Chapter 26
Conceptualizing Thai Genderscapes: Transformation and Continuity in the Thai Sex/Gender System

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1   Introduction

The blockbuster film *Iron Ladies* (2000, directed by Yongyoot Thongkongtoon), based on a true story, about a team of *gay* and *kathoey* players coached by a *tom* that won the national volleyball championship, kick-started an explosion in the representation of transgenderism and homosexuality in mainstream Thai media. At the time of its release, the film was the highest-grossing Thai film ever. Although *Iron Ladies* advocates for the rights of gender minorities, in reality, many of the players were barred from international competition, to maintain the country's reputation. The state, previously self-conscious about the androgyny of its female population, is now discomfited about a male population that is deemed too feminine. Nevertheless, the film also acts to legitimize Thai gender diversity in its portrayal of five genders.

In this chapter, I expand on the notion of "-scape" (Appadurai 1996: 33) in conceptualizing genderscapes in Thailand, which can act as a case study in developing genderscapes elsewhere. I argue for the conceptualization of a Thai sex/gender system, or genderscapes, based on five key gender categories.[1] I explore the cultural logics of naming and transformations in meaning ascribed to gender-variant people and describe the contemporary genderscapes, or the conceptual distribution of gender/sexuality forms in everyday practice as they are conditioned by fields of uneven power. I contend that genderscapes provide an enhanced theorization of contemporary

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[1] This research is part of a larger project comparing how class structures *kathoey* and *gay* life opportunities, romantic partner preferences, and risk for HIV. Anthropological fieldwork consisting of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis of media was conducted for 42 months between 2004 and 2011 with approximately 300 *gay/kathoey* informants and their families and friends. Emphasis was placed on class differences and East Asian cultural flows.

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Thai gender categories. The lines between *tom* : woman : *kathoey* : *gay* : man are neither clear nor fixed, but coalesce around these key formations.[2] These categories are grounded via the repetition and ritualization of routine practices in everyday life as they appear to others but also remain fluid in that gender performances exceed their intentions and interpretations.

My aim in articulating the localized field of gender and sexual diversity as "genderscapes" is to integrate prior scholarship in the Thai sex/gender system, which, in turn, destabilizes universal notions of sexual dimorphism and heterosexual compulsion through cross-cultural comparison. I intentionally use the plural Thai "genderscapes" to denote the contextual and perspectival figuration of any given genderscape at a time, such that genderscapes are always plural between people and even within a person given a particular situation or focus. The conceptual configuration of genderscapes shifts depending on the dimension of gender being considered (e.g., self-presentation and desire) or an individual's social position and ideological perspective (e.g., academics, activists, artists, clergy, general actors, political figures, and sexual minorities). I underscore that the contemporary terrain of gender/sexuality is habituated by one's class position and shaped by social evaluation and moral legitimacy.

2   Historical Background and Theoretical Framework

2.1   Transformations in the Thai Sex/Gender System

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that circumvented direct colonization. Without a colonial power, in either direct or indirect senses, Thailand is characterized by its semicolonial status (Jackson 2010). Yet, colonial history is important in understanding Thai gender/sexuality because the threat of foreign encroachment and subsequent nationalist modernization projects reformulated gender and produced unexpected consequences in gender relations. In part, Siam avoided external rule by proffering and employing autocolonial practices to demonstrate its *siwilai* (civilized) status (Winichakul 1994, 2000, 2010). While it would seem that these effects are more indirect since Thailand was never colonized, the consolidation of monarchical power and colonial impulse in the pursuit of *siwilai* actually heightened the ability of the state to recast cultural conventions. Arguably, autocolonial governmentality in Thailand was more direct and stronger a force of change than that imposed in its colonized neighbors by European rule. An intact absolute monarchy followed by a constitutional monarchy provided greater ability of the state to model and legislate gender norms than was possible in the colonies. For Thailand to

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[2] Nouns from Thai are not modified to express plural form. That is, like "sheep," the plural of "*kathoey*" is "*kathoey*." Thai transliteration is rendered in a modified version of the Royal Institute system unless a common or preferred rendition exists.

remain free from Western domination, the population was subjected to new forms of rule (Connors 2007). One should not, however, romanticize the Thai past as a place of greater gender pluralism or egalitarianism.

The project of modernization contrasts the traditional Thai system of three sexes with a system that promotes standardization into two gender-normative sexes ideally engaged in monogamous marriage (Loos 2006). Semicolonialism imposed sexual dimorphism and heterosexual matrices that become refashioned in the Thai case of *siwilai*—but this state process of de-androgynizing local genders is a Foucauldian (1990) disciplinary mechanism that is productive of new kinds of thirds, which may or may not be ambiguous, since polarizing binary sex makes their transgressions more apparent. The early twentieth-century interventions, particularly those during the Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram era, were particularly virulent, legislating gender-specific hair, dress, and behavior (e.g., long hair and pantyhose for women, husbands kissing wives) that would be recognizable to Westerners (van Esterik 2000; Barmé 2002). These changes were not uniformly adopted, with urban elites being most influenced. Van Esterik (2000) notes how working-class women avoided and resisted Thai bureaucratic pressures to conform to ideals of Western femininity. Besides European encroachment and subsequent attempts at modernization, rapid pulses of gender and sexual transformation also followed other key historical, economic, and technological events such as the Vietnam/American War, AIDS, the Asian financial crisis, and the availability of birth control, hormones, and sexual reassignment and cosmetic surgeries. Furthermore, cultural influence from the migration of Chinese immigrants has affected gender relations, particularly among the merchant class (Bao 2005).

A new era of development post-WWII increasingly drove capitalist modes of production and consumption in Thailand (see also Chap. 9 in this volume). These came to be inhabited under the skin and combined with new discourses around economic restructuring, consumerism, development, modern identity, and cosmopolitanism that produced a post-Fordist system of flexible gender identities that modified historical forms but whose contours vary by subject position and moral valence. Involvement with Vietnam as an American ally greatly expanded sex tourism in Thailand and helped develop Thailand's infrastructure and economy (Bishop and Robinson 1998; Jeffrey 2002). Ironically, the expansion of the middle class made possible by prostitution has increased stigma for sex workers among those eager to make novel class distinctions. More recently, the Asian financial crisis and the subsequent recovery have both produced anti-Western sentiment and greater political, economic, and cultural integration with other Southeast and East Asian nations.

