
JAPANESE STUDIES IN THAILAND : POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Japanese Studies in Thailand greatly expanded in the last 2 decades, especially in the field of Japanese language, history, and economics. In the field of politics, however, it is rather left behind and given less support from the Japan Foundation, an organization that has been most active in supporting Japanese Studies in the fields of language and economics.

This article attempts to survey the state of the studies of Japanese politics in Thailand in three aspects, namely a) curriculum b) publications in the form of commentary, academic article, monograph, text and books, research, and M.A. theses, which deal mainly about Japanese politics political history, political thought, and political economy c) approach or concept and theory.

There is another aspect besides the three mentioned above, that is academic activity, such as special lecture, seminar, symposium, etc., but since the number is small and it is often a part of a multi-disciplinary seminar, this will not be included in this paper.

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1. Curriculum

The teaching of Japanese politics, with higher number of teaching staff, is carried at two leading institutions of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University.

At the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn, according to the curriculum of 1979, the Department of Government offers a course on Government and Politics in Asian Democracies (India and Japan). The scope of the course includes the historical background, ideology, institution, process and problems of Indian and Japanese political systems. We can see that Japanese politics is only a part of the course which is offered only once a year. This is also the pattern of the case of Chinese politics, a part of the course on Communism together with Soviet politics. Another course offered there is Political Thoughts in Asia which similarly places Japanese political thought, if taught at all, as a part of other countries in the area. The Department of International Relations at the same Faculty offers 3 courses : The Problems and Development of the Eastern World I, The Problems and Development of the Eastern World II, and Seminar on East Asian Affairs. The first is a prerequisite for the second and both are the compulsories for students majoring in International Relations. The third course on seminar, however, is an elective.

A question here is, should the study about Japanese politics be turned into an independent course, offered once a year, so that students can have a deeper insight about Japanese, or Indian or Chinese politics. The disadvantage may be raised that Japan could not be considered independent from countries in the same region, since it is too luxurious.

At the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, according to the curriculum of 1983, there are 4 courses offered, most of them treat Japanese politics separately (there is no system of department among the Faculty members at Thammasat's Political Science Faculty). They are : Government and Politics in Japan, Japanese Foreign Policy, Seminar on Development in Japan, and History of Eastern Political Ideas. We can see that Thammasat's curriculum differs sharply from Chulalongkorn's.

Curriculum is not significant. what is more important is the instructors who could easily determine its nature. At Chulalongkorn, Professor Khien Theeravit pioneered and contributed greatly to East Asian Studies. Other staff, rather junior ones, include Chaiwat Kamchoo, Surichai Wan' gaeo, and Aphiwan Ratanamongkolmas. At Thammasat, Professor Likhit Dhiravegin is the forerunner, and latter-comer instructors include, Patcharee Thanamai, Nanthavadee Chanthratip and Prasert Chittiwatanapong. I am not quite sure that, up to now, we have those instructors who hold Ph.D. in Political Science and are capable of reading native sources, like Professor Yano Toru, a Japanese expert on Thai politics.

2. Publications

According to a survey in 1980 by Professor Sida (Jetir) Sonsri, during the period from 1907 to 1980, there are 312 pieces of Japanese Studies in the field of political science published in Thailand. Among these 312 pieces of writings, a large number of them are in the form of commentaries published during the period of October 14, 1973 to October 6, 1976, a period that Thai press

enjoyed the fullest freedom of expression. The weekly or bi-weekly magazines publishing these commentaries were closed in 1976 after the bloody coup d'état by the military.

As for Thai journal that published intellectual articles, the outstanding ones are, the *Asian Review* published by Chulalongkorn's Faculty of Political Science since 1979 and the *Thai-Japanese Studies Monograph* published by the Japan Foundation in 1979, and later transferred to the responsibility of the Japanese Studies Institute (now renamed East Asian Studies Institute), Thammasat University in 1983. *The Social Sciences Review*, the most important forum for Thai intellectual to express their views, has published several articles and commentaries, including three special issues on the Yellow Peril, obviously meant for the Japanese menace. This journal was also closed after the military coup d'état in 1976. Other journals that articles on Japanese politics sporadically appeared are : the *Journal of Social Sciences*, the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, *Journal of Political Science*, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University; and the *Thammasat University Journal*, published by Thammasat University.

