

Report on Participation in [Thailand Field Research Trip]

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1. Academic outcomes

It was my first time participating in this kind of program. Although I have ever been overseas for my research and for attending an academic conference, but I never had any classes overseas with international students. Thanks to this program, I could get used to having lectures in English. And I made friends with Korean, Chinese and Thai students. I could learn some of their culture through discussing our research themes or some topics about each country with them. It was a valuable experience for me.

2. My experience in Thailand

We could experience several different areas in Thailand. For example, we stayed for a week in the middle of the touristic area in Bangkok. It was the cultural area as well. And we visited some commercial areas in Bangkok, an industrial park in Chiang Mai, historical region of Ayutthaya, and rural areas. So I could understand a part of the diversity of Thailand. The characteristics of Bangkok and Chiang Mai, that we stayed, had really different. Bangkok has much more high population density than Chiang Mai. And crafts works in Chiang Mai were more sophisticated and delicate than craft products sold in Bangkok.

3. The Contents of the program

We had many lectures everyday and I found some of them were much more interesting than I expected. For example, there was a lecture about Thai culture and society. The lecturer focused on the social construction and the process of homogenization of Thai people/citizen. As far as I know, the processes of construction of national identities were often discussed through such topics as national languages or army services. So the idea that drawing maps is one of the processes of homogenization, which the lecturer mentioned, was new for me. I suppose that is because Thailand has experienced great geographical changes in their history.

Another example was the lecture about Thai economy. I had thought the lecturer would talk about general economical structure or economic growth of Thailand, but he focused on the farmers and workers classes in Thai economy. I don't know whether his focal point is popular or not in Thailand, but it was impressive for me that only one lecture about "Thai economy" focused on the farmers and workers, which is never called "main stream" in Japan.

It was also very good for me that we could see both agro-food conglomerate and contract farmers. When I was an undergraduate student, I was really interested in the unequal distribution of food in the globalized world and the poverty in rural areas especially in the developing countries. I took some classes about agri-business and I also studied about agricultural economy and rural development in the developing countries. Although my main research themes today have no direct relationship with these topics, my anger and academic interest to the agro-food politics /structures, which cause the inequality and poverty, had continued till now. So it was a good experience that I could visit an agro-food conglomerate, which could be a part of these social structures. I know we could get only superficial information that they wanted to give us, but I could feel something from how they represent their ideals, the way they speak, and how luxurious their buildings were.

The other day, we visited a farmers' group who make the contracts with other agro-food conglomerates. I was surprised that they are producing *edamame*, green soybeans under the contract for more than ten years. And they were farming with some contract more than twenty years. They didn't know the situation before agro-food conglomerate make contracts with them. I suppose that they belong to relatively high-class in that region. So I feel a little disappointed about we could not see several farmers and understand whole picture or average image of Thai farmers.

On the whole, this program broadened my view.

4. The Impact of the program on my career plans.

I have considered studying abroad vaguely before, but as a result of this program, I started consider seriously my future plan. As I had already spent four years in doctoral course, I would like to get my PhD degree first, and after that, I would like to get some scholarships or positions as a research fellow in order to go abroad.