

# Japanese Gay Pornography: Space of “Queer” in Struggle with Japanese Masculinity Power

Piyapong Ingthaisong, Somsuk Hinviman

**Abstract**— *The objectives of this study are to point out that how the space of Japanese gay pornography construct “Queer” in order to be space of resistance to Japanese masculinity power. The methodologies of this study are textual analysis and documentary research as tools of studying. The theory of “Queer” is used to explain about “Queer” construction. Power concept of Michel Foucault is used to explain power structure from “Queer” meaning construction to resist with meaning of masculinity’s power in Japan. Concept of carnivalesque of Mikhail Bakhtin is used to explain power structure in Japanese gay pornography in the upside down format which is opposite to the social reality which in that space, “Queer” is more powerful than masculinity and to understand gay pornography as mass cultural product. All these are used as conceptual framework to explain spatial construction of Japanese gay pornography to be the space of struggle with Japanese masculinity power. Analysis’s criteria is divided into 3 parts which are physical features, behavioral features, and sexual activities. The samples for analysis are 7 of Japanese gay pornography which actors have “occupational” roles which are purposive sampling. The findings indicates that Japanese gay pornography has been used as struggling space of “Queer” with Japanese masculinity power by using actors that show Japanese masculinity through physical features, behavioral features, and sexual activities as passive party or the party with less power. Meanwhile, the opposite meaning of “Queer” has power to press Japanese masculinity and shows the space of power creation in the form of upside down according to carnivalesque.*

**Keywords**— *Japan, gay, pornography, queer, struggle, space, masculinity, power*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Being “Queer” is the thing that alternative sex would like to create the meaning in order to express their self and standpoint in the society of heterosexual. It’s the symbolic struggling and meaning that is constructed through view of people that create the meaning for themselves. Space of Japanese gay pornography is representative of power struggling expression between masculinity and queer. And it’s the space for reflecting identity of “Queer” intensively. Being “Queer” which the meaning is constructed shows identity and self of alternative sex people through sexual activities or sexuality via performance in Japanese gay pornography. It’s representation of identity in dimension of sexuality which is disclosure of hidden part. It’s the activity which is not be shown in public. But in the space of

Japanese gay pornography, it becomes the space of showing the most hidden part of human in public in order to show their identities and self of “Queer” in the hidden part and greatly have privacy in public area. Besides, it’s the space which is full of resistance the external power of society like the rich battle field of meaning in term of resisting the pressed meaning of being “Queer” which has been determined by society’s power and point of view in the frame of heterosexual.

In this study, the researcher focuses at meaning construction of being “Queer” which is represented in Japanese gay pornography, the battle field of meaning that is full of conflicts between meaning of being “Queer” which has been determined by homosexual in format of specific media for “Queer” in order to struggle with meaning of being “Queer” and Japanese masculinity which have been determined by external society of heterosexual that sex are only male and female, including with using gay pornography for meaning reconstruction of being “Queer” which external power has pressed to be the other that go against a tradition. Especially, meaning reconstruction on power term for being “Queer” to be victory and liberated their self from patriarchal society via construction of being “Queer” in Japanese gay pornography. When being “Queer” is in the space that they have power in meaning construction, then being “Queer” is more powerful and could press on masculinity to have less power.

## II. PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

To point out that how the space of Japanese gay pornography construct “Queer” in order to be space of resistance to Japanese masculinity power.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOOGY

1. Textual analysis
2. Documentary research

## IV. RESULT OF THE STUDY

### *Struggles of “Queer” in Japanese Society*

Japan is patriarchal society in the study of Mark McLelland (2011) found that being “Queer” has been available since Edo era. The evident could be seen in elite’s culture which is Shudō (衆道) is the Japanese tradition of age-structured homosexuality or pederasty prevalent in samurai society from the medieval period until the end of the 19th century. Shudō was

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a samurai custom in which adult samurai engaged in pederastic relationships with younger samurai. This custom is most prominently seen, or discussed, in the Sengoku and Edo periods. Even though communication in globalization era has represented image of “Queer” in the different culture which is outside Japanese society, sexuality and sexual diversity is extensively discussed. But Japanese society is just a small group with their own culture which is trying to create identity in their space that is the borderline from external society which determined everything in order under the strict rules of Japanese society, including with being “Queer” which has been determined to express only in determined space. Therefore, queer has made “Queer” to be exist in the society, but still in the frame that has been set by the society. In consequence, the identity of “Queer” in Japan has not been expressed explicitly as westerner’s society. Because of Japan is closed society with strictness about social norms. The alternative sex group becomes the group with less power that doesn’t have enough authority to express their self freely. Gender in Japanese society is limited to only male and female.

