

The Experience of Technology Transfer Promotion from Japan to Thailand*

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The Technological Promotion Association (Thai-Japan) (TPA) introduced in this report was founded in Bangkok in 1973 as a private body with the aim of furthering scientific and industrial technology in Thailand. Through the efforts of all those involved, TPA has continued to develop its various operations steadily since its inception and has now reached the point where its achievements as an organization for human-resource development and technology promotion are regarded highly not only in Thailand but also abroad.

The Japan-Thailand Economic Cooperation Society (JTECS), of which I am a member, was established in 1972 in Tokyo as a private Japanese technical cooperation agency for supporting TPA's activities from within Japan. This report looks back on my approximately twenty years' experience of assisting with TPA's activities from Japan and describes a specific example of technology transfer.

The report is split into the following three sections:

1. TPA's Present Situation.
2. TPA's History and Development.
3. TPA's Future.

1. TPA's Present Situation.

(1) Activities

TPA's activities can be broadly classified into three groups. The first includes holding various types of industrial engineering seminar and calibrating industrial measuring

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instruments (Education and Training Department). The second consists of providing information on industrial technology and administering correspondence courses (Technological Information and Correspondence Education Center Section). The third consists of holding classes in Japanese and Thai and publishing various kind of technical literature (Language and Publication Department).

I should now like to describe three activities in a little more detail.

TPA's technical seminars cover various fields including engineering management, industrial metrology, computers, energy, quality control and productive maintenance. Approximately 330 seminars took place in the 1991 financial year, attended by about 14,000 trainees. As many as 1,000 industrial measuring instruments are also now available for hands-on training or private use.

The industrial information service, administered from an Industrial Information Center in the TPA building, offers up to 100,000 information publications from Japan and other countries. With the assistance of Japan's SANNO College, TPA provides ten correspondence courses including the Manufacturing Management Course (with a total enrolment of approximately 3,100).

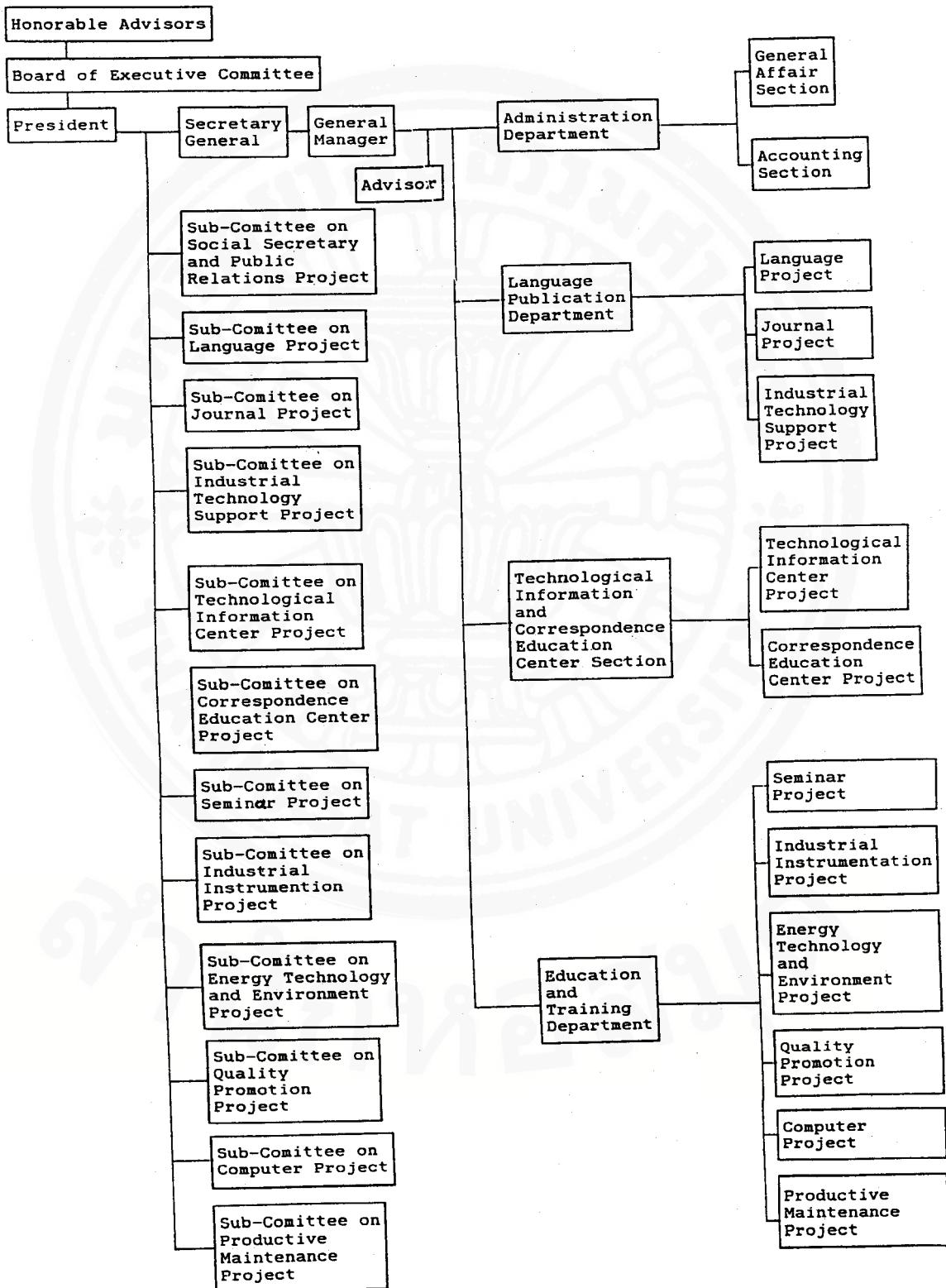
TPA's language school holds courses in Japanese for Thai nationals and courses in Thai for Japanese nationals resident in Thailand. A total of 200 courses for approximately 5,000 students were held during fiscal 1991. In technical literature, TPA plans to publish over 20 different books in FY 1991.

