MEDITATIONS ON THAI QUEER IDENTITY THROUGH LAKHON NOK

by Sura Intamool

This thesis investigates lakhon nok as a queer performative theatre practice that mirrors the relationship between Thai queer people and society. The interviews of lakhon nok performers are utilized as documents that reveal the recognition of homosexuality in Thailand. Due to the acceptance of theatrical tradition and social norms embedded within lakhon nok performances, which include cross-dressing and are marked with a high level of queer performativity, the performances are accepted in Thai society and, as a result, homosexuality, particularly the transgendered, has also been recognized in Thailand. This thesis scrutinizes and meditates on overlapping paradigms: historiography, post-colonialism, and queer theory. All of these accommodate a queer reading. Ultimately, the study highlights queerness in Thai society reflected through lakhon nok performances.
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NOTES ON ROMANIZATION FOR THAI SCRIPT

Due to the utilization of a great number of Thai words in this thesis, I will transcribe them into English according to *Principles of Romanization for Thai Script by Transcription Method* written by the Royal Institute of Thailand in 1999. The principles were endorsed by the Thai government in 2000. The system is internationally approved as deployed in the Eighth United Nations Conference for the Standardization of Geographical Names in Berlin, 2002. As a consequence, the principles can be implemented to the use of the word “lakhon” which is also employed in several sources. It will not be written as “lakon” which can be seen in a certain number of sources. However, exceptions to romanization include proper nouns such as names of people or organizations which have been long used as well as Thai terms which are well-established.
Chapter one:

Meditations of Positionality and Performativity

First of all, it is quite essential to fully apprehend the background of the author of this thesis in order to obtain accurate comprehension. Personally, I position myself as a Thai Theravada Buddhist living in Chiang Mai, the second biggest city in Thailand, and a queer who has been out to my family and all people surrounding me since I was young. While residing in Chiang Mai, most of my friends in school and college were homosexual. Some of them are now transsexual. When fulfilling my first master’s degree at Chulalongkorn University and working for Dass Entertainment and the Bangkok Playhouse, professional theatre companies in Bangkok, I became acquainted with many homosexuals, particularly academics and celebrities. Once, in my life, I played a female character in a lakhon nok performance when all male performers who played female characters were “kathoey” or gay. \(^1\) I am currently a professor in English with a concentration in dramatic literature at Chiang Mai University, Thailand. Also, I am a post-modern queer theorist who used to be an active observer in the Bangkok Pride Parade for several times. I have become most recently interested in queer theory as I attended a queer theory class at Miami University of Ohio. Fortunately, I have had golden chances to attend several interesting events organized by Spectrum, an undergraduate LGBT organization, a graduate LGBT organization called Haven, and multiple sessions of the LGBT panel hosted by the Association of Theatre in Higher Education’s 24\(^{TH}\) Annual Conference: Theatre Alive: Theatre, Media and Survival in Los Angeles. I have also had formal and informal conversations with several gay people inside and outside academia. All of these incidents have broadened my perspectives to perceive the clearer panoramic view of LGBT or queer people in the U.S., especially in Ohio, the Midwest region which is regarded as conservative. I have gained an awareness of different points of view towards homosexuality in both cultures. Homosexuality, particularly the

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\(^1\) Serena Nanda defines a Thai term kathoey which could refer to homosexual males and females. The term previously included biological hermaphrodites, and cross-dressing men as well as women. Subsequently, people neglected to use the term for cross-dressing masculine females who are now universally referred to as “tom,” which was derived from the English word “tomboy.” A feminine lesbian partner of a tom, previously not distinguished from gender-normative females, is called “dee” which is from the last syllable of “lady.” Consequently, the term kathoey nowadays is usually understood as a male transgender category. In different contexts, it refers to transvestites or cross-dressers, hermaphrodites, transsexuals, and effeminate homosexuals (71-78).
transgendered, is recognized as a distinguished gender in Thailand as a result from Buddhism which mentions the existence of homosexuals in Tipitaka, the basic scriptural canon of Theravada Buddhism. It is not recognized in the U.S. as a gender in Christianity. However, American homosexuals are permitted to have legal matrimony in some states whereas those in Thailand are not.

Next, it is mandatory to delineate the chronology of gay history in Thailand leading to the first public demonstration in 1999. According to Arin Pinijvararak, although there is no religious penalty for the act of sodomy in Buddhism like that in a more conservative reading of Christianity, the Tipitaka states that a *kathoey*, who is a homosexual and a person who has masculine and feminine sexual organs, is forbidden to be ordained as a monk. If the person becomes a monk, his monkhood must be terminated (29). There was some discrimination to queer people in the ancient time as apparently seen from some previous laws of Thailand. Prempreeda Pramoj Na Ayutthaya mentions that a *kathoey* was one of 33 types of people who could not be witnesses in court according to the Law of Appeal under the Code of the Three Great Seals, the ancient Thai law that was revised during the reign of King Rama I in 1782-1809 (9-10). Likewise, Pinijvararak states that in *Monthianban*, the law for courtiers, item 124, there was a penalty for a couple of ladies-in-waiting who performed the act of sodomy. However, the act of homosexuality or claiming oneself as homosexual is not illegal in the present law of Thailand. Nevertheless, a progressive phenomenon which marked the openness of homosexuals in Thai history was a *kathoey* beauty contest in 1972 which was the event when a great number of homosexuals in Thailand attended and many of them became officially out to the public. At that moment, Thai society did not negatively react to the phenomenon; consequently, homosexuals themselves and the attitude towards homosexuality in Thailand has consistently been more liberal (10-36).

After the “beauty contest,” “Gay Right in Thailand 2007” mentions that Anjaree, a unique Thai LGBT organization among many, was founded with the Headquarter in Bangkok by Miss Anjana Suvarnanonda in 1990. Initially, the organization solely targeted lesbians. Now it has members throughout the country. Anjaree provides the information, supports the community and brings social events for lesbians in Thailand. Anjaree, under the zealous guidance of Miss Suvarnanonda, is quite distinguished since it also includes political activism and advocacy.
Astrea Lesbian Foundation, an international organization, mentions the distinguished characteristic of Anjaree as following: “Anjaree is a lesbian activist group that has almost single-handedly changed the landscape for Thailand’s estimated 6 million LGBT citizens (http://www.globalgayz.com).” The organization assisted the repeal of a college policy that prohibited homosexual and trans-gendered students from enrolling in 36 colleges. Additionally, with the enthusiasm of Anjaree, a policy of Thai government banning homosexual people from appearing on television was reversed in 1998. Nowadays, the organization facilitates in maintaining the connection among Thai LGBT people through media such as newspapers and its website (http://www.globalgayz.com).

Subsequently, the openness of queer people in Thailand reached another significant moment in the history when the public demonstration of the gay pride parade was organized. According to Asia News, Mr. Pakorn Pimton and his group initiated the first pride festival in Thailand, the Bangkok Gay Festival, which ultimately led to the first pride parade on Silom Road in 1999.² Besides, his group later supported, participated, and appeared in other gay festivals during following years. Currently, Mr. Pimton is a consultant for the Bangkok administration staff. In that position, he focuses on stimulating the awareness of issues which are relevant to homosexuality (http://www.utopia-asia.com). “Gay Rights in Thailand 2007” also explains that Rainbow Sky Association, another active LGBT organization, was founded in 2001 by Natee Teeraroonjanapongs. Nowadays, the organization is recognized for its vigorous mission on HIV/AIDS issues. As part of this progress of the LGBT movement in Thailand, in January 2002, the organization Anjaree successfully pressured Thailand’s Ministry of Health to nationally announce that homosexuality was no longer a mental illness. Nevertheless, the 2007 Constitution of Thailand, which is the present one, does not recognize same-sex marriages, civil unions or domestic partnerships. Miss Suvarnanonda clearly states in the following. “The new constitution must recognize the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and the transgendered….The equality clause in the draft constitution only endorses equal rights between men and women. There should be an additional clause to recognize diverse sexuality, which will help ease the problems of discrimination we are facing” (http://www.globalgayz.com). As previously

² Pakorn Pimton is an active member in “Klum Gay Tan Phai AIDS” (a gay group preventing HIV crisis). For nine years, the group has consisted of performers who devote themselves to the prevention of AIDS and the education of prisoners in correctional facilities, one of the most overlooked risk groups, and grass-rooted people (http://www.utopia-asia.com).
delineated, Thailand’s political worldview in regard to the spectrum of queer issues is an evolving one. On one hand, Thailand appears open, accepting, and progressive. Yet, a closer look at civil practices reveals a society in positive transition.

In this thesis, I will investigate *lakhon nok* as an evolving queer performative theatre practice that mirrors Thai progress in relation to Thai queer people and society. The interviews of performers will be utilized as documents that reveal the recognition of homosexuality and will be evidence of evolution of homosexuality in Thailand. These five *lakhon nok* performers are from the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts which is a national company. The interviews were conducted on July 19, 2010. Those performers are Mr. Chawalit Sunthranon, Mr. Khomsannatha Huamueanglat, Mr. Kitti Chatuprayun, Mr. Sarawut Aromchuen, and Mr. A (pseudonym). Every interviewee signed a consent form to grant me permission. The permission was bestowed to me in order to utilize the data which I obtained from the interview and to publish the data for academic purposes. Specifically, at the end of each interview, I was granted permission by all interviewees (except Mr. A) to deploy their names as reference. Before launching into the historiography, and queer reading chapters of the thesis, a brief introductory discussion of queer performativity in theatre will serve as an overlapping paradigm and starting point. Theories of David Savran, Judith Butler, (Richard Schechner,) and Peter A. Jackson are discussed in this thesis. Although Western queer theory cannot articulate culturally specific performances completely within Thai society, it can considerably shape my perspective as lens to contemplate *lakhon nok*. Nerida M. Cook and Peter A. Jackson precisely prove this idea as they articulate ideas regarding Thai uniqueness. There are two characteristics which make Thailand unique among other Asian countries. The first one is that Thailand has a loosely structured social system which endorses individual freedom, particularly in sexuality. A person can make decisions that reflect self-motivation devoid of concern for other people’s opinions and expectations. This is contrasted with the rigidly communalistic respect to family and other social groups in East Asian societies. Another characteristic is that Thailand is the regional exception, a rare Asian case having escaped directly extensive Western domination at a time when all its neighbors became colonized. However, Thailand’s semi-colonial status is often recognized since the country has been open to international trade and foreign social research.

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3 I use parentheses to denote Mr. Schechner’s minimal usage and the fact that he is not a recognized queer theorist but a performance theorist.
Therefore, Thailand is considered one of the most Western-friendly Southeast Asian States. (6-7) Besides, Jackson furthers the argument that the idea of sex and gender in Asian cultures, particularly Thailand, are different from that of Western cultures due to local factors. Therefore, Western queer theories hardly articulate those phenomena in Thailand. However, they provide a basis in explaining the development of those queer cultures including Thailand (“Global Queering” 15-28).

I would argue that due to the acceptance of theatrical tradition and social norms both embedded within lakhon nok performances, which includes cross-dressing and are marked with a high level of queer performativity, the performances are accepted in the society and, as a result, homosexuality, particularly the transgendered, can also be articulated in Thai society. Holistically, the performance reflects the fluidity of Thai society in recognizing homosexuality. I would like to explore how lakhon nok performances subvert and challenge hetero-normativity and its attendant male and female behaviors. Thereby, the performances create a queer performative space that challenges the hetero-normative. In this thesis, I will scrutinize overlapping paradigms: historiography, post-colonialism, and queer theory. All of these ultimately accommodate a queer reading which, due to the essence of gender as a social construct, interest me.  

Gender is the unfixed identity variedly defined in different societies. Furthermore, queer theory allows me to explore the open space of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, and excesses of prominently constituent genders. Also, queer theory investigates the gender-neutral and anything in between male and female. Consequently, my study leads to the exploration of queerness in Thai society reflected in lakhon nok performances which resonates with the mentioned statements related to queer theory.

Subsequently, Thai queer performativity is quite significant to discuss since it enables us to comprehend why lakhon nok performances clearly portray the recognition of kathoey and homosexuality in Thai society. Generally speaking, homosexuality is both present and performative in Thailand. Richard Schechner describes the idea of performativity as it “is everywhere—in daily behavior, in the profession, on the internet and media, in the arts, and in language” (123). Serena Nanda indicates the long history of kathoey or effeminate gay men in Thailand. Buddhist origin myths describe three original human sex or genders as male, female, and

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4 Queer theory deployed in this thesis is defined by David Savran, Judith Butler, and Peter A. Jackson.
and biological hermaphrodite or *kathoey* which is an independently existing third sex. *Kathoey* can be also mentioned as effeminate homosexuals who are like women but also are not women. This system of three human sexes remained prevalent in Thailand until the mid-twentieth century (71-73). Jackson explains the existence of *kathoey* in Thailand. Drawing on Northern Thai origin legends, the ancient Thai gender system was based on a model of three genders: male, female, and *kathoey*. Moreover, in classical and some contemporary literature, it is usual for the ideal Thai man to be portrayed as soft-featured, occasionally being equally sexually attractive to women and men. *Kathoey* who are most negatively criticized in everyday contexts, are those considered loudmouthed and aggressive--qualities widely regarded as low class and anti-social based on Thai ideals of self-presentation and appropriateness. On the contrary, the most admired or respected *kathoey* are those who are apt and exhibit a high standard of feminine beauty and who adopt the reserved, polite manners and speech of a genteel man or woman. If possible, they should successfully abandon signs of masculinity in becoming feminine beauties who exhibit sophisticated behaviors and manners. Nevertheless, *kathoey* have also long been presented in a positive light in the popular press though almost always in a humorous context (“Tolerant but Unaccepting” 226-33).

David Savran argues that theatre is often a queer performative space created by the interplay between and among text, actor, director, and spectator of the bourgeoisie or middle-class white gay men. Moreover, producers who are members of the “leisure” or upper class also distribute economically and politically important roles in the space. Queer playwrights then compose their texts based on the relationship between the sexual identity of the producers and their works. The texts therefore represent the subject-matters related to queer people. Consequently, in the texts, homosexual subjectivities are produced as representative, not of the perverse but the normative, not the subversive but the national. Generally speaking, the texts represent a queered national identity. Actors and directors, who are gay men, have played significant roles in the U.S. theatre since World War II. The actors make their best effort in portraying characters and communicating messages of the texts to spectators or audiences. Consequently, the spectators primarily identify themselves with the characters onstage (152-66). In terms of queer performative space, the previously explained concept of Savran perfectly fit this thesis to explain the relationship between producers, texts, directors, actors, and spectators in *Lakhon Nok* performances. This will be subsequently investigated in this thesis.
To provide a guideline for effective reading of my thesis, it is essential to briefly review all four chapters in the thesis. In this introductory chapter, I have positioned myself as a gay post-modern queer theorist who will analyze Thai traditional *lakhon nok* performances within a queer reading. The second chapter will explore the historiography and the national revision of *lakhon nok*. In this chapter, I will investigate the panoramic history of the performance from the origin until the present moment. Also, I will explore how *lakhon nok* performances were transformed throughout Thailand’s history. The third chapter will be queer reading of *lakhon nok*. In this chapter, I will discuss how the performances could be analyzed through a Western queer theory lens which shapes an observation of *lakhon nok* performances, together with a Thai queer theory lens. Such a culturally specific lens is required to penetrate the precise comprehension of queer reading in *lakhon nok* performances. The final chapter is the conclusion of this thesis. The positionality introduction, the historiography and national revision, and queer reading will be woven to create the interconnectedness of *lakhon nok* performances, Thai queer people, and Thai society. This enables us to perceive performances as simultaneously cultural artifacts which can illuminate the entire society like threads unified to create the entire fabric. Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of academic anthropology in the English-speaking world, states the significance of culture as the major source to comprehend a specific society. “Culture…taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society” (as cited by Green and Troup 172).
Chapter Two:

Historiography and Revision of Lakhon Nok

This chapter will explore the historiography and revision of *lakhon nok* in order to comprehend why this performance usually appears as an all male cast and how the ideas of cross-dressing and queer theory can be employed. Also, I will study the epoch of modernization in Thailand which created the binary gender system which almost replaced the three gender system in Thailand and consequently affected all performances including *lakhon nok*. First of all, it is mandatory to comprehend the definition of *lakhon*. Sumonman Nimnetiphan defines the term as a performance with a plot which stimulates amusement, entertainment, and pleasure in human beings to perceive their own nature portrayed from actions in those performances. Particularly, *lakhon* is a play equipped with traditional dancing patterns. There are four significant elements in *lakhon*: plot, theme, characters with rational characterization, and setting that creates atmosphere (5-6).