In order to introduce the works of those instructors on Japanese politics, let me cite some of their articles published in various journals : Patcharee Thanamai, "Japan's New Choice in Sino-Soviet Conflict : the Case of Kurile Islands Dispute," *Thammasat University Journal* (February-May 1977) : Prasert Chittiwatanapong, "Japan's National Defense," *the Journal of Political Science* (January-April 1982); Nanthavadee Chanthratip, "Thai-Japanese Relations : Political Aspect," : *A Decade After the Boycott against Japanese Goods*, edited by Banyat Surakanwit, 1983;

Surichai Wan' Gaeo, "Development Model : the Case of Japan" *Asian Review* (January-March 1980); Chaiwat Khamchoo, "Japan's Role towards Disputes in Southeast Asia," *Asian Review* (October-December 1979); and Sirot Phaksuwan, "An Analysis of Sino-Japanese Relations," *Ramkhamhaeng Journal* (April 1976). As for works of Professors Khien Theeravit and Likhit Dhiravegin, the two pioneering scholars, the discussion will be made later. Other intellectuals who are not university instructors also contribute some articles, for example, Thanet Charoenmuang, "The Role of the Communist Party of Japan," *Journal of Social Sciences* (July 1973); Phansak Winyarat, "Japan Urmasked," *Social Sciences Review* (April 1972), etc.

Monographs on Japanese politics are published once in a while by the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn and Thammasat University. Belows are those recently published. Surichai Wan'gaeo, *the Nakasone Cabinet and Public Opinion in Japan* (1983), a study that can not be produced if the author does not master the Japanese language; Surachai Sirikrai, *Japan : ASEAN Relation : the Pacific Basin Cooperation* (1982), a research report after field study in Japan for six months; Sarasin Veeraphol (transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), *Okinawa Problem* (1970); Prathumphorn Wacharasa-thian, *the Profile of Japanese Politics* (1972), Chaiwat Khamchoo, *Politics in Japan : the 35th General Election* (1979); and Likhit Dhiravegin; *Meiji Restoration (1968-1912) and the Chakri Reformation (1868-1910) : A Case for A Comparative Study* (1981), etc.

As for texts and books on Japanese Politics, the best ones so far are the works of Professor Khien Theeravit, *Japanese Political History* (1965), *Japanese Political System*

(1965) and *Japanese Foreign Policy* (1969). Others include, Ornanong Thongaram, *International Relations in East Asia: Japan* (1980); Niyom Ratamarit and Anusorn Limmanee, *Political Development : Thai-Japanese Comparison* (1978); Prasert Chittiwatanapong, *New Profile of Chinese and Japanese Politics* (1977) and *the Liberal Democrat Party of Japan* (1983), etc. Those translated from English books are few in number. Professor Sane Chamarik, a highly respected political scientist of Thailand, in 1975, translated *Japanese Imperialism Today : Coprosperity in Greater East Asia*, by John Halliday and Gavan Mc Cormack (1973). *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (1964), edited by Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, was translated into Thai under the editorial leadership of Phornsak Phangphaew and Pholasak Chirakraisiri in 1981.

