

# Cross Cultural Interaction of Japanese Retirees through Clubs in Thailand

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## Article History

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## Abstract

Expat living is an increasing phenomenon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This involves not only people from developing countries moving to developed countries for economic or life security reasons, but also, conversely, some retirees from developed countries decide to live in a less developed country as a second home. This paper explores the mobility of Japanese retirees in Chiang Mai and explains the situation of cross-cultural interaction between the retirees and the locals through Japanese clubs, based on the social capital (SC) conception. The data was collected by interviews from 2013 to 2015 and 2019. In conclusion, three kinds of SC stimulated the exchange of Japanese clubs and the locals. For the act of bonding SC, they shared and interacted within their group, comprised of the people who have the same nationality and hobbies. For bridging SC, there were connections among Japanese clubs and organizations from Japan. Lastly, for linking SC, being a club member privileges them to participate in the club's recreation and volunteering activities, which becomes a channel for them to get to know the local people. Through these cultural exchange activities, the Japanese can gain a better understanding of Thai culture by promoting co-existence.

**Keywords:** Cross Cultural Interaction, Japanese Retirees, Clubs, Chiang Mai, Thailand

## Introduction

As a result of increasing communication technology and the internet in the globalization of information, both investment and people have increasingly crossed over national borders. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century many new forms of mobility have developed, such as overseas working, studying, cross-border marriage, season stay, international retirement, and so on.

In the past, most migration of people was from developing countries to developed ones, but now the movement from developed countries to less developed ones is obviously increasing. The phenomenon of international retirement migration to a new country has been taking place from as early as the 1970s in Northern Europe (Williams et al., 2000). Retirees from United Kingdom and Germany migrated to areas near the Mediterranean Sea. The history of Japanese migrating began since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1970s to Brazil and Hawaii as a consequence of economics reasons. However, in the 1980s most Japanese migrate for other reasons, such as lower prices of goods and services, more comfortable living environment, and self-satisfaction within a new lifestyle (Stapa, 2012).

Overseas living in the retirement period is known as long-stay tourism, season stay, international retirement migration, and lifestyle migration, depending on the definition of each organization, for example, Long Stay Foundation (JSF), Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia, Chiang Mai Longstay Life Club (CLL), and so on. Retirees from the United State of America (USA),

Europe and Japan move to Southeast Asia, including Malaysia and Thailand, especially, for a better quality of life after their retirement (Howard, 2009; Ono, 2009, 2010). They look at retirement as an opportunity for their second life as setting new goals, activities, experience of living in foreign destinations and opportunity to do volunteer work (Williams et al., 2000; Terlecky et al., 2007).

The JLF's annual report ranked the most popular destinations of Japanese migrants worldwide, with Thailand consistently being ranked as second since 2011 after Malaysia (Figure 1). Before the year 2000, Japanese had a desire to stay in English-speaking countries, like the USA, Canada, and Australia, but since the year 2000 to date, Southeast Asian countries, like Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines have become more popular because of the warm weather and cheaper cost of living than their country of origin (Japan).

No	1992	2000	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1	Hawaii	Australia	Malaysia												
2	Canada	Hawaii	Australia	Australia	Australia	Hawaii	Hawaii	Thailand							
3	Australia	New Zealand	Thailand	Thailand	Hawaii	Australia	Thailand	Hawaii							
4	U.S.A	Canada	New Zealand	Hawaii	Thailand	Thailand	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia	Taiwan	Taiwan	Philippines
5	New Zealand	Spain	Hawai	New Zealand	New Zealand	New Zealand	Canada	Canada	New Zealand	New Zealand	Canada	Philippines	Philippines	Philippines	Australia
6	Swiss	British	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada	New Zealand	New Zealand	Canada	Philippines	New Zealand	New Zealand	Australia	Australia	Taiwan
7	British	Swiss	Spain	Philippines	Spain	Philippines	Philippines	Indonesia	Philippines	Singapore	Singapore	Canada	Canada	U.S.A	Canada
8	France	Italy	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Spain	Philippines	Singapore	U.S.A	U.S.A	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore	Indonesia
9	Spain	U.S.A	British	Spain	Philippines	Spain	Indonesia	Taiwan	Indonesia	Canada	Philippines	Taiwan	Indonesia	Canada	Singapore
10	U.S.A	Malaysia	U.S.A	U.S.A	U.S.A	U.S.A	Swiss	Singapore	Taiwan	Indonesia	Indonesia	New Zealand	New Zealand	U.S.A	

**Figure 1.** Popular destinations of Japanese migrants by country

Source: Longstay foundation in Japan (2019)

Southeast Asia countries have promoted Japanese retirees to stay in their country by offering privileges. In the 2010s, Japanese elderly were rapidly increasing and became a new target in the tourism industry. In Malaysia, the Malaysian government established the “Malaysia My Second Home Program” (“MM2H”) policy, promoting the climate, security and medical level, in addition to using media exposure to establish the image of Malaysia as a desirable long stay country, a policy that has been widely evaluated as successful (Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, 2019). The Philippines, ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the survey, offers the high convenience of a “Retirement Visa (SRRV)” that can be acquired from the age of 35 and allows permanent residence, and was highly evaluated. In contrast, Thailand offers a “Non migrant type O” visa to foreigners who are aged over 50-years-old with at least 800,000 Thai Baht in a savings account in a bank in Thailand, and the need to report to immigration every time they spend a night elsewhere and every 90 days. The purpose of stay is not for income generation, and the visa must be extended yearly.

