

Between then and 1899 he pioneered in the development of radio communication and in the transmission of electricity without wires, which he realized at a distance of more than 1000 kilometers. This marked the end of his creative period, though he continued to be an active inventor for more than twenty years afterward. He became an American citizen and lived in New York until his death in 1943.

Tesla never married; no woman, with the exception of his mother and his sisters, ever shared the smallest fraction of his life. He believed that he had inherited his abilities as an inventor from his mother. As a young man he was not unattractive, though too tall and slender to be an ideal masculine type; he was handsome of face and wore clothes well. He idealized women, yet planned his own life in a coldly objective manner that excluded women entirely. Only the highest type of woman could win his friendship; the remainder of the sex had no attraction for him whatever. In 1924 he gave an interview published in *Collier's* magazine in which he asserted: "The struggle of the human female toward sex equality will end up in a new sex order, with the females superior. . . . The female mind has demonstrated a capacity for all the mental acquirements and achievements of men, and as generations ensue that capacity will be expanded; the average woman will be as well educated as the average man, and then better educated. . . . Women will ignore precedent and startle civilization with their progress."

Tesla tried to convince the world that he had succeeded in eliminating love and romance from his life, but he merely drew a veil over the secret chapter of his life which an intolerant world had no right to know. The mystery of his devotion to science is one of those episodes in the annals of invention and discovery that are illuminated by insight into the androgynous character of genius.

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## THAILAND

Previously known as Siam, in 1939 the country was officially renamed Prathet Thai, or Thailand—literally, "the land of the free." The change of name closely followed a change in the country's form of government, from the previous absolute monarchy to the modern constitutional monarchy with a representative legislature. With some fifty-two million citizens, Thailand occupies a key position in the rapidly developing Asian economic sphere, and aspires to join Taiwan and Korea as a world-wide economic force.

An ethnically and linguistically diverse nation, Thailand began to assume its present shape only within the last thousand years, and many key elements of Thai culture reached their present form in the relatively recent past. The formation of the nation began with the arrival in Thailand of members of a linguistic and cultural group designated by the term "Tai." (Some important members of this group are the Siamese, the Lao, and the Shans of northeastern Burma; altogether the "Tai" comprise about 70 million persons in southeast Asia.) The modern Thai may be a descendant of the incoming Tai, but he may also come from the indigenous Mon and Khmer groups whom the Tai joined, or from much later Chinese and Indian immigrants to Thailand. The modern Thai is not so much a member of a race as a person claiming fealty to the state of Thailand; secondarily, a Thai is identified by his language ("a speaker of Thai").

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Thailand managed to avoid colonization by any European power: the primary foreign influence was

British, and later influence came from the United States, but the Thai always retained their independence. King Rama VI (reigned 1910–25), a poet and translator of Shakespeare, was reputed to be homosexual. During the 1930s the Thai government hired the libertarian French sexologist René Guyon as an advisor, and he may have had a hand in the Thai retention of their sexual freedom.

Thailand remains well over ninety percent Buddhist. Thai Buddha figures are frequently effeminate, especially the so-called "Walking Buddha."

Thai insistence on personal freedom carries with it a logically necessary corollary: a strong tolerance of eccentricities in other people. One result is that Thailand is one of the few countries on earth where homosexuality is not condemned or treated in any special way. During the 1970s, for example, the Minister of Defense won the national Thai contest for best female dresser. The combination was not perceived as dreadful, but as *sanuk*, a key Thai concept which roughly translates as "fun" or "pleasure." The toleration of homosexuality is not a modern development. Somerset Maugham remarked long ago that "the Siamese were the only people on earth with an intelligent attitude about such matters." Two recent Thai prime ministers have been reported to be gay.

One result of viewing sexual pleasure as a domain with little moral content is that prostitution is not a highly stigmatized activity. In fact, Bangkok is renowned for its thriving "sex industry," which horrifies many Westerners (who are, of course, simultaneously tempted by all the perceived depravity).

The male prostitute is not highly stigmatized; it is perfectly possible to make a transition from a year as a Buddhist monk to a year of working as an "off-boy" in Bangkok, without abandoning any of the religion one has absorbed and without losing self-esteem. (The "off-boy" is a young man employed at a gay bar who

may be taken home by clients; the term is British.) The suburbs of Bangkok also have "off-boy" establishments which cater almost entirely to Thai customers, and which are more polite as a result. The misbehavior of foreign tourists has caused some of these Thai institutions to bar foreigners, beginning in 1988. Thai culture is inherently nonconfrontational, and the Thai would never think of trying to correct a foreigner's rude, loud, or stingy behavior. The only way out is a generic ban on the offending parties. As one owner explained: "The foreigners were scaring the boys." Bangkok also has discos, saunas, and clubs where gay men can meet on a noncommercial or free-lance basis.

