

Final Report

Title: *New Work Global Baby Factory part 2: A research and network construction for creation*

1. Summary of Activities

For two months from April 5th to June 1st 2016, I received an Asia Fellowship from the Japan Foundation Asia Center to stay in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. My main purposes for being there were to gather material on the incident of the Japanese millionaire using Thai surrogate birth, which occurred in August 2014, for my work “Global Baby Factory 2”. I also investigated the current state of contemporary drama in Thailand (the status of works and the sensibilities of the audience).

First, gathering material on the incident of the Japanese millionaire using Thai surrogate mothers did not proceed as I had hoped. Although I visited several surrogate clinics, they did not respond for interviews. And there is no way I could have met with the concerned party in the incident who had become a fugitive. However, I was able to visit the apartment where the incident occurred, and heard about the events from people at the Bangkok office of NHK, whom were introduced to me by a friend.

Next, for my research on Thai contemporary drama, I was able to interview 9 groups of artists and producers involved in Thai contemporary drama. At first, I thought that I would like to learn more about the current state of Thai social theater and documentary theater, but I soon learned that the status of theater in Thailand has a vastly different context from that of Japan or Tokyo. Therefore, I changed by plan to interview prominent dramatists and people involved in the operation of theaters as much as possible. This was because there are only ten small theaters for contemporary drama in Bangkok, and I was not able to see a great number of plays during my stay.

In that respect, my stay in Thailand did not have the same impact as when I visited Daehangno in Seoul, where over 130 theaters are based in a single neighborhood. However, I came in contact with the measure of dramatic works, “dramas that fight for freedom of expression”, and found them to be very stimulating. Simultaneously, I felt the passion of creators, which was so strong because Thai contemporary drama is still in development. I sincerely hope that the passion of these Thai creators is conveyed to theater people in small theaters in Japan from this report, and that it gives a chance for collaborations.

2. Gathering material on the incident of the Japanese millionaire using Thai surrogate birth

I began gathering materials on the incident of the Japanese millionaire using Thai surrogate birth by investigating the condominium where the incident occurred. A Thai acquaintance informed me that incident was covered in an English language newspaper in Bangkok one year ago, and upon reading that newspaper, I found that the name of the condominium written in the article and was easily able to search for the place. Nikorn Sae Tang introduced me to the monthly apartment where he lived, and I lived there as well, but the condominium involved in the



incident was only 10 minutes away by taxi. (The picture on the right is the courtyard of the condominium where the incident occurred.)

The condominium had a somewhat stylish exterior, and there were Japanese and German cars parked in the parking lot. I could tell that it was somewhat luxurious, but not totally out of reach. There appeared to be a pool on the premises, but I did not see anyone swimming in it. This condominium had an automatic lock and I could not enter it from the outside. The receptionist at the entrance on the first floor could not speak much English. I received the manager's business card from the receptionist, but in the end was unable to gather materials inside of the building.

Similarly, I also visited the surrogate clinic and agent, but they did not cooperate with my investigation.

When I was experiencing some difficulties, a Japanese acquaintance living in Bangkok introduced me to someone working in Bangkok office of NHK. I was soon able to meet with the person from NHK, and ask them about when the incident occurred and the current status of the incident. This included what had happened to the babies who were in the care of the Thai police. I was told that they were being looked after at childcare facilities and orphanages managed by the government. I strongly wished to actually tour such childcare facilities or orphanages, even if they were not the ones housing babies involved in the incident, and so I toured four different orphanages.



One of these was an orphanage called Ban Rom Sai, which is managed by a Japanese NPO. (See the picture above and to the right.) I was shocked to hear that most of the children in Ban Rom Sai are orphans who contracted the HIV virus by maternal-fetal infection. In consideration of privacy at all of the orphanages, I was not able to interview any of the orphans. Nonetheless, I was impressed by the sight of the children playing happily, as they appeared to be no different from normal children on the surface.