*Japanese Gay Pornography: Struggling Space of “Queer”*

The analysis is based on main actors and related elements which relates to main actors such as supporting actors, settings, situations. The researcher has selected Japanese gay pornography from the company named HUNK which is popular and presents in Japanese masculinity’s occupations obviously. The storytelling represents statuses and roles of each occupation in context of Japanese masculinity. The actors would act in roles as determined by the company which the feature in stories construction indicates about struggles of “Queer” to the power of Japanese masculinity. The Japanese gay pornography which is analyzed in this study are;

1. TR-MG 003 Reality Japanese Gay Massage
2. Hatten Library Part 5
3. Home Delivery Boy Part 6
4. High School Men’s Part 20
5. Male Private Car Part 3
6. Working Men Part 14
7. Nonkey Anal, Onaho Strategy Part 3

**FIGURE 1**  
**TR-MG 003 Reality Japanese Gay Massage**



**FIGURE 2**

**Hatten Library Part 5**



**FIGURE 3**  
**Home Delivery Boy Part 6**



**FIGURE 4**  
**High School Men’s Part 20**



**FIGURE 5**  
**Male Private Car Part 3**







**FIGURE 6**  
**Working Men Part 14**



**FIGURE 7**  
**Nonkey Anal, Onaho Strategy Part 3**



Analysis of being “Queer” is divided into analysis of 3 main elements which are physical features, behavioral features, and sexual activities that will indicates the power structure in the format that “Queer” is more powerful than masculinity.

*Physical Features*

1. Shape and body.

From analysis construction of being “Queer” representing through the body, the main actors are in the roles of aggressors and defenders. It’s relationship of power which aggressor will be more powerful than defender as he is in passive state. There are expressions of power via actions and sexual activities. It’s analyzed with frame of theories that explain about patriarchal society. The finding indicates that 3 of Japanese gay pornography which are TR-MG 003 Reality Japanese Gay Massage, High School Men’s Part 20, and Male Private Car Part 3 have features of “Queer” construction through shape and body that the aggressors are more masculine than the defenders. But in 4 of Japanese gay pornography which are Hatten Library Part 5, Home Delivery Boy Part 6, Working Men Part 14, and Nonkey Anal, Onaho Strategy Part 3 have counter features that the defenders are more masculine than the aggressors. It’s showing the resistance of masculinity’s power in patriarchal society which masculinity has been given the meaning through the body and that body is passive and pressed from the opposite side. This issue could be explained by concept of Michel Foucault (1975) which points out the social power that deal with and determine individual’s body of how should we deal with our bodies. It’s expression of the most intensive individual control. At the same time, individuals also could use their own bodies to resist the management and determination by society. From Japanese gay pornography analysis, this part signifies the features of masculinity to be passive and pressed to be less power in the space of Japanese gay pornography that the body is used to resist the meaning of masculinity as above mentioned analysis.

2. Costumes

Japanese gay pornography use costumes to represent the occupations of characters in each role. Then, it’s the features that represent Japanese masculinity which is reinforcement of representative images of masculinity to be realistic in order to persuade the audience to comply with the roles such as police uniform, student uniform, employee uniform.

3. Occupations

From the analysis in Japanese gay pornography, the occupations of main actors are in the table 1.

**TABLE 1**

**Japanese gay pornography Comparison of Sexual Role, Occupation and Meaning**

Sexual Role	Occupation	Meaning
(1) Aggressor	massager, student, employee, financial officer	Less powerful occupations in space and situation are more powerful in Japanese pornography which



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		it's opposite to the reality in Japan.
(2) Defender	librarian, delivery man, police, killer, baseball player	More powerful occupations in space and situation are passive and pressed to be lost the authority in that space, including with making the occupation with high masculinity or aggressive to be passive and lose power.