Thai biopolitical intervention in the production of modern sex is thus the basis for the production of the current genderscapes. The autocolonial intervention re-articulates a newly localized sex/gender system. Discursive governmentality is the catalyst to create this shift, yet cannot fully account for the variation present. Its erasure of former gender conceptualizations and reconstruction of a system in line with modern Western sexual dimorphism remains incomplete. In fact, hybrid resistances, cosmopolitan engagements, and everyday practices exceed the limitations placed on sex forms. The microstructural adjustments in the performance of gender

also provide a degree of fluidity that cannot be accounted for in taxonomic models of the Thai sex/gender system. Nevertheless, these mundane performances are enabled and constrained via socio-moral understandings of appearance. Here, I turn to a theoretical elaboration of these additional processes.

2.2   Globalization and Localization of Gender Transformations

Thai gender and sexuality categories are not given, but rather historically contingent (Scott 1999) and culturally produced locally in dialogue with globalizing forces. Having provided a brief historical overview of Thai biopolitical intervention in the production of modern sex vis-à-vis its autocolonial governmentality, I propose a formulation of Thai genderscapes. This conceptualization of genderscapes, based on Appadurai's (1996) notions of disjuncture and localization, is operationalized through Thai statecraft and everyday concepts of face, appearance, and propriety. First, I briefly outline Appadurai's-scapes in relation to Rubin's (1975, 1984) sex/gender system and Herdt's (1996) discussion of third sexes. Then, I compare Morris' (1994), Jackson's (2000), and Sinnott's (2004) formulations of Thai gender and sexuality and provide additional data about the contemporary Thai situation from the last decade. By examining issues of morality, appearances, and everyday practice, I argue for a Thai genderscape revolving around five major gender/sexuality nodes. Finally, I consider what this means in relation to Altman's (2001) global gay hypothesis.

In Modernity at Large, Appadurai (1996: 33) argues that cultural flows have increasingly non-isomorphic paths along five dimensions (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes) which he refers to with the suffix "-scapes." Thus, Appadurai proposes that scapes are not objectively given relations but rather deeply perspectival constructs historically inflected through the situatedness and power of different types of social and individual actors. Scapes themselves act as facilitators and constraints on each other, creating unexpected routes and often contentious imaginings of the lifeworld. Flows across national borders are also indigenized and are instrumental in producing locality. For Appadurai (1996: 178), locality is not already given but has a "complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts … which expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality, and reproducibility."

The various processes of globalization are disjunctured and thus require multiple scapes to demonstrate analytically how these unsmooth routes are generative of the new forms that are inherently hybrid and contradictory. But, as these scapes continue to circulate and recirculate unevenly, they are then re-indigenized through processes of localization that filter and mold them into yet another set of forms in an ongoing cycle. This formulation allows for the theorization of complexly interrelated phenomena that do not privilege stability or movement. It also leaves open cultural forms to profound irregularity and unpredictability.

Scape terms highlight the positionality, contingency, and contextual nature of globalizing forces on local processes. Here, I focus on the local phenomenological quality of Thai gender and articulate it as Thai genderscapes attentive to the discursive structures and everyday discourses that produce relative stability. The terrain of the sex/gender system is indigenized and becomes local in the tension between the autochthonous and the global.

I refer to genderscapes as a sex/gender system, a culturally elaborated mode of inhabiting reproductive differences in relation to subsistence, kinship, politics, and so forth (Rubin 1975). While I agree with Rubin (1984) that gender and sexuality should be separated analytically, they are emically intertwined and mutually constituted in Thailand and elsewhere. With the exception of masculine gay men, Thais typically do not distinguish gender and sexuality in their own lives. Sexuality is generally neither necessary nor sufficient to transform one's gender. Thus, following Jackson (2003) and Sinnott (2004), I conceptualize gender and sexuality within the purview of genderscapes as autonomous but related domains of a sex/gender order. Eroticism is corollary to but not necessarily derivative of gender, requiring relational rather than independent analysis.

Conceptualization as a -scape reveals greater possibilities for various genders. Modeling gender in a three-dimensional space rather than as a dualism opens up crosses, unities, mixes, alternatives, and liminalities beyond male-to-female and female-to-male transgenders. Incorporating time, the nodes of gender can shift and need not be fully formed to be recognized. I thus benefit from Herdt's conceptualization of third sexes, although I do not go as far as arguing that the ontology of third sexes requires a "stable social role, that can be inhabited—marking off a clear social status position, rights and duties, with indications for the transmission of corporeal and incorporeal property and rights" (Herdt 1996: 60). Instead, I embrace dynamism within the realm of habituated practice (Bourdieu 1990), as key nodes in the system help to anchor genderscapes. The performance or practice of gender allows for their ongoing rearticulation; yet the possibilities are always shaped through ritualization and regulatory discourses (Butler 2004; Morris 1995).

Currently, I argue for five major gender nodes, which exist in relation to one another based on anatomical differences, presentation of self, socioeconomic roles, desire for certain others, and so on. Each of these nodes has spin-offs or subdivisions, creating a large number of possible categories. However, they coalesce around five forms with significant ontological fixity in public everyday life. These are realized through the repetition of symbolic processes and everyday practices which make them appear to be real and part of the natural and hierarchical order of things (Bourdieu 1990). These processes include the presentation of a gendered self in daily life as well as the dissemination and reinstantiation of these practices via media representations. Face and appearance are key to Thai social norms and the regulation of behavior and propriety (Mulder 1997), especially gender performance and its formation (Barmé 2002). Surfaces (van Esterik 2000) and the gaze (Morris 1997) are technologies for the regulation of Thai gender and sexual relations. Appearances act as a mechanism to discipline idealized social forms, irrespective of interiority, through the fear of losing face. Within this public "regime of images"

(Jackson 2004), private sexual practices are sequestered while gender presentation is brought to the fore. Therefore, public enactments of gender variance become highlighted for their difference at the same time sexuality can, and "should," remain unknown. In sum, the images one projects about the self are more important than identity in public interactions. Such exteriorities are not expected to access an essential truth. Furthermore, the Thai concept of *phet* frames sexuality as an extension of gender. Thus, my focus in constructing Thai genderscapes emphasizes the public performance of gender, and nonnormative gender presentation, rather than sexuality.