Long before these professional writers produced their works, Sathian Phantharangsee, a former Thai student studied in Japan during the wartime period, wrote quite numerous books on Japan. Three of his books worth mentioned here : *Bushido : the Ethics of the Military and the Soul of Japan*, first published in 1935 ; *the Tokyo's Disaster : A Record that Unveiled the "Truth" of the War Operation of the Military Regime from the Beginning till the Defeat* (1946), and *In the Land of Sakura* (1952). The two later books are reports from the author's field experience in Japan, covering a wide range of topics from the Imperial institution down to the Burakumin problems. Kukrit Pramoj, the most famous Thai intellectual in the country, also wrote a lot about Japan and his widely-read book is *the Japanese Scene* (1962). Other older generation writers who are not university instructors include Chaophaya Phasakornwong (translator), *Sino-Japanese War Legend*, Vol.2 (1907) ; Admiral Sinth Kamolnawin, *Russo-Japanese War* (1932); and Siri Phongsathat, *Japanese Political History* (1938). Other more recent publications include Witeskoranee (Somboon Khonchalad), *When Tojo Was Hung* (1964), O. Laohakiat (pen name), *Tsushima : A Russo-Japanese Naval*

Battle in 1905 (1974); and Charoen Chaichana et.al., *Tojo : the Warlord of the Land of the Rising Sun* (1977).

Research work on Japan by Thai political scientist is limited in its number. The pioneering scholar, Professor Khien Theeravit has done three projects : *Pattern of Thai-Japanese Economic Relations* (1974); *The Thai Perception of Chinese and Japan* (1975); and *Foreign Aid and Development in Thailand*, a project to be published soon. The objective of the last work is to study the impact of grants from Japan, together with Denmark and Germany, upon the development of Thailand in the field of agriculture.

Another pioneering scholar, Professor Likhit Dhiravegin, a theorist and an area specialist, of Thammasat University, has been doing a research on comparative modernizations in Japan and Thailand. This study is a task requiring knowledges in Thai and Japanese social transformations. He has accumulated his interest on this subject since he published his article, "Contrasting Modernization in Chulalongkorn's Siam (1868-1910) and Meiji's Japan (1867-1912)" in 1970.

There are not many theses on Japanese politics. At the National Defense College, a thesis on *Japan and the Security of Thailand* was written by the College's students Group Fifteenth, and published in the *Rathaphirak*, a military journal, in July 1973. At Thammasat's Faculty of Political Science, *The Implementation of Japanese Foreign Policy*, was written by Chukiat Bandhuwong, 1974. At Chulalongkorn's Faculty of Political Science, there are two theses : *Sino-Japanese Relation*, 1983; and *the Liberal Democrat party of Japan*, written by a Japanese student, Iwasa Toshiyuki, in 1983.

From the description above, we have an overview about the university instructors and Thai intellectual and their works on the studies of Japanese politics. The number of academician is limited and their publications are also limited. This trend, I think, will continue into the 1980's due to several reasons. Japan seems to play no roles in international

politics, especially regional security of Southeast Asia, and her fundamental domestic power politics changed very little. Elections in Japan, including the one held in December 1983 that the Liberal Democrat Party suffered a great loss, almost brought about no changes in Japanese basic foreign policies and the domestic power set-up. Japanese politics is, in this sense, static and attracted little attention from political scientists and other intellectual in Thailand. I wonder this is also the situation in other Southeast Asian countries. Japanese politics is too elusive.

3. Approach

It is difficult to discuss about approach : the way one raises basic question for answers and analyses and the way one sets frame to limit the scope of the studies, used in the works of Thai academicians. Actually the number of scholars engaged in the study is small and it seems that there is little dialectic dialogue about the problem of approaches among Thai political scientists in general.

Modernization has been the dominating concept in the studies about social transformation in Meiji Japan by those American historians, economists, sociologists, and political scientists, at least in the 1960's. These scholars, when they adopt the modernization concept, the basic question raised is : why and how Japan achieved (and failed) in her efforts in transforming herself from a traditional to a modern society. They adopted the standard of the efforts towards modernization as secularization, rate of literacy, urbanization, the use of unanimate energy, social-political participation, extensive mass communication, the existence of large-scale social institutions, and increased unification of large bodies of

population under one control (nations) and the interaction of such units (international relations). As for the standard or prerequisites for a modern *political* system : 1) A sense of nationalism widely shared among at least the society's ruling political elite, 2) Enough stability and security vis-a-vis internal or external political threats to permit sustained governmental planning and action. 3) A system of allocating and terminating roles of political leadership that on balance evaluates achievement more highly than status. 4) A ruling political elite that on balance regards political, economic, and social change as either desirable or necessary and looks upon government as an appropriate agency for achieving such change.

