, has told other activists that she is using therapeutic citizenship as being born in the wrong body as her political strategy to get rights for gender recognition. Surgery legitimizes their relationship by this political strategy has caused controversy among Kathoei because groups. The argument privileged only Kathoei who underwent the SRS to pursue gender recognition. This demonstrates how the classification of Kathoei also plays a good role in Kathoei community and how it has shaped the society as well (Käng, 2012).

To this, these are contexts how Thai society focuses on the visibility of a Kathoei with a character of a feminine, heterosexual, or outstanding images reproduced by Thailand's social institution and some parts of LGBTQ+ community. This differentiation among Kathoeis and by Thai society caused in neglecting and excluding some of Kathoeis who have a different appearance, sexuality, background, socioeconomic, non-confronting identity such as trans-lesbian, non-SRS Kathoei. This helped us to have a pinpoint to explore more in Kathoei and LGBTQ+ community to find a person who lacks visibility and less privilege. This is to conduct a new study to understand the diversity of Kathoeis in Thailand.

3. Kathoei Do, Undo, (or Redoing) Gender?

Doing gender was originally written by West and Zimmerman in 1977, and the article was published in 1987. West & Zimmerman (1987) illustrated doing gender concept as gender was done or performed in interactions as an accomplishment rather than a trait, a social role, or a societal representation. They extended symbolic interaction of Goffman that the effects of gender on a wide range of human activities, it was necessary to move beyond the notion of gender display to consider what was involved in doing gender as an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 130). Doing gender therefore legitimized social structures and established the male or female dichotomy and categories as a nature. Doing gender offered sex that was socially defined as being male or female, usually based on individual's genitalia or chromosomal at birth. Gender was the product of context-related daily social practices which codified femininity or masculinity. Sex category was the assumed biological category which denied the individual's gender identification and was used as a fundamental core for differentiation such as sexual division of labour, because humans had categorized and defined many aspects of life. To put it simply, Gender was described as omnirelevant as it was relevant in almost every interaction. Doing gender was unavoidable, like obligatory heterosexuality, because a routine accomplishment was embedded in everyday interaction that humans created in a wide variety of activities (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In addition, gender, race, and class operated simultaneously with one another, as patriarchy, racism, and class oppression were seen as social order (West & Zimmerman, 2009).

Interestingly, West & Zimmerman gave an example of Agnes. She was a transsexual who adopted a female identity as a woman at 17 and underwent SRS. They argued that she was not pretending on what real women did naturally. She was obliged to analyze and figure out how doing gender was under social structure. The outcome was seen in context as gender appropriate (Garfinkel, 1967 cited in West & Zimmerman, 1987: 135). Agnes referred herself as a female, but she insisted the penis was a mistake because essential biological criteria distinguished females from males. Masculinity and femininity were not fixed properties of male and female bodies, but the meanings and expectations for being men and women differed across interactional settings. This meant that essential meanings of being men or women

were taken-for-granted, and that gender identity followed genitalia that produced heteronormativity. Even though in most social interactions, genitals were actually not visible, and identificatory display of facial hair or tone of voice could be ambiguous. She still held essential femininity, through accountably ladylike behavior that was assessed to determine membership in a sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

On the other hand, undoing gender was written by Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler developed this idea from Foucault's post-modernism. Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976) referred sexuality as belonging to heterosexuals or homosexuals. When industrial age and capitalism came into influence, the system of the society had changed to a new form, including the education, jobs, laws, and many social structures. Discourse of sexuality became the cultural knowledge and ways of thinking about a given subject including both natural and scientific ways of thinking. Butler invoked Foucault in term of bodies being inscribed with meaning and emphasized that the environment was important in creating a person's identity rather than having a fixed identity in the genitals (Butler, 1999). Butler offered heterosexual matrix as the sexual discourse which believed biological sex led to gender, and in turn led to opposite sex attraction. Gender was repeated so often that it had become normal or natural performance so-called gender performativity. For instance, a baby who was born with male genitalia would be assumed of what he would like, and his daily performance would be influenced, which could be described as masculine. This was because of the notion of male at birth. The body was not naturally sexed but became culturally processed. Hence, there was no sex because sex was always already gender. That was why there was no real difference between the biologically defined sex, socially defined gender, and identity, because performativity was not something one was, but something one did (Butler, 1999). Also, gender was a regulatory norm that operated within social practices as the standard of normalization of the matrix of masculine and feminine. It governed certain kinds of practices and action to become recognizable and defining the standard of what would and would not appear (Butler, 2004).