**Definition and Genres of Lakhon**

According to the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*, Surapone Virulrak delineates four major genres of *lakhon*: *lakhon chatri*, *lakhon nok*, *lakhon nai*, and *lakhon phantang* in Thailand. First of all, *lakon chatri* is the oldest and simplest genre related to animistic practices and spirit worship. It initially appeared in the early fifteenth century during the Ayutthya Kingdom (1350-1767). *Lakon Chatri* is traditionally an all male cast and offered as a show of appreciation to gods. Normally, the performance will start in the morning with a musical prelude, a chant to deities, a dance of offering, and then the play will follow. After an intermission at noon, the play will continue until late afternoon. Finally, at the part of conclusion equipped with music, gods are asked to return to their heavenly residences. A repertoire is based on jataka, which are tales of Buddha’s incarnations and Thai folktales. There are four major characters which are hero, heroine, villain, and clown. The costume is in traditionally Thai
theatrical style, with a cone-shaped crown, a tight embroidered jacket, knee-length trousers wrapped with a loincloth, a pendant, a belt, bracelets, and anklets for a male character. Additionally, a female character wears a shawl and a pleated long skirt instead of trousers. A stage for the performance, approximately five meters or sixteen feet square, is covered with mats. Throughout a performance, the troupe master will narrate the story to the accompaniment of a *piphat* orchestra.\(^5\) Performers sit on a bench facing the *piphat* orchestra, sing, and dance alternates with improvised dialogue. When they are not engaged in any action, they will sing as an ensemble in tune with the rhythm provided by wooden clappers. The second type is *lakhon nok* which means a play outside of the palace. It developed as a refinement of *lakon chatri*. While performers do not sing themselves, they will improvise dialogue by themselves. When they dance, they synchronize with lyrics sung by offstage singers. Originally, the stage was a raised wooden platform with a bench in front of a painted backdrop located upstage center. The *piphat* ensemble was stage right. *Lakon nok* began with a chant to deities; however, the performance lasted only two hours. The third genre is *lakhon nai* which mean a play inside of the palace. It evolved from court ritual dances and elements from *khon* and *lakhon nok* around the early eighteenth century.\(^6\) *Lakhon Nai* is considered as the most conventional of Thai theatre since it incorporates literature, music, dance, costume, and performers who were ladies in the royal palace. Nowadays, the performances are presented solely by females. The final genre is *lakhon phantang* which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. Its stories, characters, songs, and dances were considerably influenced by various cultures of early migrants to Bangkok. *Lakhon Phantang* is apparently an evolution of *lakon nok* and relies upon the same structure (http://ebooks.ohiolink.edu.proxy.lib.muohio.edu). We can obviously see that *lakhon nok* is quite significant since it is the motivation for the creation of *lakhon nai* and *lakhon phantang*.

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5 A *piphat* orchestra consists of five musical instruments at minimum: a xylophone, a drum, a flute, a gong, and a cymbal.

6 *Khon* is masked *lakhon*. The play was performed by dancers who portrayed four types of characters: hero, heroine, demon, and monkey. Each performer wears a different mask. The motif of the script Ramakien was taken from India’s Ramayana. It is usually performed to celebrate auspicious ceremonies of the state. For further information of *khon*, please see Virulrak (http://ebooks.ohiolink.edu.proxy.lib.muohio.edu).
Several scholars delineate the origin and characteristics of lakhon nok. Songsak Prangwatthanakun states that lakhon nok traditionally employed an all male cast which consisted of 2-3 actors. These actors would switch roles in a story. Later, more actors were added. Subsequently, in the reign of King Rama IV (1851-68), there was an official announcement that male and female performers would be combined in the same troupe. Then people were interested in the use of female performers. Consequently, the use of all male cast was gradually diminished. The traditional dancing patterns of lakhon nok are not as rigid as those of lakhon nai because the emphasis is on a fast driving plot and humor. Sometimes, a performance is prolonged for humorous conversations between characters. The jokes are usually naughty, having sexual innuendo, or satirical to the society. A male performer is required to possess strong and swift physicality. The ability in Thai traditional dancing and singing together with a sharp tongue enables him to provide witty impromptu dialogue (111-118). Wimonsri Uparamai mentions that all stories in Thai literature can be utilized as scripts of lakhon nok, except Ramakien, Inao, and Unnarut which are preserved as scripts for lakhon nai (129). According to Nimnetiphan, in the ancient time, there were 14 plays for lakhon nok performances which are Karaket, Khawi, Chaiyathat, Phikulthong, Pimsawan, Phinsuriyawong, Manora, Mongpa, Maneephichai, Sangthong, Sangsilapachai, Suwannasilpa, Suwannahong, and Sowat. In lakhon nok, characters in high ranks like king, queen, and people in royal families can make fun with those in lower ranks like noble people and peasants without any discrimination. Since the performances are not as rigid as the conventions of lakhon nai, scripts are composed with concise and easy-to-understand words. Moreover, these words should possess several connotations for the performers to interpret in several ways, particularly in a naughty way. In lakhon nok, sophisticated characters behave in similar ways as humble characters. The performances were staged as part of the celebrations in several secularly and religiously auspicious occasions, except royal ceremonies. Originally, the costumes in lakhon nok performances were as simple as ordinary people’s clothing which allowed the actors to move conveniently on stage. An actor was draped in a white cloth from the waist over the left shoulder to remind audiences that the actor was playing a female. The actor put on a specific makeup, a thick line around his mouth to make it
look larger than life, or a demon mask which was, and is presently, had, and presently has, usually green and has two lower fangs to signify the demon character. Later, the costume in *lakhon nok* was elaborated since it was influenced by *lakhon nai* (125-27).

Based on “Lakhon Nok” by Saowalak Anantasan, the subject matters of *lakhon nok* deal with royal families, superstition and share similar themes. Generally, there are two major types of subjects. The first one is the journey for the hero to gain more experiences or to become mature. The hero is required to take a “learning journey” to gain more knowledge. With some circumstances, the hero has to depart from his hometown and then return home. During the journey, the hero will encounter numerous interesting incidents such as meeting the heroine, getting married, and facing villains and obstacles through which he can prove himself as a mature man. The second subject matter in *lakhon nok* is a dispute over love. A large number of *lakhon nok* performances deal with jealousy and dispute in love between the wife and the husband’s mistresses because of polygamy in Ancient Thai society. The mistresses usually employ tricks to win the husband’s heart. (15-17).

**Origin and Characteristics of Lakhon Nai**

The concise definition and characteristics of *lakhon nai* must now be drawn to delineate the intimate relationship and certain distinguished features between *lakhon nai* and *lakhon nok*. According to Virulrak, *lakhon nai*, which is simply comprehended as the royal drama performed by all female cast, was originally created in the reign of Somdet Phra Chaoyuhua Boromakot (1732-58) in the Ayutthaya Kingdom (1351-1767).7 *Lakhon Nai* is known by several names: *lakhon luang* (royal play), *lakhon phuying khong luang* (royal female play), *lakhon phuying* (female play) and *lakhon nangnai* (female courtier play). *Lakhon Nai* was originally evolved from *lakhon nok* as previously mentioned: they were adjusted to fit with female courtiers. Besides, the costumes of the hero and the heroine imitated that of the royal family in the late Ayutthaya Kingdom. King Rama II (1809-24) improved and finalized the form of *lakhon nai*. Subsequently, it has been preserved and passed on to present-day Thailand’s Department of

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7 Somdet Phra Chaoyuhua is a title of king.
The motifs for several scripts of *lakhon nai* were drawn from *Ramakien*, *Unnarut*, and *Inao* that have subject matters dealing with royal families. It was solely an entertainment for kings; no one else in the kingdom could possess this genre of performance. It was generally performed inside the palace in royal ceremonies. This is the most distinguished feature of *lakhon nai*. Biological sex is not the most significant aspect since there were barely male performers in *lakhon nai*. During the reign of King Rama I (1782-1809) until King Rama III (1824-51) of the Rattanakosin Kingdom (1782-1932), Nai Tongyu usually played Inao, the title character in the performance *Inao*, and Nai Rung usually played female characters.\(^8\) Both were two male instructors who educated female performers in *lakhon nai*. Besides, during the reign of King Rama IV, there was an announcement in 1855 that noble men and ordinary people could possess female troupe. This created a big change in Thai Dramatic Arts. Women could perform in performances for ordinary people. From that moment on, women and men could perform all kinds of performances (33-167).

Viruluk further articulates five significant characteristics of *lakhon nai*. Primarily, a script of *lakhon nai* must be neatly composed with exquisite vocabulary which aesthetically facilitates the play to create artistic pictures for the audience. The script depicts just one or two episodes from a story in literature. Next, the melody operated by Thai classical instruments in the performance must be beautifully and neatly played to perfectly fit the singers who have been specifically well-trained for this genre of performance. The third characteristic is the neatly constructed costume with vividly colorful fabrics and delicately embroidered together with precious accessories which are meticulously produced to accentuate each performer from head to toe. Next, sophisticated dancing patterns must be accurately and exquisitely performed in every single detail. This results in the need for strict and time-consuming rehearsals. Generally speaking, the performance must be flawless. Consequently, the advancement of plot is quite slow due to the concentration on dancing patterns. The final characteristic is physically attractive performers who must be well-trained in social etiquettes. They will be selected to perfectly match characters in the script (92-97).

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\(^8\) Nai is a title deployed to address a man. Its meaning is similar to Mr. in Western countries.
Another style of *lakhon nok* was created with the influence of *lakhon nai* by King Rama II: the royal *lakhon nok* is the combination between the simplicity of *lakhon nok* and the sophistication of *lakhon nai*. Based on Surapone Virulrak, after King Rama II finalized the form of *lakhon nai*, his majesty experimented on a new aesthetic invention by his artistic drive. His majesty would like female courtiers to perform *lakhon nok*. In some royal ceremonies which were organized outside the palace, *lakhon nai* performances would be required to be present as part of celebration. Most audiences were ordinary people. The performances didn’t fit their preference well. The time duration of the *lakhon nai* performance and intricate patterns thereof did not suit a popular taste. As a consequence, the royal *lakhon nok* performances were invented to fit the audience’s preference and the scripts of the performances mostly depicted especially episodes which were entertaining. This is regarded as an important phenomenon in the evolution of Thai dramatic arts (97-98).

Viruluk also delineates eight significant characteristics of the royal *lakhon nok* performances that have been vigorously preserved and passed on to Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts. First of all, performances emphasize the plot advancement. They are performed more swiftly when compared to *lakhon nai*, but slower than *lakhon nok* performances by ordinary people. The second characteristic is that words in the scripts are more concise to fit the mood of characters in each episode and dancing patterns of performers. King Rama II composed five scripts, *Chaiyachet*, *Maniphichai*, *Khawi*, *Sangthong*, and *Kraithong* inspired by former *lakhon nok* scripts. The next characteristic is that performers are not required to sing like those in *lakhon nai*. There are singers who are responsible for singing parts as the narration of the story. However, performers can have impromptu conversation like that of the ordinary *lakhon nok* performances. The fourth characteristic is that dancing patterns of the royal *lakhon nok* are more sophisticated than those of ordinary *lakhon nok* due to the influence of

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9 King Rama II composed five plays for the *lakhon nok* performances which became quite popular among ordinary and sophisticated people. There is another play *Sangsilpachai* which some believed that he adapted from the play which his younger brother King Rama III once wrote. *Chaiyachet*, *Sangthong*, *Maniphichai* and *Sangsilapachai*, are the satirical plays about the jealousy in the royal court whereas *Kraithong*, *Khawi* reflects the human nature of ordinary people (Na Nakhon 289-92).
lakhon nai; however, they tend to be more swift and forceful when compared to those of lakhon nai. Next, the exquisiteness of costume is similar to that of lakhon nai. The sixth characteristic is that, in the royal lakon nok performances, kings can freely and humorously converse with their noble men and peasants, but not as much as in the ordinary lakon nok. To create humor, clowns usually flatter their kings in the royal lakhon nai. In contrast, in the ordinary lakhon nok, clowns will apparently point out the stupidity or flaws in kings. Moreover, seventh characteristic, major characters in the royal lakhon nok tend to be extroverted, not introvert like those in lakhon nai. Finally, eighth characteristic, customs or traditions in the palace have been rigidly maintained in the royal lakhon nok performances as those of lakhon nai (89-99).

Lakhon Nok performances presented by the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts, and which will be later mentioned and discussed in this thesis represent an adjustment of the authentic lakhon nok where an all male cast was deployed and the royal lakhon nok where sophisticated characteristics were influenced by lakhon nai. This is quite interesting since they are different from the royal lakhon nok when all female courtiers performed. This is obviously seen from the interview with Mr. Chawalit Sunthranon, a lakhon nok performer and an expert in Thai traditional dramatic arts and music with a distinctive rank in the Office of Performing Arts.

“Normally, plays organized by the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts, rigidly follow the great tradition of the palace because all teachers during the early period of Thai dramatic arts were trained in the royal palace. Therefore, the performances were all female cast because of the critical shortage of male performers and the rule that allowed only women to perform in the palace. When there were more male performers in the Office of Performing Arts, the performances consisted of female and male performers. Finally, the performances become all male cast. This depends on the availability of performers at each period…. since the performances were established in the royal palace, the emphasis was on the elaborate traditional dancing style; the comic element was hardly found. They didn’t tend to be hilarious like what we are performing today. The early lakhon nok performances of the Office of Performing Arts were all female caste because of the critical shortage of male performers. A current lakhon nok performance is a combination between the sophisticated lakhon nok performances of courtiers and the rustic lakhon nok performances of common people. There will be the combination of elegantly
traditional dancing patterns and humor. Besides, with all male cast, it allows actors to act out something which might be regarded as improper if performed by an actress.”

From possible and sensible changes of *lakhon nok* from time to time and which were further affected by the factor of performers, we can perceive the fluidity and openness of the performances which helped to reinforce the fluidity and openness in recognizing the homosexual in Thai society.

**Nationalism as Homogenizing Process to the Hetero-normative**

As I indicated in the introduction, Thailand has never been politically colonized by any Western imperialism. Therefore, several cultural heritages, including the royal *lakhon nok* performances, have persisted until the present without any Western interference. This can be explicitly proved according to the history provided by Viruluk and the interview with Mr. Sunthranon. The royal *lakhon nok* performances have been without fail carried on to the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts. Nevertheless, *lakhon nok* performances were indirectly affected by the imperial influences which were the causes of an intra-country domination. Repressive nationalism, which is a concept inherent in neo-colonialism, can include a hetero-normative expectation. Benedict Anderson delineates the idea of repressive nationalism which can be compared to the imagined community of the nation as the homogenizing approach to national identity.11 If citizens of the nation look different, speak a different language, and follow a different religion, then this is considered as a threat to a nation. To become a unified nation, people of the nation should resemble each other as closely as possible; different citizens, languages, and cultures should be repressed for the unity which leads to the stability of the nation (60-63). In other words, if the nation becomes homogenized, nothing can be different or queer or it will be considered as dangerous to the stability of the nation. To possess the decent image of the nation in the eye of other nations, all performances, which indicate the sophistication of the nation or the country, inevitably appear resplendent or impressive to view. Consequently,

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10 For further information of the interview with Mr. Sunthranon, please view the appendix of this thesis on pages 52-54.