In order to ask normal Thai people what they thought of the surrogate birth incident in question, I also visited a Japanese language school where an acquaintance of an acquaintance was working as a teacher (The Japanese language school is in the building on the right).

The site of foreigners studying Japanese was very new to me, and I discovered several things. "Cold" in English is "yen" in Thai, but can be expressed as "samui" (cold air or weather) or "tsumetai" (cold to the touch) in Japanese. I had never considered the difference between samui and tsumetai, so this was quite interesting to me.



At the end of the class, I asked regular Thai people (who could speak English), whom the teacher had given me time to interview, what they thought about surrogate birth. And as you would expect many Japanese people to say they told me "It's acceptable as a treatment for infertility, but should be limited to family members, and it's crazy for someone to want 20 children." Others said "I wouldn't do it, but poor women would. Just like becoming a prostitute."

Some gave the strong opinion that they do not have sympathy with the surrogate mothers. Their critical opinion was “They don’t have to do it, but they chose to do it.” I argued that “Their situation and environment forced them into a position where they had no choice but to take that job,” but the argument did not swerve, as they replied “No, they could have refused, but they didn’t.”

Also, though I did not go with the purpose of covering the incident, I visited the tourist spot Wat Arun and the Siriraj Medical Museum, and these also appeared in “Global Baby Factory 2”. Wat Arun is a real temple that serves as the setting for Yukio Mishima’s novel “The Temple of Dawn”, and it was the most beautiful of all Thai temples that I saw this time. The Siriraj Medical Museum features entire formalin-preserved human bodies on display, and a group of formalin-preserved fetuses went beyond simple eeriness to the point of feeling sacred.

I primarily gathered material in Bangkok, but when I visited Narumol Thammapruxsa (Kop), I also gathered material in Chiang Mai. Two of the four orphanages that I visited were in Chiang Mai. I primarily moved around Bangkok by train (BTS and MRT) as well as taxi. I learned address numbers in Thai so that I could tell taxi drivers. For transportation in Chiang Mai, Kop provided his own car. I procured plane tickets for the round trip to Chiang Mai in Thailand.

3. Research 2015 on Thai contemporary drama

I interview 9 groups of artists and producers in Thai contemporary drama for research on Thai contemporary drama. “Key Persons and Theaters in Thai Drama” is attached separately with interviews compiled for each group. The following is a list of these. My intention was to bring up the individual history and beliefs of key persons in Thai drama. I expect that if you read all of the interviews, it will give you a clear view of the current status of drama in Bangkok.

The extra feature number 10 is not an interview, but a record of a ceremonial performance at an academic performance. I was able to see a variety of Southeast Asian ceremonial performances at this event, and I was stimulated by the Indonesian performance in particular.

1. Pradit Prasartthong
2. Narumol Thammapruxsa
3. Thong Lor Art Space
4. Crescent Mon Theatre
5. B-floor
6. Nikorn Sae Tang
7. Democrazy Studio
8. Baby Mime
9. Creative Industries
10. Extra Feature: Watching “Spiritual Dimensions of Rice Culture in Southeast Asia”

4. Completing Fellowship Activities

Be certain to include “Future plans and outlook on the project”.

After gathering materials as part of the fellowship, a reading of “Global Baby Factory 2” was held at a hall of the Japan Foundation on June 6th, 2015 and was performed at the Chofu City Sengawa Theater from August 8th to 13th of the same year.

Some viewers remarked that went deeper into the theme of surrogate birth than Part 1, but others remarked that the second act was too long. Overall, the amount of free feedback written on questionnaires was longer than for performances thus far, so I felt that this performance must have moved the audience in some way. In the future, I hope to make Part 2.5 focused on a gay couple, or Part 3 with the theme of children born by surrogate birth.

As for collaboration with people in involved in Thai drama, I hope to do a reading performance project that will introduce Thai drama.



Picture: "Global Baby Factory 2" on stage