
Report on Thai Perceptions of Japan and Thai - Japanese Relations



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I. Introduction

In order to analyse Thai people's attitude towards Thai-Japanese relationship, Japan and her people, the field survey questionnaires was conducted during the period of 25 August to 15 September 1987. The targetted sampling size was set on 1,000 people's of various professions and levels in Bangkok and other provinces. Some prominent persons and policy makers were also directly interviewed.

The responses to the conducted survey were 885. The responses from Bangkok area were 551 or 62.3% and the other 334 responses were from other provincial areas or 37.7%.

Of the 885 responses about 60% were male and 40% were female.

The classifications of the responses by age, level of education and profession are illustrated in table 1-3 of the appendices. The majority of

the responses was 20-40 years old (70.2%). The educational level was relatively high the undergraduate and the graduate level were 40.0% and 16.4%, respectively. The distribution of profession was concentrated on Thai elite group as the responses consisted of students 11.5%, politicians 2.7%, military and police 5.8%, academics 14.4%, company managers 14.4%, civil servants 17.9% and professionals (lawyers, doctors, journalists and writers) 4.6%. The figures totaled 61.3%.

However, the result of this public opinion survey could be considered as the representative views of Thai people on Japan and Thai-Japanese relations since most people who involved the problems of Thai-Japanese relationship are belong to these groups. Thus, it is expected that the result of the survey will be useful for future policy setting and the development of mutual understanding between Japan and Thailand.

II. Knowledge of Japan and Thai-Japanese Relations

Generally speaking, the knowledge and understanding on Japan in Thailand has been remarkably developed in recent years. The study on Japan in various aspects is systematically organized in the social studies courses in secondary school and university levels. Japanese studies in Thailand are also expanding in both quantity and quality. And many articles and books concerning various aspects of Japan and Japanese people were published in the Thai language. Thus, the knowledge of Japan is of great interest and significance for Thai people, particularly, considering the long close economic relations.

To the question "Who is Yamada Nagamasa?", about 50.3% of the responses were correctly stated that Yamada Nagamasa was titled ORKYA SENAPIMOOK. The incorrect responses were 35.8% and the rest 13.9% did not answer this question. (See Table 4.)

To the question of how many population has Japan at present, there were only 35.7% Correct responses (Table 5) which marked that Japanese population is at present about 101-150 million.

Concerning Japanese rice production, 40.3% of Thai people thought that Japan could not produce enough rice for her domestic consumption, 24.0% of the responses stated that it was enough and the others 24.6% said that Japan could produce more than enough rice for her domestic consumption (Table 6).

Relating Japanese parliament system, only 38.8% of the Thais correctly answered that Japanese parliament system consisted of lower house and upper house or two house system. (See Table 7.)

In the aspect of Thai - Japanese economic cooperations, it is interesting to note that the majority of Thai people (51.0%) knew that Japan

is the number one trading partner of Thailand. (See Table 8.) And 60.2% of Thai people also acknowledged that among foreign countries' investments in Thailand, Japan is the top. (See Table 9.)

Unfortunately, only 20.8% of Thai people knew that Japan ranks the number one of foreign countries extending assistance to Thailand. The misunderstanding responses which stated that Japan ranks the number two and the number three donor are accounted of 32.0% and 13.9%, respectively. And the others 30% did not know the answer. (See Table 10.)

As a matter of fact, Japan regards Thailand as a high priority target for official development aid or the so-called ODA. Japanese aids to Thailand during 1986 totaled 260 million U.S. Dollars (net disbursement) or 6.8% of Japan's total bilateral ODA. Thus, Thailand is the third largest recipient of Japanese ODA, after China and the Philippines. However, Japan is the foremost donor of economic assistance providing about 68.5% of the total 385.5 million U.S. Dollars of the bilateral official development aid to Thailand in 1985.

Nevertheless, comparing to the past public survey, it can be said that Thai people have a higher rate of correct perceptions, except the question on economic assistance to Thailand.

As a whole, the majority of Thai people is knowledgeable about Japan's present situations relatively well.

III. Japanese Images

Many Thais still believed that Japan is not a sincerely. 46.2% of the responses felt that Japan was not a true friend 30.2% thought that Japan was a true friend. The others 22.4% did not comment on this issue. (See Table 11.)