In order to understand the movement of retirees, section 1.1 introduces the background of Japanese retirement and the steps for supporting them in Thailand.

### Background of International Japanese retirement

In 1950, 65-year-olds and over accounted for 4.9% of the total population of Japan. However, Japan has already entered the elderly society, where, by 2017, 35 million people born in the

baby-boom (1947-1949) will become elderly and will comprise about 27.7% of the total Japanese population, whilst this is expected to increase further to 38.1% by 2060 (Statistics Bureau, 2018: 10). This rapidly changing demographic structure directly affects the social welfare system. The Japanese government has reformed various benefits, such as pensions and medical treatment, and this decreasing value of their pension is the main factor driving the elderly in Japan to move abroad.

Since 1986 to 1989 Japan was in a booming economy, and the Japanese government offered the option of migrating abroad, called the “Silver Columbia 92” plan, to retired people to move to Spain, Canada, Australia, etc. The purpose of this plan was mainly to live a life that they could afford overseas due to the strong Japanese Yen and to invest in the real estate. Although it ended up being like an abandoned elderly plan, the demand of staying abroad continued. In 1989, the Japanese government established a long stay 90 project, replacing the Silver Columbia 92 plan, to encourage Japanese retirees to travel to a long-term residence abroad. In the early 2000s, when the retirement of baby boomers was approaching in the 1990s, “long stay” was featured in the mass media as not emigration but about spending most of the year abroad. This was marketed as in order to allow pensioners to use pensions to live in a foreign country with a lower cost of living and live more comfortably than in Japan (Nojiri, 2010; Lortanavanit, 2004). The Long Stay Foundation (LSF) was also established under this project, to study the needs and disseminate long-term stay (LTS) abroad in the form of living experience. Japanese baby boomers have many differences with those of the upper generations. They want to spend time for themselves, want to study, have hobbies, participate in sports, such as softball and jogging, and study personal history, such as Thai history and temples.

The definition of “long stay” by the general foundation corporation Long Stay Foundation of Japan (LSF) consists of the following five requirements. The first is a relatively long stay. It is leisure time for a long stay type of more than two weeks. The second is owning or renting a “residential facility” abroad and the third is that the purpose of living is for leisure and exchange activities with local people. The fourth is an aim for life rather than travel, while the fifth is having a source of living capital in Japan and no local labor income.

As mentioned above, Japanese retirees are the people who have been pushed out by the changing (aging) population structure in Japan and pulled into other countries to find a better lifestyle. They are generating overseas leisure time that contributes to international goodwill to the local society within Thailand, including in Chiang Mai, where Japanese retirees are mostly holders of non-immigrant type visas. They desire to stay in the country after retirement for a longer time than a tourist.

### **Chiang Mai as the destination of International Japanese retirement**

Chiang Mai is situated in the northern part of Thailand. This province is the second largest city in Thailand after Bangkok and has a long history of more than 700 years as the Kingdom of Lanna. In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the kingdom was defeated by Burma and was under the control of the Burmese forces for more than 200 years. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was completely integrated by the Rattanakosin dynasty. Then, it became Chiang Mai Province in 1933. Chiang Mai has created a unique culture that combines elements of Thailand and Burma in terms of art, temples, pagodas, cuisine and clothing, and has a well-developed tourism industry. The population was 1.68 million in June, 2015 and the climate has an average annual temperature of 25.4 °C and 1,000-1,2000 mm rainfall. The number of tourists in 2014 totaled 8.6 million persons, including 2.6 million foreigners or 29.72%. Chiang Mai is currently a hub of several kinds of tourism, such as cultural and traditional tourism, long stay, health tourism, education

tourism and Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, Exhibitions (MICE) (Chiang Mai Governor Office, 2019).

On 26 June 2001, the Thai government passed a resolution to promote long-term tourism by establishing the National Long Stay Tourism Promotion and Development Committee and allow the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to support tourism for foreigners who wish to stay longer. Chiang Mai province was selected to be one of five pilot areas [Chiang Mai province, Kanchanaburi province, Sukhothai province, Prachuap Khiri Khan (Hua Hin) and Nong Khai province] (Theppeng et al., 2003). In addition, the government has provided a special visa for one year for those who wish to stay longer in Thailand. Chiang Mai is an area that is very popular with retired Japanese people.

According to the TAT, many people stay in Chiang Mai for LTS, especially foreign nationals and including Japanese retirees. They do not stay to earn money but to rest and relax. The purpose of LTS is not for permanent residence, migration or employment, but rather it is for leisure alone. The target foreigners are limited to people from America, Europe (especially Scandinavia), and Japan. In addition, there are four categories of LTS residents: people receiving treatment for physical condition recovery, retirees aged 50 and over, international students, and sportsmen (TAT, 2015).

From late 1990's, the Japanese people who visited Thailand for LTS have increased reasons to do so and increased in numbers. As a result, Japanese clubs, events, and signboards, etc., are found more frequently in Chiang Mai. Moreover, in these areas a lot of services for them are now available, such as translation services, real estates, rental of Japanese books, golf reservation, visa support, Thai language school, and Japanese food and ingredient supermarkets. In Chiang Mai, more than any other place in Thailand, the Japanese lifestyle is more common and it is seen as an exchange of culture and society.