Doing and undoing gender had different descriptions on a gender performance. First, there were differences of the origin of a gender performance. West & Zimmerman argued that undoing gender abandoned sex, race, or class categories and deflected circumstantial modifications or complexity of a variety of context by its situational character of gender accountability (West & Zimmerman, 2009: 118). On the other hand, performativity was also not automatic or mechanical. Butler argued that it did not originate from the personhood, but rather, from social norms (Butler, 1999). Also, femininity or masculinity could be expressed in many ways depending on various social and cultural condition (Butler, 2004).

Secondly, there was a similarity that both concepts mentioned transgender, genderqueer, or gender trouble identity. For instance, West & Zimmerman analyzed the case of Agnes that she could perhaps had used such sources as manuals because doing gender consisted of managing such occasions, especially when someone was unclear to be male or female. However, self-regulating process still strived to maintain by providing the tacit rationale for differing what was women and men within the social order (West and Zimmerman, 2009: 142). This assumption pointed out that transgender people, people who lived with a social gender identity differed from the gender they were assigned at birth, could successfully do masculinity or femininity without having the genitals that were presumed to follow from their outward appearance. To put it simply, doing gender was not fixed and obviously displayed, but it was obligated by the context and regulated by oneself and by the context as well. However, Butler (1999) argued the performativity of gender with the example of drag culture. Drag could be subversive and was not a secondary imitation. It could be performed and able to reflect on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender was produced itself. As the result, it disputed heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality (Butler, 2004).

Thirdly, doing and undoing gender both had the structure dictating the performance. Butler referred it as heterosexual matrix as a sexual discourse (Butler, 1999), while West & Zimmerman referred sex categories as obligatory heterosexuality or a social construction. The latter emphasized an empirical focus on social interactions, which made gender system visible (West & Zimmerman, 2009).

There were many studies beyond doing and undoing gender from male and female to gender trouble or transgender people whether they were able to disrupt beyond heterosexual discourse.

First, two case studies to examine how nontransgender people, referred as gender normals, interacted with transgender people in order to highlight the connections between doing gender and heteronormativity in the workplace. The first case study was to examine reactions of transgender people's transitioning in a workplace. Between 2003 and 2007, 54 in-depth interviews had been conducted with transmen who announced to undergo a gender transition and remained in the same job. Each respondent was also asked if they felt comfortable recommending any coworkers for an interview. Fourteen coworkers of eight transmen in professional and blue-collar jobs accepted. As a result, transgender employees informed their employers about their transitions. Top-down position started to assign them men's jobs and workplace cultures. These included carrying heavy items, removing of a single earring, allowing to access men's restrooms, lockers, and their coworkers needed to change names and pronouns to use with their transgender colleagues. These showed how gender boundaries could shift through the transition. Interestingly, many transgender men had a transition from being gender nonconforming women, who were assumed to be lesbians, to gender-conforming men, who were assumed to be heterosexual, because one of the coworkers told a transman that he was uncomfortable with gays and lesbians. This made coworkers able to justify the confirmation of the naturalness as heteronormative gender system. However, there were some transgender men who identified as gay or queer men apart from heterosexual transgender men, but heteronormativity ensured their new sameness with other heterosexual men such as sharing sexual desire for women or perhaps gaining access to male privilege. In contrast, heterosexual women set the boundaries and created their new oppositeness as they saw their colleagues as men because they looked like men, especially unchangeable sexed reality.

Women regendered transmen as biological females passing as men in an attempt simultaneously reinforced and challenged as women positioned them as homosexual women (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

The second case was from the collection of 7,183 individual news stories about 232 homicides of transwomen who socially transition from male to female (MTF) produced by the mainstream news media in the United States between 1990 and 2005 about the killings. Interestingly, almost ninety-five percent of reported cases showed a cisgender man murdering a transwoman, while the lack of documented incidents showed a cisgender woman killing a transman. Most of the transgender homicides were reported as private relationships, such as lovers, family members, friends, acquaintances, and strangers met on the street or in bars (Grace, 2003 cited in Schilt & Westbrook, 2009: 453). As a result, texts identified a murder victim as wearing clothes or makeup associated with a different gender of the one at birth. This caused naming a murder victim as transsexual, transgender, a cross-dresser, a transvestite, or describing the victim of fatal violence. These included a man in a dress, posing as a woman. Also, transwomen victims misportrayed their gender to cisgender men through phrases such as liar, trick, and misleading. Additionally, between 1990 and 2005, the mainstream news reported on the murder of six transwomen who had genital surgery, journalists did not use the deception frame to explain the murder of postoperative transwomen. For example, the convicted killers claimed that he could not be gay. This showed that heterosexual interactions entailed both opposite genitals as well as opposite gendered behavior. Genitals were a central part of the social interaction of a sexual encounter, and so were used both to determine the genders of the people involved as well as the sexual orientation of the encounter. Doing gender in a way that did not reflect biological sex could be perceived as a threat to heterosexuality and reaffirmed the heteronormative assumption (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