11 This is mentioned by Robert J. C. Young (60-63).
lakhon nok performances had to be appropriate to possess the national image. This includes that all performers had to appear heterosexual to the hetero-normative audiences. Nevertheless, modernization which is simply perceived as Westernization in Thailand was operated by the administration of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, the Prime Minister (1938-57). According to Thailand: A Country Study, after Phibunsongkhram became the prime minister of Thailand in December 1938, his administration explicitly and vigorously aroused the idea of nationalism in the country. He borrowed propaganda methods from authoritarian regimes in Europe, and consequently the “nationalism” of Phibunsongkhram was similarly compared to Westernization. The name of the country was officially changed to Mueang Thai (the Land of the Free) or Thailand in 1939. The government encouraged Thai citizens to follow European attire. For instance, people had to wear shoes and hats in the public (28). I would like to present some significant Thai cultural mandates launched by Phibunsongkhram’s government. These mandates explicitly indicate the idea of repressive nationalism. According to the twelve Thai cultural mandates issued in 1939-1942 by the administration of Phibunsongkhram, there are four major significant points. All citizens in Thailand must call themselves and their nationality as “Thai.” Every Thai must salute the Thai flag while it is being raised or lowered along with the newly composed national anthem. All Thai citizens should consume goods that are produced or manufactured in Thailand. And finally every Thai citizen must not speak regional dialects, except official Thai language (http://www.ratchakitcha.soc.go.th).

Prempreeda Pramoj Na Ayutthaya furthers the “idea(l)s” modernization of Phibunsongkhram’s administration. Although there were many reforms in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910) and while the country had been ruled by the absolute monarchy to westernize the country, the government, under the constitutional monarchy of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram, tremendously affected Thailand. There were official announcements to Thai citizens that the most significant policy of the government is to lead the country to be one of the civilized. The government targeted the development of Thailand to be similar to the developed or modernized countries in the West. Obviously, Phibunsongkhram vigorously persuaded Thai people to stop wearing jongkraben which is Thai traditional pants for people of all genders. Men should wear pants while women should wear skirts. Above all, the modernization in Thailand sought to create the financial stability, national unity, and appropriate cultures. The results from the policies of Phibunsongkhram clearly distinguished responsibilities
of men and women. Men have the responsibility to do their best in their jobs and to defend the
countries from the invasion of enemies from other countries; they are represented as “rua khong
chat” (the Fence of the Nation). In contrast to men, women were responsible for doing their best
in their housework; they were represented as “dokmai khong chat” (the Flower of the Nation).
Women inevitably have to be decent wives, mothers and housewives. Moreover, they have to be
well-groomed to be good-looking. Additionally, the government launched an agenda for Thai
citizens to possess names which reinforced aspects of men and women. Names for the male
should indicate chivalry and courage according to the representation as the fence of the nation
such as Kriangsak, Suraphon, and Surayut. On the contrary, names for the female should indicate
delicacy and sweetness based on the representation as the flower of the nation such as
Chuanchom, Saiyut, and Sanguansri. People who had gender-neutral names were persuaded to
change their names. The government continually and vigorously advertized those policies
through all kinds of media such as radio, newspapers, and billboards (13-15). What
Phibunsonkhram had launched in his first epoch of his administration had been continued during
his second term. Based on Thailand: A Country Study, policies launched by Phibunsongkram’s
second government (1948-57) were quite similar to those it had initiated in the late 1930s. Laws
to force Thai social behaviors to reach Western standards which were initiated by him before the
World War II (1939-45) were reintroduced (32-33).

The Westernization of Thailand by the administration of Phibunsonkhram inevitably led
to a homogenizing of the country including all performances by the establishment of the
dramatic arts college with the designation of all traditional performances. This included
lakhon nok performances, as national images as performers had to appear heterosexual to
appease the hetero-normative “nationalized” audiences. Brandon delineates the expansion of
theatrical activities from Bangkok to other provinces across Thailand by Thailand’s Department
of Fine Arts under the directorship of Dhanit Yupho in 1956-68. Since 1971, seven new branch
colleges of dance training students in traditional performances have been established outside
Bangkok. There are students groomed to play one of the four major roles, studying carefully the
66 gestures of the classical dance technique. Outstanding graduates may become members of the
National Theatre Company at the National Theatre in Bangkok. At the National Theatre,
thousands of ticket-buyers now can see the forms which a hundred years ago were played only to
an invited few in a hall of the royal palace. The company presents most of the previously noted
genres, khon, lakhon nai, lakhon nok, and lakhon phantang (239-40). The policies of Phibunsongkhram have definitely affected the ideas of genders, the dichotomy of male and female, to all dramatic arts college students including lakhon nok performers. The idea of dichotomy is clearly seen from the interviewees, lakhon nok performers, who insisted that those who played female characters were hetero-sexual men; however, they mentioned that most of the actors who played female characters were kathoey, homosexual or queer.

**Lakhon Nok as Critique to the Hetero-normative**

*Lakhon nok* performances appear as a queer space to critique the hetero-normative. The critical space can be delineated by the concepts of mimicry and hybridity in post-colonialism. I previously mentioned a conspicuous characteristic of lakhon nok as having an all male cast and that required male-to-female cross-dressing. This characteristic allows effeminate behaviors of male actors for female characters. For a conservative Christian Western audience with the idea of a gender dichotomy, the existence of two genders which are male and female with socially constructed behaviors based on the creation of Adam and Eve in The Book of Genesis rules supreme. Therefore, cross-dressing might appear as mimicry for them. Such an audience member might think solely that cross-dressed male performers, while performing on stage, are trying to imitate female behaviors at their best. Homi Bhabha defines the term mimicry as something which is almost the same, but not quite. In order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, excess, and difference (*The Location* 86). For these audiences, cross dressing in lakhon nok performances can appear as mimicry. The cross-dressed male performers tremendously act as if they were women; they speak with airy voices to make them similar to those of women; they end their spoken sentences with the word “kha” which is merely used by women; they sway their hips while walking on stage. These actions which are different from how men behave in reality are now performed on stage. The performers usually exaggerate those actions in order that audiences can perceive the differences and then believe that they, the performers, spontaneously act as if they were female. Furthermore, in this moment, a queer critical performativity is at work. In contrast to the conservative Christian Western audiences,
Theravada Buddhists in Thailand potentially perceive that there are three genders which are male, female, and *kathoey* based on the myth of creation in Buddhism. In *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations*, Serena Nanda states the existence of *kathoey* which primarily refers to cross-dressed males or transgendered males who, by preference, take the receptor role in same-sex sexual relations and who appreciate feminine attributes and engage in feminine behavior, particularly drag. *Kathoeys* of Thailand are sometimes referred to as the third gender, and are also more widely understood to be effeminate homosexuals who are like women yet unlike women. The *kathoeys* have a long history in Thailand. Buddhist origin myths describe three original human genders as male, female, and biological hermaphrodite or *kathoey*. The *kathoey* was not defined merely as a variant of male or female, but as an independently existing third sex, though perhaps with a secondary meaning of a male who acts like a woman. This system of three human genders remained prevalent in Thailand until the mid-twentieth century (71-73). Both hetero-sexual and queer audiences might think in the similar way to the conservative Christian audiences; however, they tend to have an additional thought that the performers are acting like how queer people usually act or behave in the daily life. They are acting as the queer who clearly combines male and female behaviors. The combination of those behaviors can appear as a form of hybridity or a third gender space. In “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” Bhabha explains the idea of hybridity by comparing it to linguistic process of a statement which combines two different meanings to form another new meaning which destroys or challenges the “sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People (156).” Those actions of male performers in *lakhon nok* performances are different from how men or women behave in reality are performed on stage. Although the performers cross-dress like women, they still demonstrate some distinguishing behaviors which are not women’s or men’s. These actions can be considered as similar to those of queer people such as gay people or *kathoeys* which could be recognized as the third sex in Buddhism. Moreover, the cross-dressing which possibly portrays the third sex can be regarded as the third, hybrid, space between the male and female in the binary gender system.

In conclusion and drawing an unlikely cultural comparison, *lakhon nok* performances can also be perceived as “veiling” which can cause misinterpretation to conservative Christian Western audiences. Robert J. Young discusses the ambivalence of the veil. The deployment of
veils by Islamic women, in the eye of the western, presents the state of being oppressed, subordinated, and made invisible whereas, from an Islamic point of view, it indicates protection from a bizarre authority (80-92). However, veiling also asserts agency. Likewise, cross-dressing women by male performers might be interpreted by the conservative Christian Westerners as “queer” while, for Thai people, it represents a nationally cultural heritage and the belief which reflects the third sex or kathoey in Buddhism. Cross-dressing, following the tradition of the veil, can be read as a form of agency.
Chapter Three:

Queer Reading of Lakhon Nok

In the previous chapter, the historiography of lakhon nok was investigated in order to provide the information as to why its performance is now usually with an all male cast, and now a place where the ideas of cross-dressing and its relationship to queer theory can be articulated. Furthermore, the nationalism during the administration of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram affected all performances including lakhon nok and reified a binary gender system which replaced the three gender system which had been prevalent in the place, to-be-now-named, Thailand. I would now like to investigate how lakhon nok performances could be analyzed through a Western queer theory lens, which provides a good basis to view the performances, as well as through Thai queer theory lens, which is required to penetrate the precise comprehension of a cultural queer reading in lakhon nok performances.

Western Queer Theory

According to Annamarie Jagose, broadly speaking, queer theory describes those gestures or analytical models that dramatize incoherencies in the stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting the model of stability that claims heterosexuality as its origin, queer theory focuses on mismatches between sex, gender, and desire. This theory has been associated with lesbian and gay subjects. Its analytical framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity, and sex-reassignment surgery (3). Furthermore, Mark Fortier states that queers are not just homosexual, but bisexual, transsexuals, cross-dressers, hermaphrodites and anybody else who doesn’t feel particularly straight for some reasons. There is a continuum which is a broad range of practices and identities in between the homosexual and the heterosexual. The study of queer theory gives rise to the ubiquitous gerund “queering” describing an activity wherein alternative queer practices and attitudes are found at the heart of a culture, institution, or period traditionally taken as heterosexual (122-126).
The focus of the study is on what lies between two poles of the dichotomy, the male and the female. The study in this chapter will emphasize performers in *lakhon nok* performances who are considered queer, homosexual, or gay men, and in the process queer the entire performance enterprise.

Whenever mentioning queer theory, it is inevitable to discuss the idea of cross-dressing. According to Hans Bertens, queer theory has taken a special interest in cross-dressing, and in particular cross-dressing by males. Cross-dressing becomes perfect for destabilizing generally accepted views of gender and sexuality. A man in a long evening dress or a pleated skirt will in most places draw a good deal of attention. Men in drag appear interesting to queer theorists since they simultaneously position themselves on the wrong end of two oppositions. On the gender opposition, they identify with the feminine pole, in spite of their position on the male pole. Besides, on the axis of sexual orientation with its hetero or homo opposition, they take up the homosexual position. For queer theory, drag and other unusual intersections of gender and sexuality become visible and where we are confronted with the fact that there are only ever-shifting differences (229-230). Similarly, J. J. Allen offers terms of cross-dressing generally accepted in the U.S. A cross-dresser is a person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex. Another classic term is “transvestite,” a combination of the Latin “trans” meaning across and “vestire” meaning clothing. It means someone who dresses across from his or her normal sex. “Female impersonator” is a term applied to stage performers who limit their cross dressing to the stage. “Drag queen” is a general term used to describe transvestite prostitutes and those cross dressers who dress in a highly sexualized and fetishistic fashion. Many advanced practitioners of cross-dressing, particularly those who dress and live full-time as a woman, prefer a term “transgender” that places emphasis on gender rather than sex and also raises questions in regard to the potential of sexual reassignment surgery (6-7).

The idea of gender is variously different based on each society: gender is culturally constructed in each society. That’s why there are just two genders, the male and female, in the Christian Western countries where the idea of gender is majorly constructed through the genesis in Christianity where Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, are created by God. The idea of gender as the social constructed is proved by Judith Butler’s theory. Butler’s theory can be applied to *lakhon nok* performances in terms of the social or cultural construction of the third
gender. The theory of the binary gender system unfits the performance which is reflective of the existence of a third gender. Butler delineates how gender is socially or culturally constructed whereas sex is biologically obtained from the birth: “originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex” (8). Butler continually elaborates that the concept of gender is not fixed and always changeable depending on each culture. This idea is apparently seen in the following statement.

“The universal conception of the person, however, is displaced as a point of departure for a social theory of gender by those historical and anthropological positions that understand gender as a relation among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts. This relational or contextual point of view suggests that what the person “is” and, indeed, what gender “is,” is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined. As a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations (14).”

Furthermore, Butler explains how even homosexual reflects the idea of heterosexual convention which focuses on the binary gender system. Homosexual identities reflect the idea of heterosexual identities by using terms of “butch,” the top or insertive, to represent the male and “femme,” the bottom or the receptive, to represent the female (43). This idea of the binary gender system can not be perfectly applied to the existence of the third gender as portrayed in the lakhon nok performance.

The idea of a social construct differing from a Western ideology can be perceived clearly through a linguistic approach. The word kathoey is socially constructed as similarly as the word “bakla” which is deployed to explain Filipino gay men. The meaning of the word is strikingly different from White gay men. Kathoey and bakla are equivalent in terms of meaning. These two specific terms are coined to capture the accurate definition of the third gender. In *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*, Martin F. Manalansan IV describes the differences between “bakla” and “gay.” Bakla symbolizes Filipino queerness whereas gay represents white queerness. Gay identity is defined by a conscious acknowledgement of a man who desires to have sex with other men. It signifies identity, role, and a distinctive system of rules, norms, attitudes, and beliefs from a culture that sustains the social relations of same-sex desire. In contrast, bakla has
a wider meaning. The word is a result of the contraction of the first syllable of the word for woman (“babe”) and the first syllable of the word for man (“lalaki”). Therefore, the bakla possesses an idiom of the female heart (“pusong babe”). This idiom encapsulates what is the core of the social construction of the bakla, the male body with a female heart. The yearning and needs of the bakla are perceived to be similar to women’s. Bakla embraces the categories of effeminate mannerism, feminine physical characteristics such as small, frail bodies and delicate facial feature, and cross-dressing (21-25).

**Thai Queer Theory and the Queer Identity in Thailand**

Western queer theory can help start developing the idea of queer identities in Thailand; however, it hardly articulates the idea because there are culturally specific factors that shape queer identities as well. According to Peter A. Jackson, globalizations together with capitalism, which can be specifically called in another name as Americanization, from the West barely homogenize Asian queer identities, particularly in Thailand. Jackson presents several obvious examples of the autonomy of Thai queer identities. Even though some terms which describe queer people in Thailand were borrowed from the West, those terms shifted away from Anglophone Western terms. A term employed to label a gay man whose sexual role appears as active, inceptive, or top is replaced by a borrowed term as “gay king.” Similarly, a term utilized to indicate a gay man whose sexual role tend to be passive, receptive, or bottom is replaced by another borrowed term as “gay queen.” These two local terms for gay men were shaped by two cinemas existing in Bangkok during the 1950s and 1960s. Both Kings Cinema and Queens Cinema, which were situated in the Wang Burapha shopping district, sometimes screened foreign erotic films. Jackson continues to explain the terms for lesbians. In the English speaking countries, butch or femme is employed, but Thai lesbians are called as “tom” which is similar to butch and “dee” which is similar to femme. Other English terms are borrowed; tom derives from “tom boy” while dee is subtracted from “lady.” Moreover, a Thai term kathoey is used for male-to-female transgenders and transsexuals. There are other synonyms as “phu-ying prophet song” (second type of woman) or “lady boy” which is usually used by Thai people whenever speaking
to international people. Thai queer identities of gay and *kathoey* cultures emerged in Bangkok several decades before the internet era; the word “gay” has been used by masculine homosexual men many years before the Stonewall uprising in New York City in June 1969. The Stonewall incident is often cited the establishment of the gay liberation movement in the West. In other words, Thai queer identities were created in Thailand before the globalization peak of the 1990s. Jackson questions how those phenomena in Thailand happened. (“Global Queering” 16-25). Although Jackson ends his article with several questions how queer identities in Thailand emerged, his article does indicate that Thai queer identities are distinguished from the West. This leads to the subsequent investigation of this thesis to see the uniqueness of Thai queer identities.

