

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THAI LADYBOY FIELDWORK INTERVIEWS: GENDER VARIANCE

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Today's Date: June , 2007
Location of Interview: Kaedam

Name: Mua
Pseudonym: Pongsee [beautiful nice skin]

Year of birth: age 60

FAMILY BACKGROUND:

Family ancestry:
Mother's Side: Isan
Father's Side: Isan

Age of Mother at birth: 20
Age of Father at birth: 20

Family social status farmers, owned own land grow rice and vegetables

Where lived when growing up (anywhere other than native land?)

Position in birth order: #3_ out of _4_ total children

of older brothers: one

of older sisters

of younger brothers: one

of younger sisters: one

Attitude and closeness of S (subject) toward Mother: very good mother

Attitude and closeness of S (subject) toward Father: does not remember father at all, because he left to marry another woman when I was a baby. Much later, when I was 58 years old, two years ago, I visited my father and at this point he had become a monk and he was very nice to me. He hugged me and we cried at all the years we missed each other. He accepted me completely.

Attitude and closeness of S (subject) toward siblings: both loved me very much

Attitude and closeness of S (subject) toward grandparents: very nice to me, and accepted me

Attitude and closeness of S (subject) toward other relatives: all have been very nice to me. no bad experiences at all.

GENERAL SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER VARIANCE

Do you prefer to use the word kathoey, or ladyboy, or something else?

Ladyboy

When I was 15 years old I wanted to be like a lady .

By age 18 my family and others I knew referred to me as a beautiful lady.

I do not like the word kathoey, because sometimes it is said with bad feeling. But nowadays everyone accepts me now, so I do not mind if people refer to me as a kathoey.

Define in your own words what is a _____ I prefer the term beautiful lady, rather than kathoey.

I want to be beautiful .

Do you have any relatives who are ladyboy?

If yes, who? Daughter of sister was a ladyboy

How did you think of them when you were a child?

I was happy when I met him. He dressed like a man but he was very feminine in speaking, and walking and the way he drank water (holding up the little finger).

How did family treat them? Everybody accepted her as a ladyboy then. Back when I was young all the people were very nice and accepting to ladyboys. It is the same as now, with some people being anti-ladyboy but most people did accept.

For those who were ignorant, who had never seen a ladyboy, they might think it is strange. Why would a man want to be like a lady? But for those who always knew ladyboys it was just part of life. Part of the reality of the way people are.

When I was young people did not have many clothes, so it was difficult for ladyboys to be beautiful. So I think today is better because we have more clothes and other modern things.

How did community treat them?

Before the Buddhist goddess Kwan Yin from China was a ladyboy.

[She has a big poster of Kwan Yin hanging on the wall of her living room]

If someone is nasty toward a ladyboy, in their next life they will be reborn as a ladyboy themselves!

When do you remember first seeing or meeting a ladyboy?

When I was five years old, I met a ladyboy who was eight years old. She was very feminine.

What was your reaction to that person?

I was very happy to find someone like me.

I had an awareness that I wanted to be like a lady from my earliest memories.

What are the reactions of other people in your community to a person who is a ladyboy?

People are happy to see ladyboys, and to watch us dance.

When I go somewhere, people are happy to see me.

Did you ever travel to other areas outside your native Isan area?

I went to Laos about twenty years ago, and lived there for five years. I wanted to find out about their way of life. I was working for the Lao government, working as a cook for the Lao military and police. They treated me very nicely, and I had sex with many handsome soldiers there.

I met a ladyboy while I was there. The Lao people treated me very nicely. They were good people.

I lived for twelve years in Laos.

I remember seeing a Lao movie in Lao language "The Moon Broke" about forty five years ago

About fifty years ago [1957] I went to Vietnam because there was a lot of fighting in Laos versus Vietnam

and stayed there for one and a half years working in a hotel. I met a ladyboy whose name meant Big Bird. Attitudes of Viet and Lao people are the same as attitudes of Thai people. Each people want an easy life, and they try not to disturb others.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

Did you have any particular skills or abilities as a child?

I wanted to be a beautiful lady, so because we had no money to buy fancy clothes I had to go get grass and make a grass skirt. I had to work as a farmer just like my siblings.

What kind of play did you enjoy doing as a child?

I would play like I was a lady, and have a boy play like he was a man and he would hug me. That made me very happy.

Did you play mostly with boys, girls, both, or by yourself?

I lived in a very isolated area, with lots of bamboo forests but not many people.

Sometimes my sisters and brothers did not like that I was so feminine, so I played with a girl neighbor who was the same age as me. I did not like being around the boys because they always wanted hug me and I did not like them.

Did others see you as different from other boys?
Who? Mo, Fa, Sibs, friends

If different, did they ever call you names? Sometimes neighbors would call me
“kathoe” in a bad way.

How did you feel when they called you this?
I got angry and sometimes I would cry.

Did your Mother try to encourage you to act like other boys,
or did she allow you to act the way you wanted?
How much or little pressure?
Yes, she told me “Why do you want to be like a lady?” She wanted me to marry a
woman and have grandchildren. Finally when I was 25 years old, my mother accepted
me. She finally realized that I was the way I was and she should accept. My mother did
not want to be prejudiced, because that would make her a bad person if she was
prejudiced all the time.

Did your Father try to encourage you to act like other boys,
My mother married another man when I was twenty years old, but he did not say anything
bad to me or about me.

When you were an adolescent, what activities did you most enjoy doing?
I liked to sing Molum music with my ladyboy friends.
I liked to play in the sand., making sandcastles and shapes.

In adolescence, who were your closest friends?
(girls, boys, both, or none?)
Ladyboys were my closest friends.

At what age do you remember feeling erotic thoughts as a child?
15 years first time I thought about sex.
Toward whom? I thought about Bunten, who was my male friend age 18

What age did you first engage in sexual behavior? I was age 19

With whom? (category of that person; age? He was age 18 sex? man

I NEVER [emphasized] had sex with a woman. I have no sexual feelings for a lady at all.

What specific sexual acts did you do (optional if S not comfortable):
He put his penis between my thigh and my lower leg. At my bent knee.

How did you feel about this experience afterwards?
I loved it very much. I could not eat or sleep until I saw him again.
I was with him for five years.

