

Sexy Jaosue: Consuming Hindu Deities and Homoerotic Materiality in Thailand

Narupon Duangwises

**Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre,
Taling Chan, Bangkok 10170, Thailand**

***Corresponding author's e-mail: narupon.d@sac.or.th**

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Abstract

In this article, I describe the material and objectified conditions that occur with Jaosue Watcharakorn's complex operations that take Ganesha's divine sanctity in Hinduism to reconstruct a sexy and attractive masculine body that attracts gay people. I found that religious spatiality and temporality were not separate from secular matters, but they broke the disciplined order and created the unconventional form of embodiment. Jaosue's self-manifestation is conducted upon the interacted complexity of religious objects, sexual desire, and consumption of luxury goods. However, the study of materiality must also be considered in the context of the relational powers arising in the operations of various objects organized by capitalist commoditization. I understand daily material practices as a reflection of Thai society, where the disadvantaged are struggling to achieve financial success under the inefficiency of the Thai government. Only people with strong power networks can access opportunities and success within such struggles. Jaosue's story indicates that to make himself a possible material entity he must constantly strive and attempt to gain sources of power.

Keywords: Materiality, Consumption, Homoeroticism, Ganesha, Objectification

Introduction

In 2022, I saw pictures on Facebook that many people shared. I noticed a man in his 20s and 30s wearing traditional Indian clothing performing a Ganesh ritual. At the time, I thought he was a young man with faith in Hindu deities that Thai people crave and consecrated for holy things the sacred power to bring fortune, wealth, money, and success. However, what surprised me was when I visited his Facebook page called "Jaosue Watcharakorn" I saw his images in swimming trunks that revealed his sexy and perfect masculine physique. It was then that I began to question why he was able to present such a diverse identity both as a Hindu knowledgeable person and believer in Ganesha and as a sexually attractive young man, including being an inspiration to people to believe in the fortune and blessings that Ganesha will bestow for wealth. Living in this multiple state, I became interested in Jaosue's life. I tried

to understand the convergence of religious, sexual, and consumer cultural objects that were influencing and manipulating his life. In this regard, I want to describe the materiality that allows him to use his physical body as an obscure space to create a fluctuated subject. The human subject is isolated from material objects, but is inseparable and interdependent. I indicate that sacred religious practices co-exist with homoeroticism, both of which operate within the progressing context of commoditization in Thai capitalism. In addition, Jaosue's practical actions towards various material objects in the freedom of religious and sexual expression may shed light on the plight and predicament of many Thais who are struggling to find ways to be accepted, respected, and economically prosperous in which the monopolist conservative Thai state has not adjusted a better social welfare system and the growing inequality is still a severe problem.

Methodological approach

The study used data from the Facebook page of a user named “Jaosue Watcharakorn” or “Watcharakorn Amphawan”. No face-to-face or online interviews were conducted in this study. I also use the YouTube Jaosue Channel as information to understand the life of Jaosue. I need to understand this user's social and sexual identity through posting pictures and texts that indicate his physical activities, consumption of goods, religious ceremonies, and beliefs about the god Ganesha in Hinduism. This study will follow the life story of “Jaosue Watcharakorn” from September 2019 to March 2023. It has been 2 years since the “Jaosue Watcharakorn” posted pictures and messages. It is a social space that indicates a change in his masculine body image, mind, sensibility, sexual desire, way of behaving, socializing, and expressing his Hindu religious beliefs. I realized that the social media space used by Jaosue was an important tool in promoting his multiple identities and building a group of people who believed in Ganesh as he did. This includes encouraging him to persuade followers to do religious activities, buy Ganesha products, and make donations. What is important is that his Facebook page affirms that he is a successful person in terms of sexual appearance, economy, society, career, and faith in Ganesha. In this study, I used Facebook as a “Jaosue Watcharakorn” diary in which he narrated his story to communicate with others. In March 2023, his Facebook page had 98,000 followers. This indicates that his story has a large readership and has given him a reputation among gays, kathoey, and women who believe in Ganesha and admire the sexy male body.

Conceptual framework: Materiality and objectification

In this study, I am interested in 3 areas of discursive practices that converge between religious beliefs, consumption of goods, and male same-sex desire. The 3 aspects of the practice of Jaosue use objects as a symbolic expression to reinforce the religious identity that he has faith in Ganesha, emphasizing the identity of an economically successful person and accentuating sexual identities that expose homoerotic masculinity that is attractive for gay men. Studying objects in social and cultural contexts is therefore important to explain these overlapping three practices. Miller (2005) said that objects are material commodities that

expand human capacity in today's global capitalist economy. Poverty is seen as a barrier and imperfection for living in society. Therefore, collecting many material commodities is a valuable proof of existence. Marxist influences make material studies a critique of capitalism, which dominates human life as a commodity enslaved person. The Marxist paradigm used to describe the existence of objects rests on the dichotomy between material objects and human subjects. Klein (1999, 2009) explained that capitalism is turning human beings into consumers who do not know what the value of life should be. She also complained that in the production of multinational corporations, the workers were not supervised and worked hard. These studies entirely separate humans and objects and misunderstand the interaction and relativity between complex materiality.

Miller (2005) said it was difficult to establish a clear boundary and definition of materiality. It should not consider materiality as a quantity of things and objects. Considering things, artifacts, and objects in the complex network of infinite relationships, it will find that materiality constantly changes. Material objects are always related to each other and situated in the context. The actions and practices taken with the object are the stories of Materiality. Miller argued that objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrained or enabled but often precisely because we do not "see" them. (Miller, 2005, p.5) Being invisibility refers to the state in which objects dictate how we interact with things the and exterior environment. The unexpected abilities and capacities of objects we cannot see are attributes of materiality. There is also a difference between material culture and materiality concepts. In studying material culture, human beings often play a major role in creating and controlling objects. (Ingold, 2011) But in the study of materiality, humans, and objects have the same state of actor and being acted on. Hegel (2018) explained that humanity is inseparable from materiality because things will reverse control over human beings. All things, including the human being, exist in their material state. Such a state is incomprehensible because it is constantly changing. Latour (2004) called this feature the state of hybrids in which objects and humans cannot be separated. Miller (1987) explained that the process of material transformation affects humans. The things that man made in the past will become the history of human existence. Objects and human beings are, therefore, "forms" that have been created over time. The form is the result of the materialization and objectification process.

