

A woman with long, wavy brown hair and dark eye makeup is peering from behind a white curtain. She is wearing a white sleeveless top and white shorts. The background is dark and out of focus.

Brian O'Donnell

Thailand's
Ladyboys
FINALLY
Explained

***Your ten minute guide to understanding
Thailand's Slightly Different Ladies***

THAILAND'S LADYBOYS FINALLY EXPLAINED

Your ten-minute guide to understanding
Thailand's *slightly different* ladies

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered why some guys in Thailand dress as women? I decided to go there and find out why. What I discovered amazed me and I came to understand that there was much more to Thailand's *slightly different* ladies than them being 'just guys wearing women's clothes'.

Thailand's *slightly different* women number hundreds of thousands and have become a symbol of Thailand's rather special community, often referred to as 'ladyboys'.

I will reveal in this book why many Thailand families 'lose a son, but gain a daughter'.

Consider *Thailand's Ladyboy's Finally Explained*, your ten-minute guide to understanding Thailand's *slightly different* ladies.

CHAPTER ONE

It's All Quite Sad

Like many older civilizations, Thailand has had ladyboys for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. During this time, these rather unique individuals have formed a very important part of Thailand's ancient family, cultural, celebration, spiritual, religious and entertainment scene.

Sadly though, the once higher level of social acceptance and respect many ladyboys enjoyed is nowadays slowly but surely on the slide. The ladyboy community these days is plagued with increased AIDS, anti-social gangs, violent crimes, alcohol and drug abuse.

The introduction and influence of the west is largely to blame. Lifestyle and business in many places throughout Thailand has become more modernised with tall buildings, huge shopping complexes, supermarkets and cinemas. This cosmopolitan way of life, brought about largely by western influence, does not always recognise or acknowledge Thai ladyboys as an accepted and important part of society, as was the case in Thailand for hundreds of years.

In fact, the reverse is true. For the most part, Thai ladyboys, within this more modern environment, are often now seen as a source of embarrassment.

The introduction of the Christian faith to Thailand has not helped either. Christianity abides by the Adam and Eve concept of creation. This is in direct contrast with many other religious faiths that appear to acknowledge man and woman, as well as the 'third gender'.

I believe that things will get a lot worse for Thailand's ladyboys before they get any better. It's sad to see the western influence and way of life again disrupting a group of people who for centuries were an accepted, sought-after and respected part of that country's culture.

CHAPTER TWO

Thai Culture

The many reasons for Thailand's substantial number of ladyboys are deeply entrenched within the Thai culture – and more than likely always will be. A clear explanation as to why Thailand has so many ladyboys has for years remained elusive – until now!

While Thailand's ladyboy phenomenon is a very complicated and touchy subject, it can be quite simply explained:

In some ancient cultures, especially when a female is not born into the family, a son may often be required to assist in doing 'female' house duties. In countries like Thailand, such males may even be encouraged, at an early age, to dress as females.

In our western society, this is not common. However, in Thailand some males have been dressing and encouraged to act in a lady-like manner for as long as they can remember. Such a person is therefore very likely to remain lady-like and grow to become a Thai ladyboy.

In infancy, some boys like to play with girls' toys. They may prefer to play with dolls instead of guns or fire trucks.

If this usually-passing trend is allowed to continue, or encouraged within the family, it can also lead to a male growing up with a sex/gender issue. Again, adding another group to Thailand's *slightly different* ladies.

CHAPTER THREE

One's Spiritual Beliefs

We must also take into consideration one's spiritual beliefs.

Many Thailanders believe in reincarnation.

They believe they have had over 200 lives and that they have become destined to be a ladyboy in this life as punishment for various immoral sins they have committed in earlier lives.

Therefore, some Thais are sympathetic toward ladyboys and feel they are more to be pitied than blamed. Every person, they say, has been or will be in one of their many lives, a ladyboy.

Believing in reincarnation can also be a reason why many ladyboys take their own lives, in the hope that they may, in their next life, come back as a more everyday type person. I have seen many ladyboys who have scars on their arms and bodies as proof of past unsuccessful suicide attempts.

Thai Buddhists also believe in spirits.