The oldest Japanese club in Chiang Mai is the Chiang Mai Japanese Association (CMJA), established in 1980 to support Japanese who work and stay in the Chiang Mai province and nearby to share information and exchange activities, such as local events and do sport or travel outside of working time. Next, in 2002 the CLL was established by a small group of Japanese retirees who knew each other at Chiang Mai and spent time doing some activities together. They then formed the CLL and added more activities that would help other retirees who had just come to live in Chiang Mai. They have tried to pass the LTS know how on to others via the club. The CLL has an organized system with a membership fee, position ranking, activity plan, and channel to interact with local people.

## **Literature Review and Methods**

### **The concept of social capital**

In general, the term capital has largely been implied as an economic value, where it is invested and exchanged in order to get more value in the future. However, the word capital is not only used as a form of currency but also for a social network that assists the personal aims or a group's objective. The LTS tourists are invited to engage in exchange of life experiences with others. The term of intercultural communication encompasses the notion of interaction between members of different cultures (Jack and Phipps, 2005: 1-6). Here, I review the concept of social capital, which explains the Japanese retiree's adaptation to the locals through cross-cultural interaction.

Putnam (2000) revealed the social capital in American society. He said that social capital is the value that social networks have. The term social emphasized a wide variety of benefits flow,

such as trust, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Woolcock (2001) advocated that networks are premised on shared interests and ties, that are forged between individuals and collectives for the development of intra-group cohesion (bonding capital), inter-group cooperation (bridging capital) and multi-group collaboration at the community level (linking capital).

Romeratanapan (2005) discussed that capital in general is a term that everyone has known for a long time, but focused on economic dimensions more than in other dimensions, such as in social and cultural capital. Social capital can reduce the gap between people, between people and institutions, and between institutions, making it possible for all parties to work together. So whenever people have seen the benefits together, they trust each other. With the same expectations and goals, the common purpose makes it possible for people or institutions to build a social relationship, called "social capital", which allows them to work together to achieve their goals. Social capital is due to social activity, which consists of a combination of tradition and trust. As such, social capital has many properties that differ from the capital of economics, including the capital of the people's cooperation. The relationship between people or institutions is based on trust. Mutual generosity and assistance are open for everyone, the more they use it (Romeratanapan, 2005: 15-16).

Giddens (2012), quoting Putnam, argued that social capital includes useful social networks, a mutual sense of duty and trust, an understanding of norms that dictate effective behavior, and social resources that allow people to act effectively. In addition, Giddens agrees that there are two types of social capital; bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital strengthens the exclusive identity and increases the homogeneous population, while bridging social capital is the one that integrates people across social networks (Giddens, 2012: 815-818).

Many previous articles have tried to explain how social capital can improve the cooperation and society among people through social activities. Some examples are given below.

Dekker and Uslaner (2001) analyzed that the key to social capital is to merge information on the group with data about individual experiences of the members. The importance of institutions and group membership are linked between membership and generalized trust in association.

Burnett (2006) explored the building of social capital at a community level in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The participants in an active community club interfaced with other normative social institutional spheres to generate social capital at an individual and community level.

Casado-Diaz (2014) examined British retirees living in Spain. He explored the British international bonding social capital, based on visiting friends and relatives, tourism flows and migrants' social contacts with friends and family in their country. This result provided evidences of links between tourism and mobility in later life. From that, this article reports on the analysis of bonding, bridging and linking social capital with Japanese retirees' social institutional clubs to generate social capital at an individual and community level.

### **The study of LTS Japanese**

Many literatures exist on Japanese retirees living aboard, especially in Southeast Asia and Australia, and revealed that the Japanese aging society background, push and pull factor and their lifestyle at a local level. Examples are given below.

Ono (2008, 2009) studied Japanese migration in Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia, and found that the main reasons why retired Japanese moved to Malaysia were that the cost of living is cheaper than in Japan, a good climate and good living environment. They are satisfied with

‘Ikigai’ activities or what makes life meaningful with an increased quality of life and a sustainable economy.

Nagatomo (2013) studied Japanese people moving to Australia for new lifestyle and found that this was neither for economic nor political factors, but rather this movement was for the quality of life and experience abroad. Most were from the middle class and labor populations, especially Japanese women who seek advancement in jobs that are equal to men. Living in Australia makes the Japanese feel they have more free time even though their income is less than in Japan.

Some data on the socialization of Japanese in Thailand, including in the Chiang Mai province, is also available as outlined in brief below.

Hongsranagon (2005) stated that as Japan became an aging society, so the elderly received less social welfare, especially pensions, which only allows for a daily life. After retirement, they seek to find a new goal and challenging new activities, including staying overseas. Chiang Mai offers Japanese pensioners the chance to meet the physical needs of a long-term tourist, like accommodation and attractions. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of the spiritual and mental needs. Chiang Mai province arranges activities for LTS Japanese pensioner tourists to facilitate collaboration between them and Thai people.