3   Thai Genderscapes

Kathoey: a male-to-female transgender person, typically engaging in or desiring relationships with heterosexual men, irrespective of operative status
Gay: a male, masculine or feminine, who engages in or desires same-sex relationships with other males
Tom: a masculine woman who engages in or desires same-sex relationships with a woman
Dee: a feminine woman who engages in same-sex relationships with *tom*

3.1   *Contemporary Thai Gender and Sexuality*

In this section, I review the literature on the Thai gender and sexuality system and propose conceptualizing it as a "genderscape." Gender/sexuality categories are neither essential nor constant arrangements. They are culturally and historically specific, socially structured and structuring, but also tactically employed, resisted, and manipulated. Gender does not operate in isolation, but interacts with other forms of social difference. Following Jackson and Cook (1999: 23), I emphasize dynamism: "the diversity of ways in which notions of sexuality and gender are manifested and contested in everyday social practices, as well as their rapidly changing nature." Furthermore, as gender pluralism (Peletz 2009) continues to be challenged, albeit in new ways, responding to new concerns, the legitimacy of gender/sexual variance requires assessment. Class, moral status, and experience must be highlighted in understanding Thai gender/sexuality because they shape representations, everyday practices, and the acceptability afforded to various forms.

Every day Thai does not distinguish between sex, gender, and sexuality (เพศ: *phet*). Jackson and Sullivan (1999: 5) suggest that "within Thai discourse, gay and *kathoey* are not distinguished as a sexuality and a gender, respectively. Rather, gay, *kathoey*, together with 'man' (*phu-chai*), 'woman' (*phu-ying*), and the lesbian identities *tom* and *dee*, are collectively labelled as different varieties of *phet*." Academics use specialized terms to differentiate sex, gender, sexuality, and other aspects of *phet*,

but these are not commonly understood. Activists also have developed specialized terms. In the last decade, the development of HIV services for males who have sex with males and transgender women has also elaborated new specialized terms, often derived from international NGO, public health, and human rights discourses. In the general operations of *phet*, sex, gender, and sexuality are bound up in metaphorical packages which discourage dissonance between gender presentation and a presumably gendered desire rather than between sex and gender.

The multifaceted nature of *phet* has been conceptualized in two primary ways in the literature: a Westernization model and an indigenization model. In the former, modern Western understandings of gender/sexuality usurp and supplant Thai ones. In the latter, new sexual identities are ensconced within the Thai *phet* system. Morris (1994) contrasts the traditional three-sex system with a modern four-sexuality system. She argues that the Thai ternary of man, woman, and *kathoey* (กะเทย) is increasingly being replaced by four modern Western sexualities based on the two binaries of male:female and homosexual:heterosexual, which create the four positions of female-heterosexual, female-homosexual, male-heterosexual, and male-homosexual. According to Morris (1994), these systems coexist but are incommensurable, and thus the "modern" system is replacing the "traditional" one. Similarly, van Esterik (2000: 218–219) states that "the influence of international gay culture including new media (magazines and videos) may be increasing the numbers of category labels, but is breaking down the diversity in the Thai gender system to stress identity based on object choice, heterosexual or homosexual."

In contrast, Jackson (2000) and Sinnott (2004) argue that Western sexual identities are indigenized through local conceptualizations of gender, thereby multiplying gender categories. Jackson (2003) uses the term "eroticized genders" and Sinnott (2004) uses the term "gendered sexualities." They emphasize that sexual desire is an extension of gender identification rather than separate domains of gender and sexual orientation. Based on the historical analysis of the Thai press and academic texts, Jackson (2000: 412) asserts that there are at least ten gender terms commonly used in contemporary Thai discourse. He charts how the three categories of (1) man, (2) *kathoey* (transgender), and (3) woman have proliferated into ten categories from the 1960s to the 1980s: (1a) man, (1b) *seua bai* (male bisexual); (2a1) *gay king*, (2a2) *gay queen*, (2b1) *kathoey*, (2b2) *kathoey plaeng phet* (transsexual), (2b3) *khon sorng phet* (hermaphrodite), (2c) *tom*; (3a) *dee* and (3b) woman, respectively. These terms refer to seven common *phet* categories: "man," *gay king*, *gay queen*, *kathoey*, *tom*, *dee*, and "woman" (414).

Yet, the categories of salience that I documented in everyday talk are those that are visibly distinguishable by outward appearance: man, effeminate *gay*, *kathoey*, *tom*, and woman. I want to note that the categories of woman and man are not natural, preexisting forms. Nor do they require heterosexuality. For instance, a woman can be a *dee* or a man can have a female, *kathoey*, or male partners while maintaining a gender-normative status. Additionally, the range of acceptable demeanor, dress, and other gender markers is quite wide and has historically shifted. All Thai genders are modern formations that have undergone tremendous transformation over the last century. However, for lack of space, here I focus on individuals who

would be considered gender variant and update the contemporary literature (see also Chaps. 25 and 26 in this volume).

In Thai, *kathoey* is a general term encompassing all third-gender categories, theoretically referencing all nonnormative gender presentations and sexualities beyond heterosexual male and female. But in practice, *kathoey* seldom refers to female-bodied individuals, regardless of their gender expression. In cosmopolitan Bangkok, among the middle classes, *kathoey* only refers to male to female transgender persons, that is, transgender women (Jackson 2000; Sinnott 2004; see also Chap. 25 in this volume). *Gay* are typically offended when others refer to them as *kathoey*, although the term is used for in-group joking and accepted when outside Bangkok, as the locals are considered not to know better. People identified as *kathoey* may also be offended by the term as it can be used as a slur. There are numerous words that are considered more polite or respectful. Thus, if a person who is not *kathoey* is in the presence of one, she might use a term like สาวประเภทสอง (*sao-praphet-sorng*: second category woman). Thai academics often refer to gender "fluidity," as identities follow a developmental trajectory and situational positioning. Witchayanee (2008) differentiates between "half and half" (those who have either breast implants or neo-vaginas but not both) and "fully transformed" transgender sex workers (see also Chap. 25). Pramoj Na Ayuttaya (2008) identifies five types of *kathoey*: postoperative transgender, preoperative transgender, drag queen, penetrating girl (active in sexual intercourse), and those who live part time as transgender and part time as men.

