

Report on Participation in [2013 Thailand Field Research Trip]

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As a Thai citizen, SEND Thailand trip taught me a lot about Thailand and ASEAN, not many aspects like economics, politics, society, and culture. The trip was wonderful in all aspects, academic knowledge, real experiences that cannot be found in a Thai everyday life. All the lecturers are well known and very professional in their own fields. Classes we attended are Politics and Security in Thailand, Situation of Japanese companies in Thailand, Thai economy, ASEAN in global trend, International Relation and International Political Economy of Thailand, ASEAN cooperation in political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions, Government policies and current condition of trade in Northern Thailand, Society and culture in Northern Thailand, and Socioeconomic history in Northern Thailand. Classes are very interesting and cover all the aspects that are very beneficial to both Thai and non-Thai participants. One of the lecture that I found it the most interesting is the "Situation of Japanese companies in Thailand," since Japanese companies account for more than 50 percent of total foreign investment in Thailand. There are concerns for investing in Thailand; 1. The intensification of competition, 2. The increase of labor cost, 3. Development and proper implementation of customs related system, 4. Board of Investment of Thailand's new investment promotion policy. There have been some impacts to Japanese companies recently due to both the big flood in Thailand and the 300 baht minimum wage policy. Fortunately, Most of the Japanese companies can accept those negative impacts due to other advantages of Thai market structure and the suck cost of companies.

We also visited many places, which are Thammasat University, Chulalongkorn University, The Parliament House of Thailand, The Grand Palace, an agribusiness company in Thailand, Ayutthaya province, Chaingmai University, Department of international trade promotion (Chiangmai regional office), and a study tour of soybean contract farming in Chaingmai province, and industrial community in Lumpoon province. The most interesting study tour is when we visited the biggest agribusiness company in Thailand that has its business in all the supply chain of food from seeds, animal feed, chemical substances, contract farming, logistics, processing, to retailing to the end customer. (They also operate in other sectors such as mobile service, Cable TV). This visit let me know more about Thai agricultural sector especially it is a chance to interview and discuss with the company's manager which normally most of the data is quite confidential to the public.

We also participated in student workshop between Kyoto university students and Thammasat university students. Each student presented his own research interest and field of study. It was a fruitful workshop because everyone was well prepared and the audience was quite active in listening and asking questions. It was my first public workshop experience of mine and I like it very much.

The content and schedule of the program were perfect. There are both lectures in classroom, study tour experience, discussion with company, interview farmers, and historic site visits. The schedule enables us to experience all kinds knowledge about Thailand and be able to shape and answer what Thailand really is. This trip has reminded me again that Thailand still have a lot to improve especially the income inequality that brought about every other inequality in other aspects such as power, education, living standard, and etc.

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I have to say thanks to this opportunity to be one of the participants in this trip, and it's an honor as a Thai citizen to have this chance to welcome all the trip members and to present them Thailand, and I think this trip was successful and productive in both the learning of students, and the academic relationship between the two universities.