The three gender system of Thailand mentioned in the previous chapter is strikingly different from the binary gender system of the West. Before I subsequently discuss how a *lakphon nok* performance can be read as a queer performativity space in this chapter, it is mandatory to explain the concise historical background of how Thai society has perceived queer identity. The idea of *katheoy* in Buddhism plays the most significant role in the belief of *kathoey* in Thailand. Richard Totman states that approximately 95 percent of Thais have faith in Theravada Buddhism which has been embraced as the country’s official religion in the thirteenth century AD. Buddhism emphasizes the significance of each individual’s karma. He or she gains karma, a kind of metaphysical credit, through the worthiness and selflessness of his or her deeds and the serenity of his or her everyday demeanor. Conversely, the person loses it, or gains negative karma, through yielding to and indulging carnal cravings and worldly living. One can reach the state of nirvana or the ultimate happiness by his or her positive karma or good deeds (47-52). Therefore, people in Thai society can tolerate anyone who performs constructive deeds, especially those based on the religious teachings. Despite the uncontrollable circumstance of a person’s life, one can determine to perform good or bad karmas which are affecting the next life. All these beliefs absolutely prevail upon Thai Buddhists. Therefore, they do not have prejudices towards *kathoey* or homosexuals as long as they behave themselves.

Moreover, *kathoey* or the in-between gender has long been recognized by Buddhists in the neutral way. Totman furthers the explanation of the word *kathoey* stated in the Tipitaka, the basic scriptural canon of Buddhism. The script identifies four genders, male, female, ubhatobyantaraka and pandaka. Ubhatobyantaraka is defined as having the characteristics of
both sexes or biological hermaphrodite. This can also be defined in Thai as *kathoey thae* (true *kathoey*). Pandaka means a eunuch weakling, a *kathoey*, or a castrated man. It also means a person who has a deficiency in the signs of masculinity or femininity and a person who takes pleasure in having relations with a man while feeling that they are like women. This last definition equates the word *pandaka* with the word *kathoey*. Besides, in Tipitaka, there is a genesis which narrates the beginning of the three human beings: a man, a woman, and a hermaphrodite. The traditional Buddhist system of beliefs explains how a person becomes *kathoey* who is predetermined from birth and is the direct result of negative karmic debt committed in a previous life. This negative karmic debt is due to him or her performing actions violating sexual mores. Such misdeeds include adultery, being a female prostitute, sexually abusing one’s children, or failing to fulfill an expected role in the reproductive process, such as a man’s ignorance to a woman who is impregnated by him. This is an unavoidable destiny of *kathoey* to be what they are and this places them outside the arena of moral sanction. They are to be pitied, not judged (51-57). Likewise, Nanda apparently indicates that Buddhist views *kathoey* as natural phenomena, whose condition was a result of karmic debt, preordained from birth and thus beyond their capacity to alter. This view is still commonly held in Thailand both by ordinary people and by *kathoey*. The identification of the biomedical with the Buddhist position preserved the traditional Thai ethical position regarding *kathoey*. This position is that *kathoey* are people who are different or disabled because of their karma and should be sympathized with rather than ridiculed. *Kathoey* are not sinful because their behavior is beyond their control (74).

According to Peter A. Jackson, there are controversial and exoticized perceptions of queer people in Thailand. Briefly, they theorize that Western observers, including many foreign gay visitors, commonly view Thai culture as expressing liberal, even accepting, attitudes towards male transgenderism or *kathoey* and masculine-identified male homosexuality or gay. Since the 1970s, Western gay travel guides, in particular, have portrayed Thailand as a gay paradise. Such presentation has continued into the 1990s by international press networks as well as through gay media. Despite outward appearances, the circumstances in Thailand towards gay people is not gay paradise: the international press failed to report that the “Flower Town,” a gay real estate venture, subsequently collapsed due to a lack of investor interest and local people’s opposition to the idea of living next door to thousands of gay men. Another example of Thai intolerance to
homosexuality is Thai academic writing. These writings commonly problematize male homosexuality as a perversion. This perversion needs to be treated, or this disease needs a cure. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the protest against homosexuality including transgenderism is much less severe in Thailand than in Western societies. Homosexuality is neither illegal under Thai law nor immoral according to Buddhist teachings. Consequently, for those who are aware of or who have experienced first-hand the intensity of anti-homosexual sanctions in many Western societies, they may first perceive Thailand as a gay paradise. Although there is a general saying that homosexuality is not a problem in Thailand and that gay men and transvestites are widely accepted, the example of Seri Wongmontha, the well-known former academic and a flamboyantly public gay man, can prove the intolerance of some people in Thai society. He resigned from his post as Dean of the Faculty of Mass Communications at Thammasat University in Bangkok in 1987, in part due to colleague’s criticisms of his openness about his homosexuality (“Tolerant but Unaccepting” 226-228). As mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis when Thailand was reformed with the idea of nationalism, from that moment on, the idea of binary gender system was quite influential to Thai people. Anything which does not fall into the category of the male or the female will be considered queer and seemingly appears as a problem to the hetero-normative. This is the reason why the controversy towards homosexuality was created in this country.

The most admired or respected kathoeys are those who are appropriate and exhibit a high standard of feminine beauty and who adopt the reserved, polite manners and speech of a genteel man or woman. There then appear borders of acceptability: beauty and conduct. These can be apparently seen from the example of Mr. Khomsannatha Huamueanglat, a lakhon nok performer who is considered beautiful and elegant in his conduct. He becomes the role model for kathoeys in Thailand. As a kathoey who has been trained in Thai traditional performances and have long practiced in very many of performances, Mr. Huamueanglat regards himself as a role model for younger kathoeys and, particularly those who dream of being the heroine of performances in the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Fine Arts Department. Mr. Huamueanglat realizes that many younger kathoeys dream to be like him. Therefore, he behaves himself in an appropriate way to be accepted in the society. Mr. Huamueanglat always teaches or suggests those younger kathoeys how to behave themselves if occasions allow. He has been a guest lecturer at many institutes, which are schools, dramatic arts colleges and universities for several years.
Sometimes, several students in these institutes contact him personally to have private classes with him. Once, after a performance, a *kathoey* student brought him flowers, candles, and incense sticks to pay respect and ask him to admit him as a student. Certain *kathoey* students traveled across the country to ask him to be their teacher. Finally, Mr. Huamueanglat is on the directing board of the Art Association for Youth, Thailand’s Office of National Culture Commission. 12

**Queer Performativity in Lakhon Nok**

David Savran explains that theatre is often a queer performative space created by the interplay between and among text, actor, director, and spectator. There are five elements that indicate queer performativity in *lakhon nok* performances. The first queer element which can be apparently seen from *lakhon nok* performance is the all male cast. According to Mr. Chawalit Sunthranon, all performances in Thailand were originally established from the entire male cast. Mr. Sunthranon offers an unconventional and perhaps controversial evolution of a queer development in *lakhon nok*. In the past, a male performer married and had children. Sometimes, the nature of the female character, which the performer was responsible for, influenced the performer to behave like a woman. He had to realize the nature of a woman so that he could spontaneously perform in the play. For example, as the heroine of the play, he embraced or expressed love to another male performer who played the hero. The Dialogue and behaviors on stage then affected the performer’s mind which led to his female-like behaviors in reality. It was possible for him to absorb female-like behaviors. Also, in the past, the performer had performed the female character for a long duration like 3 months, 6 months, or a year at a theatre. From the dawn to the dusk, he was trained daily to perform as a female character. Apparently, in the period of King Rama VI (1910-25), there was a teacher named Khunwad Phitsawong who behaved exactly like a woman; he slowly glided and pointed his finger to teach his students as if he were a woman. Khunwad Phitsawong had a wife and children. Due to the long duration of the

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12 For further information of the interview with Mr. Khomsannatha Huamueanglat, please view the appendix of this thesis on pages 64-65.
practice of a female character, the male performer tended to behave and think like a woman unconsciously. All factors in the theatre as mentioned might influence the person to be kathoey. ¹³

The second element which makes a lakhon nok performance as a queer performance is cross-dressing as previously explained by the definition of Allen on page 22. This element can be apparently pointed out from the costume, dresses and ornaments, of male performers who wear Thai traditional female dancer’s attire. As demonstrated in the subsequent two illustrations of a female character and male character by Ranee Chaisongkram’s The Preliminary Thai Dances, a male character or “phra” apparently wears pants and epaulettes on shoulders, while wearing long sleeved shirt, whereas a female character “nang” wears a long skirt or pha-nungnang (138-45). ¹⁴

Figures 1 and 2 are illustrations of the costumes of a female character and a male character from Ranee Chaisongkram’s The Preliminary Thai Dances (140&143).

¹³ For further information of the interview with Mr. Chawalit Sunthranon, please view the appendix of this thesis on pages 54-55.
¹⁴ Due to the limited space, please view description of each part of the costumes in the appendix on pages 85-87.
The third characteristic which marks a *lakhon nok* performance as a queer performance is queer performers who are homosexual or *kathoey*. This conclusion can be drawn from the interviews from *lakhon nok* performers. According to Mr. Sunthranon, most of the performers are *kathoey* or homosexual. That’s the reason why they can play female characters spontaneously. Generally, those who in reality behave like women can do their parts fantastically on stage. Their performance is better than those who are heterosexual men, but on occasion some heterosexual appearing men might perform better than some gay men or *kathoey*. However, this leads Mr. Sunthranon to doubt that those men are indeed heterosexual. The performers may be closeted and not realize themselves. Personally, Mr. Sunthranon thinks that arts, including the performing art, are delicate and beautiful. Men in general are not interested in building an artistic work up. Basically, those men who are attracted in the creation of arts tend to be gay or *kathoey*. Likewise, Mr. Chatuprayun agrees that most of the performers who play female characters are *kathoey* or gay. Personally, he thinks that those performers who play major female characters probably are *kathoeys* or homosexual. Mr. Chatuprayun thinks that it is essential for a performer to be *kathoey* in order to play one of those roles. It is appropriate for a *kathoey* or gay man to play a major female character in order to clearly communicate the femininity of the character to audiences. Moreover, a *kathoey* or a gay man can energetically and gracefully dance. A fantastic Thai traditional dance requires lots of energy to perform. Besides, as a tradition of this genre of performances, it requires verbal and physical quarrels because it is a performance for common people outside of the palace. If a female character is performed by a heterosexual woman, it will not be as entertaining as that performed by a *kathoey* or gay man. Mr. Aromchuen has also experienced some performances when all of the performers who played female characters were either *kathoey* or gay. Like Mr. Sunthranon, Mr. Chatuprayun and Mr. Aromchuen, Mr. A confirms that the majority of performers that play female characters in *lakhon nok* are *kathoey* or gay, and they know (his emphasis) how to entertain the audiences. Therefore, those, who organize each production, prefer *kathoey* or gay as performers in the production. The performers are able perform fantastically. Plus, they are gorgeous. Consequently, Mr. A. believes that it is a waste of time to train homosexual men to play female characters.\(^{15}\) This information provided by Mr. A also indicates the interplay of a producer who prefers queer performers in *lakhon nok* performances.

\(^{15}\) For further information of the interview with Mr. A, please view the appendix of this thesis on page 82.
The fourth characteristic is queer audiences with adequate knowledge of lakhon nok who desire to watch lakhon nok performances with queer performers. This characteristic can be perceived when performers narrate their story towards audiences’ appreciation to their lakhon nok performances. According to Mr. Huamueanglat, audiences prefer an all male cast. There are many interesting factors. First of all, most of the audiences are female. They prefer male performers to female ones. Second, when all male performers do wild actions or speak naughty or ambiguous words, it is acceptable where in contrast it is not appropriate for female performers to behave in this way. This relieves the seriousness from those deeds when male performers perform female roles. The audiences love to watch an all male cast in lakhon nok; they submit letters and postcards and sometimes directly telephone the director of the Office of Performing Arts to request an all male cast for a lakhon nok performance. Most of them realize that Mr. Huamueanglat, who always plays the heroine of the play, is a kathoey. Mr. Chatuprayun’s ideas support Mr. Huamueanglat’s information. Mr. Chatuprayun thinks that the audience can tolerate the way that a man can dress up and act like a woman in the performance. They have tolerated it for a long time. If not, this genre of performance would not have existed nowadays. The audience can accept that because of the long historically existence of kathoeys in Thailand. For example, Mr. Huamueanglat has played Rotchana for more than ten years. Audiences still attend; the audiences can accept Mr. Huamueanglat as a kathoey. They appreciate how well and skillfully he can perform. The audiences’ appreciation of queer performers can be seen from the instance of Mr. Huamueanglat. He constantly gains a lot of positive comments from audiences. The audiences always deliver him letters and postcards expressing their appreciation towards his performances. Sometimes, while he is driving back home after a performance, he receives several calls with appreciation towards the performance. For instance, after a performance in a province Suphanburi, there were several admirers of his who journeyed approximately three hours from Nakhonsawan which is another province. These audience members brought him a lot of presents. Also, in Bangkok, audience members usually call him to inquire about show times and lavish him with lots of presents. The audience members mentioned that Mr. Huamueanglat provided them happiness; therefore, they were willing to provide him anything, which gives him happiness.

The director is the last factor in the interplay which creates a lakhon nok performance as a queer performance. The director of a lakhon nok performance is inevitably a teacher or a senior
of the troupe. A teacher or senior always selects a *kathoey* or gay man who behaves like a woman to play a female character. According to Mr. Sunthranon, there is a custom of learning Thai traditional dramatic arts, where teachers significantly consider what each student will learn based on his or her physical appearance, talent and personality. In class, they teach everything based on the curriculum; however, in practice, they select an appropriate role for a student by how perfectly each person can perform.

**Lakhon Nok Performances Reflecting Thai Queer Identity**

As performance is simultaneously a cultural artifact as I previously mentioned in the introductory chapter, *lakhon nok* performances as the queer performative space can be a source to gain access to the comprehension of Thai queer identity. The examples of *lakhon nok* performances I would like to utilize to discuss Thai queer elements are *Sangthong* and *Chaiyachet*. The performance *Sangthong* which will be mentioned was organized by the Office of Performing Arts, by Department of Fine Arts and broadcast through channel 11, the national television channel of Thailand. The episode of the performance is an excerpt from part VII, the demand of King Samon for hunting. The second performance is *Chaiyachet* which was demonstrated at Sala Sangkhit (Sangkhit Pavilion) in Bangkok. It was organized by the Office of Performing Arts, the department of Fine Arts. The episode of the performance is an excerpt from part I, the expelling of Suwincha.

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16 *Sangthong* is a story of Prince Sang, a gorgeous king in disguise of an ugly peasant. Frustrated with the outer undesirable appearance of Prince Sang, his father-in-law King Samon has done several evil schemes to eliminate him. Prince Sang overcomes all of the schemes invented by King Samon. Eventually, at the last scheme, Prince Sang reveals his divine beauty and the high rank of birth to other people including King Samon. For the entire story, see King Rama II 1-221.