In February 2010, the term ผู้หญิงข้ามเพศ (*phu-ying-kham-phet*: transsexual woman) was introduced by Nok Yollada to differentiate a transsexual (who desires or has had gender surgery) from a transvestite. Around the same time, the Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, a sexual diversity NGO primarily funded to provide HIV prevention services, started using the term สาวทีจี (*sao-thi-ji*: transgender woman), borrowing from the English abbreviation "TG." However, most *kathoey* use the term among themselves or simply use สาว (*sao*: young woman). "Ladyboy" refers to *kathoey* who are cabaret performers, beauty pageant contestants, and bar-based sex workers. Some *kathoey* consider "ladyboy" distasteful as it upholds the stereotype that they are prostitutes and thus inherently indecent and criminal. *Kathoey* are also differentiated by their operative status. But, many *kathoey* consider it offensive to be asked whether they have had sexual reassignment or gender confirmation surgery because they feel their identity does not need to follow their genitalia. While there has been a proliferation of terms around male-to-female transgenderism, I suggest that they coalesce around one commonly understood gender form: *kathoey*.

For *kathoey*, transgenderism is made visible via sartorial practice, cosmetic use, bodily comportment, and language (Thai uses gendered particles that mark the speaker as male or female). Bisexual men, who are labeled based on sexual behavior rather than desire or gender presentation, are generally said to be *gay*, but ashamed (อับอาย: *ap-ai*) to identify themselves. There is no equivalent term for a bisexual woman. *Dee* and masculine *gay* express gender normativity. Thus, *dee* are only discernable when with their *tom* partners and masculine *gay* are said not to "show"

(แสดงออก: *sadaeng-ok*). Importantly, as public display of affection is considered impolite, nonnormative sexuality is generally not apparent while nonnormative gender presentation is. Sexuality is understood as private and thus not subject to social condemnation. However, for gender nonnormative individuals, sexuality is presumed as an extension of gender presentation. Thus, only effeminate *gay*, *kathoey*, and *tom* noticeably do not conform to gender norms; and among them, *kathoey* are the most stigmatized. Though, with the growing use of surgery and other medical technologies, *kathoey* visibility is decreasing, as they increasingly pass as women.

Gay are further characterized by age and effeminacy (ตุ๊ด: *tut*, sissy or queen; แต๋ว : *taeo*, sissy; สาวๆ *sao-sao*, girly; อีแอบ: *i-aep*, a feminine person who presents masculinely in public). These terms are usually not labels of self-identity but are used as insults or for in-group joking. Use of the terms "*king*" and "*queen*" in relation to *gay* is now considered passé (although the terms have been taken up by lesbians in *lesking* and *lesqueen*), perhaps because gender presentation has become more independent of preferred sexual positioning (แบบ: *baep*), and *baep* is often flexible depending on the partner. *Gay* rather matter-of-factly disclose their *baep* (รุก: *ruk*, penetrate; รับ: *rap*, receive; โบ๊ท *bot*, versatile; สลับ: *salap*, reciprocate or alternate) as Thais would their age. These are among the first questions one might be asked upon meeting a stranger in a gay venue or online. However, *baep* does not constitute a public identity.

Along the continuum of *kathoey-gay*, distinction making occurs at both ends (see also Jackson 1997). Masculine *gay* refer to effeminate *gay* as *tut*, *kathoey*, or *i-aep*, individuals who would be *kathoey* given the opportunity. Postoperative transsexuals differentiate themselves from those who have not had surgery. They say they have already become women and often assume they pass (even when they do not), confident in the alignment of their essentially female mind and body. At the same time, there is fluidity between *gay* and *kathoey* categories, both in identity and sartorial practice. *Kathoey-noi* (กะเทยน้อย: little *kathoey* or just a little transgendered), for instance, use makeup like women but dress in men's clothing. *Kathoey-noi* are not transgender; they are not *gay*; they are an in-between category. *Kathoey-noi* are not uncommon. They are generally young, around 16–26 and often said to be transitioning into a *kathoey* lifestyle. There are, however, adult males who fit into this pattern. Some *kathoey* become *gay* and vice versa, although the former conversion is more prevalent. As *kathoey-kathoey*, *gay-kathoey*, and effeminate *gay* pairings become more common, the disgust associated with similar-gender coupling is diminishing. New terms such as *sao-siap* (สาวเสียบ: penetrating girl, referring to *kathoey* who are active in anal intercourse) and *tom-gay* (a *tom*, masculine female, in a relationship with another *tom*) describe variations that incorporate putatively discordant gender expression and sexual practice. These changes point to the breakdown of the heterogender sexual matrix (Peletz 2006), in which only sex between individuals of "opposite" genders is socially acceptable.

In English, we say "gay man," with "gay" sexuality (an adjective) modifying "man" (a noun). But in Thai, "*gay*" is already a noun so that one is either "*gay*" or "man." Thus, one can say "I am a *gay*" or "I am a man." However, these are not exclusive categories and there is a recognition that sexual desire does not

have to follow gender identification. For example, one can say the two in sequence, as in ผมเป็นเกย์ ผมเป็นแมน (*phom pen ke; phom pen maen.*) to emphasize that one is a masculine gay man. Bee, who is *gay*, once told me: ผมไม่เป็นเกย์ ผมเป็นแมน (*phom mai pen ke; phom pen maen*: literally "I am not *gay*. I am a man") to stress that he does not see himself as effeminate at all, since the term "*gay*" can invoke effeminacy, as in เกย์มากเกินไป (*ke map koen pay*: too *gay*). In the statement ไม่เป็นรุกไม่เป็นรับเป็นเกย์ (*mai pen ruk, mai pen rap; pen ke*: He is not top/penetrator or bottom/receiver; he is *gay*), the term is referencing sexual versatility. Thus, the term "*gay*" is polysemic in everyday use, contextually referencing effeminacy, masculinity, or sexual versatility. These examples show that while gender and sexuality are linked, they can be distinguished from one another. At the same time, they are conflated in everyday life.

Phet terms are not isomorphic with identities. Neologisms and variants do not necessarily constitute new forms; they can be situationally employed or used to label others and make fine distinctions. Masculine *gay* often refer to themselves as แมนๆ (*maen-maen*: very manly, like a man), although this is more a descriptor of gender presentation than an identity. Similarly, the term เมโทรเซ็กชวล (*me-tho sek-chuan*: metrosexual), while defined in Thai Wikipedia and in many lifestyle magazines as a heterosexual man who appears gay based on his interest in fitness, fashion, and grooming, is typically used in speech to refer to someone who is *gay* or closeted. Indeed, this "ผู้ชายสายพันธุ์ใหม่" (*phu-chai saiphan mai*: new breed of man) category was popularized by the film *Metrosexual* (2006, directed by Yongyoot Thongkongtoon), in which a group of women tries to prove to their friend that her fiancée, who is too perfect to be heterosexual, must be *gay*. The Thai title is แก๊งชะนีกับอีแอบ (*kaeng chani kap i-aep*: Gang of Girls and the Closet Case). Metrosexuality is marked visibility by being too perfect a man to be straight, just as *kathoey* beauty contestants are often said to possess โอเว่อร์บิวตี้ (*owoe-bioti*: over beauty) in comparison to women. Many new gender expressions are derived from films, songs, and Internet sites, although their usage is typically short-lived and the terms do not constitute identities, though they may be variations upon them.