In the process of creating human subjects, there are objects and social rules and disciplines that shape human beings as "persons" in various ways. Social, religious, economic, and political institutions make rules to govern humanity. Miller (2001) said that we both produce and are the products of these historical processes. He argues that humanity is not prior to what it creates. The process of objectification creates objects and social institutions. In the case of religious objects, belief in a deity is materialized through objects such as statues and idols. An intangible divine state is created as an object and ritual. Possession of a religious object thus affirmed that humans would attain the immaterial divine state of the gods. In the same way as a consumer society, human beings possess commodities to reinforce their existence. Many items are the "shape" of objects that indicate the potentiality and capability of the owner. Those who cannot possess valuable objects do not exist in a capitalist society. In

addition, Miller explains that materialization, meaning is given to those objects, meaning that is often immaterial and intangible. (Miller, 2001, p.28) For example, given the meaning of sacred objects and gods, if such religious objects and things have great autonomy powers, the creation of god images and rituals is a very prominent manifestation. Materiality is constructed as a relationship that appears with immateriality.

In this study, I consider that material entities and human beings exist in an unstable and scattered state. I see material objects as social actors who are not defensive of human activities. In a consumer society dictated by the logic of global neoliberalism, commodity material becomes the measure of the value of life. I do not describe the commodity product as an illusion and false consciousness that destroys the essence of humanity. I think differently from the Marxist concept that describes capitalist society as destroying humanity and using material as a means to control human life. (Marx, 1990) In Marx's idea, material objects are commodities produced and sold for a profit. (McLean, 2015) On the other hand, I used Miller's ideas and anthropological studies to explain how objects in different societies have different values and meanings, including changing the meaning of objects under social processes and practices. I also follow Keane's argument that objects do not support symbolic meaning made by humans. However, the object has the potential and ability to change human actions. (Keane, 2007) The limitation of semiotic theory is the separation of objects and meanings, which reinforces modern scientific reasoning. Keane (2015) also explained that material things are independent of semantic systems and human interpretation.

I tried to transcend the Western paradigm that separates the mind from the matter. Ingold (2011) suggests that materiality is the coexistence of various objects, people, plants, animals, landscapes, spirits, and material entities. The coexistence of all things means breaking the myth of anthropocentrism. Studying the existence of objects as matter and life helped me understand that their existence cannot be explained by human experience and interpretation. Bennett (2010) said that understanding material things must be learned from one's own experience and sensibility that interacts and participates with humans events and activities. Bennet called this "vital materiality" manifested both in human and matter. The agency and autonomous power of matter configure itself in the effects of human and thing interactions. Bataille (1985) explained that when a human alters a matter for any purpose, that matter manifests its autonomous power. However, studying human-material interaction is a challenge for me and the anthropologists, especially in not taking the human mind to interpret the existence of objects and the actions that occur with them. Since the meaning is used to describe the existence of material objects, it does not mean that they are true to objects. Taking cultural ideas to elucidate things is simply telling the context in which the material object exists. (Strathern, 1990) Nevertheless, things do not create meaning but are compared with meaning. (Henare et al., 2007)

The arguments of many scholars inspired this study mentioned above. The theoretical concepts and arguments cited here may indicate that attempts to understand objects and the material world are not an absolute answer. (Viveiros de Castro, 1998) I do not want to argue for creating a new post-phenomenological theory of the material world but to try to understand

the various forms of knowledge used in the experience in which the entanglement of humans and objects interact mentally and physically. My concern is that I have applied the concept of materiality to study things and objects manifested in the Jaosue's religious, consumption, and homoerotic practices. These practices exist in everyday life, which rely on objects and things as mutually dependent tools for creating and identifying life's meaning and existence.

Consumer, religious, and homoerotic entities in present Thailand

In a study of material conditions in Thailand's current situation, most studies use economic perspectives to analyze inequality and exploitation. The main descriptions look at commodities in consumer society and capitalism that are exploited to satisfy well-being, social identity, prestige, and disposition of personal success or failure. (Jewpattanakul et al., 2013; Sangkhawasi & Johri, 2007; Watchravesringkan & Dyer, 2007) These studies consider objects as mere means of passive support and response to human consumption. They are also dominated by Western capitalist and psychologist theories that focus on the rational use of material products for economic gain and disregard the global and local interrelation that affected material use associated with cultural beliefs and practices. A study that attempts to analyze the relationship between man and material is Van Esterik's anthropological work, which demonstrates how the modern Thai state uses women for economics, tourism, and national culture. Van Esterik (2000) argued that the patriarchal Thai state uses material objects to construct and separate stereotypical male and female genders that respond to essentialist sexual binary discourse. She also explained that the rules of Buddhism in Thailand affect the positioning of women as inferior to men. On the other hand, consumer culture drives women to become commodified sex objects that promote the national economy. However, the meaning of the material object in her idea is industrial commodities used in human activities, which does not recognize the object agency acting on human beings. Therefore, Van Esterik's explanation aims to answer the problem of gender inequality in Thailand's consumer society.