The way to look at the problem above is clearly seen in the six volumes of studies in the *Modernization of Japan*, general editor John W. Wall. Each volume is composed of articles from international seminar on the Conference on Modern Japan at Hakone, Japan, in 1960. They are : *Changing Japanese Attitudes toward Modernization*, ed. by Marius B. Sansen, 1965; *The State and Economic Enterprises in Japan*, ed. by William W. Lockwood, 1965; *Aspects of Social Change in Modern Japan*, ed. by R.P. Dore, 1967; *Political Development in Modern Japan*, ed. by Robert E. Ward, 1968; *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture*, ed. by Donald Shively, 1971; *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan*, ed. by James W. Morley, 1971.

The above approach had been widely propagated in *Japan* through the role of American Ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, a Harvard University historian, during 1961-1966. Ambassador Reischauer had travelled extensively throughout Japan and made thousands of speeches to Japanese

academic gatherings. He pointed out to the Japanese that, in assessing the achievement towards modernization in the Meiji period, the native, feudal legacy had been overlooked, or negatively evaluated by certain interpretations. Professor Reischauer's call had been responded by a number of Japanese scholar. In 1961 the *Chuo Koron*, an intellectual magazing in Japan, published his discussion on the Historical Evaluation of Japan's Modernization with Professor Nakayama Ichiro. This discussion led to the publications of *Nihon Kindai no Atarashii Mikata* (A New Way to Look at Japan's Modernization) by Edwin O. Reischauer and Nakayama Ichiro, 1965; *Nihon no Kindaika* (Japan's Modernization) by Nakayama Ichiro, 1965.

What is important is that this concept has been widely used in the study of Comparative social changes. Japan tended to be assumed as success, while China Turkey, and Thailand cases faced a number of obstacles preventing them to achieve successful modernizations. These comparative studies would analyze the problems in this way : what are the major-minor factors, what are the internal-external variables, and what are the traditional legacies that make Japan successful while China, Turkey and Thailand failed. There are many studies of this sort published since 1950's, for example, Marion Levy, Jr., "Contrasting Factors in the modernization of China and Japan," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* (October 1953); William W. Lockwood, "Japan's Responses to the West, the Contrast with China," *World Politics* (October, 1956); Edwin O. Reischauer, "Modernization in Nineteenth Century China and Japan," *Japan Quarterly* (July-September 1963); Allan B. Cole, "Contrasting Modernization in China and Japan," *The Chung Chi Journal* (May 1965). The works that com-

pared Japan with other countries, Turkey, Russia and Thailand, are : Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, editors, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (1964), Cyril Black, Marius B. Jansen, Herbert S. Levine, Marion J. Levy, et. al *The Modernization of Japan and Russia : A Comparative Study* (1975); Norman Jacobs, *Modernization Without Development : Thailand as an Asian Case Study* (1971), etc.

Modernization is also closely linked to the concept of political development, an innovation that dominated mainstream Political Sciences in America in 1960's and in Thailand nowadays. Acutally, political modernization and political development were used synonymously by some political science theorists, for example, Robert E. Ward in the book he edited, *Political Development in Modern Japan* (1968). Professor Lucian Pye said that political development concept was also used as political modernization in his collection of ten definitions in his book, *Aspects of Political Development*. The "political development syndromes" could be said to have derived from the 7 traits of modern political system that Almond and Coleman put forward in their well-known work, *The Politics of Developing Area* (1960) : 1) a comparatively high degree of urbanization 2) the widespread literacy 3) comparatively high per capita income 4) extensive geographical and social mobility 5) relatively high degree of commercialization and industrialization within the economy 6)an extensive and penetrative network of mass communication media 7) widespread participation and involvement by members of the society in modern social and economic processes.