Female-bodied gender forms are highly visible but have less social presence in Thai society and media (Käng 2011). Like female same-sex sexuality in other parts of the world, it is limited by income differentials, safety concerns, and social proscriptions around propriety. Additionally, female same-sex relationships can also be less challenging to the sex/gender order. Many Thai women are able to circumvent the issue of respectability as being in a same-sex relationship can be morally less damaging than a heterosexual one (Sinnott 2004). In particular, one can avoid unwanted pregnancy and the contamination associated with the loss of virginity. This, however, is more applicable to young women and those from wealthier backgrounds. Compared to women in other regions of the world, Thai women also have relatively high employment and financial independence, allowing many of them to live independently of family and forestall marriage (Mills 1999; Muecke 1984). Thailand has the highest rate of single women in Asia and one of the lowest birthrates in the world. These factors perhaps provide more opportunity for female same-sex relationships than in other geographic areas.

Tom-dee (the terms are derived from the English "tomboy" and "lady") couples are ubiquitous and easily identifiable in mainstream commercial venues such as shopping malls (Wilson 2007). Suburban malls have stores targeted to *tom*, selling men's clothes in smaller sizes (in contrast to stores targeting *kathoey* that provide women's clothes in larger sizes). I suggest that *tom-dee* couples are actually more visible than gay men in Thai public space, where they become legible by learning their social codes. Female couples can be seen holding hands, one sporting short hair and men's clothes, the other with long hair and women's clothes. Sinnott (2004: 142) has referred to the public conspicuousness of these relationships in terms of "visual explicitness and verbal silence." The couples are discernible but unremarkable. Women are also highly active in Thai activism around sexual diversity, with organizations such as Anjaree (founded in 1986) among the most vocal advocates for sexuality rights. However, their work is often overshadowed by an infusion of international HIV prevention funding for *gay* and *kathoey* in the mid-2000s, which has been mobilized to promote the acceptance of sexual minorities and their human rights more broadly.

In *tom-dee* relationships, it is only the former who can be considered misgendered. *Toms* are masculine women. They are biological females attracted to women, but this attraction to women is an extension of their masculinity. Their gender does not match their sex, though their sexuality can be seen as an extension of their gender. *Dees* are their female partners. But, as gender normative or "ordinary women," *dee* identity becomes relevant in relation to *tom*. That is, *dee* are labeled as counterparts of *tom* rather than as another category of women, often being temporary members of the *tom-dee* community (Sinnott 2004). Thus, while *tom* represent a more or less stable *phet* identity in contemporary Thailand, *dee* have a more liminal position. They exist primarily in association with *tom* rather than as an independent category. *Dee* remain peripheral to the nodes of *tom* and woman in Thai genderscapes.

Dee inhabit a relational and situational identity (Sinnott 2007). Sexuality can be tied to temporal gender positions in the life cycle: what is appropriate in youth may not be so in adulthood. Engaging in sexual acts inappropriate for one's status can modify ascribed gender positions. Yet, being *dee* is considered relatively unproblematic. Many women, often married, have told me, without remorse or shame: "I was a *dee* before." From a Western perspective, *dee* are a lesbian sexual identity, women who desire or engage in sexual relations with other women. However, gender difference is more important to *tom-dee* couplings than sexual identity (Sinnott 2004). From the perspective of Thai *phet*, as a feminine woman attracted to the masculinity of another woman, their desire is homosexual but heterogender (Peletz 2006) and thus normatively paired.

In the alternate genders of *tom* and *kathoey*, blending of sex/gender attributes is a more typical feature than the disavowal of a biological sex and the recreation of a newly contrasting gendered persona. *Tom* maintain many characteristics of women (e.g., being good caretakers) as *kathoey* maintain many characteristics of men (e.g., being sexually assertive). Some *kathoey* are more like transsexuals in the classic sense of seeing themselves as an "opposite" sex, and this is essential to the new

conceptualization of *phu-ying-kham-phet* (transsexual woman), literally a woman who has crossed sex. But, this is generally not the case for *tom*, who see themselves as masculine women rather than as men. Sinnott (2004: 22) refers to *tom* "in the feminine form ("she," "her") to reflect the common understanding among Thais that *toms* are female, and although they are masculine, they are distinct from males."

3.2   Five Genders?

The proposal of five *phet* categories is reminiscent of Davies (2010) five genders among the Bugis of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Yet, the sex/gender system in Thailand does not follow the same pattern of crossings (i.e., female, female to male, male/female androgyny, male to female, and male). Nor are the spiritual aspects of *bissu* unity at play.[3] The five gender forms I propose are similar to the seven *phet* categories Jackson (2000) states are commonly described in Thai literature. However, rather than representing the categories like a phylogenetic tree, which emphasizes the historical transformations of the categories, I propose a multidimensional -scape. On the one hand, this formation provides greater flexibility in the enactments of gender as they are practiced in everyday life at a point in time. On the other, a -scape model shows the layered relationships between nodes and can shift based on historical transformations, one's social positioning, or ideological perspective.