17 *Chaiyachet* is a story of a king Phra Chaiyachet who is deceived by his seven mistresses. The mistresses fool him that his queen Suwincha gives a birth to a log. Totally believed in the invented story, he expels his queen from his palace. After he realizes the truth, he drives the mistresses away and resumes his queen and son. For the entire story, see King Rama II 225-297.


32
The first aspect is the entirely male cast. This can be perceived from both performances. In *Sangthong*, the title character Phra Sang is, of course, the main play-as-male character. Other minor characters such as King Samon, six sons-in-law, and noble men are all male. 19 Also, actors whose biological sex is male perform all seven daughters and the queen of King Samon. Likewise, in the performance *Chaiyachet*, there are eight characters. The title character Phra Chaiyachet is definitely the main male character and all seven mistresses are played by actors whose biological sex is male. Consequently, all actors, in those performances, enacting female characters must dress in traditionally female attire. Distinctly, they wear long skirts and place long cloths across their shoulders. These aspects indicate the existence of acceptance of cross-dressing that acknowledges an established queer performance practice in Thai society. Men are allowed to become women by dressing in women’s attire without protest from people in the society according to the mostly hetero-normative audiences’ acceptance to the performance. A great number of people tremendously enjoy these cross-dressed performances.

Another aspect is the utilization of simple language which can create humor to fit ordinary people’s preferences. In the performance, between pauses of verse singing and traditional dancing, there are impromptu dialogues between characters. Colloquial words are generally utilized in order that audiences can comprehend and subsequently laugh. The words tend to be comic, naughty, and open to several connotations due to the disharmony of situations. For instance, in *Sangthong*, a daughter of King Samon helps explain her husband’s words. King Samon hardly understands what his son-in-law is uttering because Phra Sang has sliced his nose tip. The daughter sometimes misunderstands what her husband narrates. She consequently misinterprets her husband’s message and then tells her father the wrong message. Sometimes, she provides endearing comments that her father should have understood—simple things that her husband has said. These humorous circumstances stimulate audiences’ laughter and emphasize the idea that transgendered people are accepted when they comically present themselves. As I once previously mentioned, in popular press, the transgendered in Thai society have usually been presented in the humorous fashion. I would argue that the derisive use of comedy to talk about the other, in this case, the male cross-dresser is subsumed in the larger historical context of traditional Thai theatre and its forms. Furthermore, humor or comic part is accepted in the

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19 Phra is usually part of a name of a monarch or royalty.
society culturally as it is regarded as not harmful to other people. Nevertheless, the words can sometimes be comic because of the exaggeration. For example, in the performance *Chaiyachet*, a mistress tells Phra Chaiyachet that, while assisting Suwincha, the heroine of the story, to birth her son, the mistress would like to eat the placenta, but another mistress steals the placenta from her. This joke makes audiences feel disgusted; however, it is laughable if one thinks of the impossibility that a normal person will have appetite for placenta. This portrays the idea that transgendered people will be accepted when they present themselves in a comic way, which I once previously mentioned that the transgendered recognized in Thai society are often presented in a humorous way. That way is accepted by the society since it is regarded as not harmful to other people.

The third aspect is related to the spontaneity of performers and not rigidly linked to the tradition of dancing patterns. This is obviously recognized through the acting of King Samon’s six older daughters in the performance *Sangthong*. When they become furious due to jealousy, all of them attack Rotchana. Phra Sang protects his beloved life companion from the dangerous situation and he kicks some of daughters off the stage. The actions of those six older daughters are like male gangsters trying to harm a woman. They walk and sway their bodies like men and sometimes they scream loudly like women or queer people. This spontaneous acting during pauses reflects the idea that transgendered and homosexual people can be recognized as long as they suitably conform to the social norm. The subtle message is for transgendered people. They will be accepted if they behave themselves. Otherwise, as seen with Rotchana, the heroine, as paradigm within a queer reading of Thai performances as an artifact of Thai culture—beauty and conduct are the borders of acceptability. They increase social fluidity. In the case of the cross-dressed princess Rotchana, who is the heroine, the youngest daughter of King Samon, and Phra Sang’s wife, stands as the sole character that acts appropriately and gracefully. This behavior reflects the fluidity of acceptability, beauty and conduct, of the transgendered in Thailand. Embedded ironies arise as the male defends Rotchana, the cross-dresser, against the other six siblings, who are also cross-dressed. Ambivalence and fluidity reign. In the case of Rotchana, comedy is at a minimum; her essence is serious. Nevertheless, the humor of the additional parts performed by male performers is obviously seen through the performance *Chaiyachet* with the acting of seven mistresses during the pauses between songs. In the moment of the performance, while they are presenting a log that is believed to be Suwincha’s new born son to Phra
Chaiyachet, a mistress holds the log and uses it as if it were a stick to move a boat. Then another mistress seizes the log and tries to sing a lullaby with incomprehensible words. This improvisational addition by actors to the script really entertains audiences. It can be noticed by audiences’ laughter. A conclusion can be then drawn from these examples from *lakhon nok* performances. For queer people, they will be accepted if they mostly behave themselves properly or gracefully. All three aspects in *lakhon nok* which are the entirely male cast, the utilization of simple language, and the spontaneity of performers reflect Thai queer identity.

*Lakhon Nok* as a cultural artifact enables us to comprehend the Thai queer identity. We can obtain this idea because of the characteristics of a queer performative space in *lakhon nok* as perceived by the interviews with *lakhon nok* performers of the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts. Through the acceptance of cross-dressing in *lakhon nok*, Thai people tolerate queerness, especially the transgendered and the transvestite; they will be accepted as long as they possess beauty and exhibit certain behaviors. This recognition therefore stems from cultural practices within *lakhon nok* and is mirrored in Thai society. As gender is socially or culturally constructed, it has been noticeably portrayed and presented in this thesis through the practice of *lakhon nok* which is a cultural artifact. Therefore, this genre of performance reinforces the visual belief of the Thai society. Thai queer performativity can be perceived through the characteristics of a queer performance in *lakhon nok*. The queer text has the content about heterosexual people; however, it is written with the intention to be performed for an all male cast. Then the all male cast accommodates the homo-social environment. Plus, *lakhon nok* performers are not only cross-dressing in female traditional attire, but are also *kathoey* or homosexual. The producer or the director prefers homosexual performers to those who are heterosexual. Ultimately, audiences prefer to see *kathoey* or queer performers rather than heterosexual performers. These indicate the interplay of *lakhon nok* performances on stage. The interplay leads to the perception of Thai queer performativity which is iteratively seen in the society; as a consequence, we come to realize Thai people’s recognition of queer people in Thai society.
CONCLUSION

I have positioned myself as a gay post-modern queer theorist who analyzes Thai traditional lakhon nok performances within a queer reading. Then I explored the historiography and the national revision of lakhon nok to comprehend why this genre of performance usually appears as an all male cast where the idea of cross-dressing and queer theory can be articulated. From the study, I investigated the epoch of modernization in Thailand during the administration of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram which created the binary gender system which and almost replaced the three gender system in Thailand that had been prevalent in Thailand. The third chapter is a queer reading of lakhon nok. I discussed how the performances are analyzed through a Western queer theory lens which helps shape the way to view lakhon nok performances, together with Thai queer theory lens which is required to penetrate the precise comprehension of queer reading in lakhon nok performances.

Thai queer theory is quite mandatory since Asian queer identities, particularly in Thailand are barely homogenized by globalizations together with capitalism. The three gender system of Thailand mentioned in the previous chapter is strikingly different from the binary gender system of the West. However, the binary gender system plays an important role after the modernization in Thailand as previously mentioned. It leads to a controversial perception of queer people in Thailand. Fortunately, kathoeys as agency can figure out their way to resist the opposition; they realize ways to be admired, respected, or recognized when they exhibit a high standard of feminine beauty and who adopt the reserved, polite manners and speech of a genteel man or woman. These are the borders of acceptability, beauty and conduct. These can be apparently perceived from the example of Mr. Khomsannatha Huamueanglat, a lakhon nok performer, and from heroines in lakhon nok performances, particularly Rotchana from the performance Sangthong.

As theatre is often a queer performative space created by the interplay between and among text, actor, director, and spectator, these factors indicate the queer performativity in lakhon nok performances which can be perceived through the examples of two lakhon nok performances, Sangthong and Chaiyachet. Due to the acceptance of theatrical tradition and social
norms both embedded within *lakhon nok* performances, which includes cross-dressing and are marked with a high level of queer performativity as previously mentioned in chapters of this thesis, the performances are accepted in the society and, as a consequence, homosexuality, particularly the transgendered, who regarded as queer people can also be recognized in Thai society. Holistically, *lakhon nok* as simultaneously cultural artifacts reflects the fluidity of Thai society in recognizing homosexuality.


Manalansan IV, Martin F. *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham:


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tfu-YiFt618>.


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUJW94716_o>.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8oRuRSyg0o>.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jbLCswKfg>.

[The National Dramatic Arts]. N.d. CD.


APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORMS SIGNED BY LAKHON NOK PERFORMERS

Each of lakhon nok performers was asked to sign a consent form for the interview.

The translated consent form in English is below.

Date__________________ Month___________________ B.E.______________________

I_______________________________ grant Mr. Sura Intamool my consent to have an interview about lakhon nok performances. Besides, I grant Mr. Sura Intamool permission to utilize and/or publicize the data from the interview for academic purposes solely. If Mr. Sura Intamool would like to refer my name, he must obtain my permission.

Signature ____________________________ Interviewer

(Mr. Sura Intamool)

Signature ____________________________ Interviewee

(Name of the interviewee)

Following are five consent forms signed by five lakhon nok performers of the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts. They are Mr. Chawalit Sunthranon, Mr. Khomsannatha Huamueanglat, Mr. Kitti Chatuprayun, Mr. Sarawut Aromchuen, and Mr. A (pseudonym) respectively.
วันที่ 19 เดือน ตุลาคม พ.ศ. 2553

ท่านนายชวลิต สันทรายนนท์ ได้ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับ
การแสดงละครบกัน นายสุระ อินตามูล  นอกจากนั้น ท่านนายชวลิต
อินตامูล ให้ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ และ/หรือ เผยแพร่ ทางการศึกษาเท่านั้น

แต่ถ้า นายสุระ อินตามูล ต้องการใช้ข้อมูลและนามสกุลดifferenceพ้นจาก
อนุญาตจากท่านนายชวลิต

ลงชื่อ สันทรายนนท์ ผู้ขอสัมภาษณ์

(นายสุระ อินตามูล)

ลงชื่อ สันทรายนนท์ ผู้ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์

(นายชวลิต สันทรายนนท์)
วันที่ 19 เดือน สิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2553

ข้าพเจ้า นางโสมสุนัน หรือ ถังองค์อิ มีนามสกุลให้สังกัดภัยภิบัญ

การแสดงละเว้นออกเกี่ยวกับ นายสุระ อินตามูล นอกจากนั้น ข้าพเจ้ายินยอมให้นายสุระ อินตามูล ใช้ชื่นผู้ทำการตั้งหมาย และ/หรือ แทนพว ทางการศึกษาท่านนั้น

แต่ถ้า นายสุระ อินตามูล ต้องการใช้ชื่อและนามสกุลของข้าพเจ้า จ่าเป็นต้องได้รับ

อนุญาตกับข้าพเจ้า

ลงชื่อ __________ ผู้ขอสัมภาษณ์

(นาย สุระ อินตามูล)

ลงชื่อ __________ ผู้ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์

(นางโสมสุนัน หรือ ถังองค์อิ)
วันที่ 19 เดือน สิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2553

ช่างเจ้า ประภิทิต ตูปอรุ พยุ มีอนุญาตให้สมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับ

การแสดงความออกไป นายสุระ หินตาหลุด นอกจากนั้น ช่างเจ้าอนุญาตให้นายสุระ

หินตาหลุด ใช้ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ และ/หรือ เผยแพร่ ทางการสื่อสารเท่านั้น

แต่ถ้า นายสุระ หินตาหลุด ต้องการใช้ชื่อและนามสกุลของช่างเจ้า จำเป็นต้องได้รับ

อนุญาตจากช่างเจ้า

ลงชื่อ [ลายพิมพ์]

ผู้ช่วยสมภาษณ์

(นายสุระ หินตาหลุด)

ลงชื่อ [ลายพิมพ์]

ผู้อนุญาตให้สมภาษณ์

(นายกิตติ ตูปอรุ)

Picture 3: The consent form signed by Mr. Kitti Chatuprayun
วันที่ 19 เดือน สิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2553

ข้าพเจ้า สมชาย สารวัตร ต้านมีบุญ ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับ

การแสดงผลการก้าวหน้า นายสุระ ต้านมีบุญ นอกจากนั้น ข้าพเจ้ายินยอมให้นายสุระ
t้านมีบุญ ใช้ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ และ/หรือ เผยแพร่ ทางการศึกษาเท่านั้น

แต่ถ้า นายสุระ ต้านมีบุญ ต้องการใช้ข้อมูลและเอกสารของข้าพเจ้า จำเป็นต้องได้รับ

อนุญาตจากข้าพเจ้า

ลงชื่อ [ลายเซ็น]
ผู้ขอสัมภาษณ์

(นาย สุระ ต้านมีบุญ)

ลงชื่อ [ลายเซ็น]
ผู้ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์

(นาย สารวัตร ต้านมีบุญ)
วันที่ 19 เดือน ตุลาคม พ.ศ. 2553

ข้าพเจ้า__________ ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์เกี่ยวกับ

การแสดงผลออกแก่นายสุระ ติมาสุก นอกจากนั้น ข้าพเจ้ายินยอมให้นายสุระ
tิมาสุก ใช้ข้อมูลจากการตั้งภาษณ์ และ/หรือ เผยแพร่ ทางการสื่อสารเท่านั้น

แต่ถ้า นายสุระ ติมาสุก ต้องการใช้ข้อมูลนั้นให้อนาคตของข้าพเจ้า จำเป็นต้องได้รับ

อนุญาตจากข้าพเจ้า ชื่อ__________

ลงชื่อ__________ ผู้ขอสัมภาษณ์

(นาย สุระ ติมาสุก)

ลงชื่อ__________ ผู้ยินยอมให้สัมภาษณ์

(__________)

Picture 5: The consent form signed by Mr. A
APPENDIX II: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

First of all, I will state clearly at the very beginning that my interview will be part of my thesis about the relationship of lakhon nok and the existence of kathoey in Thailand. Then I will inform and assure him that, if he does not want to use his name, his anonymity will be protected by creating a pseudonym for him. I will ask the informant’s background which is the place of birth (which part of the country), age, education, and profession. Following are questions for the informant.

1. How many times did you perform lakhon nok? What are titles of lakhon nok plays in which you participated?
2. How did you get involved in lakhon nok? Who introduced you to it? Or was it your own motivation?
3. How often do you perform lakhon nok? Which character in lakhon nok, male or female, do you prefer or were usually assigned to play? Why?
4. Do you think that lakhon nok is related to the existence of kathoey in Thai society in terms of the reflection of kathoeys through female characters? Why?
5. From your experience, are most performers who play female characters gay or kathoey? Why so? Are there any gays or kathoeys who prefer to play male characters? Why?
6. Did you experience a performance which was full of gay or kathoey playing female characters in lakhon nok performances? How do you feel about it?
7. While you are performing lakhon nok, when is the moment that you really enjoy the most? Is it the moment when audiences laugh? Why?
8. Does laughter from audiences indicate the acceptance of what you are performing on stage? Why?
9. Do you get any comments from audiences? How are they? Positive or negative?
10. As a performer, what is the chief charm of performing in lakhon nok?
11. Will you perform in further lakhon nok performances if any chances arise? Why?
12. Do you think that audiences can tolerate when a man dresses up and acts like a woman in a lakhon nok performance? Why?
13. Can we say that audiences can accept that in previous question because they get used to the historically long existence of *kathoeys* in Thailand? Why?