Kawahara (2010) examined the adaptive strategy of Japanese senior LTSers and local community responses in Chiang Mai, Thailand in terms of the characteristics of migrants, strategies for building relationships through association of Japanese senior LTSers and impacts on the local communities. The formation of an association, to be able to live in Thailand as Japanese, is indispensable, under the condition that many senior Japanese LTSers have important mediator roles in two different types of property: using the status of Japanese nationality and Japanese culture, thereby building relationships with local communities. Thus, the flow and characteristics of Japanese have influenced Japan-Thailand relations and the social structure of Chiang Mai.

Kanjanakaroon and Panyo (2014) studied the factors influencing the decision to extend the Japanese LTS residents’ duration in Chiang Mai province using a 100-question based questionnaire of the non-immigrant Japanese. They found that three factors influenced their resident period: (i) personal factors, including age, income and status; (ii) economic, social, cultural environment, activities and climate; and (iii) significance-intermediary factors, such as having a consulate of Japan. Assistance with consultation of various activities to the Japanese was found to have a significant priority.

Yoshida (2015) studied Japanese retirement migration in Thailand from the perspective of welfare and social participation. She described and categorized the elders’ social participation as belonging to the four types of (i) jobs, (ii) volunteer work for Thai society, (iii) mutual aid, like volunteer work for their own Japanese community, and (iv) recreational activities containing volunteer work for themselves as a hobby. Japanese elderly people in Chiang Mai exchanged with Thai, Japanese, and foreign societies. However, most people stay in the Japanese society due to, in the main, the language barrier. They also rarely interact with foreign societies.

### **Materials and Methods**

Review of the existing literature from thesis, articles, books, free papers, such as Chao (mainly found and distributed in Chiang Mai city), Japanese clubs or related organization website, Chiang Mai LTS introduction films in Youtube, and news in Thai, English and Japanese.

Information and data from previous field studies based on both observation and interview data from 31 interviewees (23 persons in November 2014 and 8 persons in February 2015) at Chiang Mai province, especially Muang district (Chiang Mai city). I found them by private network and

snowball sampling. Many of them were introduced by Japanese club members, while some were met at a language school in Chiang Mai. Interview time was about one hour at a coffee shop, hotel lobby, or apartment lobby. Data also was updated in June 2019 by observation of locals and interviews with key informants as below;

September 2013, Chiang Mai Welfare Association, Mr. Hino

September 2013, CJRC, Mr. Chiyoda

June 2019, CLL, Mr. Aoyama and Mr. Baba

June 2019, CJRC, Mr. Chiyoda

In order not to be identified, the interviewees will be named as alias. All of the interviewees were interviewed in Japanese and recorded in handwriting by the author only without an interpreter. This was because it can cause less misunderstanding and unconsciously leaving out some details which may be important for the study.

This paper focused on the Japanese clubs and organizations that have an established formal construction and interaction, and also a wider impact on the local people and society than Japanese individuals. The data was then analyzed and the phenomenon explained in terms of the concept of social capital, bonding, bridging and linking social capital.

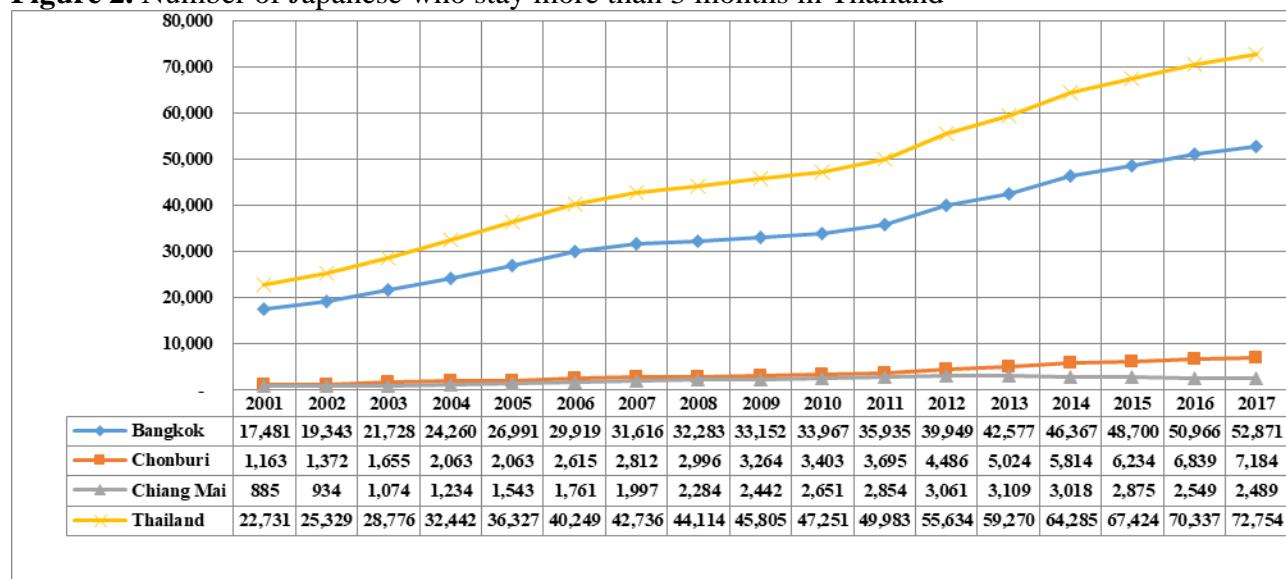
## Findings

### The current Japanese retirees in Chiang Mai

#### 1) Number of Japanese LTSers in Chaing Mai

It was found that in Thailand most of the Japanese who stayed more than 3 months resided in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, followed by much smaller numbers in Chonburi province and then Chiang Mai province (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Number of Japanese who stay more than 3 months in Thailand



Source: Embassy of Japan in Thailand (2017)

Bangkok is the capital of Thailand and is where the center of politics and economics is located. Most of the Japanese expats in Bangkok are of working age, business entrepreneurs and work for Japanese companies as executives. Next, most of Japanese who stay in Chonburi province, are middle-aged, like those in Bangkok, and are employed by factories and industrial zones.