With the proposed five gender nodes, I have not included *dee*. As Sinnott (2004: 9) notes, "masculine women have long been evident in the Thai system of sex and gender, but the linguistic and social marking of feminine women who are partners of masculine women creates a new and precarious field of identity." Sinnott likens *dee* to the gender-normative partners of *kathoey*, who are simply categorized as men. As women who are feminine in dress, comportment, and speech, they are not marked as gender different. Most *dee* do not refer to themselves as *dee* but as "women." *Dee* is more frequently a label that *tom* use for their feminine partners. Ploy, a neighbor of mine who ran a noodle shop, talking to me about her brother's transition from *kathoey* to *gay*, stated matter-of-factly: "Well, I was a *dee* before I was with him," nodding her head in the direction of the unmarried father of their daughter. Many other women told me that they had been in relationships with women when younger, but typically did not refer to the relationship as *tom-dee*. Instead, the relationship was with another *phu-ying* (girl/woman). The expectation among *tom* is that *dee* will eventually leave *tom* for a man. Similarly, a "real" man

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[3] The *bissu* are transgender ritual specialists whose mixture of male and female characteristics identify and represent the undifferentiated nature of the universe. *Bissu* gender unity allows them to access spiritual powers unattainable by males or females. Peletz (2006) notes that this pattern exists throughout Southeast Asia. However, the situation in Thailand is more complex. Transgender and gay ritual specialists are currently increasing in popularity in both the North and Central regions, yet the lack of an historical record makes it unclear whether this is a resurgence of prior practices. Of course, transgender ritual specialists exist in other world areas, with the *hijras* of South Asia perhaps the most well-known case.

is anticipated to leave a *kathoey* for a "real" woman in order to have a family, or keep the *kathoey* as a mistress. A *dee* is thus generally considered ธรรมดา (*thammada*: ordinary or normal) but could shift positions within genderscapes, for example, if one emphasizes sexual object choice over gender presentation.

Additionally, I have not differentiated nodes for masculine and feminine *gay*, which can be thought of as two different categories based on different gender presentation, public visibility, and sense of self. Like *dee*, masculine *gay* are gender normative in presentation or often hypermasculine. However, unlike *dee*, *gay* have a strong sense of identity based on their sexual desires. Sinnott (2004: 29) suggests that "the category 'gay' has introduced a third possible kind of masculinity positioned between normative 'men' and *kathoeys*, in that gay men are masculine yet desire other masculine men as sexual partners…. [Masculine gay men] are not highly visible, in that they do not match the perception that gayness equals effeminacy—they simply fall off the radar for many Thais." Masculine *gay* break the rules of the heterogender matrix; they represent a singularity where the traditional three-sex system and the modern four-sexuality systems intersect in Thai genderscapes. Of course, feminine *gay* would provide a fourth male position. Yet, while only the feminine *gay* is visibly identifiable, both masculine and feminine *gay* have a sexual identity that is often an important component of self-concept and lifestyle. They also conceive of themselves as a community using shared social space and having a common identity and transnational ties with other gay communities around the world. The terms *king* and *queen* are rarely used and tend to reference sexual position more than an identity. Thus, while focusing on the appearance of gender-variant performance, which would exclude masculine *gay*, who are relatively invisible, I combine them here as a single node. Indeed, no genderscape nodes are homogenous or consistent. Yet, the gay node has a particularly two-faced characteristic. As Sinnott (2004: 30) notes, "an important difference between gay men and *dees* is that *dees* are only *dees* in relation to a *tom*. The masculine female gives the *dee* her identity, whereas gay men take pains to distinguish their community and identities from *kathoey* identity." *Gay*, *tom*, and *kathoey* are more like what Foucault (1990) might refer to as a "species" with discursive and ontological fixity. They all have elaborated subcultures with specific social spaces and organization. At the same time, elaborating gender categories as nodes in the Thai genderscapes acknowledges the variation within each in relation to the others.

3.3 Social Position and Ideological Stance

Class, education, geography, and *phet* identification also affect how people conceptualize gender/sexuality categories. In Thailand, geographical regions and urban/rural distinctions are very important and highly associated with class differences. Central Thais, who are culturally and linguistically dominant, conceive of Northerners as "soft." The women are thought of as more gracile, polite, and lighter skinned. The men are similarly effeminized. Southern men, by contrast, are considered rough,

hard, and dark. They are also portrayed as more patriarchal as a result of Islamic conversion or interaction. Northeasterners are often said not to be Thai and, instead, referred to as Lao, and therefore, less developed. For many Central Thais, Bangkok is the *only* city. All other areas are considered ต่างจังหวัด (*tang-changwat*: provincial, upcountry) or, less politely, บ้านนอก (*ban-nok*: the boonies). While rural populations consume the same national media as produced in the capital, interpretations are filtered through their daily experience, which includes the out-migration of many young people, including the gender variant. There is also less access to the consumer products that allow for greater gender differentiation.

One of my best friends, Wan, who is a *kathoey* in her mid-30s from *Isan* (the Northeast region), often makes the statement: "I was the first *kathoey* in my village." This assertion struck me as strange because I imagined there must have been *kathoey* who preceded her since there is a history of *kathoey* in Thailand. I have traveled with her to her home village three times, and people have confirmed that she was the first *kathoey* that they can remember. Before, villagers were quite hostile to *kathoey*, until she and a few others showed themselves as *kathoey*, dressing and living as transgender women.[4] Now there are approximately ten adult *kathoey* in her village, one of whom was married to a man in 2009 in a day-long celebration attended by several hundred guests. Both sets of parents gave speeches about their happiness during the wedding. There are also several *kathoey* children. When I asked a mother of a 10-year-old boy about when the child started expressing herself as a girl, the mother replied: "Since birth. When she/he started talking, she/he used 'ค่ะ'" (*kha*: the female polite particle).[5] But, this increased acceptance has only occurred since around 2000. Wan only began living as a *kathoey* after the death of her father, who was a respected village leader. Others soon followed and transgenderism became a visible part of village life. Thus, Wan feels that the situation for *kathoey* is improving rapidly.

Wan believes that while there is a strong inclination toward being *kathoey*, one can choose to be *gay* instead. When we met with a 16-year-old at a temple fair who was cross-dressing, Wan immediately went to speak with her. "What are you?" she asked. "Are you like me or him [nodding toward me]?" She went on to ask whether her father accepted her cross-dressing, which the young *kathoey* affirmed. She then said: "You have to choose whether you will be like me or him. If you choose to be like me, life will be harder." Wan counseled the youth, acknowledging the fluidity between *kathoey* and *gay* as well as the different opportunities associated with these life trajectories.

Wan notes that the number of *gay* in her village is increasing, although their normative masculinity renders them relatively invisible and uncontroversial. Villagers simply refer to men and women; the distinction between the two is based

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[4] As in other parts of Asia, there is not an emphasis on "coming out" in Thailand. However, unlike Confucian Asian societies, there is less emphasis on hiding one's gender/sexual nonconformity. Effeminate *gay* will often state that people know about their sexual orientation, even if they have not been told, because they "show" themselves.