(2) Organization and Management

TPA's organization chart is shown below.

Under the Board of Directors, the top policy-making body, are committees of experts responsible for planning each area of operation, enabling TPA to receive advice from experts in the

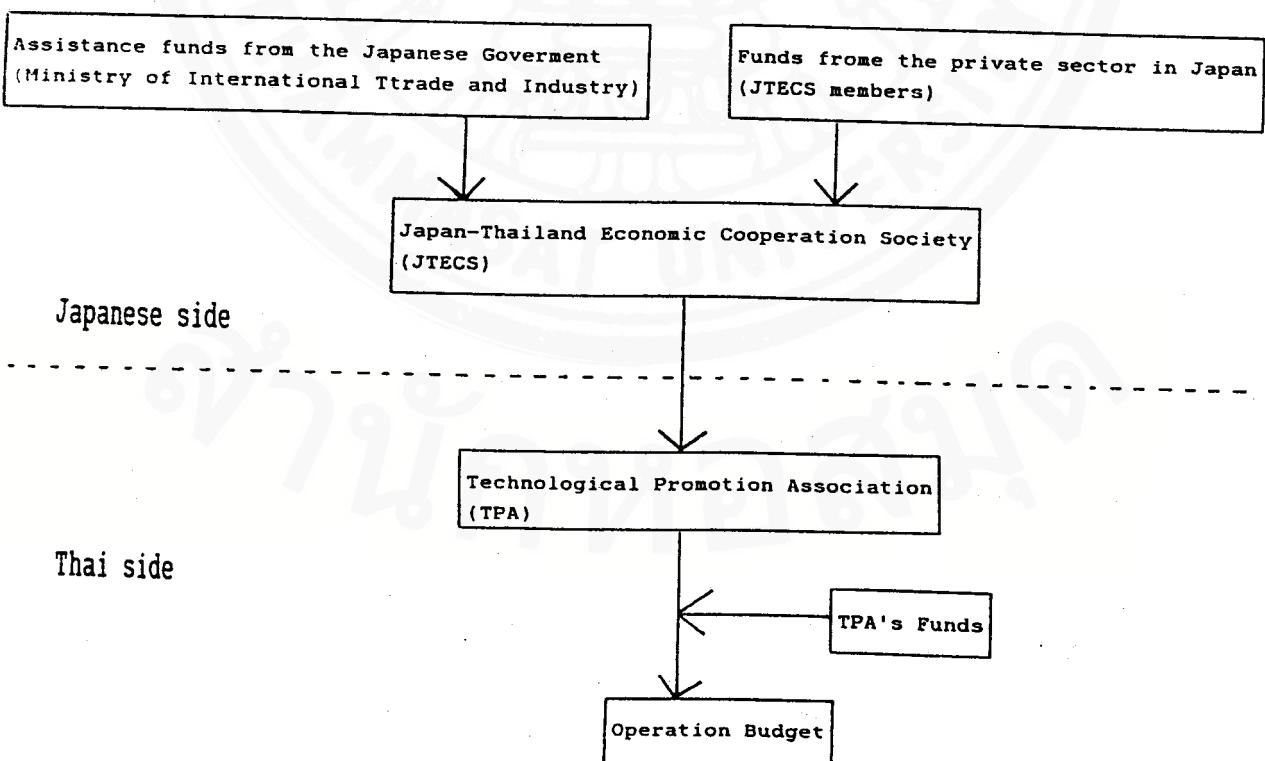
TPA Organization Chart



various relevant fields. The Secretariat is in charge of coordinating and executing the work.

Regarding the operation budget, when TPA founded, almost all of its working capital was initially sent from Japan. Now, however, a large proportion of it is supplied by TPA's own income, derived from membership fees, lecture fees, publication sales and so on. The portion supplied by Japan consists of the Japanese-government ODA budget allocation which JTECS receives in Japan via MITI, together with membership fees from private Japanese companies. The route followed by funds from Japan is illustrated below.

Funding of TPA's Activities



To carry out the activities described above, TPA had its own building constructed in Bangkok in 1975 with financial assistance from Japan. This building was subsequently extended and is now a 6-storey structure with seminar rooms, training laboratories, library and offices.

2. TPA's History and Development.

(1) The History of TPA's Founding

TPA was founded and carries on its activities with the help of an allocation from Japan's ODA budget. Two moves led directly to its establishment.

The first of these was by core people on the Thai side, who founded TPA and manages its operations. This move can be traced back to the formation of the Asia Bunka Kaikan Dosokai in 1964. At that time, the Asian Student Cultural Association and the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship were based in the Asia Bunka Kaikan in Tokyo's Bunkkyoku. The Director-General of these associations, Goichi Hozumi, believed that "Asia's nations and individual citizens are equal and autonomous, and wish for the independence and prosperity