

Final Report

From May 17 2004 to May 28 2004, I conducted a preliminary fieldwork in Singapore. I stayed in one of the guesthouses at Singapore National University (SNU). SNU provided a good working and research environment as well as affordable accommodations. For the first week, I spent most of time reading archives, books, and newspapers about the state and nation building process of Singapore at the libraries in SNU. I also met Prof. Yeoh, Prof. Chua, and Prof. Hutchcroft to talk about my topics and discuss future direction of my research. In the second week, I exposed myself to more various parts of Singapore. I visited several different museums in order to have a better sense of the history-making process and different ethnic neighborhood to observe actual ethnic interactions. The best part of this preliminary visit was when I went to the shopping malls where migrant workers get together on Sundays. Migrant workers get together on Sunday. I visited three different shopping malls to observe how the dynamics of interaction among migrant workers and between Singaporeans and the migrant workers are different depending on the gender and nationality of the migrant workers. It was the moment that I got to have a firmer grip about what I want to do for my dissertation project. The abstract notion of migrant workers turned into concrete human beings. I also notice that it is not always easy to ask some questions to them. I realized I need to be better prepared with my research questions and think about a proper method to get to know them.

After 2 weeks of stay in Singapore, I flew to Korea and spent another 2 weeks there. At the first week of stay in Korea, I visited National Library to review literatures on Korean nation and state building. I also reviewed literatures and statistics about the trend of migrant workers in Korea. In the second week, I visited several NGOs that work for migrant workers in Korea. I was not lucky enough to meet migrant workers while I was visiting NGOs. I talked to the staffs and asked them what kinds of things they do for the migrant workers and what the most difficult part is. One thing I noticed is that there is a gap between the labor movement and the advocacy works for the migrant workers. Even if the migrant workers are also 'workers', the NGO staffs used the vocabularies of human rights instead of vocabularies of the labor movement. It will be interesting to investigate the relationship between the labor movement and migrant workers' movement paying specific attention to the role of ethnicity in separating the two movements.

It was a great opportunity for me to go to Korea and Singapore and to have a better sense of what my research would be like. Thank you for the support.