Then, in 2014, Schilt & Westbrook again examined three case studies showing the conflict over transgender employment rights and policies for competitive sports, and removal of the genital surgery was required for a change of sex marker on birth certificates in order to understand the sex/gender/sexuality system in the liberal moment of gender. As a result, they described the social process of person's gender identity as determining gender. Determining gender was the response to doing gender in face-to-face interactions, and an umbrella term for these diverse practices of placing a person in a gender category. The category upheld the logic of gender segregation and maintained the naturalness of a gender binary. This struggled transgender people to fit in gender segregated spaces, such as public restrooms. The struggling of transgender people was called gender panics, and to quell the panic or succeed the binary, the gender naturalization was at work. To this, the differential policing of gender-segregated spaces illustrated the cultural logics that upheld gender inequality and heteronormativity. They concluded genitals carrying in determining gender in these segregated spaces. Since genitals were changeable criteria, unlike chromosomes, it allowed for some validation of liberal values of self-determination. Also, male, and female genitals were imagined to be opposite and played a central role in gender panics because gender and sexuality were inextricably intertwined. For example, sexual threat of penises in women-only spaces showed that gender panics were not just about gender, but also about sexuality. Sex/gender/sexuality system were presumed as heterosexual, and genitals were not supposed to be used in interactions in gender-segregated spaces, but fear drove the policing of bodies in those spaces (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014).

In addition, Connell offered 19 in-depth interviews with transgender people about their negotiation and management of gendered interactions at work. West and Zimmerman (2009) argued that gender could never be undone but might instead be redone (West and Zimmerman 2009: 118). This finding showed that being transgender did not necessarily disrupt doing gender, the more gender normative, thereby the more accepted by others. Doing gender policed transgender in the workplace regarding appropriate gender behavior, especially when it masked

discordance between sex and sex category. For example, transmen were chased out of women's bathrooms due to appearing too masculine. Interestingly, gender-blending had important political meaning. They wanted to maintain parts of themselves that felt authentic, even if it did not perfectly match their chosen gender. For instance, a hybrid gender identity or using the gender-neutral pronouns ze or hir. This politicization of transgender suggested that the concept of doing transgender captured transgender people's unique management of situated conduct as they, with others, attempted to make gendered sense of their discordance between sex and sex category. Doing transgender might operate more like doing gender, undoing, or Redoing gender depending on the context. Transgender people were not necessarily the only social actors engaged in the undoing or redoing of gender, but the more moments of challenging the gender binary that were identified, the more common ground was uncovered for transgender people and others to oppose gender inequality. These were from developing a greater awareness of gender inequality, which had to be the first step in social change to a more feminist future, to use a position to advocate for opposing unequal division of domestic labor affected women's career opportunities and advancement in the workplace (Connell, 2010).

To this, doing and undoing gender referred to gender performance. Undoing gender emphasized on the performativity, that gender derived from the countless performances into nature, while doing gender emphasized on the context-sensitive, that gender was circumstantial products, and its variety of gender performance situated on different contexts. However, redoing gender was from the assumption of reproduction of doing gender after one have gone through the transition. Since West & Zimmerman claimed that gender could not be undoing but redone, doing transgender was presented as a way of a transgender person to neutralize the binary or inequality situations detected by heterosexual discourse. This meant that the important political meaning of using gender neutral words, pronouns, or using a role in a workplace could educate about gender equality.