14. Are there any additional comments you’d like to make about yourself, *lakhon nok* performances, or this interview?

At the end of the interview, I will present my gratitude to the interviewee for his precious time and subsequently request a permission to refer to his name in this thesis.
**APPENDIX III: INTERVIEW WITH CHAWALIT SUNTHRANON**

**Intamool:** Now, I am interviewing Mr. Chawalit Sunthranon about the relationship of *Lakhon nok* and the existence of *kathoey* in Thailand. Mr. Sunthranon is an expert with distinctive rank in the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand. First of all, could you please tell me about your background which is place of birth (which part of the country), age, education, and profession?

**Sunthranon:** I was born in Ayutthaya. Now, I am 52 years old. After finishing grade 4 in a school in Ayutthaya, I moved to Dramatic Arts College, the Fine Arts Department, Thailand, which is situated in Bangkok until obtaining a bachelor degree in 1982. I had studied in the college for 13 years. At this moment, in the Office of Performing Arts, several responsibilities are Thai traditional dramatic arts and music, world music, administration, and academic. My major responsibility is related to academic knowledge concerning Thai traditional dramatic arts and music. At the very beginning of my career, I was a Thai traditional dramatic artist. When I became more experienced, I tried my hand on academics. Eventually, I have been a scholar of the Office of Performing Arts in the position of the expert in Thai Traditional dramatic arts and music.

**Intamool:** How many times did you perform *lakhon nok*? What are titles of *lakhon nok* plays in which you participated?

**Sunthranon:** Honestly, I can hardly count how many times I took part in this genre of performances because I have performed it since I was a student at Dramatic Arts College. In fact, I have learned and been specialized in *khon* performances, particularly with the character of *phra* or the major male character. Unexpectedly, a *lakhon nok* performance, which required all male cast, would be organized. Teachers considered that I was qualified for a female character in the performance as I possessed some abilities which support the performance. They selected me as a female character in that *lakhon nok* performance. From that moment, I have mostly performed a female character in this genre of performance.
Intamool: Do you know why teachers selected you to play a female role? Did you ask them?

Sunthranon: I think that is due to my physical appearance. I am a small guy, not too big and not too tall. At that moment, I started playing as a female character which is a female villain in disguise of the heroine or sometimes I played a distinctive supporting character to the heroine. Generally, we name this typical character as nangtalat.20 I really prefer this character to the heroine. It is absolutely contradictory to my personal behaviors. At the first period of my professional career, I was selected to play as a female character with proper behaviors or the heroine. After taking part in more performances, I discovered that I am really fond of the nangtalat character. Firstly, my teachers doubted if I could play the role. However, after I tried my hand on the performance once, I was always assigned the nangtalat character.

Intamool: Do you still remember the early lakhon nok performances of yours?

Sunthranon: Yes, the first performance is called Suvannahong. I played as the heroine. Later, for the nangtalat character, I played in Rotthasen as Nangsanthi, an old female hunchback, who is the nanny of the heroine’s mother. Then I played as the title character Nangkaewnama with the Nangtalat character in the performance Kaewnama while Mr. Khomsannatha played as the heroine or Manirattana. The performance occurred during 1984-85. In fact, during early rehearsals, the actor who was first assigned failed to perform the character and to satisfy teachers’ requirements. So they altered from him to me.

Intamool: Did you ask teachers why they selected you for the play?

Sunthranon: Yes, they selected by considering my performing abilities, not my personality traits. I mean the way I speak or behave on stage fit requirements for a female character. In fact, they had long observed my persona because I also played female characters in khon performances such as Benyakai. For khon performances, I was not demanded to speak. I merely danced. Sometimes, beside lakhon nok performances, I played as female characters in other

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20 Nangtalat is a minor female character that must be energetically and swiftly performed. Sometimes, this character can be performed as a female villain.
performances. Based on teachers’ observation, I could play a female character, especially a heroine because I am a well-behaved person. Nevertheless, after I played the nangtalat character, I preferably request this character because it is quite challenging for me. Anyone is able to play a heroine. In contrast, the nangtalat character demands more abilities to perform spontaneously. It requires more physical movements and witty dialogue while khon performances require merely classical dancing and facial expressions. I have no need to speak any single word in khon performances. Besides, to perform the nangtalat character the performer must have a high pitched voice which is totally different from other female characters. Apparently, my abilities which are classical dancing, swift movements, behaviors on stage, facial expressions, and the high-pitched voice, fit all that are mandatory for the character. You are going to see how suitable I am for the role in today performance.

**Intamool:** Today, what character are you performing in Suwannahong?

**Sunthranon:** I am playing as the disguised Ketsuriyong or a river demon in disguise of Ketsuriyong. In the performance, Suwannahong, the hero, and Ketsuriyong, the heroine, are returning to Iyarat City. While they are going to cross a river, a female demon accidentally see them and then falls in love with Suwannahong. The demon plots an evil scheme. By her black magic, she disguises as an old woman volunteering to sail a boat for Suwannahong and Ketsuriyong to the other side of the river. Then the disguised old woman casts a spell bringing waves of river and storms to crush down the boat and then carries Ketsuriyong away. After that, she disguises as Ketsuriyong and accompanies Suwanahong. Although disguising as Ketsuriyong, the demon still maintains all previous undesirable behaviors of her own. All behaviors of hers are obviously different to the civilized Ketsuriyong. This requires a profound interpretation. Therefore, it appears quite challenging to me.

**Intamool:** So we can say that teachers selected you to play as a female character in the performances?

**Sunthranon:** According to the custom of learning Thai traditional dramatic arts, teachers significantly consider what each student will learn based on his or her physical appearance, talent
and personality. In class, they teach everything based on the curriculum; however, in practice, they select an appropriate role for a student by how perfectly each person can perform. Take me as a clear example. After playing as the nangtalat character, I had been incessantly selected to play that character. Normally, plays organized by the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts, rigidly follow the great tradition of the palace because all teachers during the early period of Thai dramatic arts were trained in the royal palace. Therefore, the performances were all female cast because of the critical shortage of male performers and the rule that allowed only women to perform in the palace. When there were more male performers in the Office of Performing Arts, the performances consisted of female and male performers. Finally, the performances become all male cast. This depends on the availability of performers at each period. By the way, the performances had been all female cast until the reign of King Rama II. The king, himself, composed six lakhon nok plays. Before the time of King Rama II, all performances were possessed by royal families and noble people due to their affluence. Each noble person possessed his private performing troupe which was specialized in a genre of the traditional performances. For instance, a troupe of a jaophraya merely performed lakhon nok while another troupe of another jaophraya specifically performed lakhon nai.21 Apparently, the distinctive titles of the troupes, such as Ketpharam and Tongyuinao, indicated genres of their performances. Besides, there was the distinguished establishment of each character in each play in each troupe; a performer always enacted in a specific role in a play depending on his individual talent. Consequently, each performer profoundly comprehended in the character which he was responsible. In contrast, performers of the Office of Performing Arts in the present including me have to perform in many roles or characters in several plays and genres of performances. For example, I, myself, although I had been trained to perform khon performances with the expertise in phra or a major male character, I had to play roles of a minor character, a deer, or even a female character. Likewise, in lakhon nok performances, I played a wide range of variety in roles such as a hero, a heroine, a villain, and a supporting character. However, there is a character which I am keen on based on my physical appearance, personality traits, and talent. I think it is the role of nangtalat or nangplang which is a villain in disguise of a heroine.

Nevertheless, since the performances were established in the royal palace, the emphasis was on the elaborate traditional dancing style; the comic element was hardly found. They didn’t tend to

21 Jaophraya is a title of a noble man in the highest rank.
be hilarious like what we are performing today. The early lakhon nok performances of the Office of Performing Arts used to be an all female cast because of the critical shortage of male performers. A current lakhon nok performance is a combination between the sophisticated lakhon nok performances of courtiers and the rustic lakhon nok performances of common people. There will be the combination of elegantly traditional dancing patterns and humor. Besides, with an all male cast, it allows male performers to act out something which might be regarded improper if performed by female performers.

**Intamool:** In lakhon nok performances, what is the character which you usually play?

**Sunthranon:** I can’t recall at this moment because it depends on each performance required by the Office of Performing Arts. I dare say that I have played most female characters in those performances because of my physical appearance as a small person. Seldom, I might play a male character if there is a demand on that. However, I would be assigned to play a youth character or a son of a king due to my physical appearance.

**Intamool:** Do you think that lakhon nok is related to the existence of kathoey or gay people in Thai society in terms of the reflection of kathoey through female characters? Why?

**Sunthranon:** Well, all performances were originally established from the entire male cast. There was a rule that forbade women in performing the plays. This regulation was quite obvious in the period of King Rama I. Women were merely permitted to perform lakhon nai which was established in the royal palace, with the ultimate purpose as the entertainment for the king and royal families. Common women, who were not courtiers, were absolutely forbidden to perform. This rule had been carried on until the reign of King Rama IV. After common women were permitted to perform, all noble men gradually established their private troupes. Then women were trained to perform. They were able to perform all genres of performances. However, all female cast troupes were originally reserved for the king.

**Intamool:** Is this similar to some Asian countries where there were all male cast performances?
Sunthranon: That’s right. Those are in India and Japan. Alternatively, an ancient Chinese opera in China was performed by men. Therefore, this characteristic of all male cast might lead to homosexuality. In the past, a male performer married and had children. Sometimes, the nature of the female character, which the performer was responsible for, influenced the performer to behave like a woman. He had to realize the nature of a woman so that he could spontaneously perform in the play. For example, as the heroine of the play, he embraced or expressed love to another male performer who played the hero. You are going to perceive this clearly in today performance. The Dialogue and behaviors on stage then affected the performer’s mind which led to his female-like behaviors in reality. It was possible for him to absorb female-like behaviors. Also, in the past, an actor of a troupe had performed a female character for a long duration like 3 months, 6 months, or a year at a theatre. From the dawn to the dusk, he was trained daily to perform as a female character. Apparently, in the period of King Rama VI, there was a teacher named Khunwad Phitsawong who behaved exactly like a woman; he slowly glided and pointed his finger to teach his students as if he were a woman. Otherwise, he had a wife and children. Due to the long duration of the practice of a female character, the male performer tended to behave and think like a woman unconsciously. All factors in theatre as I mentioned influence the person to be kathoey.

Intamool: Do you think that this might be a way or a method of those who were naturally kathoey or gay to express his identity in the ancient time?

Sunthranon: Yes, we might say so due to all factors that I previously mentioned. I mean all training and performances on stage might lead to the fulfillment of what those people desire to do.

Intamool: From your experience, are most male performers who play female characters gay or kathoey?

Sunthranon: Most of them? Yes, they are. That’s the reason why they can play female characters spontaneously. Generally, those who in reality behave like women can do their parts fantastically on stage. Their performance is better than those who are heterosexual men. Some
heterosexual-appearing men might perform better than some gay men or kathoey. However, sometimes, I doubted that those men are indeed heterosexual. They might not realize themselves. Personally, I think that arts, including the performing art, are delicate and beautiful. Men in general are not interested in creating an artistic work. Basically, those men who are attracted in the creation of arts tend to be gay or kathoey.

**Intamool:** How do you feel when you experience a performance which is full of gay or kathoey playing female characters in a lakhon nok performance?

**Sunthranon:** I admire them as long as they can do their parts in the performance precisely and aesthetically. Since Thai traditional performances are regarded as one of the sophisticated arts passed on from the most respected place as the royal palace, artists must respect the performance. The limit of the performance is obvious and everyone should be aware of that.

**Intamool:** While you are performing lakhon nok, when is the moment that you really enjoy the most? Is it the moment when audiences laugh? Why?

**Sunthranon:** I really enjoy every single moment while playing the character of Kaewnama since the character is the nangtalat character which challenges me to push myself to the limit. It requires a wide range of variety of emotions. Based on the script, this character appears tremendously amusing to audiences. It is not only a satisfaction when playing as a female character, but it is also a self-esteem when I have the profound understanding of the designated character and then can spontaneously act as if I were that character. When audiences appreciate my acting as seen from their smiles, laughter, and applause, it is my true reward. I feel satisfied. Sometimes, I step down from stage to interact with audiences. They are quite happy and willing to respond to my action.

**Intamool:** Do you get any comments from audiences? How are they? Positive or negative?
**Sunthranon:** Mostly, I get positive comments from some audiences who know me and some who don’t know me personally. Those who are familiar with me are my teachers, friends, and colleagues.

**Intamool:** As a performer, what is the chief charm of performing in *lakhon nok*?

**Sunthranon:** Since the challenge of *lakhon nok* is the impromptu situation which allows the spontaneous acting on stage, I have to think all the time to handle with unexpected situation or acting from other performers on stage. This is the characteristic of *lakhon nok* which attracts me.

**Intamool:** Will you perform in further *lakhon nok* performances if any chances arise? Why?

**Sunthranon:** Sure, if I can still act.

**Intamool:** Do you think that audiences can tolerate when a man dresses up and acts like a woman in *lakhon nok*? Why?

**Sunthranon:** Yes, they can accept this. They realize the circumstance. At least, they know that I act according to my career. This can be proved by all positive comments that I obtained. The audiences appreciate my talent when I can perform spontaneously and aesthetically.

**Intamool:** Can we say that audiences accept that in previous question because they get used to the historically long existence of *kathoey* in Thailand?

**Sunthranon:** I don’t think so. Most audiences realize the nature of *lakhon nok* which requires all male cast. They have been adequately informed about the performance. Then they experience the charms of both the comic part and the sophisticated Thai traditional dance. This is the reason why people are fascinated by *lakhon nok*. They prefer *lakhon nok* to *lakhon nai*. This is not related to the existence of *kathoey* in Thailand.
Intamool: Are there any additional comments you’d like to make about yourself, lakhon nok performances, or this interview?

Sunthranon: I am glad to have this interview. It is part of promoting lakhon nok to other people in order that they might have more comprehension toward this genre of performance. People might realize why we need an all male cast in lakhon nok. Male performers in lakhon nok are talented and hard working; therefore, they should be role models for the next generation.

Intamool: At last, could I ask for your permission to refer your name in my thesis?

Sunthranon: Sure, with my pleasure! That is also part of my responsibility. I am an academic or an educator. I grant you the permission to refer to my name in your thesis with academic purpose.

Intamool: Thank you so much for your kindness.
APPENDIX IV: INTERVIEW WITH KHOMSANNATHA HUAMUEANGLAT

Intamool: Now, I am interviewing Mr. Khomsannatha Huamueanglat. First of all, I would like to ask about your background which is the place of birth (which part of the country), age, education, and profession.

Huamueanglat: I was born in Sakonnakhon. However, I graduated from the Dramatic Arts College, Bangkok, which is now united in Bunditpatanasilpa Institute. Both institutes are in the control of Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts. Then I got a master’s degree from Thammasat University. At this moment, I work as a civil servant in the position of a dramatic artist. If counting from the year that I was first trained in college, I have performed for 40 years approximately. Now, I am 50 years old.

Intamool: How many times did you perform lakhon nok? What are titles of lakhon nok plays in which you participated?

Huamueanglat: I have performed in a great number of lakhon nok performances, especially in which I get cross-dressed. Honestly, I can’t remember how many times I performed in lakhon nok. However, I remember the first lakhon nok play when I cross-dressed. At that moment, I was a student. The performance was Suwannahong. However, I can’t remember the year.

Intamool: How did you get involved in lakhon nok? Who introduced you to it? Or was it your own motivation?