Thai society is an area of diverse religious practices. (Johnson, 2015; Maud, 2007; Muecke, 1992; White, 2017) The coexistence and amalgamation of animistic beliefs, spirits, rituals, sacred things, supernatural power and the worship of religious figures is not a conflict in Thai people's lives. Jackson (2020) said that Thai society's complexity of religious beliefs may not blend harmoniously and consistently in each locality. The multiple and dynamic integration of religious beliefs in Thai society is not a combination of the new and the old. On the other hand, Thai people practice their beliefs and rituals in "kala-thesa", spatiality, and temporality, which means making choices of religious practices that suit the specific place, occasion, economic status, class, gender, and cultural conventions. It is generally found that Thai Theravada Buddhist temples have deities from many religions and beliefs, which separate areas for performing local rituals and events. This practice reflects the beliefs, teachings, cosmologies, and chants of many religions used in the rituals. For example, Buddhist monks can chant and recite incantations to consecrate sacred objects and perform animistic and spirit rituals. Therefore, Thai people can worship Buddha images, animistic figures, gods, deities, and sacred things in various religious beliefs at the same time.

However, the religious practices of the Thai people still reconsider rapid social transformation within global capitalism. Applying the concept of kala-thesa, which is the main idea of Nidhi Eoseewong (1991) and van Esterik (1999), to explain various religious practices often emphasizes that Thai people have a good organization of their multiple beliefs and know how to exercise and manage them under the right circumstances and contextualization. Such an explanation reproduces the functional-structural paradigm, which explicates the balance and harmony of the social world. The concept of kala-thesa describes characteristics of Siam feudal society and the royal patronage system governed and controlled by Siamese elites and the ruling class. I found that in today's Thai society, the middle class and the younger generation are not following the context of times and spaces. However, they are challenging and questioning obsolete customs and social inequality. This can be seen from the dissatisfaction with the dress in the school uniform, outdated student hairstyles, the ceremony to pay homage to teachers, and standing upright in respect to the royal anthem in the cinema. Awareness of freedom, achievement, and success has led the younger generation to choose according to their preferences. The traditional culture of kala-thesa has become insignificant discourse and a contradictory stereotype of commodified independent living.

I have found that for Thai people, practices of ritual and religious beliefs play an important role in determining freedom in life. This way is the creation of a new generation's identity through digitalized social media that uses religious beliefs to access economic success and valuable material possessions. Nicholson and Kongthaewtong (2021) explained that Thai Generation Z is dissatisfied with social stratification and patriarchy. They grew up in liberated society that was different from older generations. Farrell and Phungsoonthorn (2020) suggest that younger generations in Thai society emphasize the material rewards of achievement, which means that any task their responsibility must expect tangible results and appropriate time invested in work. The work that the new generation is interested in is work that uses creativity that can express their imagination. Creative work must also be fun. Working on strict command without freedom of thought disgusts this new generation. The entrepreneurial spirit is the attitude of a new generation who wants to take control of their own lives. In addition, the new generation wants to be socially accepted and admired by those around them.

Modern communication technologies in the digital age enable young Thai people to express their critical opinions and express themselves to others. (Wijitwatcharak, 2020) This allows the younger generation to challenge conventional space and time and to act in contradictory ways. For example, they are wearing pajamas in university classrooms. University students think dressing is freedom and does not affect their studies. Likewise, secondary school students have criticized outdated student haircuts and urged school administrators to give freedom to long hair. In this case, the disciplined school spaces controlled by conservative teachers are being questioned by young people about whether schools allow freedom of expression. In sexual issues, in 2019, the LGBTQ rights movement gave a document to the government to legalize same-sex marriage, in which a press conference featured gay couples kissing in front of the media in the Thai parliament building. Government offices and politicians' workplaces, where heterosexism is normalized, are being challenged

by gay affection and homoeroticism. In religious issues, in April 2022, in Surin province, there was an ordination ceremony in a temple where female coyotes danced on a parade with loud music. In March 2023, the nephew of the president of the Sub-District Administrative Organization, Pathum Thani Province, organized a celebration for the ordination by bringing over 100 female coyote dancers to perform on the stage. These dancers wear sexy bras and panties while dancing to upbeat music in the case of coyote dances in temples and at Buddhist ordination ceremonies, which is a puritanical and sacred space that emphasize calming mind and devotion being challenged by mundane, carnal and sexual activities. The events mentioned here indicate that today's Thai society debates the multiple spaces and times individuals expect to express themselves and seek happiness, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Space and time are therefore given a new definition, overlaid with the old meaning. Religious, political, and bureaucratic space and time, which are highly organized, are always used for unpredictable lawlessness.

I think understanding the complexity of how individuals conduct their existence in formal space and time based on a structural-functional paradigm is insufficient to describe the unusual relationship individuals experience with the material world for various daily purposes. A recent study that seeks to understand human actions and feelings through interaction with material objects is Visisya Pinthongvijayakul's Spirit Medium study. In his study of spirit mediums in Chaiyaphum province, Northeastern Thailand, he said that the medium's body is alive and sensitive. (Pinthongvijayakul, 2019) The physical body of the spirit medium is an object that drives and facilitates the transmission of sentiments; Pinthongvijayakul believes that the bodily organs are sensitive to the environment and other material objects around them, such as khaen music, light, moon, tree, and monument. In addition, he explained that the emotional experiences of spirit mediums enable local Thai females to express sexual feelings and desires outside of social rules and heteronormative practices. The fact that a female spirit medium lives with another woman in the same house is perceived by local people as a friend relationship. This same-sex relation involves being a spirit medium who believes that the sacred possessing spirit needs her to abstain from heterosexual marriage and live a virgin life. In explaining gender and sexuality, Pinthongvijayakul mentions the relationship of female love through cohabitation. He did not indicate the specific sexual objects that created this intimate relationship. While the spirit medium's physical body is interpreted as a sentimental entity affected by religious objects, the body as the actor of libidinous matters is not clearly explained. I consider that the human body is sensitive and volatile. When the body is sexually aroused and touched by another person's body, it transforms into a sex object and carnal materiality. I reconsider that sensuality is expressed through material forms whether the human body, clothes, bed, lotion, or perfume.