To analyze Kathoei's gender performance as doing and undoing gender and its challenge to the discourse, queer theory was used as a main concept to analyze. Queering or queer was not only homosexual, but queer also emerged as a raising question of the status, force, opposition, and a site of collective contestation. Queer deconstructed normative models of gay and lesbianism and created a legitimization of queer subjectivity. Queer theory was originally from post-structuralist theory and deconstruction first introduced in 1990. Queer theory was the feminist challenge to the idea that gender was part of the essential idea from gay and lesbian studies. In terms of challenging to the social discourse, queer theory focused on mismatches between sex, gender, and sexuality. The identities which were not fixed, and couldn't be categorized and labeled were inclusivity, coalition of marginalized sexual identities. These led to repoliticization and radicalization of movement and resignification of norms by its function of inefficacy and rearticulation (Jagose, 1996).

Thus, queer theory was used to analyze the challenge with the emphasis on mismatches between sex, gender, and sexuality. These mismatches were not only solid identifying gender and sexuality of a person, but mismatches also included the circumstance modification or dynamic changes of gender performances in terms of gender and sexuality in the different contexts. Additionally, there were a few studies on Kathoei with the context-sensitive performances and the changes in different context. It was also interesting to see the dynamic changes with the emphasis on the negotiation between an external sex/gender/sexuality concept like queer identity and internal concepts such as Phet, and Kalatesa.

4. Kathoei & Kalatesa

The article aims to understand the diversity of Kathoeis by presenting a Kathoei who lack of visibility and representation in LGBTQ+ community and Thai society. However, Thai term 'Kalatesa' referring to proper, suitable, or balanced according to politeness, appropriateness, or context in time and space. These internal and external concepts' negotiations in Thai society would help understanding strategies of interaction, and results in this pattern of adaptation. Thus, Kalatesa helps to understand life experiences of a Kathoei in different times and spaces to fulfill the diversity of Kathoeis.

Van Esterik then extends that Kathoei identity mocks the notion of Thai masculinity and femininity. She also refers to Kathoei as agents of destabilization of gender identities. Kathoei underscores the different positioning of boundaries in Thai and Western logic, and the ability of individuals to move in and out of identities. Van Esterik argues that Thai gender identity is much more context-sensitive than Western constructions. Thai gender, sexual orientation, sexual practices, and identity should be thought of as context-sensitive choices shaped by a number of factors. Thai term ‘Kalatesa’ (กาลเทศะ) means proper, suitable, or balanced according to politeness, appropriateness, or context in time and space. ‘Kala’ is the formal term for time in general. ‘Tesa’ refers to space or locality. Kalatesa helps understand surfaces, strategies of interaction, and results in this pattern of adaptation. Kalatesa reveals literary discourses in ‘Rabiab’ (ระเบียบ) and represent elite as ‘Phu dii’ (ผู้ดี). Thus, Kalatesa highlights regional, ethnic, and class differences in the form the basis of gender hierarchies. Someone who violates Kalatesa loses face and respect. Krenghai, is the feeling that arises when you have violated Kalatesa. If you have knowledge of Kalatesa about the people you will be interacting with, then you will not feel embarrassment or discomfort or Krenghai and will be less likely to ‘Phit Kalatesa’ (ผิดกาลเทศะ) (Van Esterik, 2000).

In addition, Peter Jackson (2020) emphasizes the notions of syncretism and theories of hybridity do not capture the full complexity of Thai religious and other cultural forms. To this, Kalatesa is patterns of cultural amalgamation in the fields of religion, gender, and language as well as more broadly. However, Nidhi argues that Kalatesa spatialities have clear borders or boundaries. This means the vertical divisions of Thai spatialities are forms of hierarchy. If one move from one bounded, rule-defined spatiality to another has several aspects. One needs to change one’s physical presentation, such as one’s dress. Secondly, changing one’s behavior, or producing a different personality. Third, changing oneself by ritual means, such as conducting ritual practices. (Nidhi, 1991 cited in Jackson, 2020). However, Jackson mentioned the possibility of the destabilized of Thai religious complexity, and the Kalatasa contextualization. This means dealing with external cultural influences is limiting the impact of those influences. The more foreign influences are the more neutralizing its potential threat by preserving its difference within delimited contexts or containment zones. The emerging of ethno-cultural diversity seeks to neutralize the challenges presented by the foreign by preserving its difference but insisting (Jackson, 2020).

To this, these studies show that Kalatesa could help us understand the different gender performance of a Kathoei. Especially, the dynamic changes in different context of time and space. Additionally, the mismatch of the sex/gender/sexuality of Kathoei in Thai society that could overcome binariness is naturalizing binary in Thai society as well. This is why this article aims to understand the diversity of Kathoeis by presenting a Kathoei who lacks visibility and representation in LGBTQ+ community and Thai society.