According to investment by the business sector, these Japanese populations in both Bangkok and Chonburi have been increasing.

Meanwhile, Chiang Mai province has no heavy industry, but is a rich green zone and traditional Lanna culture. Residents and expats can live a slow life but with infrastructure, such as hospitals, public utilities and department stores. This makes the living environment in Chiang Mai more preferable for the elderly Japanese. The Japanese expat population from 2001 to 2013 increased from 885 to a peak of 3,109, due to baby boomer retirement. Once the baby boomer period was over the stream of Japanese nationals living aboard after retirement dropped. In addition, in 2009 the number of Japanese in Chiang Mai then slightly decreased because of the concern about the weakening of Japanese Yen per Thai Baht and the extension of the retirement age in Japan. In addition, Japanese have to pay more to a Thai bank savings account and the increase in the Japanese retirement age from 60-y-old to 65-y-old affected their decision due to health problems and their parent's healthcare (Chiyoda, 2019). Therefore, since 2014 to 2017, the Japanese expat population in Chiang Mai has decreased from 3,018 to 2,486. However, the second baby boomer population will reach retirement age in the next ten years.

In a fieldwork study in 2014 and 2015, most Japanese retirees were found to be male with an average age of 68 y. They mostly came from the Kanto region of Japan, and about 75% had stayed in Chiang Mai for more than three months to six years, 48% stayed by themselves, while 36% stayed with their spouse (Japanese and Thai), 16% had an income of 200,00 to 249,999 yen per month and most of them used to work as company employees, but they speak both Thai and English poorly. Some of them applied for membership of the Japanese clubs.

## 2) Reasons to stay in Chiang Mai

From the interviews, five main factors were found that made the participants more satisfied with living in Chiang Mai rather than living in Japan. These factors were: (i) freedom from the inflexible rules imposed by Japanese society. For example, J17 said “I have been in Japan for 60 years, so I want to live overseas after retirement. I was stressed when I was in Japan. It is more comfortable to live in Chiang Mai than Japan and Thai people are friendly”. (ii) A cheaper cost of living as compared to living in Japan, resulting in more value for their money. For example, J2 said “on 150,000 yen (approximately 30,000 baht) I can live more comfortably in Chiang Mai than in Japan”. (iii) A good atmosphere. For example, J16 said “Chiang Mai has a nice climate. In April is very hot and not very good but on average the climate is nice and warm”. (iv) Ability to assimilate with the locals who recognize Japanese products and culture. For example, J15 said “Every Sunday I purchase pesticide-free vegetables at JJ market. Breakfast and dinner meals are Japanese food and Thai food for lunch”. (v) The ability to seek assistance from the Japanese support clubs in Chiang Mai. For example, J14 said “I participated in a Japanese club, I study Thai with members, play card games, do chorus, and learn how to use iPad. My husband does golf and writing” (Duangkaew, 2015). Moreover, a 2019 field study found that two main reasons, (i) cheaper cost of living than in their country and (ii) an average warm weather, not frigid like Japan, were still attractive reasons for Japanese retirees to stay in Chiang Mai province, but not in a big city like Bangkok.

## 3) Popular areas for Japanese people within Chiang Mai

From late 1990's, Japanese people who visited Thailand in the long-term, stayed for increasing reasons. As a result, Japanese clubs, events, and signboards, etc., have become more common making it easier for Japanese expats to stay and feel at home (less alienated). Here we can also see that the living pattern of Japanese retirees in Chiang Mai depends on their personal economy

and lifestyle. In particular, the following four areas of Chiang Mai will be described below: Nimmanhemin zone, Hoi Kaew Road, Chang Puak Road and Changkhan Road.

(a) *Nimmanhemin zone* is close to a naturally blessed place where you can see the mountain peaks and the weather is often mild. This zone is the most expensive in Chiang Mai. Foreigners and Thai tourists often come to visit. There are many stores that feature artistic designs, coffee shops, sweet shops, a spa, a nightclub and it is easy to enjoy a leisurely walk through the town during the day or night. This zone has the necessary infrastructure for a long stay. It is in a convenient location, close to hospitals, department stores, markets, stores, and other companies and agencies that support long-term stays. While being urban, it is possible to enjoy a lifestyle that combines local culture with the local people. Some stores offer Japanese signs, menus, and recommended product services for Japanese tourists. Also, Japanese people often set this zone as a meeting place when they go out. Accommodation includes Hillside 2 and Kantary Hills Hotel. Japanese-specialized shops and services include InfoQ.C (Japanese ingredients and tour service) and Dentaland (dental service).