In the spirit medium cult of the Northeastern Thailand, gods, spirits, and divinities are transcendent states of being manifested unpredictably through material entities of animistic rituals and human bodies. The sensible bodies of female and male spirit mediums would act as materiality capable of possessing divine spirits and supernatural power. Therefore, this kind of sensible body is both human and non-human embodiment, which is an extraordinary object.

Pinthongvijayakul also said that spirit mediums' rituals often involved supernatural events, such as finding Naga slithering marks on several objects. Villagers come to see the marks and pay respects for themselves to experience good fortune and economic success. Many lottery vendors will set up stalls where there are traces of the great Naga god. Meanwhile, many of Naga spirit mediums will come to perform the rituals for believers to come and ask for blessings and lucky numbers in the lottery. Although Pinthongvijayakul clearly explained the sensibility and susceptibility of the spirit medium's physiological body, it does not describe the economic objects associated with the spirit mediumship. I think spirit mediums' physical bodies are not only susceptible to religious objects, supernatural powers and sexual desire but also extend their power to objects of economic value and commodities. Understanding the material world requires awareness of the dynamic and multiple sociocultural contexts that characterize the ongoing power relations between material actors.

Objects are essential to human identity in the consumer context of family making. In the study on material things used in Australian gay and lesbian families, Gorman-Murray (2008) explains that domestic materiality found in gay/lesbian home environment have a valuable meaning for marriage and stable romantic love. He said that the material possessions of gay and lesbian couples indicate multiple identities, including sexual self, religious belief, and monogamous family. Gorman-Murray argued that heterosexualization of home marginalizes gays and lesbian people who had to hide their sexual identity in their parents' homes. He also suggests that the material and everyday homemaking practices of gay/lesbians are related to their domestic possession and sexual identity reconciliation. In designed home spaces, gays and lesbians can choose extraordinary things and objects that are associated with their desires and life stories. Gorman-Murray argued that a sense of gay/lesbian self and belonging is manifested through domestic materiality. In this context, family objects are active and lively, affecting and influencing human sensibility. This study comes from Western societies where gay and lesbian couples can establish economically appropriate families and create their own homes separate from heterosexual parents and relatives.

In Thai society, building houses and using material objects to express homoerotic sensations have similarities and differences from other societies. The case I describe here is the life of a sexy young man named Jaosue Watcharakorn, who has gay and kathoey friends and has a network related to the Ganesh worship, which he has revealed in online media where various commodified things and objects are present outstandingly. The presence of religious, sexual, and economic objects inherent in the Jaosue's social practice has challenged the spatial and temporal order and the overlapping of human and non-human beings that are significant in the meaning of the Jaosue's multiple identities. I consider that unfolded consumption and the global capitalism system expanding uncontrollably in Thai society today can be understood from the cooperated actions of material objects that connect various spatiotemporal dimensions into intense online social media. The vague state of regenerated unthinkable needs to be reconsidered. I think material things are potent agents that make it possible for Thai people of deviate from bureaucracy and strict social norms, which is hopeless for them, especially when they need wealth and economic success. Perceiving material things as the originator of possible

opportunities and a better life, I found that scattered disorder and sensational practices of sexual and religious objects create an alternative way of living.

The life story of Jaosua Watcharakorn

Jaosue Watcharakorn is the Facebook name of a man named Watcharakorn Amphawan. He always referred to himself as the son of Ganesha (Jaosue Bootkanet). He grew up in a working-class family settled in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. His parents had to work hard to earn money to support their children. Growing up, he separated from his family to work for himself. He is multi-talented and has many careers. The beginning that made him well-known to the public was as a singer of Isaan Luk Thung. (country music of local Northeastern Thailand). In 2017, he created a personal YouTube channel called “Jaosue Channel”. He will shoot videos about various matters related to personal matters, activities with celebrities and singers, and performing Ganesh rituals and post them on YouTube. In 2018, he was a new male singer in a record company named “Fun Plearn Record.” His first song was called “Jeb Jai Ka De” (hurts). His social network involves celebrities, singers, hosts, television producers, and other social media influencers. In 2022, he had the opportunity to present in a TV show called “Peam Rod Perm Rak” under production by Maya Chanel. This show is about male-male love, which is gaining popularity due to the growing trend of Y-series in Thailand. He used to post a hashtag on his Facebook, saying he would be happy to accept and play a role in every Y series. Warodom Sirisuk, or Chai Hack, was the one who persuaded him to become an MC by working with his friend Chinnakorn Saukaew. Warodom is the director of program production at IPMTV, a telecommunication company. As Warodom reveals his sexual identity, people know that he is a gay man who likes to work with handsome and sexy male models and actors. Jaosue Watcharakorn and Chinnakorn Saukaew were invited to work with Warodom because they have an attractive masculine body. After Jaosue worked as a TV host, his Facebook followers increased.

Wealth, fashion, and consumption of expensive goods

Jaosue Watcharakorn often posts pictures of various expensive items, for example, gold rings, necklaces, and bracelets. He also posted stories about Ganesha’s blessings during lottery draw days to give his Facebook followers hope of winning. This action indicates that worshiping Ganesh will promote good fortune and wealth. The photo of Jaosue raising his hands before the Ganesha statue is a sign of good fortune. In addition, he also spends his spare time doing product reviews on TikTok and Facebook to sell various kinds of products such as perfumes, cosmetics, beauty and health products. Due to his interest in health and appearance, he visits beauty clinics regularly. Going to a beauty clinic, he explains that it is a handsome enhancement known as “searm lor”.