Varions publications resulted from the Conference on Modern Japan under the

chairmanship of John W. Hall and the Committee on Comparative Politics under the successive chairmanships of Almond and Pye were very influential. Perhaps these conceptual frames are useful, full of explanatory power, in accord with historical substance, relevant to today's reality, and superior to other concepts in comparative studies, or there may be some other reasons, including the non-academic factors. The clearest example of the work by Thai Social Scientists along this line: *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, edited by Robert B. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow, was translated into Thai under the editorial leadership of Phornsak Phongphaeo and Pholasak Chirakraisiri, 1981. Others include: Likhit Dhiravegin, "Contrasting Modernization in Chulalongkorn Siam (1868-1910) and Meiji's Japan (1867-1912)" *The Journal of Social Sciences* (January 1970); and his research project on *The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) and the Chakri Reformation (1868-1910) : A Comparative Perspective*; Prasert Chittiwatanapong, "Modernization Base in Japan and Thailand : Education and Science," *T.P.A. Journal* (May-July 1976); Pholasak Chirakraisiri, "Political Party and Political Development : A Comparative Study between Thailand and Japan," *Journal of Social Sciences* (January-March 1978); Niyom Rathamarit and Anusorn Limmanee, *Political Development : A Comparative Study between Japan and Thailand*, 1978, etc. This way of looking at the problem also appeared in the works of other Thai intellectual with the difference in degree of emphasis, for example, Khien Theeravit, "Why Japanese Economy is More Advanced than Thailand," *Journal of Social Sciences* (April 1973). Actually, the tendency to look at Japan as a successful case had been in the mind of

Thai elite since the Rebellion Group in the reign of King Rama VI. It is perhaps no wonder that Professor Maruyama Masao's work, *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, 1963, a book that all political science students in Japan must read, is neither not known nor translated in Thailand, mainly because his book is difficult to read, but there may some other reasons.

One may ask why asking and analysing the problems towards the final end of Japan's successful modernization, development, or even miracle? In his article written in English and delivered at a seminar on Comparative Study of Patterns of Economic Development of Japan and Thailand in October 1980, Surichai Wan'gaeo asserted that, while viewing Japan as a shining success, one should also look at the costs to be paid both in Japan and overseas. Then one would, he believed, hesitate to deem "success" as an appropriate word. Surichai strongly argued, the costs of foreign wars, colonization, fascism, environmental destruction, including destruction of lives and property of Chinese, Koreans, Taiwanese and Filipinos who suffered from Japan's imperialism and militarism, were not incidental and must be put into account when we start asking basic questions for analyses. These arguments were raised again in his article in Thai, "Development Model; The Case of Japan," *Asian Review* (January-March 1980). In the forward written for a Thai translation in 1983 of E.H. Norman's *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State* (1940), Surichai extended his views further : the modernization approach, he said, "pays no attention and attaches no importance to conflicts in history, the role of the lower classes, and the suppressive conditions under military and colonial rules. Or if mentioned at all, that approach deems these

things insignificant or as “accidental diseases” without relating them as a consequence of the structure or as a causative process of change that came earlier”. He also suggested, “the value of history lies at the encouragement of man and society to attain a higher level of humanism and civilization.”

Internal conflict and external expansionism of Japan were given adequate attention and importance in the “Yellow Peril” special issues of the *Social Science Review*. In these special issues, Thanet Kongprasert wrote “New Jews of the Orient” *Social Science Review* (April 1972) and Narong Phetprasert wrote, “The Japanese Monopoly of Thai Trade,” *Social Science Review* (August–December 1975). Others along this line may include the Thai translation of *Japanese Imperialism Today: Co-prosperity in Greater East Asia*, by John Halliday and Gavan McCormack (1973), 1975; Prasert Chittiwat-anapong, *Japan’s Quest for Equal Position*, 1982; and Suthy Prasartset, “Thailand–Japan Trade: A Case of Third World Dependency,” *Asian Review* (January–March 1980).