Relating Japanese military powers, the large majority of the responses (67.7% believed that Japan will not become a military superpower

country. Only 21.4% of the responses thought it would (See Table 12.) the result of this issue contradicted a Japanese Foreign Ministry survey of ASEAN countries from February to March 1987 which stated that 53% of Thais believed that Japan would become a military superpower while 37% thought otherwise (comparing to the survey conducted in 1983.) However, both public surveys indicated that the number of Thai people who believed that Japan will not become a military superpower had been increased. The reasons may come from the fact that Thai people have had less bitter experiences from Japanese militarism during the Second World War than other countries in this region and most Thai people do not worry about Japanese military expansion and influence.

Nevertheless, in the economic area, 69.8% of the responses felt that Japanese trade and investment in Thailand were of an imperialistic nature. Only 16.8% thought otherwise. (See Table 13.)

And 48.2% of Thai people thought that Japanese economic assistance to Thailand benefited Japan more than Thailand. 21.1% of Thai people thought that it was very useful for economic development in Thailand and 20.7% thought that it was equally useful for both countries. Only 4.3% of the responses criticized that it was not useful for Thailand. (See Table 14.)

It could be said that Japanese economic cooperation and official development aids are principally acceptable to Thailand and her people. But in practice, small conditions attached to the assistance have the value of the well intentioned Japanese aids. Thai people want to have the sincerity and brotherly assistance without being bound by conditions or hopes for immediate return. Therefore, the Thai impression and gratitude for Japanese help has always been suppressed by these small tricky conditions. This also diminished the concept that Japan was a "real friend" among the concerned Thai people.

However, comparing to the attitude survey by a team of professors from the department of Foreign Relations, the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University in 1977, Thai perceptions of Japan seemed to be improved. According to the result of the past survey, 68% of Thai elite thought that Japanese trade and investment in Thailand could be described as economic imperialism. The majority of Thai people (45.7% of the general public and 68% of the elite or intellectual group) also thought that Japanese aids to Thailand was motivated primarily by Japan's own interests.

Generally speaking, we could say that the image of Japan in Thailand has been gradually improved. At present, more Thai people see the Japanese less as economic animals and more as representatives of a cooperative Japan.

IV. Japanese Investment in Thailand

Despite the fact that Japanese investment in Thailand has been steadily increased to the level that accounting for about 44.3% of total net foreign direct investment in 1986. And in terms of projects promoted and approved by the Board of Investment of Thailand, Japan is also the leading investor. As a result, Japanese influence in Thailand is expanding simultaneously in many aspects.

However, 47.5% of Thai people still wanted to see more Japanese investment in Thailand. 28.2% thought that it should be maintained at the present level, while only 18.6% said that it should be limited (See Table 15.)

The majority of the responses (40%) also thought that Thailand should open more chance for Japanese businessmen to invest in Thailand. However, 20% thought otherwise. (See Table 16.)

A total of 28.4% of the responses wanted Japan to invest more in the agricultural sector, 22.8% in the manufacturing sector, and 15.9%

in commercial and service sector. These figures indicated that the Japanese business role was not resented. (See Table 17.)

The majority of Thai people 48.8% thought that Japanese firms in Thailand have been transferred technology to Thailand in the medium level. 30.4% believed that it was little and only 17.1% thought that there are much transfer of technology. (See Table 18.)

IV. Thai-Japanese Trade Relations

In 1986, Thai exports to Japan was increased by 25.8%. The total exports to Japan amounted to 32,481 Million Baht. On the other hand, Thailand imports from Japan was slightly decreased to the total amount of 63,656 Million Baht due to the yen's appreciation. However, Thailand still suffered from trade deficit with Japan by the amount of 31,175 Million Baht. This huge deficit was accounted to 188.6% of Thailand's total trade deficit with the world (Total amount 16,526 Million Baht) in 1986.

Although the balance of trade between the two countries has been reduced to some extents as comparing to the trade deficit of 40,759 Million Baht in 1985. The trade pattern which Thailand exports mostly primary products to Japan and Imports industrial products from Japan will eventually caused the imbalance problem.

Japan is the biggest trading partner of Thailand. Thus, the trade imbalance problem is a fundamental problem facing the good relationship between the two countries.

Concerning trade deficit problem, the majority of the responses (80.3%) felt that Thailand's huge deficit with Japan was a cause for grave concern. (See Table 19.) And 40% of the responses believed that Thai exports can not compete in Japanese market because of tariff and non-tariff barriers of Japan. The major re-

sponses objected to Japanese protectionism, while about 28.8% of Thai people also thought the Thai exports faced a lot of competition from other countries and at the same time 26.8% of the responses thought that the quality is not good enough. (See Table 20.)