represents sexual activities in the features of both male and female. But mostly the main characters are in the sexual role of defender and are passive by the aggressors. It's the representation of resistance the power of masculinity in Japanese patriarchal society and power of Japanese society. The aggressors are the ones which are constructed countering to masculinity in Japanese society. The actions of aggressors are going against a tradition as mentioned above. The main characters in each story are all defenders which are a customer in spa, librarian, delivery man, baseball player student, killer, police, and baseball player who have more masculinity than the aggressors. When they are in sexual activities, the higher level of masculinity of defenders are challenged and pressed to represent the switching of power upside down. The props in the settings sometimes are used to communicate symbols with masculinity resistance meaning such as using female foot to rub the sport man's t-shirt, using of handcuffs and police's stick to torture the defenders who is the police. The element of camera angle is normally point of view camera angle of the aggressors, the defenders and the audiences. The camera angle represents the power that the aggressors have more power than the defenders by representing that the aggressors are above the bodies of the defenders. In the same time, there is the angle that defenders look up to show that they are in the lower positions and they are passive. The element of scenes ordering is divided into 3 periods which are before, in between, and after having sex. The period before having sex represents normal situations of Japanese society. In each role is going on in Japanese tradition. But in the period of having sex, the power structure is turned to be upside down and masculinity is challenged and pressed from being "Queer". For the period of after having sex, everything turns back to normal situations to signify the space construction of "Queer" to liberate and decrease the stress from Japanese society which is patriarchal society. This explanation is similar to the study of wrestling (John Fiske, 1996) describing that wrestling is the space of stress reduction and liberation of the audience from pressures on the stage of wrestling which has no rule and the players could do everything. It's the social disordered space as same as Japanese gay pornography. In addition, the important scene is the orgasm scene which the aggressors do something on the bodies of the defenders, especially on the face in order to show more power and to show the victory of aggressors who have less masculinity while they have more power in the space of Japanese gay pornography.

The relationship of occupation and role factors in sexual activities is showing who is powerful in the format of tuning upside down. The aggressors are less masculinity with more power indicates the intention of pressing masculinity in Japanese society. It conforms with Mikhail Bakhtin's explanation (2009) about carnivalesque. It's the allowance to have events or festivals that the participants could resist or not follow the social norms in the events or festivals temporarily. After the events or festivals, everything will

turn back to normal. The events or festivals are created to reduce the stress and it shows power using in the format of turning upside down which could not happen in the normal situation.

*Behavioral Features*

The behavioral features are 3 periods which are divided by criteria of changing behaviors of both sexual roles which is noticeable different. The 3 periods are; 1) period before having sex, 2) period of having sex, and 3) period after having sex. The manners before having sex of both sexual roles are normal in masculinity. The behaviors are as assigned occupations. In the period of having sex, the aggressor is aggressive, threatens the defender, act more powerful while the defender's behavior is surrendering to the aggressor and is pressed such as screaming, begging in the sound of Japanese female. Both sexual roles express the totally different behaviors in the period of having sex. After having sex, all actors show the normal behavior that sexual activities are the tool for "Queer" to press Japanese masculinity. They triumph and are more powerful when they are in sexual activities.

*Sexual Activities*

It's the behaviors expressing sexual activities and showing being "Queer" which is the performance of main characters, including with environment and situations in the storytelling. As analysis, there is relationship between statuses of actors which normally use high masculinity occupations in representations with sexual roles which always determine the aggressors to be passive as the resistance of masculinity's power in Japanese society. The 7 of Japanese gay pornography represent sexual activities in the feature of male and male. But there is 1 Japanese gay pornography which is High School Men's Part 20 that

**V. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY**

According to the analysis of 7 Japanese gay pornography, the researcher found that the space of Japanese gay pornography is the space of "Queer" which is constructed to decrease the pressures of strict Japanese society. Being "Queer" is not accepted in Japanese society. Genders in Japan only consist of male and female. It's the society of heterosexual. Therefore, "Queer" has identity and self only in the space that society has determined in the real space that there are communities of "Queer" mixing in many spaces in Japan such as Shinjuku Nijome in Tokyo.



When “Queer” are in their own territory, they could express their identity extremely. But when they are out off those areas, they have to come back to the identity that Japanese society has determined the frame. It’s the same with the space of Japanese gay pornography which reflects the mentioned phenomenon by using sexual activities as the ceremony which is constructed by “Queer” in order to make being “Queer” more powerful than masculinity in the format of turning upside down with the reality and it’s the special event that is allowed to happen. When the sexual activities end, everything turns back to normal. The power of masculinity is still higher than being “Queer” which has been framed the actions and identity expression as social determination.

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