of the countries of the South". Former exchange students and technical trainees who had returned to their home countries after studying in Japan and who sympathized with Mr. Hozumi's philosophy were instrumental in forming regional alumni societies of the Asia Bunka Kaikan Dosokai in their countries. The Thai Asia Bunka Dosokai was also formed in Thailand at this time. Prominent members of the Thai alumni society who agreed with the aims of the Asia Bunka Kaikan Dosokai took the leading role in establishing TPA, and the spirit behind its foundation continues even today.

The second move was on the Japanese side, in answer to criticism by the countries of South-East Asia, starting in about 1970, about the region's worsening trade balance with Japan and about Japan's rapid economic advance into those countries. The Japanese public and private sectors began to realize that

something had to be done to respond to this criticism. As a specific strategy, the idea arose of starting a cooperative venture between Japan and Thailand as a new form of economic assistance. To put this idea into practice, Mr. Goichi Hozumi visited Thailand to solicit the opinions of various circles there, and discovered that the country thought that its technological progress would be best promoted by transferring advanced technology from Japan. However, any such action would have to respect Thailand's autonomy, that is, financial assistance from Japan would be acceptable, but the management of the venture would have to be entrusted to Thailand. On returning to Japan, Mr. Hozumi held discussions with the government via MITI and with private industry via Keidanren, and it was decided that a new foundation should be created out of the Thai Asia Bunka Dosokai to manage the venture. An agreement was reached with former Finance Minister H.E. Sommai Hoontrakul, who was responsible for founding the new corporation under the above mentioned conception, and the new foundation came into existence in 1973.