While Thai society is generally lacking in homophobia, and also has little antipathy to age-graded relationships, an age of consent for males was first established (with little publicity) in 1987, at 15.

Thai society lacks Western concepts of homosexuality as a distinct identity, though this situation may be changing. Traditionally, the Thai conceptualization of male homosexuality is similar to the Mediterranean model: the penetrator is considered a "complete male," and any normal male may find himself in this role; his opposite is the "katoey," a term which embraces transvestism, transsexuality, hermaphroditism, and effeminacy. The katoey is expected to remain sexually passive and submissive, and to have no interest in women. While not discriminated against as homosexuals, the katoey suffer from the limited position of women in the male-dominated Thai culture. Not all males who take passive roles are katoey, however, and reciprocity in sex is not unknown.

To these traditional concepts is now being added a more flexible concept, imported from the West, of a "gay" (the term itself is borrowed into the Thai language, which has no counterpart).

Thai homosexuality is seldom discussed in public, although changes in this area are noticeable in the emergence

of five homoerotic or bisexual publications, led by *Mithuna* [bi], *Mithuna, Jr.* [gay], and *Neon* [gay], a regular radio program broadcast from Bangkok, and the beginnings of gay literary output in the form of novels and short stories.

Attitudes on homosexuality show marked differences by class, relating to power positions. While there appears to be no "queerbashing" violence directed against homosexuality, there seems to be a considerable amount of coercion, abuse of authority positions, and rape of males. Peter Jackson comments that "the lessened resistance to having sex with a man means that male rape or sexual attacks on men appear to be significantly more common than in the West." As in other cultures, however, rape of males is a taboo subject and is not reported to authorities.

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## THEATRE AND DRAMA

As public performance, accessible to a wide range of spectators, the theatre has been more subject to the constraints of censorship than any other long-established art. It is expected to confirm and endorse standard social values and to present the heterodox or the taboo in a manner which will incite either derision or revulsion. Consequently, homosexual sentiments, behavior and concerns have, until recently, rarely appeared on stage; when they have, their presentation has often been skewed to the expectations and sensibilities of convention-bound playgoers.

At the same time, the practicing theatre, in its gregariousness, its opportunities for artistic creativity, and its relative tolerance, has been, at least from the sixteenth century, both in Western and Eastern cultures, an arena where talented

homosexuals have flourished. From the ancient Romans until very recently, performers were distrusted as outcasts, misfits in the scheme of things: the outlaw actor and the sexual heretic were often the same individual (and some psychiatrists are fond of equating the actor's egoist exhibitionism with an alleged homosexual love of display).

As homosexuality has become more conspicuous in everyday life, the stage, traditionally regarded as the mirror of life, has portrayed it more openly, both as a subject worthy of dramatic treatment and as an attitude that informs the production.

*Ancient Greek Theatre.* Greek classical theatre developed in a culture saturated with homoerotic attitudes and behaviors, but owing, perhaps, to deliberate excision by Byzantine and monastic librarians, there is little surviving evidence of these aspects in drama. Lost tragedies include Aeschylus' *Laius* (467 B.C.), about the man thought by the Greeks to have invented pederasty; *Niobe*, which displayed the love-life of Niobe's sons; and *Myrmidons*, concerning Achilles' grief at the death of his lover Patroclus. This last was a favorite of Aristophanes, who quoted it frequently. Other lost plays on the Myrmidon theme were written by Philemon (436/5–379 B.C.) and Strattis (409–375 B.C.). Sophocles, too, wrote *Lovers of Achilles*, whose surviving fragment describes the intricate workings of passion. The oft-dramatised tragedy of the house of Labdacus was, in the earlier myths, triggered by Laius' lust-motivated abduction of the son of his host during his foreign exile. Sophocles eschewed this episode, but it was the subject of Euripides' lost *Chrysippus* (ca. 409 B.C.), apparently created as a vehicle for his own male favorite Agathon (447–400/399 B.C.), who was noted for his "aesthetic" way of life. (Another lost *Chrysippus* was composed by Strattis.) Euripides' masterpiece *The Bacchae* (405 B.C.) depicts the androgynous god Dionysus unsexing and de-