Knowing how to dress and use fashionable items, he can choose the right as a charming person. Every picture he posts on Facebook and Instagram, he is dressed up in fashionable shirts and pants. When he goes to eat, he posts pictures of expensive food. He will post pictures of accommodations, luxury hotels and resorts when traveling. In January 2022, he bought an

expensive white Mercedes-Benz and took a picture with it. This picture clearly emphasizes that he has much money. He had a dream since childhood that he had to own a Mercedes-Benz when he grew up. He takes pictures with this car and posts them on Facebook when he travels to different places. When he drove his new Mercedes-Benz back to visit his family in Nakhon Ratchasima provinces, he would let his mother and relatives s In January 2022, it in the car and take pictures. The day he drove his new car to his hometown, Jaosue raised his hands and bowed to his parents while crying. He said he thanked his parents for their constant support. His mother replied that she wished him to receive every success. When their mother sits in his car, it means good fortune; he gets more money and protects him while traveling. She wanted him to find good things and be a family supporter. Jaosue told his mother to honk the car horn 3 times and say in Thai, “Rauen Rauen Heng Heng” which means rich and lucky. His mother also prayed for Ganesha to help his son. Getting his family members in his new car reflected his pride in his financial success and made his family happy that he had so much money. Mercedes-Benz is, therefore, an indication and symbol of riches and prosperity.

In October 2022, he hosted the Robe Offering Ceremony at Wat Madka, Sisaket Province. In this ritual, he and his mother lead the procession and carry an umbrella decorated with large amounts of money. He gave money and rice to the monks and donations to the children and villagers who attended the event. The rice he gave the monks would be distributed among the poor villagers. Hosting this ritual, he became a philanthropist and wealthy man. Traveling to Wat Madka, he drives a Mercedes-Benz to the temple, where he wants the monks to bless and anoint his car based on the belief that an anointed vehicle will bring safety to the driver. As a health and fitness enthusiast, he and his friend, Chinnakorn Saukaew, are the face of an advertisement for Vietnam sportswear and fitness apparel. In addition, he also invited Facebook followers to join the online lottery sales group Line. He will persuade people to buy lottery tickets on this Line application, indicating they have won much money. The lottery winners will present the lottery ticket and show their gratitude to Jaosue, who guided him to worship Ganesh until he won the prize.

In March 2022, he was very proud to be able to buy a motorbike that cost 300,000 baht for his brother. He clarified that his brother wanted a Thruxton RS motorcycle. On the day he bought a motorcycle, Jaosue had a salesman deliver it to his house where his brother stayed with him. He did not know in advance that he would receive a new motorcycle. His brother was thrilled to receive the motorcycle, which had been his dream for a long time. Jaosue has a strong bond with his older brother because he has cared for him since childhood. When he bought this motorcycle for his brother, he felt pleased to repay his gratitude. Working hard and earning money so he can buy Mercedes-Benz, motorcycles and successfully help pay off his parents’ debts is his pride. The motorcycle and the Mercedes-Benz reflect his economic success, perseverance, and family relationships. Buying such expensive objects is also a tangible way of expressing love and care for his family who sense Jaosue’s gratitude and concern.

Religious practices and faith in Ganesha

In 1998, Jaosue Watcharakorn dreamed of Ganesha, a Hindu god with the head of an elephant. Hindus believe that he is the deity of the arts and wisdom. His amazing dream made him feel he had a special devotion to Lord Ganesha. After that, he brought statues and images of Ganesha to worship at home. He used to travel to perform a ritual to worship Ganesh at Saman Rattanaram temple, Chachoengsao Province, where a large pink Ganesh was built. In such a sacred ritual, many people will come to ask for blessings. Jaosue Watcharakorn is the one who chants the incantation and puts the head of Ganesha on the head of the believers. His great faith in Ganesha can be seen in his willingness to recite long mantras to worship. Hindus in India hold the Ganesh Chaturthi festival for 10 days yearly from August to October. Believers will mold Ganesha from the ground, then make an offering and send it back to heaven by bringing the Ganesha statue to float in the water. He can travel to Mumbai in India to attend the festival in 2020. At this festival, he recited mantras and blew the conch to worship Ganesha and send him to heaven. In Ganesh's procession to the sea, he also joins a walk with Hindus to send Ganesha floating on the water. Earlier in September 2019, he and a group of Ganesha devotees traveled to the Hindu temple, The Dagadusheth Halwai Ganapati temple in India. The Ganesha statue in this temple is 2.2 meters high and 1 meter wide and decorated with about 40 kilograms of gold. Hindus believe offering gold and money to Lord Ganesha, it will bring fortune and much money back. When Jaosue Watcharakorn posted a picture of Ganesha at this temple on Facebook, he explained that everyone who views this picture should pray for money and prosperity.

In 2021, he built a 3-metre-tall large 5 headed Ganesha statue, stating that it combines great blessings and prestige. He posted a picture of the statue on Facebook in August 2021, inviting believers to donate money to build the new statue. Once the money has been donated, he will post the proof of the money transfer on Facebook to indicate that there are believers who have made merit with him. This five-headed Ganesha statue is placed in front of his house, where he often performs rituals around it. He also brought donations to build a building to enshrine Hindu gods. This building is named Sri Maha Panchamuccanapati. He built this statue because he believed that when he was 29 years old, Ganesha wanted him to create merit and prestige. His knowledge and faith in Ganesha resulted in reciting incantations, mantras, and prayers and performing rituals that created merit and fortune for those who came to ask for blessings from Ganesha. He also led the ceremony to establish the shrine of the revered Ganesha. Performing this ritual makes him a communicator who connects humans with Ganesha. However, he was not a medium that invited Ganesha to sit on his body.

Noppadon Subdeng, known as "Ball Ganeshinsuan" is an important person who plays a role in the Jaosue Watcharakorn's Ganesha worship. Noppadon became famous in 2017 when he won the 1st prize in the lottery, where he told the media that praying for Ganesha brought him luck. He also built a building, Thevalai Ganeshinsuan, enshrining several Hindu gods and goddesses as a place for people to worship and seek blessings. In addition, Noppadon also creates products for offerings to the gods, such as "Khanom Chokdee" (lucky dessert). This dessert is an adaptation of an Indian dessert called ladoo or laddu, made from flour and sugar.