(b) *Hoi Kaew Road* is a street from the foot of Chiang Mai to the city wall and historical temples, and the communities on both sides of the road have various high-rise buildings and facilities. Rents range from economical to exorbitant and there are many locals surrounding the area. This area has a hospital, department stores, supermarkets, restaurants, hotels, golf shops, and the CLL office nearby. These facilities provide services in Japanese. It is close to the Nimmanhemin zone and has good transportation, both public and private. Not only that, Japanese tourists who are on the experience tour who still have to decide if they want to LTS will use the inn located here. Popular destinations are Hillside 4, Nakhonping Condominium, Hoi Kaew Resident and Lanna3.

(c) *Chang Puak Road* has many places to stay with all the necessary facilities, including hospitals, supermarkets, markets, restaurants, bus terminals, language schools and a sport stadium, all in close proximity. Accommodation and products are cheaper than at the Nimmanhemin Zone and Hoi Kaew Road. At the sport stadium, there are some Japanese retirees that do sports, such as badminton, table tennis and walking. Vieng Bua Mansion, Chang Phuek resident and Pacific Mansion are popular accommodations located nearby.

(d) *Changkhan Road* is close to the Night barzaar, where popular lodgings are stationed along with the shopping district for tourists, as well as Japanese working as executives in Lumpoon province in the northern industrial area. Changkhan has a night market, international food, restaurant, and bars, and is close to river. Accommodation includes the Night Bazaar Inn (Duangkaew, 2012).

Japanese retirees mostly resident in Chiang Mai City in a condominium or apartment. They sometimes use public transportation and own an automobile, motorcycle, or bicycle and also commute on foot. These areas also have Japanese food and ingredients, such as Miso soup, curry paste, Japanese rice, etc. Many shops hire Thai staff who speak Japanese and English to service their main customers. The Japanese expats do activities like sport, shopping, sightseeing, lunch meetings, and studying in the city. Moreover, they participate in local events and festivals and get to know the local customs and people. For an explanation on participation between Japanese and local people, it is necessary to observe Japanese clubs and their activities.

### **Japanese clubs in Chiang Mai**

Aside from the physical area of Chiang Mai and objects related to Japanese retirees, they also have activities clubs. Japanese retirees group together to perform activities through their clubs. In order to live in Chiang Mai with a quality life, local information such as visas, hospitals, restaurants, and real estate is needed. Joining a Japanese club helped them to quickly and

accurately acquire and communicate various information about the locals and activities with other members. In addition, in the club they can make new friends doing activities and asking for assistance while living locally.

The retired LTS Japanese are familiar with the local society and people. They started creating unofficial groups, such as friend groups, in order to exchange knowledge and do volunteer work for local Thai people, which reflected their adjustment to live together in a different society. They then established more official networks or Japanese clubs. Factors that make the Japanese join the network community or Japanese clubs are as follows; (i) needing help when facing with a problem, (ii) joining the club allows participation in the in club's activities, especially group activities, (iii) want to make good use of their free time, (iv) meet psychological needs, such as needing a friend, feeling anxious without a group, need a new positions or duties after retirement, and (v) create power in demanding or negotiating (Duangkaew, 2012).

From the interviews, there appear to be a lot of activities within each club and relations with the locals. Some examples are given below:

Aoyama and Baba from CLL (2019) described outdoor activities, such as golf competition and visiting hot springs, and indoor activities, such as lunch meetings, language studying, handicraft and chores. They also were part of local events and festivals, such as the Loi Kratong parade, Japanese festival in the university, and traditional dancing.

Chiyoda from the CJRC (2013 and 2019) stated that they have monthly meetings and lunch meetings as indoor activities and play softball and volunteering as outdoor ones. He has tried to engage with locals in rural areas to support Japanese and student facilities.

Hino from Chiang Mai Welfare Association (2013) explained there are a lot of Japanese groups and clubs that enjoy doing activities and travelling. However, for Japanese people who decided to stay in Chiang Mai for a lifetime, they must have a club that supports issues like sudden illness and accident.

The activities of clubs function as intermediary support clubs, and are comprised of a group of people with the same purpose and demand. From the fieldwork, a lot of existing clubs were found, but there were four productive Japanese clubs with a clear structural organization including member conditions, membership fee, club's objective and division of roles, and these are listed in Table 1.

On the other hand, participation in cross-culture events can be advantageous for the locals, especially people who are interested in Japanese language, culture and business. For example, Japanese-studying students get an opportunity to learn Japanese from native speakers and there is more job opportunities for employees related to Japanese business. New customers and markets for Thai entrepreneurs become available to produce new products and offer services.

From this background and situation of Japanese retirees in Chiang Mai, analysis of the data and discussion on the social capital concept is presented next.

