

COMPLETION REPORT

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Exploring English-Language Community Theatre-Making in Tokyo and Bangkok: Tokyo International Players and Bangkok Community Theatre

The research project entitled ‘Exploring English-language community theater-making in Tokyo and Bangkok: Tokyo International Players and Bangkok Community Theater’, funded by The Sumitomo Foundation, aims to study the concepts, activities and operation models of two similar non-profit amateur theater groups, run entirely by volunteers who are foreigners living in Tokyo and Bangkok, that present theatrical performances in English. The two groups are Tokyo International Players (TIP), which is the largest and oldest English-speaking drama group in Japan (125 years), and the Bangkok Community Theater (BCT), which is the largest English-language group in Thailand and have a history of over 62 years.

The project began in April 2020 and was expected to complete in March 2021, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, the project was granted extension until June 2022. However, even with the extension, the researcher was unable to travel to Tokyo to collect data, and decided to conduct interviews online, participate in virtual events and activities, and use data available on the internet instead.

The findings of the study show that it is important to approach and appreciate these amateur theatre groups, not through the lens of professional theatre, but as a form of leisure that places more emphasis on the process rather than the finished product. After thematic analysis has been conducted, the results reveal factors that enable both organizations to maintain its status and standing in the foreign community and in the theatre industry in Tokyo and Bangkok today. These factors are organized into 5 core themes:

1. Meaningful relationship – theatre productions bring people together, new relationships are formed in every project and production, which are held regularly through the year
2. Strong organization structure – both groups have a strong system of management, established by past committees
3. Passion for theatre – members connect through their mutual love of theatre, allowing individuals of any race, culture, profession, or social status to form deep friendships and learn from one another in the creative process
4. Escapism – taking part in the theatre productions allows individuals to get away from the stress and routine nature of their work and life. It also serves as an outlet for their creativity
5. Professionalism – by definition, these theatre groups are characterized as amateur theatre (the opposite of professional theatre, which is a for-profit theatre group), but the members of TIP and BCT prefer not to be seen as "amateur" because they devote substantial physical, mental, time and energy to create performances

Studies on the creative industry, especially in the field of theatre, tend to be focused on activities or groups that bring profit. There is much to be learned from amateur theatre groups like BCT and TIP about developing and building relationships in the community and developing strength and sustainability of the organization. The five core themes could be applied to both amateur and professional art organizations to encourage more successful creative activities, personal development and career building as well as generating income for the country in the long run.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

1. 13 May 2021, Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC), Design Research Day, **Bangkok Community Theatre: A role model for community building**, Dr. Grisana Punpeng
2. 29 April 2022, 14th International Conference on Thai Studies [14th ICTS] Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan, **Exploring English-language community theatre-making in Tokyo and Bangkok: Tokyo International Players and Bangkok Community Theatre**, Assistant Professor Grisana Punpeng, Ph.D.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

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Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Book Chapter: English-Language Theatre on the Margins?: The Serious Leisure of Amateur Theatre Groups in Bangkok and Tokyo, Assistant Professor Grisana Punpeng, Ph.D.

In DECOLONIZING DRAMATURGY IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

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