Hindus in India believe that Ganesha favored this dessert. Those who offer this kind of dessert will have good fortune and money. Jaosue Watcharakorn inherited the sacred ritual of Ganesh worship from the network of Ganesh worshippers. In addition, he has also partnered with a Ladoo dessert shop to sell to Ganesha devotees, where he will use his portrait as a presenter selling ladoo priced from 89 baht to 1500 baht. Therefore, Ganesha symbolizes the god of success, attracting believers to pay him homage with various offerings. Therefore, Jaosue Watcharakorn house is filled with statues and paintings of Ganesha. He also believes in the prestige of Lord Ganesha, who protects his life especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2021.

January and February every year is the birthday of Lord Ganesh, which is called “Ganesh Jayanti.” His devotees will bring laddu desserts to Lord Ganesha, just like Jaosue will bring him a large laddu dessert. Jaosue has posted a picture on Facebook selling a large Ladoo dessert, priced at 999 baht, inviting people to buy it to worship Lord Ganesha. He also said that buying Big Ladoo is to become a billionaire. Besides that, he also worshiped Ganesha with a crystal ball, Kaew Sarapatnuek, which was an offering to achieve success. In November 2022, he brought coconuts to worship Ganesh by peeling the coconut shells to turn brown. Then, he would paint red and set fire to the top of the coconut. After that, he would pick up a coconut and use an ax to cut it down. Then he would throw the coconut to the ground to break it, which was considered to destroy obstacles in life.

Other Hindu deities he worships include Kali and Uma. He would bring offerings to these gods to wish him financial success. In the case of Kali, she is worshiped with red flowers, which believe the goddess will bestow courage and strength. In the Navaratri festival October, he attended a ceremony to offer a tiger statue to Uma, the goddess of love. In addition, he also believed in the Naga gods, Phaya Nak, and traveled to a sacred place in the Northeast where the Nagas lived. He believed in Thao Wessuwan, the leader of all ghosts and demons, who had magical powers to help people achieve economic success and financial gain. He also participated in Buddhist activities with his friends, such as making merit in temples, giving money to temples during the Robe Offering Festival, and cleaning Buddha images. In posting pictures of activities in Buddhist temples, he often describes it as adding merit that brings wealth and fortune. He would put a large amount of money in a large tray to offer to the monks, indicating that he had money. In addition, sacred objects are in the tray that helps promote luck and earn more money. Many people who come to make merit with him will come to pay respect and touch the sacred objects in the tray in the hope that they will receive good luck in return.

On the day he drove his new car back to his parents in Nakhon Ratchasima, he took his parents and older brother to make merit at 9 temples to enhance prosperity and make much money. Holy water from the temple where he goes to make merit will be sprinkled on his Mercedes-Benz with prayers for success in work and wealth. Jaosue explained that his success was due to his respect for his parents and Buddha’s image which he considered the most important worship. He said regularly making merit in the Buddhist temple would bring blessings and unexpected fortune. He believed that worshipping his parents and the Buddha would help him stay safe and be distant from poverty.

Jaosue masculinity and homoeroticism

In 2021, he and his friend Chinnakorn Saukaew, nickname Bang, took a sexy photo shoot wearing swimming trunks that reveal beautiful tattoos and masculine bodies. Jaosue Watcharakorn took care of his appearance. He is always exercising and building up his muscles in the gym. He also did facial surgery by augmenting his nose. On his right shoulder, there is a tattoo depicting Ganesha. This tattoo indicates that he has great faith and worship of Lord Ganesha. On Facebook, he posts pictures of himself wearing underwear, exposing his sexy abs, shoulders, arms and legs, indicating that he is always working out. These sexy photos invite Facebook followers to express their affection, especially for men who are drawn to their sex appeal. In a photo of him in his underwear and swimming in a pool, a man wrote that he wanted to get in the water and touch his genitals. Some guys will send an icon that symbolizes a kiss and love.

The picture in the bathroom he took with his friend, Chinnakorn, reveals the beautiful six packs. The man who saw this photo commented that they had a big penis and muscles. The picture of him washing his new Mercedes, he took off his shirt and put on shorts. His left hand grasped the crotch of his pants. In this photo, a man commented whether he would open his penis as well. In his photo with his friend, Chinnakorn, both take off their shirts to reveal their six packs and tattoos. The photo was used to advertise a new TV show he and his friend will host as a male couple. Although the image was used to promote a TV show, Jaosue Watcharakorn wrote a metaphorical caption of them being male sex workers. More men post pictures of hearts showing their love for this photo. Chinnakorn Sueakaew has experience working as a model for a porn magazine popular among gay people. In 2017, Chinnakorn used to take a photo showing a penis for a magazine. In an interview, he said he was willing to show off his muscular body during the photo shoot. He thinks nude photography is art. Since Chinnakorn was involved in pornographic photography that catered to gay needs, when Chinnakorn took a picture with Jaosue Watcharakorn wearing underwear, people imagined that they were a gay couple. The image of Jaosue and Chinnakorn standing with their shirtless thus implies homoerotic imagination.

In May 2022, the TV show they co-hosted promoted a photo they took together. In this photo, they are both wearing white shirts and blue jeans. Jaosue Watcharakorn was sitting in the back, wrapping his arms around Chinnakorn. Their expressions looked like a lover. Jaosue Watcharakorn posted this photo on his Facebook, which got many likes. Jaosue and Chinnakorn often go to the gym together. They would often take off their shirts to exercise and take pictures while exercising. Jaosue's sexy photos get a lot of views and comments. Knowing that his followers liked sexy photos, Jaosue posted more pictures of himself bare-chested and wearing underwear. The photo of him in his swimming trunk and swimming in the sea, has received a lot of gay comments. Most of the gay men love his sexy body and want to see more pictures like this. In a video of Jaosue and Chinnakorn in the swimming pool, Chinnakorn suggests exercises to get six pack of the abdominal muscles and make bigger pectoral muscles. Afterward, Jaosue and his friends put on their swimming trunks and swim joyfully, exposing their sexy masculine bodies.