Modernization, political modernization and political development concepts, and conflict–dependency–imperialism concepts, dominated Thai studies on Japan and its relations with Thailand quite a great deal. But both are the two extremes. There are a lot more studies that care little about these two ways of looking at the problems or two sets of concepts and theories. Some writers preferred discussing directly the problems based on facts gathered. If we call the approaches discussed earlier deductive and theory-oriented, this new one might be called inductive and issue-oriented. This later approach will not aim at testing the strength of theories or the usefulness of a certain concept. I wonder the work of Professor Khien Theeravit

could be classified along this line? I think his research works seem to be closer to this category.

4. Final Remarks

I have so far made a general survey of the curriculum, publications and approaches about Japanese studies in Thailand in the field of political science. It is rather difficult to make conclusions. The points made here could be easily disputed with facts and opinions. However, let me make some final remarks before ending this paper.

First, political power in Japan is closely linked with economic development, business groups, and problems created by high-growth economic policy. Japanese domestic politics changed very little in terms of leadership and policies. Each election in the last 30 years brought about no new leadership. All were from the same political party, the Liberal–Democratic Party. Other political parties gradually became professional opposition with little chance of realizing their ideologies. I think the studies that treat Japanese political institutions independently can not reflect the reality in Japanese politics as effectively as political–economy approach. Thus, Hans Baerwald’s study on Japanese parliament that inadequately related the Diet to economic policies and business groups will be less academically valuable than Chalmers Johnson’s study on the role of MITI in national industrial development. I think this reality of Japanese politics should be considered when we train our future Japan specialist and translate or write texts and articles about Japanese Politics.

Second, it is a fact that directions of training future teaching staff, translation or

writing books and articles have been guided and influenced by various institutions both domestic and overseas, such as, Thai universities, Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbook Project, Toyota Foundation, Japan Foundation, etc. Could translation programs be moved to encourage more publications of the works that are not as equally well-known as those mentioned earlier in this paper? Could Professor Maruyama Masao's *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, for one, be put on the list that welcomes any translators. I think it would be a big step if we could start making a list of books worth translating, both in English and Japanese language, and invite anyone interested to come in and proceed without having to start writing application forms from the very beginning.

Third, there is a suspicion that the study of Japanese politics is given less support from Japan Foundation since it is rather a hot issue and since it may contribute little to better understanding and the promotion of Japanese culture abroad. To do research in Japan or to hold seminar on Japanese politics, security problem and political parties; are they to be given lower priority or rejected supports from Japan Foundation? It seems that we can do very little on this matter since bureaucratic control, in this case the Embassy

of Japan, is still a fact of life in most of Japanese cultural activities abroad.

The final remark is about the way one ask basic question and set frame for analyses, that is the problem about approach. I think the legacy of the modernization theory is still powerful and dominating in Thailand. Works written along this line published in the West unceasingly advanced in to our knowledge and attracted attentions from policy planners. Malaysia's Look East policy may gives an impetus to this trend. Belows are some examples of the books that placed Japan as a success. Since some book called for American government and people to learn from Japan, so why not developing countries like us? These works are already well known: *The Japanese Miracle Men*, by Ralph Hewins, 1967; *Japan Surges Ahead: The Story of an Economic Miracle*, by P.B. Stone, 1969; *The Japanese Challenge*, by Robert Guillain 1970; *The Emerging Japanese Superstate*, by Herman Kahn (1970); *Japan's Revenge*, by Hakan Hedberg, 1970; *Japan as Number One: Lessons for Americans*, by Ezra Vogel, 1979; *MITI and Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy 1925-1975*, by Chalmers Johnson, 1982.

I wonder how social scientists and general public in Japan regard these works. How about in other Southeast Asian countries?