

Report on Participation in Thailand Field Research Trip 2014

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Thailand is the first ASEAN country I've actually visited and explored outside my own country Indonesia. I spent about two weeks in two important cities of Thai: Bangkok, the heart of Thailand; and Phuket a small island in southern part of Thai well-known for its tourism. The two cities have their unique and distinctive characteristics, and to be able to get there is really a valuable experience.

Began at August 31, 2014, we had our first eight days in Bangkok where the agenda was combination of class lectures organized by Pridi Banomyong International College Thammasat University, company and cultural sites visits, and students workshop. By joining the lectures I got to understand social-historical situation of Thai and how it influenced Thailand's past economic situation and its current development. Moreover, it becomes clearer now for me to place Thai's position in ASEAN economy. I also compared Thai's economy to Indonesia and other countries of ASEAN and found that ASEAN countries have similar patterns of economic development, yet varying social and political situation distinguish the outcome and brought them into different level of economic prosperity. In panel discussion on sustainable development in ASEAN held on Saturday, September 6 2014, highly diverse economic and social aspects of ASEAN were described as challenges as well as richness and opportunity toward ASEAN community which is approaching closer and closer.

In the beginning of the second week on Monday, September 8 evening, we moved to the second destination: Phuket. It was such a lovely city where you can feel the warm atmosphere and people's hospitality. I enjoyed very much the chance to interact with local people as we visited many sites: the pineapple plantation, rubber research center, organic goat farming, community based learning center for organic farming and garbage NGO. If I could mention my 'favorite', I would say the organic goat farming and garbage NGO. I sensed the humbleness of these people and how they try to live with nature in harmony. They tried to face the current social and environmental problem caused by human activities and to rise other people's awareness toward sustainable living at the same time.

The organic goat farming, owned by Mr. Akkara, is designed to be micro-model for other farmers to follow. The farm, he explained, is intentionally kept to be small in size and to be simple in technology so that it will be applicable and easy to be adopted. Together with his wife and his daughter, he managed the farm and let farmers and lay people to come and learn in order to spread the idea. My second favorite, the garbage NGO, is also an interesting story on how social capital support one's movement or idea. The activities conducted by this NGO initially only covered a very small area. In relatively short time -only a few years- they are successfully spread their activity throughout the province. They also cannily could involve business players to be in their activities.

I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to visit Thai, meet new culture and new people of Thai, and learn together with Kyoto University international students and Thammasat University students from best lecturers. I'm hoping that more students will join the program and have this great experince.