It is worthy to note here that Thailand's trade deficit with Japan, which was characterized as a chronic problem, has shown some signs of improvement partly as a result of the yen's appreciation and the export performances of Thai business firms. However, trade imbalance between the two countries will continue in the future unless there is a structural reform of all economic activities between Thailand and Japan.

VI. Cultural Relations

Since Thailand is an open country and Thai people are always friendly to every nations as was called "The land of smile" 92.0% of Thai people thought that we should promote more Japanese people to visit Thailand. (See Table 21.)

At the same time, 56.9% of the responses supported the promotion of cultural exchanges between Thailand and Japan, while 24.0% felt that it was good at present and only 5.6% suggested that it should be limited. (See Table 22.)

Relating Japanese cultural influence on Thai people, particularly on the question about Japanese movies, cartoons, plays and other entertainments which affected Thai people, 66.8% of the responses felt that there were both good and bad influence. (See Table 23.)

VII. Academic Exchanges and Japanese Studies

A majority of 87.6% thought that Thailand and Japan should promote more academic exchanges. (See Table 24.)

The reasons may come from the facts that a total of 47.7% felt that they knew little about

Japan and Japanese people. Nevertheless, some 41.7% of the responses reckoned their knowledge of Japan and Japanese as fair. Only 6.0% were sure that they knew much about Japan. (See Table 25.)

The majority of Thai people 80.7% realized that the Japanese language was important (Table 26) and 77.9% supported the promotion of the Japanese language teaching in Thailand. Only 13.3% of the response thought that studying the Japanese language in Thailand should not be more encouraged. (See Table 27.)

Thus, the majority of 62.4% thought that there was a need to promote more Japanese studies activity in Thailand, while 18.8% felt that it was good at present and only 4.7% thought that we should not promote more Japanese studies here. (See Table 28.)

In order to promote Japanese studies in Thailand, 52.1% of the responses supported that Thailand should set up a fund or foundation for Japanese studies. Only 13.0% did not support this matter and others 14.2% felt indifferent. About 20% were of no comment. (See Table 29.)

At the same time, 81.0% of Thai people thought that Japanese should study and try to understand Thailand and Thai people more. (See Table 30.)

In this sense, as the Japanese cultural mission led by Mr. Toshikuni Yahiro who had visited Thailand in November 1987 and had interviewed to the Thai newspapers that "the cultural exchange between Thailand and Japan should be based on the principle of reciprocity for the benefit of the two peoples" is the future direction to be promoted by both parties.

VIII. Thai's Impression of Japan and Japanese People

Up to 60.3% of Thai people were impressed by Japanese economic and social development. 12.4% said that they like Japanese people and

12.2% were impressed by Japanese style of management. The others 9.4% were fond of Japanese landscape. (See Table 31.)

The attitudes of Thai people towards the Japanese people's characteristics are as follows:

Deligent	87.3%
Polite and humble	47.2%
Honest	20.3%
Trust worthy	10.5%
Tricky	7.5%
Take advantage on other persons	4.3%
Others	19.1% (Table 32)

All in all we can say that only few Thais have a negative views towards Japanese habit.

Futhermore, 44.5% of Thai people felt that their imagination about Japan was better, while 33.7% felt of no change and only 5.1% said that it was worse. (See Table 33.)

Relating the question that "Will you send your children to continue their studying in Japan if you have a chance?" 64.9% of the responses said that they will while 18.8% thought otherwise. (See Table 34.)

However, if they can choose the country to send their children to study aboard, 32.7% of the responses preferred U.S.A., 26.8% of the total preferred Japan, 15.0% for England, 8.7% for Australia, 6.6% for Germany, 2.5% for France and the rest 6.6% for others. (See Table 35.)

Concerning Japanese products, 40.8% of the responses thought that Japanese goods are very acceptable in Thailand because of the good qualities and reasonable prices. (See Table 36.) But if the Thai and Japanese goods are in the same quality, 92.7% of Thai people would choose Thai goods, while only 4.9% would choose Japanese goods. (See Table 37.)

This result is not surprising because Japanese products are more expensive than Thai products.

However, if the price is the same and Thai people are still willing to buy Thai products, the gap of trade deficit would be significantly reduced.

IX. Conclusion

We can say that Thai's attitude towards Japan and Japanese people has been improved considerably.

The majority of Thai people wanted to know and understand more about Japan and Japanese people because Thai people think that Japan is a friendly nation and reliable people. They had expressed their wishes to see more. Japanese cooperations in the following fields: economic cooperation, cultural exchange technical

know-how assistance, and academic exchange. Thus, Japanese contribution to these efforts would be highly appreciated.