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22 During the interview, Mr. Huamueanglat always ended his sentences with “kha.” This word is always deployed by Thai women and kathoeys to say “yes” or to end sentences in Thai language to present gentility.
**Huamueanglat:** In fact, if I could do by my own desire, I would play a female character in a performance. However, according to the tradition of Thai dramatic arts, I couldn’t say it directly at that moment. Generally, teachers select students whom they have considered as appropriate for characters in performances. I was selected to perform. Now, if I as a teacher who selects someone to perform as a female character in a *lakhon nok* performance, I will consider his personality traits such as femininely gentle or delicate. This is what I am able to perceive from that person’s unconscious behaviors. Besides, his physical appearances must be considerably similar to those of a beautiful woman….. I think, in the past, I was chosen because I was a pretty boy who had a beautiful complexion, a good shape, and wit….I have been usually selected to perform as the heroine in *lakhon nok* since I was 28 years old. They can’t find anyone to replace me. To be the heroine in *lakhon nok*, a person must be skilled in Thai traditional dances for female characters.

**Intamool:** How often do you perform *lakhon nok*? Which character in *lakhon nok*, male or female, do you prefer or were usually assigned to play? Why?

**Huamueanglat:** Mostly, I was assigned to a role in a performance by the head of the dramatic arts section or the director of the Office of Performing Arts. However, by my own desire and my expertise, I can play a female role much better than a male role…….The office initially had an all female cast for *lakhon nok* performances. Later, there was a combination between male and female performers. Ultimately, it tends to be an all male cast. It depends on performers at each period of time. By the way, audiences prefer an all male cast. There are many interesting factors. First of all, most audiences are female. They prefer male performers to female ones….. Second, when all male performers do some wild actions or speak some naughty or ambiguous words, it is acceptable. In contrast, it is not appropriate for female performers to do exactly the same things as those demonstrated by male performers….. It relieves the seriousness of those deeds when male performers perform female roles…. Audiences love to watch an all male cast in *lakhon nok*. Many of them submitted letters and postcards and they sometimes directly telephoned to the director of the Office of Performing Arts to request an all male cast for *lakhon nok*. Most of the
performers they know are *kathoeys*. I, myself, who always play the heroine of the play, am *kathoey* as well........

**Intamool**: Do you think that the performance *lakhon nok* is related to the existence of *kathoey* in Thai society in terms of the reflection of *kathoeys* through female characters? Why?

**Huamueanglat**: Yes, I believe so. Personally, I think that playing in *lakhon nok* is the best way to release the unconscious desire of male performers who wish to be female……...In reality, they might not be able to express themselves; therefore, the performers fulfill their desire through the performances. However, originally, people in Asia realized that having a career in performing was quite complicated for a woman because performers had to wander and travel to many different places which took a long distance and duration. This might not be convenient for women. Therefore, male performers were preferable. Women were required to be preserved at home and to perform all housework. Probably, this reason facilitated *kathoeys* in performing female characters in *lakhon nok*. Later, when the dramatic arts institutes were established, male students who would like to learn the dramatic arts tended to be feminine.

**Intamool**: From your experience, are most performers who play female characters gay or *kathoey*? Why so? Are there any gays or *kathoeys* who prefer to play male characters? Why?

**Huamueanglat**: There were a lot. I think more than 50 percent of the performers who perform female characters are *kathoey*. They might not explicitly acknowledge their identities to audiences; however, at least, they did reveal themselves to other performers in the cast.

**Intamool**: Did you experience a performance that was full of gay men or *kathoeys* playing female characters in *lakhon nok* performance? How do you feel about it?
Huamueanglat: I feel nothing in particular about them. I think that everyone is a performer who is assigned a role to succeed. They must do their best..... Now, I behave like a mentor to younger or inexperienced kathoey performers. I suggested how to perform female characters and how to behave themselves to be accepted kathoeyys in the society. Basically, we should know how to limit our wild nature; we should not go beyond the border of acceptability of audiences. The performances of the Office of Performing Arts, the Department of Fine Arts, are respectively recognized as the royal court performances. All performers of the office always realize how appropriately they should perform. By the way, whenever I take part in a performance with a large number of performers who are kathoey or gay, I feel quite comfortable and really enjoy playing my role because these people are talented. They dance elegantly and they are fast learners as well as witty. So we can get along well in the performance and immediately respond in impromptu situations.

Intamool: While you are performing lakhon nok, when is the moment that you really enjoy the most? Is it when the audience laughs? Why?

Huamueanglat: I take pride in being the person who passes on this valuable cultural heritage of dramatic arts from the previous generation to the next generation. Also, I enjoy providing happiness and laughter for audiences who watch my performances. However, laughter and applause sometimes don’t mean happiness of performers. For instance, while we are performing in a scene when we moan with grief, if some audiences laugh, it probably means that we are not performing well to make audiences perceive the melancholy of the scene. However, if they respond with laughter to the moment when we intentionally excite their laughter, we achieve our goal. Besides, I am proud of my beauty while I am cross-dressing, especially when being paid with compliments towards my beauty and my fantastic performances. More or less, this is human nature, isn’t it? Sometimes, audiences compare me to other female performers to indicate my superiority to those performers.
**Intamool:** Do you get any comments from audiences? What are they? Positive or negative?

**Huamueanglat:** Yes, I constantly gain a lot of positive comments from audiences. Sometimes, while I am driving back home after a performance, I get several calls with appreciation towards the performance. For example, after a performance in the week before you attended the performance in Suphanburi, there were several admirers of mine who took approximately 3 hours to travel from Nakhonsawan which is another province. They brought me a lot of presents. Also, those in Bangkok usually call me to inquire about my show times and then bring me presents as well. They mentioned that I provide them happiness; therefore, they were willing to provide me anything which brought me happiness. Besides, the admirers sent me some letters and postcards expressing their appreciation towards my performances. By the way, once in my life, I got a negative comment. I was accused of verbalizing some improper words on stage. In fact, those words were ambiguous, not exactly rude. At that moment, I wondered if he or she didn’t realize the nature *lakhon nok*. I was informed as to who that person was by my director of the Office of Performing Arts. Afterwards, I still saw that person attending my performances several times. The person might subsequently realize the nature of *lakhon nok*.

**Intamool:** As a performer, what is the chief charm of performing in *lakhon nok*?

**Huamueanglat:** As a *kathoey*, the chief charm for me is to dress up like a woman. As an artist who presents an artistic work to the eye of the public, the chief charm is the amusement in performing *lakhon nok*.

**Intamool:** Will you perform in further *lakhon nok* performances if any chances arise? Why?

**Huamueanglat:** Yes, I definitely will…….
Intamool: Do you think that audiences can tolerate when a man dresses up and acts like a woman in lakhon nok? Why?

Huamueanglat: Personally, I strongly believe that audiences can tolerate men’s cross-dressing.

Intamool: Can we say that audiences can accept that in previous question because they get used to the historically long existence of kathoeys in Thailand? Why?

Huamueanglat: Yes, this is quite simple because of the open-mindedness in Thailand towards sexuality. A person has freedom to be anything or any gender he or she desires. Therefore, audiences don’t oppose cross-dressing and kathoeys. They can tolerate kathoeys. If not, they would not have gone to those performances of mine.

Intamool: Do you think that, due to being a kathoey, it helps you to create such fantastically artistic work?

Huamueanglat: As I am a kathoey who has been trained in Thai traditional performance and have long practiced in tons of performances, my answer is absolutely yes. Besides, I regard myself as a role model for younger kathoeys, particularly those who have a dream to be the heroine of performances in the Office of Performing Arts, the Department of Fine Arts. I know that many younger kathoeys dream take my role. Therefore, I behave myself in an appropriate way to be accepted in the society. I always teach or suggest those younger kathoeys how to behave themselves if occasions allow. I have been a guest lecturer in many institutes such as schools, dramatic arts colleges, and universities for several years…… Sometimes, several students in those institutes contacted me personally to have private classes with me. Once, after a performance, a kathoey student brought me flowers, candles, and incense sticks to pay respect to
me and ask me to admit him as my student. Some kathoey students traveled across the country to ask me to be their teacher. Besides, I am on the directing board of the Art Association for Youth, Thailand’s Office of National Culture Commission.

**Intamool:** Are there any additional comments you’d like to make about yourself, lakhon nok performances, or the interview?

**Huamueanglat:** Well, I embrace a perspective that a human being doesn’t have a specific gender. A human gender depends on each individual’s satisfaction in selecting what he or she would like to be. If we are perceived as kathoeys by people in the society, we should behave ourselves well. Be valuable kathoeys.

**Intamool:** Thank you so much for the interview. By the way, I would like to inquire of two permissions from you. First, is it possible to utilize the information from this interview in my thesis or to publicize the information from the interview with academic purposes?

**Huamueanglat:** I willingly grant the permission. I am glad to provide the information for academic purposes. Also, I am quite proud that I could be a role model for other kathoeys.

**Intamool:** Second, I would like to ask if I can utilize your name as reference in my thesis.

**Huamueanglat:** Sure, I willingly grant you the permission…..

**Intamool:** Thank you so very much for your kindness.
APPENDIX V: INTERVIEW WITH KITTI CHATUPRAYUN

Intamool: Now, I am interviewing Mr. Kitti Chatuprayun. First of all, I would like ask you about your background which is the place of birth (which part of the country), age, education, and profession.

Chatuprayun: I was born in Bangkok, the Central Thailand. At this moment, I am thirty-three years old. I graduated from Rajamangala University of Technology, Khlonghok Campus, Rangsit, Bangkok…… in the Faculty of Dramatic Arts and Music. Now, I am a civil servant in the position of the dramatic artist at the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts.

Intamool: How many times did you perform lakhon nok? What are titles of lakhon nok plays in which you participated?

Chatuprayun: I played in four lakhon nok performances such as Kaewnama, Sangthong, Kraithong, and Suwannahong which will be performed today.

Intamool: How did you get involved in lakhon nok? Who introduced you to it? Or was it your own motivation?
Chatuprayun: I once played the character Taphaokaew, one of the major female characters, in Kraithong when I was a student at the Dramatic Arts College. My friend and I are heterosexual. At that performance, my friend played another major female character Taphaothong. We played with a kathoey performer who played another major female character Wimala. That performance was a great success. I gained a good grade and a reward from my teacher. My performance, at that moment, might not have been as good as that of a kathoey, but it was quite unique in my own way. … This performance was restaged two more times!....When I became a dramatic artist at the Office of Performing Arts, I always got an order from my boss who assigned each performer for each character based on appropriateness. We have no right to select roles that are our preferences…..

Intamool: How often do you perform lakhon nok? Which character in lakhon nok, male or female, do you prefer or were usually assigned to play? Why?

Chatuprayun: Sometimes, I cross-dressed as a woman. Alternatively, I performed as a male soldier. … However, mostly, in lakhon nok which I performed, I played as a male character…..Nevertheless, when I started working in the Office of Performing Arts 8 years ago, I played female characters. Probably, the senior artists wanted me to try something new and challenging…..It is not a bad thing. I regard any performance as a piece of art……If I could choose to perform a female character, I would like to play the character Rotchana, the heroine in Sangthong. It is quite challenging. I can showcase my ability in Thai classical dance. I mean I would love to play a female character in a performance if I can demonstrate a lot of Thai Classical dancing patterns….For any character, male or female, it doesn’t matter.

Intamool: Do you think that lakhon nok is related to the existence of kathoey in Thai society in terms of the reflection of kathoeys through female characters? Why?
Chatuprayun: As I have experienced within the field of my career, I strongly believe that kathoeys or gay men have existed since the ancient time or when this performance still remained in the royal palace….The acceptance of these people might be in a tiny circle. However, without these people, there might not be cross-dressing and audiences would not be attending lakhon nok performances….There has been the tolerance or acceptance since the ancient time. This tolerance has existed in the society although it might not be mentioned. That is a different point from the performance. I do think that these two matters are related, but we can’t speak openly. Due to some restrictions in the society, kathoeys or gay men could not express true selves. Therefore, they expressed themselves through performances on stage as a way to release their tension…..I do believe that, with the existence of kathoeys or gay men, wherever in this world, arts will be more and more progressive. There will always be progress. Therefore, lakhon nok and the existence of kathoeys or gay men are related to each other.

Intamool: From your experience, are most performers who play female characters gay or kathoey? Why so? Are there any gays or kathoeys who prefer to play male characters? Why?

Chatuprayun: Yes, most of performers who play female characters are kathoey or gay, especially those in today’s performance…Personally, I think that those performers who play major female characters probably are kathoeys or gay men. If we ask if it is essential for a performer to be kathoey in order to play one of those roles, I preferably say that it is appropriate. It is appropriate for a kathoey or gay man to play a major female character in order to clearly communicate the femininity of the character to audiences. A kathoey or gay man can energetically and gracefully dance. A fantastic Thai traditional dance requires lots of energy to perform. Besides, as a tradition of this genre of performance, it requires verbal and physical quarrels because it is a performance for common people outside the palace…. Most stories deal with marriage lives or rivals in love….If a female character is performed by a heterosexual woman, it will not be as entertaining as that performed by a kathoey or gay man. I do think that it is more appropriate for a kathoey or gay man to play a major female character in lakhon nok.
**Intamool:** Did you experience a performance that was full of gay or *kathoey* playing female characters in *lakhon nok* performances? How do you feel about it?

**Chatuprayun:** Yes, I did. Well, I consider at how well those people can perform. I particularly focus if one can reach the high standard of performing because, from what I have experienced, those who play this genre of performance obtain an idea of a decent performance from the previous generation. They can perform without imprudence; their performance is definitely not impolite. In the ancient time, performers did not employ impolite words, mostly wild physical language. In contrast, performers in the present tend to employ some impolite words which I dislike……..It should not be performed beyond the appropriateness of general etiquette.

**Intamool:** While you are performing *lakhon nok*, when is the moment that you really enjoy the most? Is it when audiences laugh? Why?

**Chatuprayun:** I feel happy and enjoy performing a lot. …..It is quite challenging for me to perform as a woman or to act like a woman with some female manners in sitting and walking…..I have to try harder to imitate female behaviors. …..

**Intamool:** Does laughter from audiences indicate the acceptance of what you are performing on stage? Why?

**Chatuprayun:** …..they might laugh when the scene is funny….they might applaud….

**Intamool:** Do you get any comments from audiences? How are they? Positive or negative?
Chatuprayun: Yes, I got some endearing comments. It might be a little surprise for audiences who have seen me performing as male characters to see me cross-dress. They gave positive comments like “good job” or “such a beautiful woman.” Mostly, they appreciate my cross-dressing and performing…Most of comments are positive. ....However, for those who are not familiar with me, they said that I could do a good job. They didn’t say anything bad about cross-dressing….. Furthermore, they provide me some suggestions which might enable me to act more spontaneously or to cross-dress more beautifully……

Intamool: As a performer, what is the chief charm of performing in lakhon nok?

Chatuprayun: ….This performance is quite unique in many directions. First of all, it is all male cast. Those kathoeys or gay actors will do their best to perform their parts or to dress; consequently, sometimes it is like a competition among them to be more distinguished than other performers. Other charms are the amusing plot and how to present the story with a sense of humor. An aesthetic way to present the story as previously mentioned is also required. Therefore, I love to take part in this genre of performance.

Intamool: Will you perform in further lakhon nok performances if any chances arise? Why?

Chatuprayun: Yes, I will……It is a way to preserve this genre of performance…. 

Intamool: Do you think that audiences can tolerate when a man dresses up and acts like a woman in lakhon nok? Why?
Chatuprayun: Yes, they can. They have tolerated for a long time. If not, this genre of performance would not exist nowadays…….All characteristics of lakhon nok performances should be preserved, including all male cast…..However, they must be performed appropriately like what Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts is doing. …..with the gracefully and precisely traditional dancing……

Intamool: Can we say that audiences can accept that in previous question because they get used to the historically long existence of kathoeys in Thailand? Why?

