

Report for Institutional Program for Younger Researcher Overseas Visits,
Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Kyoto University

Name : Loh Kah Seng	Date : 15 February 2013
Position in CSEAS : Postdoctoral Fellow, Program-Specific Researcher	
* Check an appropriate entry (Lecturer · Assistant Professor · Research Assistant · Postdoctoral · Ph. D. Student · Master's Student · Undergraduate Student)	
Host Institute (Counterpart, Institute and County) : Dr Ann Nipaporn, Department of History, Thammasat University	
*Circle the appropriate entry for host institute (University · Research Institute · Company · Others)	
Position at Host Institute: Visiting Affiliate	
Term : (1 February 2013) ~ (13 February 2013) (13 Days)	
Research Purpose: * Check any appropriate entries. ① Research/Laboratory Work ② Fieldwork ③ Seminar ④ Internship ⑤ Take course or class ⑥ Attend Academic Meeting ⑦ Earn credits ⑧ Other	
Research Area: * Circle the appropriate entry. ① Humanities ② Social Sciences ③ Mathematics and Physics ④ Chemistry ⑤ Engineering ⑥ Biology ⑦ Agriculture ⑧ Medical Science, Pharmacy and Dentistry ⑨ Integral Area of Studies ⑩ New Multidiscipline	
Outline of Overseas Visits (About 300~400 words)	
<p>Research Project: Social and Historical Perspectives of Floods and Fires in Slums in Bangkok</p> <p>I spent 13 days in Bangkok conducting archival research and oral history interviews on slums in the city. This was a scoping study towards mapping a social history of floods and fires in Bangkok after World War Two till 2012. The research included library and agency-based research and interviews with residents, community organisers and NGO workers of informal settlements in Bangkok.</p> <p>With the help of a research assistant, Ravin Khamphothong from Thammasat University, I obtained archival and published material on the history of floods and fires in Bangkok and more generally Thailand. The material, which is in English, dealt with the history of slums and occurrence of floods and fires in Thailand.</p> <p>In addition, I was able to interview 27 informal settlers, community organizers and NGO workers living in several slums in Bangkok, namely, Klong Bung Pai, Poon Sab, Klong Toey, Klong Phutta Monthon Sai 2, Klong Bua Kwan, and Lak Hok. I spoke to the residents about how they had been affected by floods and how they responded to them, particularly the 2011 floods. In Klong Toey, which was not flooded, I spoke to residents about the fire hazard.</p> <p>In my fieldwork, I was assisted by colleagues and contacts, particularly Ann Nipaporn of Thammasat University,;Abhayuth Chantrabha, community organizer and coordinator of Community Organization for People's Action [COPA], an NGO in the Four Regions Slum Network [FRSN];Jeff Wong, also of COPA/FRSN and interpreter; and Rittirong Chutapruttikorn of Bangkok University and interpreter.</p>	

Research Achievement on this Program (300~400 Words)

The fieldwork has been useful as a scoping study. The archival and published material will help me to frame the historical and social context of floods and fires in slums in Bangkok. Similarly, my interviews have been valuable in providing insights into the experiences of slum dwellers and the ways they respond to these hazards, which are often neglected in the academic literature. What is particularly interesting in the case of Bangkok is the influence of politics on floods and fires, such as the government's decision to protect some areas at the expense of others (such as slums), and its failure to provide assistance to slum dwellers because they do not possess land titles. What is also important, in relation to my previous research in Singapore and Manila, is the role of community organization in Thailand: while flood response is not high on the agenda, NGOs and slum-based community networks are organizing slum dwellers to articulate and safeguard their right to suitable housing. In addition, the residents in Klong Toey have established a volunteer system to detect and extinguish fires in the settlement. The research also enables me to contrast slum and flooding issues in Manila, Singapore and Bangkok.

The preliminary research will enable me to conduct further research on slums in Bangkok, particularly on less organized slum communities and the role of NGOs and housing experts in tackling housing and environmental issues in Bangkok.