(Just a little more sincerity of Japanese cooperations would win Thai's heart and the gratitude for the help from a true friend.)

Since many Thai's viewed the Japanese as good friends, and see Japan as a model for development, the expectation towards Japan and the Japanese are also high.

To develop a healthy relationship and mutual benefits for all the people in both countries is not an easy task. But with sincerity and cooperation on both sides, such a development will be actualized.

Appendices

Table 1 Basic data of questionnaire responses : Classified by age

<i>Age level</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 20 years	78	8.8
20-30 years	353	39.9
31-40 years	268	30.3
41-50 years	95	10.7
51-60 years	63	7.1
More than 61 years	14	1.6
No answer	14	1.6

Table 2 Basic data of questionnaire responses: Classified by education

<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Primary school	86	9.7
High school	108	12.2
Vocational college	152	17.2
Bachelor's degree	354	40.0
Master's degree	145	16.4
Doctorate degree	27	3.1
No answer	13	1.4

Table 3 Basic data of questionnaire responses : classified by profession

<i>Profession</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Labour	52	5.9
Farmer	57	6.4
Student	102	11.5
Politician	24	2.7
Military and police	51	5.8
Company employee	162	18.3
Academic	127	14.4
Company manager	39	4.4
Civil servant	158	17.9
Professional occupation	41	4.6
Others	71	8.0
No answer	1	0.1

Table 4 Thai people's perceptions of Japan. (Who is Yamada Nagamasa?)

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
CHAOPRAYA VICHAYEN	241	27.2
ORKYA KHUNSRINAKHON	41	4.6
ORKYA SRITHAMMARAT	35	4.0
ORKYA SENAPIMOOK	445	50.3
No answer	123	13.9
Total	885	100

Table 5 How many population have Japan at present?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number (people)</i>	<i>%</i>
1- 50 Million	107	12.1
51-100 Million	221	25.0
101-150 Million	316	35.7
151-200 Million	78	8.8
Don't know	157	17.7
No answer	6	0.7

Table 6 Does Japan produce enough rice for domestic consumption?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Not enough	357	40.3
Enough	212	24.0
More than enough	218	24.6
Don't know	89	10.1
No answer	9	1.0

Table 7 What is the characteristic of Japanese Parliament?

Answer	Number	%
One house	299	33.8
Two houses	343	38.8
Don't know	223	25.2
No answer	20	2.3

Table 8 What is the rank of Japan as the trade partner with Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Number 1	451	51.0
Number 2	167	18.9
Number 3	66	7.9
Other.....	16	1.8
Don't know	178	20.1
No answer	7	0.8

Table 9 What is the rank of Japan among foreign countries investing in Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Number 1	533	60.2
Number 2	162	18.3
Number 3	46	5.2
Other.....	9	0.6
Don't know	130	14.7
No answer	9	1.0

Table 10 What is the rank of Japan among foreign countries giving assistance to Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Number 1	184	20.8
Number 2	283	32.0
Number 3	123	13.9
Other.....	15	1.7
Don't know	268	30.3
No answer	12	1.3

Table 11 Do you think whether Japan is a real friend of Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	267	30.2
No	409	46.2
Don't know	198	22.4
No answer	11	1.2

Table 12 Do you think whether is a military superpower country?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	189	21.4
No	599	67.1
Don't know	89	10.1
No answer	8	0.9

Table 13 Do you think whether trade and investment of Japan in Thailand is economical imperialism?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	618	69.8
No	149	16.8
Don't know	111	12.5
No answer	7	0.8

Table 14 How do you think about Japanese economic assistance giving to Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
It is very useful for economic development of Thailand.	187	21.1
It is not useful for Thailand.	38	4.3
It is more useful for Japanese than Thai economics.	427	48.2
It is equally useful for both countries.	183	20.7
Don't know	30	3.4
Other.....	13	1.5
No answer	7	0.8

Table 15 Do you think whether Japanese investment in Thailand should be more promoted?

Answer	Number	%
Should be more promoted	420	47.5
Should be limited	165	18.6
Should be maintained at present	250	28.2
Don't know	46	5.2
No answer	4	0.5

Table 16 Do you think whether we should open more or less chance for Japanese businessmen to invest in Thailand?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
More	354	40.0
Less	117	20.0
Maintain at present	211	23.8
No comment	141	15.9
No answer	2	0.2

Table 17 Which kind of industry do you want Japan to increase their investment in Thailand?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Manufacture	202	22.8
Agriculture	251	28.4
Commerce and service	141	15.9
No comment	179	20.2
Other.....	104	11.8
No answer	8	0.9

Table 18 How much transfer of technology that Japanese firms in Thailand have transferred to Thailand?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Much	151	17.1
Medium	432	48.8
Little	269	30.4
Not at all	26	2.9
No answer	7	0.8

Table 19 Problems of Thailand trade deficit of Japan at present is.....