The Kathoei

To portray the diversity of Kathoeis and the possibility of overcoming doing and undoing gender, the author contacted civil rights non-profits organizations in Thailand. This is to learn more about their unique life experience. One of the most interesting Kathoei informants that is able to represent the diversity of Kathoeis is Bow. Bow is a 50-year man looking person. Bow wanted to share her Kathoei story because she was a Kathoei. Also, she married to a woman, became a father of two children, after divorced she started to date another Kathoei. There is less visibility of Kathoei who had hidden and shifted her gender identity and sexuality thought her lifetime. Therefore, the unique life experience of Bow is a great example of portrayals of diverse and fluid gender identity and sexuality of Kathoeis as well as the differences of the intersectionality of class, age, ethnicity, and economic status. Bow was born 50 years ago in Bangkok. Her family had Chinese descent. she lived with her family including her father, mother, grandmother, and sister. Bow was the oldest son. It was quite the same as other Thai-Chinese families that they put high expectations towards a male family member, especially the oldest male member or son. In addition, Bow's father was a well-known person in Thai politics. Her mother was from Chiang Mai. Her grandmother was Thai traditional dancer in King Rama 6 Era, and one of the founders of Thailand's The College of Dramatic Arts. To put it simply, Bow's family has a good reputation in society. At that time, there was not a well-acceptance towards LGBTQ+ community. There was no term describing diverse gender identities and sexualities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or Tom-dee existing yet. There was only Kathoei as she remembered. One day, there was a Kathoei cabaret performer renting her family's property. Bow watched her, and though she wanted to be like her.

Bow had learned Thai traditional dancing because her grandmother taught in the school. She usually performed a female character. Bow explained she started to ‘Suemsap’ (ซึมซับ) or absorb femininity from the environment she had grown up in. One day, her grandmother told her father to send her to study at The College of Dramatic Arts. The school was full of female students to learn Thai dancing. Thus, Bow thought she would have become more feminine there. Unfortunately, her grandmother passed away before she started school. Then, her father decided to send Bow to study at a regular school. During that time, it was hard for Bow to come out. She was not allowed to express femininity at all. She hid in the closet and started to man up. Bow explained she was so quiet and polite, or ‘Riaproi’ (เรียบร้อย). In Matthayom, Bow still thought she wanted to be a woman. She decided to take a birth control pill for her medical transition. At that time, there was no medical-certified hormone for transgender people. A birth control pill was the only way to make her body appear more feminine. Bow usually expressed her identity with her Kathoei friends as soon as coming back home, she needed to hide her identity. Even though Bow could not express as a woman temporary, she truly wanted to become a woman. Additionally, there were many guys falling in love with her. Bow used to have a first love and first sexual activity in the school but need to keep it in secret from her family. Although Bow always wanted to study medicine major, her father forced her to study architecture major. Because her father graduated and was a special lecturer there. Most of the professors knew him. Bow thought the reason for her father was he wanted to convert her identity. During the university, most students were men, and there was no Kathoei. The atmosphere made her uncomfortable that she was panic to negotiate her gender identity with new people. Bow decided to stop her medical transition and start to man up in order to blend in with the new community.

‘It was like I adapted myself for surveillance in the society where there were a few women, and men only. They did not accept Kathoei, and they did not understand at all. Some hated Kathoei. All of the professors knew my father. Even my ex-boyfriend also said to me it was good already because it was impossible, he said to me not to resist. Society did not accept a person like me. He was worried about what I am going to work on in the future. Because there were not many jobs for Kathoei except makeup artist, cabaret show’ Bow said.

When Bow decided to de-transitioned, new terms of gender and sexuality in Thailand such as Tut, or Gay were created and commonly used in Thai society. Her friends from school might think she was ‘Tut,’ but friends from the university might think she was gay. In fact, she was not sure. These show new terms understand about them, and it potentially was easy that some people might understand one term differently from others. Especially, these are English word terms adopted which might be derived from the different concept of gender and sexuality from Thai Phet concept, it showed that there are some people who still identified themselves as the local old term, Kathoei, like Bow.

After graduating, Bow’s first job was as a photographer. As a photographer, she had more freedom working outdoor than living inside the university and in the control of her father. However, she did not decide to start transitioning again. She admitted that she chose the future more than what she wanted to be. Unfortunately, Bow was forced by her family to marry a woman. Her father and father-in-law had known each other for a long time. They had lived in the same neighborhood, and Bow had known the woman she was going to marry to.