*They uphold the idea that a man can communicate with a male spirit
and a woman can communicate with a female spirit.*

Many Thai Buddhists believe that ladyboys have greater spiritual powers, as ladyboys are both man and woman. This can lead to some Thai Buddhists becoming ladyboys, in the hope that they, too, will have greater spiritual power. While all these notions may sound strange and superstitious to us as westerners, ideas like these are common in spiritually-diverse Thailand.

RELIGION

Then there is religion.

*Over ninety percent of Thailanders are Buddhists.
The Buddhist religion appears to be a little less judgemental
to slightly diverse ways and practices,
whereas other countries of a Christian faith may not be as accepting.*

This open-mindedness can mean it may be a little easier to become a ladyboy in Thailand than in some other countries. Hence, encouraging even more males to join the ladyboy community.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gender Issues

Scores of older societies including the Thai culture, some Pacific Island nations, and even ancient Indian tribes such as the Navajo, have for thousands of years believed that some people may be wrongly-born into another sex's body – the third gender.

Many Thai ladyboys believe this to be true and scores of them do think they are women mistakenly born into the body of a man.

While this may also sound outrageous to westerners, let's not overlook the fact that Anorexics think they are fat when they are, in fact, quite skinny. Some people, even huge bodybuilders, can perceive themselves as under-developed – an emotional condition known as Bigorexia or Muscle Dysmorphia. In a similar fashion and as mentioned above, some people, despite being born a male, do believe they were meant to be a woman.

Those males who do feel they have a woman's heart, mind and soul are found in all cultures, and nowadays are often referred to as transgender males, and are said to be experiencing a psychological condition known as Gender Dysphoria.

I had a male friend who suffered Gender Dysphoria and would rush home every day after work, just so he could get out of his man's clothes and put on a woman's bra and knickers.

In the past, such males from the western world have not been well-accepted by friends and family, and have rarely been free to express their desired gender. Therefore, trans males in our society have for hundreds of years virtually lived their entire lives hiding the sex gender many of them thought they were really meant to be.

Males with Gender Dysphoria can start feeling and acting a little girlishly at very young ages and some of them may begin wearing their mother's or sister's clothes, eye shadow and lipstick, and preferring to do women's chores well before the ages of 5 or 6.

Naked in front of the mirror, many transgender males would still not likely see themselves as men, and because they are totally convinced they are a woman trapped within a man's body, some ladyboys hate their penis and testicles. Such ladyboys are more likely to have artificial breasts and are much more likely to undergo full sex change surgery.

Gender Dysphoria can be found in boys as well as girls younger than 5, and while some may grow out of this at times painful psychological condition, many don't. Teenagers, as well as younger adults, can also experience the onset of Gender Dysphoria. I believe those who experience Gender Dysphoria globally number hundreds and thousands.

In Thailand, without doubt, these rather unique individuals contribute greatly to the Thai ladyboy population.

In his excellent book *The Third Sex, Kathoey-Thailand's Ladyboys*, Richard Totman writes about this very subject. His book is an educational read for those wishing to learn more about Thai ladyboys and trans people.

There are also those who think that because they look 'kind of girlish', they, too, are meant to be women.

In my free ebook download *Transvestites Explained* I write:

"In most societies, few men are driven and anchored to a lady-like lifestyle by the belief: *because they look kind of girlish, they, too, are meant to be women*. This is because, even as youths, men from many societies don't see themselves as being pretty. Plus, by the age of around 20, most males tend to be more solidly built and thicker skinned than most women, and have much more facial hair and manlier features."

However, in countries like Thailand many males have leaner bodies. Even at age 20 they still have naturally softer skin, less facial hair and less manly facial features.

Such males (if a little wayward and cute-looking) can, over time, become dogmatically convinced that they are meant to be a woman and so they identify themselves as, and act like, a woman. Adding yet another group to Thailand's ladyboy population.

POVERTY

Large-scale poverty in Thailand has, over time, driven many younger rural Thai males into cities like Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket and Chang Mai, in the hope of finding employment.

However, these cities did not always offer many working opportunities for rural boys. To support both themselves and their families back home, many younger Thai males and females drifted into prostitution. This became very evident in the early 1980s – and Thailand’s sex industry boomed.