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Very much concerned	711	80.3
Not worry	73	8.2
No comment	95	10.7
No answer	6	0.7

Table 20 Why can't Thai exports compete with others in Japanese markets?

Answer	Number	%
Quality is not good enough	237	26.8
Price is too high	23	2.6
Tariff and non-tariff barriers of Japan	354	40.0
There are a lot of competitive countries	255	28.8
No answer	5	0.6

Table 21 Do you think whether we should promote more Japanese people to visit Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Yes, we should.	814	92.0
It is good at present.	39	4.4
No, we should not.	10	1.1
No comment	19	2.1
No answer	3	0.3

Table 22 Do you think whether cultural exchanges between Thailand and Japan should be more promoted?

Answer	Number	%
Yes, it should be more promoted.	504	56.9
It is good at present.	212	24.0
No, it should be limited.	50	5.6
No comment	113	12.8
No answer	6	0.7

Table 23 How do Japanese movies, cartoon, plays and other entertainment influence Thai people?

Answer	Number	%
Good influence	130	14.7
Bad influence	113	12.8
Don't know	46	5.2
Good and bad influence	591	66.8

Table 24 Do you think whether we should promote more academic exchanges between Thailand and Japan?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes, we should.	775	87.6
It's good at present.	49	5.5
No, we should not.	12	1.4
No comment	44	5.0
No Answer	5	0.6

Table 25 How much do the Thais know and understand about Japan and Japanese?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Much	53	6.0
Medium	369	41.7
Little	422	47.7
Don't know	39	4.4
No, answer	2	0.2

Table 26 Do you think whether the Japanese language is important?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	714	80.7
No	129	14.6
Don't know	39	4.4
No answer	3	0.3

Table 27 Do you think whether studying the Japanese language in Thailand should be more promoted?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	689	77.9
No	118	13.3
Don't know	72	8.1
No answer	6	0.7

Table 28 Do you think whether we should promote more Japanese studies activity in Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Yes, we should promote.	552	62.4
It is good at present.	166	18.8
No, we should not.	42	4.7
No comment	121	13.7
No answer	4	0.5

Table 29 Should Thailand set up a fund or foundation for Japanese studies in order to promote Japanese studies in Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	461	52.1
No	115	13.0
Indifferent	126	14.2
No comment	175	19.8
No answer	8	.9

Table 30 Do you think whether Japan should learn and understand more about Thailand?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	717	81.0
No	17	1.9
It's good at present	60	6.8
No comment	84	9.5
No answer	7	0.8

Table 31 Do you think which Japanese aspect impress you most?

Answer	Number	%
Landscape	83	9.4
Social and economic development	534	60.3
Japanese people	110	12.4
Japanese food	12	1.4
Japanese style Management	108	12.2
Japanese civil administration system	11	1.2
Other.....	22	2.3
No answer	5	0.6

Table 32 How do you think about Japanese habit?

Answer	Number	%
Honest	180	20.3
Deligent	773	87.3
Polite and humble	418	47.2
Take advantage on other person	38	4.3
Trust worthy	93	10.5
Tricky	66	7.5
Other.....	169	19.1

Table 33 How has your imagination about Japan changed?

Answer	Number	%
Better	394	44.3
No changing	316	33.7
Worse	45	5.1
No comment	118	13.3
No answer	12	1.4

Table 34 Will you send your children to continue studying in Japan if you have a chance?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	574	64.9
No	166	18.8
No comment	137	15.5
No answer	7	0.8

Table 35 Which country will you choose if you have a chance to send your children to study aboard?

Answer	Number	%
Japan	237	26.8
USA	289	32.7
England	133	15.0
Australia	77	8.7
Germany	58	6.6
France	22	2.5
Other.....	58	6.6
No answer	11	1.2

Table 36 In your opinion, What is the reason that the Japanese goods are much appreciated in Thailand?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Good quality	71	8.0
Good quality and reasonable price	361	40.8
Low price	133	15.0
Good quality, low price and good after-sell service	215	24.3
Other.....	97	11.0
No answer	8	0.9

Table 37 If Thai and Japanese goods are the same quality, which one do you choose?

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Thai goods	820	92.7
Japanese goods	43	4.9
Don't know	17	1.9
No answer	5	0.6