‘Both families wanted to have 2 children. So, two children, okay. we did as a quest. A quest for Katanyu katawethi (กตัญญูทเวที) We finished numbers as a quest’ Bow explained.

After marrying, Bow had 2 sons. She realized that her wife did not attract to a man. Bow explained their marriage was for ‘Katanyu katawethi.’ This is one of Thai moral that a person who has a lower serenity or owns something, needs to give back. Thai people think that we need to give back as a moral. However, it was lower serenity people, because we do not usually see higher seniority need to give back to a younger or lower one. A few years later, Bow’s father passed away. Bow decided to divorce. Bow explained that her parent-in-law did not say anything. However, Bow said they would always be a good father and mother for their children.

‘We both will always be good father and mother for our children. I do not want to hurt them. I think it was my fault since I delivered them to the world. It was not from love. But I will not hurt them. I will do my best to take care of them’ Bow explained.

After divorced, Bow did not want to transition as well, but she started to express her effeminate behavior more to some of friends, colleagues, and family members. Bow always goes outside as a man. She explained her look as ‘Phuchai How’ (ผู้ชายหัว) which means a man with manly looking. Additionally, Bow sometimes dresses up as a woman with Kathoei’s friends from Matthayom. Bow demonstrated how society has shifted, and there is more acceptance toward LGBTQ+ community. Recently, there are drag queens, crossdressers, and more. Bow likes drags because drag culture is art, and so clear to be whatever they want. Additionally, Bow admitted that her sexuality also had shifted after divorce. She said that she used to like a nerdy man or Phuchai, but recently she attracts ‘Phuchai Suai’ (ผู้ชายสวย). Bow created Phuchai Suai by herself. This means a biological male who has beauty including Kathoei, Saopraphetsong, or transgender woman.

‘My sexual preference is Kathoei, Phet thisam, Sao song. I am not sure is it this term or not. But I do not like Phuchai or someone who had already undergone SRS, I would break up. I like them when everything is like the same (non-SRS) I do not like big boobs of women or a female sexual organ. Never at all. For example, when I work with a female model for a nude picture, I do not have a sexual feeling with her boobs. But I think I want to have boobs like her instead. [She laughed.] When I see a male model, a masculine body, or hair. I do not like it. I used to talk to a psychologist doctor, he said I wanted to be like them, but I could not be. So, I like something I could not be. I am not sure. Maybe it is because. I really wanted to be, but I could not be. Then I want to have one and take care of them just like love and take care of myself’ Bow explained.

Bow used to have relationships with 3 Kathoei partners. Her first relationship with a Kathoei caused a different feeling inside her. She was confused and did not know how to negotiate her identity with the relationship. Because she used to be a Kathoei, but now she becomes more masculine, and people will think she is a man. But she likes a person who has the identity as her in the past. In addition, Bow thought there were fewer amounts and less visibility of a partner of a Kathoei in the society, especially a man. Because when there were a few men. In fact, Bow observed most of a male partner of a Kathoei, most of them usually hid or embarrassed to say to the public that they are dating a Kathoei. Kathoei did not know the diversity of men. It was hard to tell whether they were active or passive due to less visibility. Thus, some of them assumed men have to be active right away.

In public space, Bow thinks her generation or people around 50 years old were oppressed by society. Some of them had mental illness and a lot of stress. This was why Bow decided to live as a manly man. But after the divorce, Bow started to express a bit more of her identity. When she meets her architecture faculty friends or Matthayom friends. She could ‘loose.’ This loose means Bow could unconsciously express her identity such as a phrase or saying ‘Ka.’ Bow showed a picture of her with a wig and makeup. Then, she smiled.

‘Deep down from my heart, I do not want them [children] to know. Because I made their lives to be born, I do not want it to be their sin again. I could not know the future. I do not want to destroy their lives. And I do not know they would hate a people like me or not.’ Bow said.

Although Bow started to be outed in the public. She tried hiding her gender identity from her children or people who know her children. Because she was concerned about their feeling. She thinks in reality if her sons want to have a partner. The family of their partners could accept or not. It is hard and it is more complicated between acceptance inside the family and in public.

‘I think people inside the community can accept her. But how people outside such as a very conservative group which does not see the world same as her. For those people, there are only two genders. ... But I think in the future, the conservatives will disappear. But now I am in between. I adopted the idea of your generation, and the old generation before me. I think in the future, in 50 years, it is possible. But currently, it cannot’ Bow said.