**Table 1:** List of Japanese Clubs in Chiang Mai

No	Club name	Details	Activities
1	Chiang Mai Japanese Association: CMJA (チェンマイ日本人会)	Established in 1980; current office at Changkhan district; 343 members as of May, 2015; Most members are Japanese who work at the industrial zone at Lamphun province, close to Chiang Mai city, and with their family.	Monthly lunch meeting, golf competition
2	Chiang Mai Longstay Life Club : CLL (チェンマイ・ロングステイ・ライフの会)	Established in 2002; current office is located at Hoi Kaew road; 128 members as of May, 2019; average age is 71-y-old; Club's objective is to provide members life support and enjoy life in Chiang Mai.	More than 15 activities in the club, such as information publishing, Thai lessons, English lessons, photo club, handicraft club, hot spring and lunch meeting once a month.
3	Chiangmai Japanese Resident Club: CJRC (定住者の集いの会)	Established in 2009; monthly meeting is at Chang Phueak district; 70% of members get married with Thai women; Non-members and tourists are allowed to participate in the meeting	Golf, traveling and assist members in acquiring survivor's pension, funeral, driving license
4	Chiang Mai Welfare Association (福祉の会)	Established in 2012 with the budget of NPO JT / ASH in Japan. Three purposes of to live (i) safely, (ii) healthy, and (iii) lively.	IT support, including how to use a PC, tablet, and smartphone, visa and health support, such as frozen food for Japanese elderly, and a movie room

## Discussion

Social capital plays a big role in cross-culture and social participation between Japanese and Thais and leads to a more peaceful co-existence in society.

There are many papers and researchers, such as those outlined in section 2.2, which have explained the distinctions between the kinds of social capital. Following Woolcock's study (2001), this study differentiated social capital into the three types of: (i) bonding social capital, which refers to the relationship amongst members of a network who are similar in some form; (ii) bridging social capital, which refers to collectives' inter-group cooperation; and (iii) linking social capital, which is a multi-group collaboration at the community level. This article reports on the analysis of bonding, bridging and linking social capital with Japanese retiree's social clubs to generate social capital at individual, club and community levels.

### Bonding social capital

For the act of bonding social capital, the participants share and interact within their club. The Japanese club is composed of people who have the same nationality, language, custom, values, hobbies and sports. Within the organization, homogeneous people will strengthen the group functions and achieve collective goals mainly by participation in activities and sharing information to the membership only.

The purpose of moving to Chiang Mai, is that they desire to stay with their Thai spouses and family, who are willing to start a second life. Consequently, they have established a club to assist their lives in a new society. Japanese retirees bonded themselves based on the origin of country, language, culture, and age. They were able to choose how to spend retirement, including with

other Japanese or by themselves. Some of them become club members to make friends and spend an enjoyable time. Some examples are given below.

According to two informants from the CLL club, the club has a management structure consisting of a leader, sub-leader, committees and normal member. They all pay a membership fee and at the same rate, including the leader. Committees work as volunteers, with no monetary benefits. They change leader every year by voting. Within the club, a lot of activities are organized, such as handicrafts, Thai language, English language, hula dancing, photo, I-go chess, karaoke, chorus, golf competitions, and hot spring visits. Meetings are held at the CLL office in the Hillside 4 condominium, where they also share the same room with other members for many activities and manage the schedule for activities.

For the CMJRC, the interviewee told of the events and activities they arrange, such as the monthly meeting at the YMCA. The December 2018 meeting had a report of activities, such as computer and smartphone class, golf, sticky rice hitting event, traveling events, yoga, I-go chess, billiards and searching for new ingredients. Additionally, this group consisted of members who were married with a Thai wife and/or desired to stay in Thailand all their life. The members are provided details on local life, including how to get a Thai driver's license, updates on the regulations about non-immigrant visas, spouse visas, funerals and pensions.

For the Chiang Mai Welfare Association (Fukushi no Kai)'s website, this club's activities included computer, smart phone and IT classes. Only members can consult leaders and get reparation work for technology program, items and tools. In the office, there is a mini-room to enjoy wide screen movie, especially famous old Japanese movies, and a book rent service with Japanese novels.

As a result, social capital is established as a relationship between each member. By being part of the club, Japanese members can find new friends more easily and in less time than those who are not members. They match sport partners, especially for indoor and outdoor sports. This all leads to more socialization even though staying in a new (alien) place, especially in a foreign country. They can speak in Japanese, and share ideas and information of living in Chiang Mai as a Japanese foreigner. Special benefits are included, such as discounts and services. Sometimes, there is a problem in their expat life that causes communication problems, such as with the rental contract of accommodation, where someone in the group who can speak Thai can draw on the groups' knowledge and then help solve the problem. They can use the social networks and abilities of other members directly and indirectly to solve their problems and assist their lifestyle. As examples, benefits and assistance in membership can be said to play the role of providing bonding social capital.

### **Bridging social capital**

The act of bridging social capital is a connection among the Japanese clubs and organizations from Japan. Japanese clubs play a role as a domestic and international connection in Chiang Mai. In the domestic part, they share important announcements and ask for cooperation from the Consulate-General of Japan in Chiang Mai. Through these clubs, other Japanese organizations can also get in contact. The Consulate was the leader in arranging the Japanese parade for Loi Kratong festival by calling for participation from all the Japanese clubs. The CMJA's website showed an announcement homepage about an outline of health care (Kaigo) for Japanese who live in the North of Thailand. For the international part, Japanese organizations, such as universities from Japan, contact the clubs.

According to a representative of the JSF in Japan, there were many consultations between 2011 and 2012, due to effect of the Great East Japan Earthquake (on March 11, 2011). When the Long

Stay Fair took place in November 2013, we had a meeting with a group of doctors who participated privately from Chiang Mai. At the meeting, opinions were exchanged that medical treatment for Japanese long-term residents was an important issue. Among the LTSers in Thailand, Chiang Mai province is a popular and representative destination. Members from the CLL club also participated in this event.