Mostly foreigners flocked to Thailand and many preyed on the young male farmhands who worked on the street and in parlours as ladyboys.

Not much has changed in Thailand, so this entire scenario of males becoming ladyboys, just to sell their sexual services, is as prevalent today as it was back then – if not more so.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sexual Preference

When talking about why some Thai guys become ladyboys, we must not forget to mention one's actual sexual preference.

*Some Thai men are bisexual or homosexual.
To attract the attention of a male for sex,
some of these gay men will, at times, dress up as females.*

This, however, does not mean that all ladyboys are gay men who merely want to attract other males for sex.

Many ladyboys are so for a great many reasons, most of which have very little to do with sex. Scores of them don't see themselves as gay men, and because they truly believe they are women, they are more interested in being a woman. They, therefore, view their sexual relationships with men as either a way to make money or just the natural way for a lady like them to behave.

CHAPTER SIX

Other Issues

You are learning much about Thailand's ladyboys. But there are still other pieces to the puzzle as to why some Thai families 'lose a son, but gain a daughter'.

Peer pressure as well could encourage certain wayward males to join the ladyboy community.

Some young males may have also seen ladyboys and thought them attractive and appealing when dressed in women's clothes, possibly leading them to believe they, too, could be attractive and appealing if they were to dress as a woman.

Some males may also feel the need to dress as ladyboys and become involved in prostitution in order to fund a narcotic habit.

There could also be an 'attention-seeking' element. Many ladyboys are 'quite cute' and they do thrive on the attention they get.

Some Thai males become ladyboys so they can perform in live cabaret shows.

Also, as the number of ladyboys grow, others may more than willingly follow.

As you can now see, cultural, spiritual, superstition, religious and emotional beliefs, plus one's own personal way of thinking and ambitions, all play a very significant role in the forming of the sexual orientation of many Thai ladyboys.

This throws into question the many scientific studies that claim ladyboys are born biologically different! While there are some studies which suggest a tiny percent of ladyboys may be born with a tendency to be lady-like, for the vast majority of Thai ladyboys, this is just not the case.

Ladyboys, like gay men are rarely born biologically different, and any body chemistry, biological or physical differences they may have are more than likely due to the vast amount of pharmaceutical drugs and hormone medication most ladyboys take.

If you want to uncover the real reasons for Thailand's ladyboys, please throw away the microscope and take into consideration:

their upbringing
their cultural, spiritual, superstitious and religious beliefs
their emotional state of mind
their own personal ways of thinking
their often-hidden ambitions

After studying many of Thailand's *slightly different* ladies, I am convinced they are so simply because of one or some of the reasons I have outlined above.

Perhaps now Thailand's Ladyboys are just a little less of a mystery.

THE JOURNEY

Often, transitioning to a ladyboy (at a level they are comfortable with) many of Thailand's ladyboys have artificial breasts. Others undergo full sex-change reconstruction. However, nearly all ladyboys in Thailand take massive amounts of cheap (in Thailand anyway) hormonal drugs and consume huge quantities of other pharmaceutical products to keep them looking feminine – often resorting to these measures well before they have reached the age of 15.

Ladyboys spend a lot of their money on 'looking good' and some do appear quite striking. Ladyboy celebrities can be seen on TV shows and many of them feature in magazines, beauty pageants, and live ladyboy cabaret performances.

So, there you have it. You now finally have a better understanding of Thailand's *slightly different* ladies.

I have helped many gay males and their families overcome their emotional hurdles. I am mostly in New Zealand or Australia and can be contacted from anywhere via this website for questions, one-on-one sessions, over the phone advice and live group talks, as well as radio and television interviews.

I wish you good luck and joyful living.

Brian O'Donnell

Suggested reading:

How to Be Happy and Sane Despite the Rain - Brian O'Donnell (Amazon kindle download)

These three books are all-time classics written by the late, but great Dr Albert Ellis:

A New Guide to Rational Living

How to Stubbornly Refuse to Make Yourself Miserable About Anything (Yes, Anything!)

Feeling Better, Getting Better, Staying Better

THE END