[5] The third person singular pronoun in Thai is gender neutral.

on outward presentation. However, when someone is verbally identified as *gay*, the reaction is often: "I didn't know she/he was a woman." Such comments show that villagers perceive sexuality in terms of a gendered desire that should be an extension of their gender presentation. For most villagers, a *gay* is someone who appears like a man, but is actually a woman based on their จิตใจ (*jit-jai*: mind/heart or inner being), their desire for male partners. One of Wan's friends, who used to be *kathoey* when living in the provinces but has since become *gay* after moving to Bangkok, overheard our discussion. He commented: "Before, things were bad for us, but now it is getting much better." The repetition of an improved situation for the "third gender" has become a refrain among Thais of all genders. But, the increased acceptability of gender variance is neither embraced nor uncontested (Jackson 1995, 1999b; Sinnott 2000). See also Chap. 26 on the Third Gender.

In particular, moral stance can override other classificatory schemes, as was evident from a pile sort exercise I conducted to develop a conceptual map of Thai genders among a diverse group of Bangkok residents.[6] Respondents were asked to think aloud while making their taxonomic decisions. Individuals used a variety of factors in creating groups: anatomy, gender expression on a male-female continuum, romantic attraction, common/normal/natural status, and personal experience. I was not surprised when an early free list by a man in his 50s returned two items: man and woman. I was, however, taken aback when, after elaborating a wide number of gender categories, he created two piles: man and woman in one called "normal" and the rest in another called "abnormal" (ผิดปกติ: *phit-pakati*). I had erroneously assumed that man and woman were counterparts and would remain in separate piles because I failed to account for the moral valence attached to *phet* categories.

Gender classification is not an amoral process. *Phet* are defined by factors which are variously invoked by different people, situationally dependent, and experientially based. Instead of seeing Morris' and Jackson's and Sinnott's interpretations as orthogonal, I suggest the three are complementary. Class, generation, rural/urban upbringing, moral stance, personal experience, and context mediate how the local repertoire of gender/sexuality is practiced, interpreted, and labeled in relation to differential exposure to market mechanisms, bureaucratic institutions, and cultural forms. That is, social stances and life opportunities condition how Thais inhabit and interpret *phet*. Furthermore, I argue that gender forms are interpolated by the moral valence attached to their normativity. These concerns not only expand the terrain of gender/sexuality but also force a reconsideration of their topography. I suggest that *phet* should not be enumerated individually but conceptualized in nodes and clusters. That is, gender/sexuality categories are not fixed to four

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[6] Pile sorts are a cognitive mapping procedure to understand how community members think about and attach meaning to different items within a conceptual domain. I began the exercise with a free list to identify the *phet* respondents conceived of as most salient. Up to 22 terms were then sorted based on similarity. If there were more than three initial piles, I asked participants to subsequently sort into three piles and then two piles as I wanted to see if the three-sex system would be reproduced and how genders in the third category, especially *kathoey*, would be categorized as males or females. There were 37 participants.

modern sexual positions. Nor are they proliferating with each new addition of a term. Rather, *phet*, which may or may not be publicly visible, cluster around several key nodes (man, woman, *kathoey*, *gay*, and *tom*), which are renewed through everyday experience. These forms shift over time, often proliferating in punctuated bursts that retreat into refined forms. Furthermore, as Thais use different criteria to assess *phet* (e.g., anatomy, sartorial presentation, desired partner, normality, personal experience), their classifications vary widely and the boundaries between groups overlap. For example, *phu-ying-kham-phet* (transsexual woman) are variously grouped with men (based on anatomy at birth), women (based on postoperative anatomy, social presentation, or desired partner), or *kathoey* (based on their being transgender or "not normal"). The framework Thais use to think about these differences is conditioned by social experience. There are multiple stances and layers to the evaluation and categorization of gender/sexuality. Thus, I argue that the multidimensional nature of Thai *phet* are best conceptualized as a localized genderscape, a terrain of archetypes in which fields of power, morality, and experience shape its continually shifting boundaries over time.

4   Discussion and Conclusion

4.1   The Persistence of Gender Variance

Genderscapes also acknowledge that locality is produced when autochthonous forms interact with the forces of autocolonial governmentality, capitalist expansion, and other globalizing processes. Thais, regardless of gender/sexuality, say that there is a massive proliferation of *gay*, *kathoey*, and *tom*. A precursory *kathoey* form of some kind predates *gay*. However, as Jackson (2009) has argued, the modern *kathoey* is not a predecessor to *gay* but emerged concurrently vis-a-vis the regulation of Thai gender norms, particularly in dress. The Thai state proffered and enforced sexual differentiation as a means to show its civilizational status and to resist colonial encroachment. In particular, the androgyny of Thai women in Western eyes compelled the state to require their feminization in dress, hair, and behavior. This polarization of femininity and masculinity is the very mechanism of biopower that makes cross-dressing and transgendering more legible. That is, the fixing of masculinity and femininity enables greater possibilities for their transgression.

Kathoey today are clearly a different form of transgender personage than what existed in the past. Yet, middle-class urban Thais consider the *kathoey* form an archaic predecessor to *gay* in Thai culture, possessing an indigenous quality of local distinction. In particular, "ladyboy" cabarets are commodified by government and private agencies for tourists to demonstrate the "amazing" character of Thainess, an exotic place with an institutionalized third gender. However, as *kathoey* themselves note, their beauty often requires the utilization of modern medical technology such

as hormones, Botox, and surgery. Younger urban *kathoey* refer to themselves as กะเทยสมัยใหม่ (*kathoey samai-mai*: modern *kathoey*) in contrast to กะเทยควาย (*kathoey khwai*: country bumpkin *kathoey*), older, more androgynous *kathoey* who are not as gracile and polished. These comments suggest that a discursive shift is occurring in the way that kathoeyness is construed in popular media and everyday life. Increasingly, *kathoey* are being referred to as new and modern rather than traditional and anachronistic (Käng 2012).

When I started preliminary fieldwork in 2004, middle-class heterosexuals would often refer to *kathoey* as strange and embarrassing. I would often ask people the question: how many *phet* (gender/sex) are there in Thailand? They would look at me as if I just landed from the moon. The response was invariably two. When I followed up with a question about *kathoey*, the response was often, "Oh yes, there are those people, ha, ha, ha." Such discussion would often elicit giggles among women. If I asked for any other *phet*, a short list of gender/sexuality types would emerge, typically including *gay* and *tom*, but not *dee*. Thais readily acknowledged that Thailand is known for having a large transgender population, often citing the North as a region with a particularly large number. Among middle-class Thais, there was some embarrassment about having so many *kathoey*, a sense that kathoeyness was backward compared to being *gay*, another feature that showed Thailand lagging developmentally behind other countries (Sinnott 2000). This attitude is particularly prevalent among those educated in international schools or abroad. In their minds, the presence of *kathoey* literally demonstrated that Thailand had not succeeded in civilizing gender.