His sexy body is also found in Ganesha worship, and he performs the ritual by wearing a beautiful Indian dress. However, around 2022, when he became well-known on TV and gained more followers, he took off his clothes for sacred rituals. This is a significant change that indicates that Jaosue wants more followers to come and see him. When he goes on a trip, he brings a statue of Ganesha with him and takes a photo of the statue while he is shirtless. In September 2022, Jaosue and Chinnakorn were working as presenters for a brand of soap used for cleaning the penis, a product for gay men to use during anal sex. Jaosue explains that this soap will whiten the penis, make a pleasant smell, and make it bigger. Advertising pictures of this brand, both of them take off their shirts and unbutton their pants. Jaosue used his hand to stroke Chinnakon's stomach. Gay men who followed Jaosue's Facebook commented on this picture. Most gay men love this image and want to see them having sex. In addition, he advertised a spray that slows gay men's orgasm. In the photo for this ad, he is shirtless, wearing shorts where he is widening his legs so his crotch is visible. Most of the people who view this image are interested in his genital area. The same brand also has long-term erection capsules during sex. These products are made directly to the gay audience.

On March 2023, Jaosue posted a picture of him sitting on a rock by the sea wearing a blue swimming trunk. In this photo, he describes it as celebrating his Facebook page reaching 100,000 followers. More than 5,500 people have liked this photo. A picture of him wearing a swimming trunk will receive many likes. Some pictures have thousands of likes. Compared to his pictures of doing religious activities and worshiping Ganesha, there are hundreds of likes, less than his sexy pictures. Most of the people who like his sexy pictures are gay men who show a preference for his handsome and perfect masculine body.

Autonomous material objects and Jaosue multi-embodiment and sensibilities

Jaosue uses a variety of Things and objects to represent religious, sexual, and economic identities. I will discuss three important objects; the Mercedes-Benz, Ganesha statue, and the swimming trunks. These three objects are related as the emotional attachment and social contributors to the Jaosue's identities and self-embodiments. Material objects Jaosue uses in daily life are related intimately to religious rituals, economic and consumer activities, and masculinity that interact with the complicated and transformed material world. Ganesha statues are powerful holy objects enabling Jaosue to recite incantations to the Hindu deities, making him the leader of sacred rituals with many pious disciples. The fact that he called himself the son of Ganesha indicates that he could live with and treat him like a father. A Ganesha tattoo on his left shoulder indicates that nonhuman Ganesha amalgamated with the human physiological body which transform Jaosue's body, a religious materiality. In Ganesha rituals to pray for various successes, Jaosue manifests itself as a magical and sacred religious figure enabling his disciples and followers to receive invisible powers from Ganesha through his consecrated body.

Jaosue's naked body is also a sexual matter for homoerotic sensation when he wears sexy swimming trunks and sports shorts, along with removing his shirt to reveal his six packs abs and masculine physique. He takes good care of his masculine body, hair, face, limbs, and

torso, which a cosmetic surgery clinic has taken care of. He also works out in the gym regularly with his friend, Chinnakorn. When he reconstructs a sexy masculine body, he can use male appearance as a sexual object to gain popularity among the people who follow him on Facebook and Instagram. Photos and videos of him wearing swimming trunks are getting much attention from gay people. Gay men refer to their sexy masculine bodies as homosexual seductive, and sexually arousing objects. The various factors that make Jaosue attractive to gay men can be determined by the various associated objects: beauty and healthcare products, fitness facilities, sportswear, and swimming trunks. When he hosts a TV program that presents and recounts the story of male-male love and gay sexual intercourse, it reinforces the objectification of homosexuality and homoeroticism. Josue in swimming trunks standing by the sea is transforming his physical body into a gay sensual materiality.

I think Jaosue is trying to take care of his appearance to gain popularity among his gay followers and wearing swimming trunks, and taking pictures on Facebook thus garnering interest among gay men. Due to his friend, Chinnakorn, working in a gay magazine and doing a lot of swimming trunks photo shoots, Jaosue realized that wearing swimming trunks was a tactic to get him noticed by a group of gay men. In Thai gay consumer culture, staring at naked male models is a regular activity. (Duangwises & Jackson, 2023) The swimming trunks on Jaosue's masculine body became a digital photo that was posted on Facebook and shared by gay people. This interaction between various objects suggests an autonomous actor-network. Swimming trunks on the Jaosue's male body is the interaction between inanimate objects and biological objects, both of which create the definition of sexy masculinity and homoerotic desire. When the tiger shows various bodily movements that show off his abs, chest, shoulders, arms and legs, eyes, and smiles, his swaying body in brightly colored swimming trunks serves as masculine sexiness. Such bodily practice is the act of materializing the predominantly homoerotic fantasies that are prevalent in the mainstream media of the global gay market.

Mercedes-Benz an expensive item purchased by Jaosue, is a symbolic object of economic success. His Mercedes-Benz was so influential and powerful that it directed to be proud of himself. It is also a testament to his gratitude to his parents. His parents and brother were delighted with the Jaosue's success when he drove the Mercedes-Benz back to his hometown and took his parents and brother to make merit at 9 temples. His luxurious stimulates and reinforces the wealthy and prosperous embodiment and subjectivity Jaosue has dreamed since childhood. Mercedes-Benz which used to be an object of dreams is becoming an object of pride, reflecting Jaosue's efforts to work on his own for more than 10 years. When he drives a Mercedes-Benz to various places, including tourist attractions, temples, gyms, swimming pools, and beauty clinics, he demonstrates an economic accomplishment and tasteful purchase of expensive goods and services. In this sense, the Mercedes-Benz is a luxury product and a material object that encourages Jaosue to transform from the lower classes to the noble middle classes.