In the present, Bow works for a documentary about war, peace, animals. Once she wanted to work with Thai LGBTQ+ activists. She contacted the big LGBTQ+ organization in Thailand to help campaign as a photographer. But they did not reply. She thought she was excluded from the advocacy since her look was a Kathoei man or not feminine. That was why she tried to have different channels to share her story to challenge the perception of Kathoeis in Thai society. Until she met me, she wanted her life story to encourage LGBTQ+ people who are suffering or living in the closet.

‘I think I want to tell you about my story, because there is a person like me in my generation, and they are still afraid and suffering to say and talk about this. So, I want to give this story to you’ Bow said.

Bow is one of the interesting Kathoei cases that had the ability to balance the appropriation of each time and space. This means she had several roles in her life including Kathoei, father, mother, and son of her parents. She acknowledged the previous inequality in her life and used it to challenge it again. For example, she admitted she got along with a gender role as a man when she was young. Then, after she had her own children. She did not want to pass her uncomfortable to her children again. Then, she wanted to be a good father. Also, she still had a concern of other people in other contexts. That was why she did not decide to transition not the full time to present her gender to all of them but transitioning temporary where she felt comfortable. The 50-year life experience of Bow shows the fluidity in terms of gender and sexuality show the variety of gender performances. These gender performances included positive and negative impacts from and to Thai society as well as balancing it to several contexts including family, work, friend, children, or people surrounding her children.

5. Diversity of Kathoei

This study aims to understand the diversity of Kathoeis. Although the definition of LGBTQ+ terms and identities had been shifted throughout the times, Thai society focuses on the visibility of a Kathoei with a character of feminine, heterosexual, or outstanding images. This differentiation among Kathoeis and by Thai society caused in neglecting and excluding Kathoeis who have a different appearance, sexuality, background. Thus, Bow's 50-year life experience shows the variety of gender performances as well as positive and negative impacts on Thai society in different contexts throughout her life. This means balancing several contexts including family, work, friends, children.

The changing context in each time and space impacted the definition of Kathoei and gender performances of Kathoey in Thai society throughout their lives. These were influenced by the changes of heterosexual discourse in several contexts. These also showed how different contexts had different heterosexual discourse governing one's gender performance including the Thai local concept of Kalatesa. First, Bow is one of the interesting Kathoei case that had ability to balance the appropriation of each time and space. This means she had several roles in her life including Kathoei, father, mother, and son of her parents. Bow's life experience was not only a case to directly demystify the inborn character of a Kathoei, but she acknowledged the previous inequality in her life and used it to challenge it as well. For example, she admitted that she got along with a gender role as a man when she was young. Then, after she had her own children. She did not want to pass her uncomfortable to her children again. Then, she wanted to be a good father. Also, she still had a concern about her customers, relatives, children. That was why Kalatesa does not only play a role in life at the context at the time. But it is possible to change dynamically and impact differently throughout the times.

Secondly, developing her gender identity and sexuality as a Kathoey throughout her life causes in her acknowledgment of fluidity of gender identity or the possibility of unfixing the definition of each gender in Thailand. This acknowledgment from her unique experience causes the creation of her own term, Phuchai Suai. She defined Phuchai Suai as a biological male with a male genital and fluid and wide ranges of feminine beauty. It indirectly challenges Thai society by acknowledging the paradox from past time and space then taking in an action in present time and space.

Lastly, the classification within the Kathoei community does not only exclude the diversity in terms of gender and sexuality, but it includes the discrimination of intersection of class, economic status, age. This is similar to Kalatesa. However, the discrimination of intersection gender, sexuality, and class in one time and space could perform differently in another time and space. This means it could lead to benefits and negative effects differently. For example, 'Krengchai' or respected the reputation of the person, and 'Katanyu katawethi' or give back their senior that influenced her gender role. These led to Bow being 'Riaproi' at home or following a gender role to marry and have a child. These experiences of Bow caused her to suffer at that time. However, in a different time like after Bow had succeeded her responsibility or quest from her family. This success in a life following a gender role gained a social reputation and ability for Bow to be herself in the present time and space.