For the middle class, modern masculine *gay*ness, which is often said not to "show" because of its normative masculinity, was clearly more cosmopolitan than kathoeyness. *Kathoey* are almost always portrayed as comic, criminal, or tragic in the media, as if those are the only life trajectories. However, since the coup of the Thaksin government in 2006, which attempted to censor kathoeyness on television, there has been an explosion of more balanced and humane representations of *kathoey* (Käng 2011). The increase in depictions of kathoeyness is assumed by most Thais to reflect their increasing numbers in society, although this presence more likely reflects greater openness to alternate gender expressions.

In the Thai context, public surfaces and face are highly valued and regulated without the need to refer to private behavior, interiority, or truth (Morris 2000; Mulder 1997; van Esterik 2000). Ousted Prime Minister Thaksin had many social campaigns to recreate Thai society (see Chaps. 10, 11, 12, and 13 in this volume). In 2004, his Minister of Education stated that the number of *kathoey* on television should be limited. Similar restrictions were proposed in the 1990s (Jackson 2004). Popular media images that do not uphold Thai respectability or values are often suppressed by government censors. In nationalistic discourse, the expansion of alternative genders is linked to an increasingly pathologizing discourse, expressed as a loss of Thainess and the inability of Thai society to reproduce itself. The historical legacy of anticolonial national projects continues to act as a regulatory force of sex normalization. However, now the concern is with the virilization of masculinity.

4.2   Conceptualizing Thai Genderscapes

I argue that the gender-inflected sexualities of Thailand were produced by the very forces of autocolonial governmentality, modernization, and globalization (including the institutionalization of sexual dimorphism, restructuring of kin relations, and the construction of tradition) that tried to erase them. While masculine *gay* represent a gender node where a "modern" sexuality intrudes into a system of multiple genders, *gay* is itself a product of modern *phet* formation that developed concomitantly with the West and in relation to *kathoey* and other local gender configurations. The addition of gay identity forms in Thailand cannot be described as a "rupture" as transgenderal homosexualities both continue unabated and modernize alongside new forms of homosexuality that, at least on the surface, appear modern and Western. That is, gay identity as Altman (2001) describes did not diffuse to Thailand from the West, but developed in parallel dialogue at approximately the same time (Jackson 1999a). While capitalist modes of consumption facilitate such new identities, the conditions are not the same, particularly in relation to a break in kinship relations.

The continued prominence of *kathoey* and their hypervisibility alongside "modern" gay identity attests to the fact that replacement by a Western system based on sexuality is not the only model operating. Jackson (2003) notes that the *kathoey*, while being a traditional gender category, have taken their modern form alongside *gay*. *Kathoey* have developed their current gender/sexual identity and proliferated simultaneously. There is limited evidence on the existence of *kathoey* before the mid-twentieth century. They were likely ritual specialists in the North and theatrical performers. But, their current form, devoid of spiritual power and associated with sex work and, increasingly, beauty, is a modern phenomenon that parallels the timeframe of gay identity development. These dual trajectories, of gay identified and gender-transformed homosexualities, will likely persist into the future, albeit with different implications than the recent reassertion of transgender identities in the West. The putative projection of transgenderism into the premodern past ignores that the very possibility of transgenderism is enhanced by modernist gender differentiation into binary modes. Heterogender same-sex sexuality and gayness in Thailand both articulate modern refashionings of gender logics as they are mapped onto local systems of gendered presentation and identity. Thus, the historical assumption that *kathoey* come prior to *gay,* and that they are a "traditional" form of homosexuality being replaced by a "modern" one via capitalist expansion, is unsupported.

The regulatory discourses of biopower simply have not operated in Thailand as they have in the West. Thus, the decoupling of gender and sexuality, and the replacement of gender-transformed modes of homosexuality by modern *gay,* is not occurring. Transgenderisms in Thailand continue to thrive and are expanding at the same time gayness is, not being displaced. These gender formations are also evident among females. Sinnott (2004) notes that Lesla, a more recent lesbian organization

than Anjaree in Thailand, is more supportive of the gendered terms *tom* and *dee*, while Anjaree promotes a more neutral term *ying-rak-ying* (women who love women). Significantly, Anjaree also avoids the term "lesbian" to claim a locally authentic female sexuality rather than one imported from the West. Thus, forms that are "modern" or new in Western contexts are actively resisted. Rather, both "modern" and gendered forms of homosexuality are proliferating simultaneously. The emergence of new categories, for the most part, is subsumed within existing conceptualizations of *phet*.

Sexual desire has not been made independent of gender presentation. However, the field continues to be shaped by the practices of individual actors, often in unexpected ways. On March 19, 2012, the วีไอพี (VIP) program produced a talk show called ทอม แต่งงานกับกะเทย (*tom* marries *kathoey*). While a heterogender couple, the show was still sensational for its novelty. Such instances of innovation have the potential to revise gender positions in Thai genderscapes. However, they are more likely to pass without sticking, leaving traces but not reconstituting the terrain.

Thai genderscapes are a localized production of gender and sexual differences that negotiate the tensions between local and global gender/sexuality forms. As such, they are hybrid: indigenizing the global and recasting the local for international audiences. The disjuncture or tension arising from the differences of autochthonous and global forms produces local distinction, distinguishing Thailand from many of its Asian neighbors. Furthermore, regardless of whether a gender form is considered "traditionally" Thai or not, they are all constituted via historical transformations interacting within the forces of human, capital, technological, ideological, and other flows. Thai genderscapes are already completely hybrid and globalized. But, they maintain local character as gender/sexuality forms are, for the most part, indigenized through local conceptualizations of *phet*.

I have argued for the conceptualization of contemporary Thai gender and sexuality as genderscapes grounded in five major gender/sexuality categories: *kathoey*, *tom*, *gay*, woman, and man. These categories are not the only ones that exist. Rather, they possess an ontological fixity which comes from their reproduction in the repetition of everyday performances and symbolic practices, which can shift norms over time. Moreover, key historical incidents produce punctuated expansions of possibilities, which may or may not shift the terrain of gender forms. Finally, the social position and ideological stance of an individual shapes how she/he inhabits and interprets *phet*, making genderscapes a perspectival endeavor.

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