(2) TPA's Subsequent Development

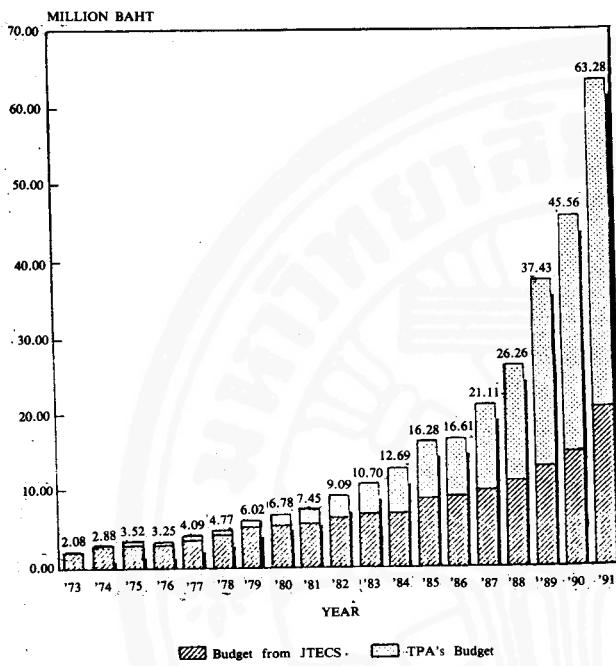
TPA's development is illustrated below in terms of its budget size and operating statistics.

The events leading up to TPA's founding are described above, and there are a number of reasons why it has developed in the way it has. I would particularly like to emphasize the following points here:

The first point is the devoted efforts made by those on the Thai side to further the activities of TPA since its establishment. Most of those who have helped run TPA in the past have had experience of studying or training in Japan. I believe that what has kept them going is their sense of responsibility

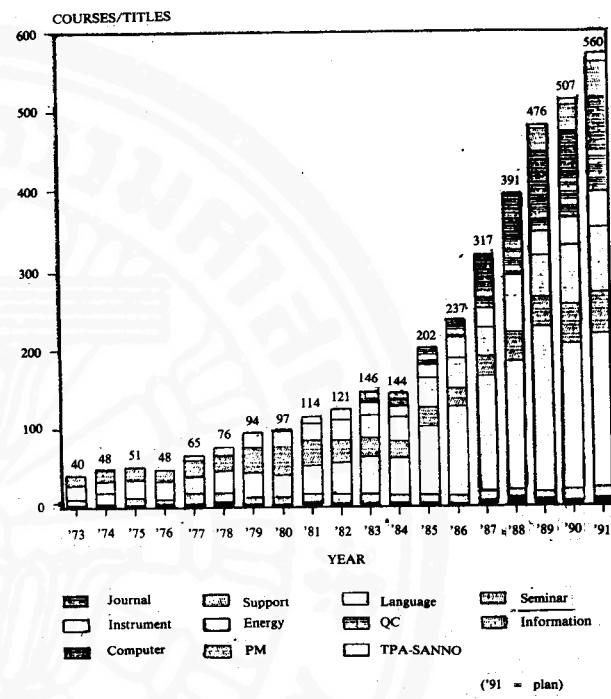
TPA'S Operating Budget

for the year 1973-1991



TPA's Activities

for the year 1973-1991



and pride in seeing Thailand's technological progress promoted by the Thai people themselves, while maintaining cooperative links with Japan. The tremendous enthusiasm and effort of those involved in TPA has led to the gradual appearance of others at all levels in both Thailand and Japan willing to offer their assistance. In Thailand, TPA has become able to enlist the aid of people in business, education and government who have not been to Japan. It also receives a lot of help on the Japanese side from industry and academic circles, while continuing to receive financial assistance every year from the Japanese government via MITI.

2. TPA's Future

(1) The Engineer Shortage in Thailand

Thailand's rapid economic development and industrialization have

led to a severe shortage of engineers and technicians, as is also probably true in other ASEAN countries. Voices are heard from all quarters pointing out the urgent need to develop such people, and TPA has drawn up plans to construct a new technical training centre to help cope with this demand. Since Thailand has far too few university-trained engineers, it is planned to take graduates of technical high schools and junior colleges and give them intensive training at this centre in order to develop them into competent engineers. Last year, TPA sent out questionnaires about the plan to companies in Thailand, and the majority of the 289 respondents agreed with the merits of the plan. TPA is making arrangements to put it into effect without delay, but various problems must be tackled, particularly the question of funding the construction project.

(2) Conclusions

As described above, TPA is developing steadily, thanks to the patient and persistent efforts of all those involved, and I think it will in future have to address the issue of expanding its role in Thailand more and more. To achieve this, I believe that TPA must continue its activities as an agency for human-resource development rooted in Thai society, building even more extensive cooperative relationships.