To this, undoing gender was the outcome of performativity under heterosexual discourse. However, undoing gender in Thai society also included Krengchai or respected the reputation of the person, and Katanyu katawethi or giving back to their senior by assimilating countless numbers of gender performance. After they accomplished this gender performance assigned by gender role including developing career, being married, having a child, it unconsciously gained a social reputation or face under Kalatesa concept. This led to independence for them to have more choice in their lives including choosing the suitable career for their identities, transitioning, and choosing a partner.

Also, Kalatesa was an example of another local concept of sex/gender/sexuality embedded with the hetero normative discourse, and how it exercised its power of controlling people's behavior in different contexts, in everyday life action as well as in terms of time and space during different period of people's life. However, Kathoei's experiences showed that the local concept under the discourse could not only create the reproduction of power of the discourse. There was a possibility of using the existing local concept as a subversive challenge to the discourse. This also included the movement that could use the acknowledgment of the gap of power of a discourse to be negotiating strategy to the society.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, ‘What does Kathoei really mean?’ and ‘Kathoei could mean to be out of heterosexual discourse?’ In this study, Kathoei refers to all individuals who were born with male genitalia but identify as transvestites, cross-dressing people, androgynous and polygender individuals living in Thailand. Interestingly, the findings showed that Kathoei could have their gender performance that reproduced gender role assigned by transitioning gender under heterosexuality and gender binary. However, there was also a possibility of both intentionally and unintentionally gender performances that mismatched between sex, gender, and sexuality and could be a challenge to the discourse. These gender performances consisted of diversity, complexity, and fluidity throughout their lives.

It was inevitable to grow their complexity and paradox to heterosexuality in a form of western understanding, or Thai concept of Phet, or Kalatesa. To this, the author would like to demonstrate that the conflict coalition and argument of LGBTQ+ community were also undeniable, because there was no absolute universal, the best, or lifelong perfect tool to overcome heterosexual discourse in Thailand. Even though some of the movements at this time might not lead to the end of the discourse, and perhaps support the discourse unintentionally, one could learn throughout their lives to find the best tool considering time, space, and surveillances, to balance the different aspects of their lives. Hence, the movements from Kathoei’s life experiences were an initial example of the magnificent architecture of the movement. If a movement is the building, one day it would be reconstructed, renovated, or deconstructed, because the movement and community always keep growing.

Reference

- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (2nd Edition). New York & London: Routledge.
- _____. (2004). *Undoing gender*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Duangwises, N. (2013). Phet Laklai Nai Sangkhom Thai Kap Kanmueang Khong Atta Lak. *Journal of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University* 2/2013.
- Connell, C. (2010). Doing, undoing, or redoing gender? Learning from the workplace experiences of transgender people. *Gender & Society*, 24(1), 31-55.
- Jackson, P. (2020). Beyond hybridity and syncretism: Kala-Thesa Contextual Sensitivity and Power in Thai Religious and Gender Cultures. *Journal of Anthropology, Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (JASAC)*, 3(1), 1-34. Retrieved April 9, 2021 from <https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jasac/article/view/243148>
- Jackson, P., & Sullivan, G. (1999). A panoply of roles: Sexual and gender diversity in contemporary Thailand. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 9(2-3), 1-27.
- Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Nidhi, E. (1991). "Spatiality in Thai Thought (Pheun-thi nai khati thai)", *Sinlapawattantham (Art and Culture)*, 13(2): 180-192.
- Käng, D. B. C. (2012). Kathoey "in trend": Emergent genderscapes, national anxieties and the re-signification of male-bodied effeminacy in Thailand. *Asian Studies Review*, 36(4), 475-494.
- Pravattiyagul, J. (2014). *Abusive relationships: Thai transgender women and European men*. *Criminología y Justicia*, 7(3). (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Utrecht, The Netherlands.
- Schilt, K., & Westbrook, L. (2009). Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity: "Gender Normals," Transgender People, and the Social Maintenance of Heterosexuality. *Gender & Society*, 23(4), 440-464.
- Sangganjanavanich, V. (2003). *An invisible life: post-operative male to female transsexual*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Bangkok: Ramkhamhaeng University.
- Ten Brummelhuis, H. (1999). Transformations of transgender: The case of the Thai Kathoei. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 9(2-3), 121-139.

- UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre.
- Van Esterik, P. (2000). *Materializing Thailand*. Oxford & New York: Berg.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (2009). Accounting for doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 23(1), 112-122.
- Westbrook, L., & Schilt, K. (2014). Doing gender, determining gender: Transgender people, gender panics, and the maintenance of the sex/gender/sexuality system. *Gender & Society*, 28(1), 32-57.