The autonomous transcendental actions of the Ganesha statue, the swimming trunks and the Mercedes-Benz are intricately intertwined. These material interrelations arise and disappear instantaneously in Jaosue's operation of material consumption related to the multiple

situations in which he participates and practices. Jaosue's sensible body, a material entity that responds to other activated objects, can transform into various identities including incarnated people, wealthy persons, and sexually attractive men. Jaosue's objectified materiality blends both worldly and divine temporal/spatial boundaries. Sacred religious objects are attached and combined contextually with eroticized objects under conditions of consumption and economic activities. This is disordered unpredictability in which Jaosue can transgress the inheritable regulated normality. When Jaosue exposes his naked upper dressed in traditional Indian clothes and wears beautiful ornaments for Ganesh's sacred rituals, it confirms that Jaosue's body is a susceptible materiality that operates as a solemnized and sexually provocative entity. Therefore, the Jaosue's authorized body is the enabling agent of the dynamic and transforming subject. This transcends the material state, as Miller (2005) said, exists in the complex network of infinite relationships.

Nevertheless, Jaosue's capability to consume these material objects did not arise by itself, but rather his social network of connections with a diverse group of people who had the power to control opportunities and resources. He has a fellow, Chinnakorn, who is well-known in gay online media, allowing him to build his ideal sexy masculine body that attracts gay men. His friend also gave him the chance to work with a gay producer who wanted a sexy male model to work as a TV and beauty product presenter. That he has an extensive network of Ganesh devotees who will join religious activities on various occasion, are close to famous people and celebrities in the entertainment industry. Jaosue's network thus created the negotiated power and social privilege that makes him notable. When he created Facebook and other online media, he instantly gained many followers and admirers. Considering the Thai economic context, religious objects related to good fortune are trendy and financially profitable commodities. When Jaosue devotes himself to learning the holy rituals and chants for Ganesha, he can create a channel that invites others to believe in Ganesha and his Hindu religious knowledge. What is even more interesting is that he is also a sexy man, unlike any other Hindu ritual practitioner. Jaosue's possible self-embodiment, I argued, is a highly contradictory materialistic circumstance in which holiness and lustfulness are consolidated.

Jaosue self-reliant success and unequal well-being in Thailand

Jaosue lives in a competitive consumer society and dreams of earning success. He knew that he found economic opportunities by using his knowledge of Hinduism and the worship of Ganesha. He may not have questioned the power that dominates society, but he realizes that the path to happiness requires a network of people who will help him follow his dreams. I was therefore interested in how Jaosue would build himself based on existing power. Jaosue has always said that he grew up striving for a better life. He thinks that working for money is not a life struggle but a life creation. Because life struggles, known in Thai as "Toh Su Cheewit", are the words that one must be fatigued to be successful. He therefore, re-explained that working for money is creating a good life, known as Sang Cheewit. He thought working for money was like building a house gradually until it was finally completed. Jaosue's success in life is reconsidered due to having a lot-of money wealth. In inconvenient situations where the

Thai state does not have good measures to promote social and economic equality, it forces the underprivileged working class to seek alternatives to make themselves successful. Those options will include buying a government lottery to win the prize the prize. Many poor Thais turn to sacred objects in various religions to ask their gods and deities for blessings and good luck that generate money and financial success. Jaosue is a good case that suggests that people experiencing poverty in Thai society do not wait for the government to help them but instead try to fight by pleading with the magical powers of the gods to grant them what they need. This can be seen as a strategy of the weak that uses the power of commercial beliefs to create social and economic opportunities. Jaosue's life context is not a challenge to the power regime, but the struggle to become part of the power gives him happiness and success. The question is, does Jaosue reproduce the brutality of capitalism? In my anthropological thought, I think Jaosue is presenting another experience of capitalism where the powerless seek alternatives to the available powers when he is economically successful, he tries to share and help the family and other people.

The prevalent religious objects, ritual fetishes, and talismans in present Thai society reflect that informal non-government sustenance, driven by many sacred deities, is a means for the poor to access resources. When many Thais have no hope of government assistance, they seek ways to generate their income, one of which can be seen by paying homage to sacred things. Businesses and marketing related to religious beliefs, ritualistic objects and fortune-related products are widespread and growing in Thai society today. Jaosue relies on social media platforms to advertise his religious products, and he is a powerful material influencer with many people following and believing in his Hindu religious and ritual abilities. I think that Jaosue's religious and homoerotic practices reflect how self-reliant and surviving are reconfigured in Thai capitalism. People with stronger power networks tend to benefit economically. This trend examines how material objects, including human bodies, are intensely commodified for commercial profit and success. I consider that mainstream commodities that exist in Jaosue's religious and sexual practices reproduce social and economic inequalities in the neoliberal regime because they cater to the needs and desires of the wealthy people and urban middle class.

Conclusion

With the emergence and expansion of the consumption of religious and sexual objects in Thai society today, I tried to understand this complex phenomenon through Jaosue's incredible life story, a handsome and sexy young man capable of performing Ganesha holy rituals. In this study, I understand that purified religious objects can be fused with sexual and libidinous objects within potent cultural commodification. I understand that objects are not unified entities and agents of change moved by multiple contexts and events in which they interact. This may be defined as materiality and objectification indistinguishable from fluid social action. On the contrary, I realized Thai consumer society's very influential commodified objects are used and managed within contexts of individual success. This incident implies that the personal happiness and achievement of the Thai people relies on the combined multiple

and paradoxical objects outside government coercion and regulation but within other sociocultural structures such as capitalist consumerism, beauty standards, power relations of gender, and dominant gay hypermasculinity. I argued that the changeable material world is an appropriate tactic that marketers and businessmen are more widely adopting and doing better than government agencies. This material domain helps state power to maintain existing social inequality. Although religious beliefs allow people to express their faith and create symbolic objects of success, wealth, and well-being a person needs a strong network of powers to access prosperity and affluence.

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