Chatuprayun: Yes, we could say that. For example, Mr. Khomsannatha has played Rotchana for over ten years. Audiences can tolerate with that. They appreciate how well and skillfully he can perform. Audiences can accept what Mr. Khomsannatha is.

Intamool: Are there any additional comments you’d like to make about yourself, lakhon nok performances, or this interview?

Chatuprayun: I would like people to perceive the significance of all kinds of traditional performance. Everything is unique in its own way. All performances, no matter performed by what gender, are valuable….We should preserve all performances……Men, kathoeys, or gay men should put all their effort to create the best lakhon nok performance which is a piece of art….We should preferably concentrate on the work….

Intamool: Thank you so much for your interview. Finally, I would like to ask for your permission in referring to your name in my thesis or any work of mine with academic purposes. Can I get the permission?
Chatuprayun: Sure, you can. No problem.

Intamool: Thank you.
APPENDIX VI: INTERVIEW WITH SARAWUT AROMCHUEN

Intamool: Now, I am interviewing Mr. Sarawut Aromchuen. First of all, I would like ask you about your background which consists of the place of birth (which part of the country), age, education, and profession.

Aromchuen: I was born in Nakhonrachasima. Now, I am 26 years old. I got a bachelor degree from Bunditpatanasilpa Institute three years ago. At this moment, I am a civil servant at the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts.

Intamool: How many times did you perform lakhon nok? What are titles of lakhon nok plays in which you participated?

Aromchuen: So many times! Honestly, I can hardly count how many lakhon nok performances I played. However, I can recall some titles of performances such as Honwichai-Khawi, Kaewnama, Chaiyachet, Sangthong, etc. I usually played minor characters, not a heroine……The latest performance before today’s performance happened in April….. This one is Suwannahong. Today, I am playing as a mermaid who saves Ketsuriyong, the heroine, from dreadful drowning.

Intamool: How did you get involved in lakhon nok? Who introduced you to it? Or was it your own motivation?
**Aromchuen:** While I was studying at the Dramatic Arts College in Nakhonrachasima, my seniors introduced me to know this genre of performance and then asked me to perform a *lakhon nok* performance. Also, when I was studying at the college, it was mandatory for every student to be trained in every genre of performance. The first *lakhon nok* performance that I performed is the play *Honwichai-Khai*...I played as a lady-in-waiting. I really enjoyed that performance because it was the first time I cross-dressed.

**Intamool:** How often do you perform *lakhon nok*? Which character in *lakhon nok*, male or female, do you prefer or were usually assigned to play? Why?

**Aromchuen:** Yes, I am usually assigned to perform in *lakhon nok* performances. Whenever I am approached and asked to play a character, I always prefer to be a lady-in-waiting because I really enjoy this role. I can freely converse and argue with characters which are on the opposite side or rivals. It is acceptable to pay cursing words to the rivals. In reality, I never do something like this, so I can compensate for this in *lakhon nok*. Also, the performance requires witty performers to converse and to play impromptu; this is a charming characteristic of *lakhon nok* to me……If I can choose to be a heroine, I would like to be an anti-heroine.

**Intamool:** Personally, do you think that *lakhon nok* is related to the existence of *kathoey* in Thai society in terms of the reflection of *kathoeys* through female characters? Why?

**Aromchuen:** I think that these two things might not be related to each other because, in a performance, acting is playing a character. To get into a role is to play that character spontaneously or to be similar to the character. Consequently, those who perform female characters might not be *kathoey* or gay in reality.
**Intamool:** From your experience, are most performers who play female characters gay or *kathoey*? Why so? Are there any gays or *kathoeys* who prefer to play male characters? Why?

**Aromchuen:** Some who played in *lakhon nok* are really *kathoey* or gay…….. By the way, it is not certain that those who play female characters in *lakhon nok* performances are always *kathoey* or gay.

**Intamool:** Did you experience a performance that was full of gay men or *kathoeys* playing female characters in *lakhon nok* performances? How do you feel about it?

**Aromchuen:** Yes, I experienced some performances when all performers who played female characters are *kathoey* or gay. Each of them is! I really enjoyed those performances. I could get along well with them while performing. While playing with those *kathoey* performers, they used a lot of slang or unique words which I really like……..

**Intamool:** While you are performing *lakhon nok*, when is the moment that you really enjoy the most? Is it the moment when audiences laugh? Why?

**Aromchuen:** I really enjoy being a lady-in-waiting in the company under the lead of a character…….. I am so proud that, whenever I coursed at the rival, audiences laugh……. However, once, when I played in the play *Khunchang- Khunphan*, the Making of Bueang Dessert Episode, I played a female character called Moei, a lady-in-waiting….. I was so proud that I myself could create my own Mon language and stimulated a lot of laughter from audiences.
\textbf{Intamool}: Does laughter from audiences indicate the acceptance of what you are performing on stage? Why?

\textbf{Aromchuen}: Yes, sometimes.

\textbf{Intamool}: Do you get any comments from audiences? How are they? Positive or negative?

\textbf{Aromchuen}: Most of them are positive. They said that I could play very well. They enjoyed the performance tremendously so much that they laughed a lot. They also said that I could play like a woman. I mean in the way of \textit{lakhon nok} ……

\textbf{Intamool}: As a performer, what is the chief charm of performing in \textit{lakhon nok}?

\textbf{Aromchuen}: It is my personal preference. I would like to improve my acting ability in this genre of performance. I like the moment when audiences are happy because of my performance.

\textbf{Intamool}: Will you perform in further \textit{lakhon nok} performances if any chances arise? Why?

\textbf{Aromchuen}: I think that I would like to play. It is my own preference. It is entertaining and it is a good time when I can socialize with other performers who are my friends.

\textbf{Intamool}: Do you think that audiences can tolerate when a man can dresses up and acts like a woman in \textit{lakhon nok}? Why?
**Aromchuen:** For audiences who acknowledged this, before attending *lakhon nok* performances, they realize and then can tolerate the way that male performers cross-dress. There might be some people, the minority, who can’t tolerate cross-dressing. They normally prefer male performers for male characters and female performers for female characters.

**Intamool:** Can we say that audiences can accept that in previous question because they get used to the historically long existence of *kathoeys* in Thailand? Why?

**Aromchuen:** No, I don’t think that these are related. Nowadays, in Thai society, gay men dress like general men while *kathoeys* cross-dress like women. Besides, in *lakhon nok* performances, gay men, *kathoeys*, or heterosexual men can play female characters. Consequently, I don’t think that those two things that you mentioned are connected.

**Intamool:** Are there any additional comments you’d like to make about yourself, *lakhon nok* performances, or this interview?

**Aromchuen:** *Lakhon Nok* performance is a kind of arts which allow men, women, gay men, or *kathoeys* to take part in performing. It is like an open area for anyone of any gender to take part….. Audiences can tolerate the way that men cross-dress from the ancient time to the present because the society can tolerate gay men and *kathoeys*.

**Intamool:** Is it possible for me to refer to your name in the work of academic purposes?
Sarawut: Yes, you can.

Intamool: Thank so much for your time in the interview.
APPENDIX VII: INTERVIEW WITH A

Intamool: Now, I am interviewing Mr. A. First of all, I would like to ask you about your background which consists of the place of birth (which part of the country), age, education, and profession.

A: I was born in Suphanburi, the central region of Thailand. At this moment, I am 29 years old. I graduated from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts and Music, Rajamangala University of Technology. My major is dramatic arts. Now, I work as a civil servant at the Office of Performing Arts, Thailand’s Department of Fine Arts.

Intamool: How many times did you perform lakhon nok? What are titles of lakhon nok plays in which you participated?

A: Honestly, I can hardly remember how many times I performed in lakhon nok because I have performed in this genre of performances since I was a junior high school student. I began playing lakhon nok when I was in eighth grade. I was assigned to be a lady-in-waiting. If I was not assigned that role, I would be assigned to be a high-ranked official. If there is a lakhon nok performance, I will usually have a chance to take part. The most performed plays that I usually take part are Kaewnama, Suwannahong, Kraithong, and Sangthong. Probably, the first lakhon nok performance in my life was Kaewnama. I can barely recall this because it occurred long time ago.
Intamool: How did you get involved in lakhon nok? Who introduced you to it? Or was it your own motivation?

A: At that moment, teachers in the dramatic arts division at my school assigned each student to play each character. The Office of Performing Arts requested students as performers to play the roles of the lady-in-waiting and other minor characters. The request was regarded as the cooperation from the school. Then those teachers in my school responded to the request. At that moment, I was therefore initiated into this kind of performance……. With the order from my teachers as the representative of the school, I performed in the play without any protest. Also, I really enjoyed the performance. The role of a lady-in-waiting was considerably easy to act……When I performed a high-ranked official, I just sat on the floor and observed what was happening on stage. That was all I did. It was a lot of fun for me.

Intamool: How often do you perform lakhon nok? Which character in lakhon nok, male or female, do you prefer or were usually assigned to play? Why?

A: Yes, several times for performances of the Office of Performing Arts and some performances offered by other organizations with the connection through my friends. I like this genre because I like to perform. However, I don’t like the process of preparation as a female character such as wearing the make-up, styling hair, and dressing up for playing a court lady. This process is quite complicated and detailed, but I really enjoy the moment on stage. I experienced performing as female and male characters in lakhon nok …..I am interested in every character role. However, sometimes, it depends on the charm of that character and the background of my expertise since I have been trained to play a demon in khon….. Once, I played as a female demon in khon….. I can play any character depending on how interesting that role is.
Intamool: Do you think that lakhon nok is related to the existence of kathoeys in Thai society in terms of the reflection of kathoeys through female characters? Why?

A: I think this genre is a type of entertainment. The performance is not related to the existence of kathoeys in Thai society. Nowadays, people think that those who perform in lakhon nok must be kathoey or gay. The performers who are kathoey or gay have ability to perform this genre wonderfully and can entertain audiences very well. They are able to perform better than heterosexual men…. KATHOEY or gay men have some tricks for a more entertaining performance…..However, for performances of the Office of Performing Arts, since all traditions are passed on from courtiers, the performers always realize the limit of craziness they can perform ……

Intamool: From your experience, are most performers who play female characters gay or kathoey? Why so? Are there any gays or kathoeys who prefer to play male characters? Why?

A: From what I experienced, the majority of performers that play female characters in lakhon nok are kathoey or gay. However, I don’t know what was like in the ancient time. As I told you, performers who are gay men or kathoeys, know how to entertain audiences. Therefore, those who organize each production prefer them in the production. The performers are able to perform fantastically. Plus, they are gorgeous. Consequently, it is a waste of time to train homosexual men to play female characters.

Intamool: Did you experience a performance that was full of gay men or kathoeys playing female characters in lakhon nok performance? How do you feel about it?
A: Yes, most of performances I took part. I have had acquaintance with performers who are gay or kathoey since I was a student. Basically, it is quite usual in the field of arts where you can generally find this group of people. They are paralleled with this career path. I can tolerate kathoeys and gay men. Besides, I admire them, especially those who are talented…. I mean those who can play female characters spontaneously.

Intamool: While you are performing lakhon nok, when is the moment that you really enjoy the most? Is it when audiences laugh? Why?

A: I am never satisfied with any character I played. I don’t feel like I can reach the moment of pride. I saw performers who had played the roles that I played. I think that they could fantastically play the roles. I couldn’t reach that standard. Consequently, I never felt proud of what I performed although I tried my best to succeed. However, I always feel happy when I am performing on stage.

Intamool: Do you get any comments from audiences? How are they? Positive or negative?

A: Yes, I always got positive feedback from those who are familiar with me such as my friends and my teachers. Most comments are constructive. I can consider them for my improvement. ….

Intamool: As a performer, what is the chief charm of performing in lakhon nok?

A: The plays in the great tradition are something far beyond lives of common people. In contrast, lakhon nok, for common people, is accessible. People feel that they can access this genre.
Besides, the entertainment of this genre is created from cursing, naughty words, and quarrels among characters….

**Intamool:** Will you perform in further *lakhon nok* performances if any chances arise? Why?

**A:** Yes, since I am still unsatisfied with what I played, I would like to improve myself. It’s why I would like to get involved in *lakhon nok*…. I would like to make the improvement in further performances. There is no perfection.

**Intamool:** Do you think that audiences can tolerate when a man dresses up and acts like a woman in *lakhon nok*? Why?

**A:** The audiences realize that all female characters in *lakhon nok* are performed by male performers. They always do. Consequently, they can tolerate this! They accept that this is a genre of performance that requires an all male cast….. They attend a *lakhon nok* performance with the expectation to see an all male cast.

**Intamool:** Can we say that audiences can accept that in previous question because they get used to the historically long existence of *kathoey* in Thailand? Why?

**A:** This should be made clear! The audiences can tolerate because of the tradition of *lakhon nok* performance. However, they might not if the performers are *kathoey* or gay. Therefore, after the performance, audiences might not tolerate if they discover that those performers are *kathoey* or gay…. They can’t accept the truth; they can tolerate the moment on stage…..
**Intamool:** Are there any additional comments you’d like to make about yourself, *lakhon nok* performance, or this interview?

**A:** Generally, nowadays, less and less people are interested in Thai traditional performances. This might be affected by many factors in the transforming society. I would like people in the new generation to pay more interest in Thai traditional performances…..

**Intamool:** Thank you so much for your time.
APPENDIX VIII: COSTUMES OF LAKHON NOK PERFORMERS

The Costume of Female Character (Nang)

1. Kamlaithao  Anklet
2. Suea-nai-nang  Bodice
3. Pha-nungnang  Nether garment
4. Khemkhat  Belt of girdle
5. Sa-ing  Set of chains worn from the left shoulder to the hip opposite to it
6. Phahomnang  Upper garment
7. Nuamnang  Ornament worn on shoulders
8. Chi-nang  Pendant
9. Phahurat  Armlet
10. Waen-rob  Bracelet which is a coil spring bent into a circle
11. Pawalam  Bracelet of beads
12. Kamlai-takhap  Bracelet shaped like a centipede
13. Kamlai-suam  Bracelet
14. Thammarong  Ring
15. Mongkut  Crown
16. Kanchiak or Chonhu  Ornamental piece extending down, behind the ear, from the lower part of the crown
17. Dokmai-that  Flower worn above the left ear
18. U-ba or Phuang-dok-mai  String of flowers hanging down, from the lower part of the crown, in front of the left ear.

**The Costume of Male Character (Phra)**

1. Kamlai-tao  Anklet
2. Sanapphlao  Tight-fitting drawers
3. Pha-nung  Nether garment
4. Hoi-khang, Chiarabat, or Chaikhrang  Embroidered cloth used like a belt, but with its ends hanging down to the knees, one at the front of each leg.

5. Chalong-ong  Upper garment
6. Ratsa-ew or Rat-ong  Waist-band
7. Hoi-na  Cloth hanging down from the waist between the end of No. 4

8. Suwankrathop  Gold plate, with traceries in open work, hung from the waist so that if partly covers No. 7

9. Khemkhat  Belt
10. Krong saw or Nuamkho  Ornament worn around the body on a level with the shoulders

11. Thapsuang  Pendant
12. Intha-nu  Epaulette worn only with the long-sleeved upper garment
13. Phuhurat  Armlet
14. Sang-wan  Golden chain worn from the shoulder to the hip
15. Tabthit  Plat attached to No. 14 where the latter touches the hip
16. Chada  Crown
17. Dokmai-phet  Diamond flower
18. Kamchiak or Chonhu  Ornamental piece extending down, behind the ear from the lower part of the crown

19. Dokmai-that  Flower worn above the right ear
20. U-ba  String of flowers hanging down, from the lower part of the crown, in from of the right ear

21. Thammarong  Ring
22. Waen-rob  Bracelet which is a coil spring bent into a circle
23. Pawalam  Ornament for the forearm which looks like a row of bangles fused together
24. Thongkon  Ornament for the forearm which looks like a row of bangles fused together