That is what makes it possible to build bridged social capital, which makes it easier to achieve its goals, for policy to reach the individual level, and for individuals to make demands on the government. This type of social capital is stressed on cooperation and promotion from Japanese to Japanese, irrespective of the location. Therefore, as a club member, the retiree can use his/her club's network to help in activities and participate in the events and festival. Clubs channel the opportunity to connect, receive, and cooperate with other clubs and organizations.

### **Linking social capital**

Lastly, for linking social capital, being a club member gives them the privilege to participate in the club's recreation and volunteering activities, which becomes a channel for them to get to know the local people even without any knowledge of the Thai language.

A club of Japanese long-term residents may cooperate with Thai organizations in exchange activities. To illustrate, the author participated as a translator in a project on the organic (non-agrochemical) cultivation of vegetables held by the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce and Meajo University to the Japanese members in the CLL club. The club's membership was able to experience this course given by Thai professors. Along with Chiang Mai University, we also organized activities to experience Thai cultures, such as Thai food and Thai dance. There is a monthly meeting for new information on the visa system by Chiang Mai immigration in CLL. Posters on how to exercise to avoid Sarcopenia was distributed to Japanese expats by Chiang Mai University, Kawasaki University of Medical Welfare, and Kagawa University. There have been regular volunteer activities and donations by Japanese clubs to the locals. Japanese club members demonstrated a tea ceremony to Thai students. Members of Japanese clubs participate in the Japanese Parade on local festivals, and enjoy the Songkran festival with the locals.

These examples show that although it is difficult for Thais and Japanese to interact with each other individually, there is an opportunity for them to interact with locals as a group and so the role of linking social capital is played.

This paper has highlighted the interactions between Japanese and the Japanese club, and also with Thais. The most important thing for Japanese people to live a smooth life in Chiang Mai is the middle-level organization, in this paper called the club. Clubs build relationships between Japanese and Thai people. Social capital plays a role in strengthening the credibility, cooperation, and relationships among the members of the organization.

The following is a summary of the benefits gained by increasing the bonding, bridging and linking social capital.

(1) *Obtain useful information for everyday life:* Information, such as restaurants, festivals, how to buy a mobile phone, how to ride public or private transport, sightseeing, etc., can be obtained at a deeper level than ordinary tourists. Building social capital with Thais can provide credible information.

(2) *Increase participation in social activities:* The clubs provide greater accessibility to members to participate in social activities, such as lunch meetings and golf competitions, and interact with the locals, such as parades for local festivals. This participation helps retirees understand and trust local people (as well as other expats) even they just met each other.

(3) *Increased cross-cultural understanding*: Cross-cultural understanding is increased as exchanges both ways are increasingly unalienated and trustable. Multicultural existence leads to cooperation in society and bridging the cultural divide across Thailand and Japan.

(4) *Empower Japanese customer demand*: Have bargaining power with Thai society. According to a study by Kawahara (2010), Japanese groups have direct and indirect impacts on Thailand's economic, political, cultural, environmental and infrastructure aspects. As a policy case, a group of Japanese are campaigning to relax the visa extension and conditions. As an example of infrastructure, there is a demand for the development of a road where pedestrians can walk safely.

As mentioned above, those who can adapt to a LTS in Chiang Mai construct and utilize social capital in various ways for cross-cultural adaptation.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, having Japanese clubs in Chiang Mai provides information and assistance for Japanese retirees. Having a club makes it easier for people to decide whether to stay in Japan or not. This way, they can ask for advice and have easy access to various information. Besides, Japanese people spend time together doing group activities, such as golf tournaments, Thai language lessons, softball dances, handicrafts. This is one way to easily join in activities of the local Thai people. Through these cultural exchange activities, the Japanese could gain a better understanding of Thai culture and vice versa and so promote co-existence. Japanese retirees in Chiang Mai do activities with less conflict and trouble. The locals trust that the Japanese are good mannered customers.

To encourage cultural exchange between the locals and Japanese people, and to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously, there should be more support from both sides, from Thailand and Japan. On the other hand, strong bonds will lead to participation with the same group, excluding those who are not from the same type. Some of the Japanese tend to gather with their own group more than participating with the locals. Japanese can live in Thailand without speaking Thai, or interacting with Thais, which is caused by the ease of living separately and disconnected from Thai society. They will understand Thailand and Chiang Mai from their viewpoint only, which can lead to misunderstanding Thai culture and society, causing feelings of alienation with the locals. The Japanese should report club activities to the Thai Authorities to avoid the risk of illegal activities. Linking social capital should be more supporting of both sides.

Finally, there should be a balance between bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding empowers the group to get privileges, but as mentioned too much bonding will cause a trend to participate only within a group, excluding others who are not of the group and so risk setting a feeling of alienation in the locals. Bridging empowers the group too, but each club has its own unique requirements due to the difference in living objectives in Chiang Mai. In this kind of social capital, linking should be more supportive. Thailand tourism and universities are two good examples. More balance between bonding, bridging and linking social capital will encourage respect towards multiculturalism in the locals.

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