

Japanese Studies in Southeast Asia: Problematic Trends and Challenges Ahead*

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This is a preliminary report on the status and trends of Japanese studies in Southeast Asia during the recent decade.

Japanese studies, as used in this brief report, is viewed as an area study. As such, it is taken for granted the idea that people of a definable geographical unit acting in their society and their environment offer an appropriate unit for scholarly attention. This concept and approach is not really new; it has been used by ancient philosophers as well.

Although the objective is to examine Japanese studies in the context of Southeast Asia, the limitation of time and resources do not allow the writer to be comprehensive nor to go beyond available documentary study. This report relies heavily on *Japan Studies in Southeast Asia* (1987)¹ as its starting point. The area focused is more on Thailand and some of its ASEAN neighbors; no data is available at the moment for Brunei Darussalam, a new ASEAN member, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Japanese studies could be seen in terms of teaching and research. In terms of research it is well covered territory. In terms of teaching in the region's higher institutions, Japanese language has been increasingly popular for the last 2 decades while social sciences of Japan are much lagging behind. In other words, while there is an impressive record of Japanese Studies, an interdisciplinary as against a disciplinary study of Japan is still in its formative stage.

This report proposes to consider the developments of Japanese studies in Southeast Asia during the recent decade on country-by-country basis.

Much detailed and systematic data gathering and analysis still remain to be done both on national and regional level, but through the specifications of these four countries, it is hoped that this can provide an overview of some basic trends in the emergence and maturation of Japanese studies as an area study in the region's academic and professional communities. In the final part, we propose to discuss the key features, problems and challenges lying ahead.

Japanese Studies in Thailand

According to Chulacheeb Chinawanno² who estimates no less than one hundred research projects had been carried out on Japanese studies in the 1980's. Research foci range from economic relations between Thailand and Japan, ODA and transfer of technology to politics,

foreign policy and literature and culture, with the non-economic ones much fewer.

There are more books published during the last decade. For examples:

1. Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) and the Chakri Reformation (1868-1910): A Comparative Perspective*, 1981 (in English)
2. Thavee Theerawongseri, *Political Relations Between Japan and Thailand*, 1981 (in Thai)
3. Ezra Vogel, *Japan As No. 1* trans. by Banyat Surakarnvit
4. Khunthong Intharathai, *Why Japan Developed More Rapidly than Thailand*, 1985 (in Thai)
5. Suvinaï Pornavalai, *Japanese Companies and the Industrialization of Thailand*, 1989 (in Thai)
6. Chaiwat Khamchoo and Bruce Reynolds, eds., *Thai-Japan Relations in Historical Perspective* (1988)
7. Kanita Poothong, *Hara Kei and the Democralization of Japan Before W. W. II*, 1993 (in Thai)
8. Ebashi Takashi, edited with cooperation several Thai writers, *Foreign Workers and Human Rights* (in Japanese and Thai language) (1990)
9. Kimura Eiichiro, *Protection of Migrant workers*, An M. A. Thesis in Thai language (1993)

There are more research some are joint or team projects also:

1. Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Busaba Kunasirin, Abhinya Ratanamongkolmas and Kanoksak Kaewthep, *Japanese Official Assistance: Its Administration and Impacts on Thailand's Development*, 1983 (in Thai)
2. Prasert Chittiwatanapong, *Japanese Official Development Assistance to Thailand: Impact on Thai Construction Industry*, 1985
3. Khien Theeravit, *Japanese Construction Business in Thailand: Its Impact on Thailand's Development and Thai-Japanese Relations*, 1988 (in Thai)
4. Shoichi Yamashita, Suthy Prasartset, Lim Hua Sing, Gregory T. S. Thong, et. al., *Transfer of Japanese Technology and Management to the ASEAN Countries, (1986-1988) Its major results are published in book form in 1993*

There are also other academic activities and exchange, particularly, national and international seminars, some organized in cooperation with The Japan Foundation, Core University Program of JSPS and The National Research Council of Thailand. The themes of conference includes:

- Comparative Development Between Japan and Thailand
- Japan-Thailand Economic Relations
- Thailand, Japan and Asia (1986), of which proceedings are later published as *The Lion*

And The Mouse: Japan, Asia and Thailand, edited by Pasuk Pongpaichit, Chulalongkorn University

- Japan's Official Development Assistance and Asian Developing Economies, Institute of East Asian Studies, Thammasat University (1991)
- Japanese International Responsibility and Contribution to Peace and Prosperity in Asia Pacific, Thammasat University (1994)

In 1986, according to a comprehensive survey done by Banyat Surakarnvit and Piyakamol Sindrinvanada of Thammasat University,³ there were 16 Thai universities teaching Japanese studies. In 1989, according to a report by Japanese Culture Center, the number of universities teaching Japanese studies becomed to become 22 (with 17 government, and 5 private), apart from another group of 20 government technical colleges. Japanese Studies here is taken to mean Japanese language, however.

Among the 17 government universities, only 3 offer Japanese studies as a major for undergraduate courses.

The others have Japanese language as electives. Apart from the language teaching which is most popular, teaching other subjects on other aspects of Japan such as economics, politics, history, sociology and culture is going on in 5 universities including Chiangmai which has better staff. It should be noted that there is no universities in Thailand offering a multi-disciplinary program as a undergraduate major. Thammasat is the only university offering such a program as a minor, which includes 2 required course in Japanese language and at least 6 other elective courses on Japanese history, culture, literature, politics, foreign policy and economics.

Students Studying Japanese Language (1989)

| Categories of Institute | No. of Institutions | No. of Students |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. National Universities | 17 | 4,589 |
| 2. Government Technical Colleges | 20 | 4,677 |
| 3. Private Universities | 5 | 228 |
| 4. Private Technical Colleges | 16 | 5,908 |
| 5. Secondary and High Schools | 8 | 539 |
| 6. Public Offices | 6 | 7,968 |
| 7. Private Schools | 41 | 4,666 |
| 8. Companies and others | 37 | 905 |
| Total | 150 | 29,480 |

Source: Japanese Language Center, Bangkok

Japanese Studies in Singapore

Based on "Japanese Studies in Singapore"⁴ written by Lim Hau Sing of the National

University of Singapore. Japanese language are taught at the Department of Japanese Studies an also at the Department of Extramural Studies, NUS, the Singapore-Japan Cultural Association, the Foreign Language Centre under the Ministry of Education and other public and private institutes and organization. In terms of research in Japanese studies, they are basically carried out at the NUS, and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS).

With respect to teaching, the NUS Department of Japanese Studies has been offering both language and subjects on other aspects of Japan such as economic history of modern Japan, Japanese Social Organization, Japanese Southeast Asian Relations, Modernization and Social change in Japan, etc.

With respect to research, the NUS Department of Japanese Studies members has been most preoccupied with teaching obligations, not having ample time for research. Some of the members have been cooperating with regional and international research projects arranged by ISEAS.

One point on an important infrastructure: library collection on Japan. Presently the NUS Central Library has more than 10,000 volumes of Japanese publications and 100 Japanese journals, periodicals and newspapers. Its Japanese collection has been strengthened by sufficient funding and from donations from official and semiofficial Japanese institutions.

Papers in Japanese Studies Series and Monograph Series are published by Department of Japanese Studies National University of Singapore since 1989. Their titles are:

- No. 1 Japanese Management Thinking and Practice and the Internationalisation Pressure by Ishiwara Atsuo
- No. 2 Public Policies and Elections: An Empirical Analysis of Voters-Parties Relationship under One Party Dominance by Inoguchi Takashi
- No. 3 The Japanese Mind: An Interpretation
- No. 4 Japan's Foreign Policy and its Internationalisation Strategy by Hsu Chieh-Lin
- No. 5 On the Periphery of the World: Japan's Internationalisation in Historical Perspective by Tanaka Kyoko
- No. 6 The Impact of Internationalisation on the Japanese Defense Issue
- No. 7 Local Government Policies on Internationalisation by Yabuno Yuzo
- No. 8 Primordial Sentiments or Rational Planning: Takeshita's Furusato Creativity Concept Analyzed by Seah Chee Meow
- No. 9 Internationalisation and the Japanese Economy: A Case Study of the Coal Industry
- No. 10 Business Organisations and Management: A Comparison between Japanese and Chinese Firms
- No. 11 Direct Foreign Investment in Singapore with Particular Reference to Japanese Investment
- No. 12 The Politics of Liberalization of the Japanese Agricultural Market
- No. 13 From East Asia to Southeast Asia: Patterns of Japanese Investments
- No. 14 The Japanese Military Administration in the Philippines and the Tragedy of

General Artemio Ricarte

- No. 15 Writing Plain visions: The Mystic Migrant in Joy Kogawa's Obasan
- No. 16 The July 1989 Upper House Election in Japan
- No. 17 Process and Product: Singaporeans Writing in Japanese
- No. 18 Sake and "Spare Time": Management and the Imbibement in Japanese Business Firms
- No. 19 Japan's Economic Role in the Dynamic Growth of Asian Economies: A Summary of Issues

Monograph Series

- No. 1 Overview: Kyushu and Japanese History
- No. 2 Japanese Language Teaching: Methods and Practice
- No. 3 Ageing in Japan and Singapore

Japanese Studies in Indonesia

Based on I Ketut Surajaya⁵, Japanese Studies in the Republic of Indonesia. There are 15 universities or institutional programs offering Japanese language studies, among which 3 are research centers and the rest teaching institutions mostly of Japanese language. University of Padjadjaran Bandung, opened a Center for Indonesian Japanese Studies in 1987 implementing a program for Japanese language and literature. University of Indonesia at the same time was reported to open a center for research in the form of a program at the graduate level. The former program hopes to produce Japan language experts, while the latter Japan experts.

With respect to research, there are for example:

1. Research on Japanese Culture by Dr. Lie Tek Tjeng National Institute for Cultural Studies, LIPI
2. Japan as a Power in Asia by Nazaruddin Syamsudin and Maswardi Rant, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia (1982)
3. Research Concerning Japanese Multinational Companies by Dorodjatun Kuntjoro Jakti, Anwar Nasution Mayling Oey Gardiner, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Indonesia

Some books on Japan including translation are published:

1. Ketut Surajaya, Yoshino Sakuzo and Taisho Democracy (1982)
(in Indonesia)
2. Marius b. Jansen, Japan and Its World (1980)
3. James C. Abegglen, Social Aspects of Organization in Japan (1983)
4. Ruth Benedict, The Chrysenthem and the Sword

It should be noted also that periodic national seminars on Japanese Studies has been organized every other year, based on cooperation between the University of Indonesia, Podjadjaran, IKIP Bandung IKIP Surabaya and IKIP Manado since 1982.

Japanese Studies in Malaysia

Based on M. Rajendran's "Japanese Studies in Malaysia"⁶, Japanese language has been taught as an optional subject at the University of Malaya, University Sains Malaysia, National University of Malaysia.

The government's Look East Policy since 1981 has been an impetus for more interest on Japanese language, on learning from Japan and more research on Japanese economics and history.

Research are said to be lacking due to the following factors: (1) scarcity of language equipped personnel (2) low priority given by respective faculties (3) limited availability of research material and (4) of funds.

It is reported that a Japanese studies program has been set up recently in the University of Malaya.

Japanese Studies in the Philippines

Based on "Japanese Studies in Philippines"⁷ prepared by a group of Filipino scholars and the Japan Information and Cultural Center, there are 4 universities classified as having an established program on Japanese Studies as part of their curricular offering. The following six institutes are cited as granting degrees on Japanese Studies (the first four has special Japanese Studies Program)

1. The Asia Center, the University of the Philippines
2. Japan Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University
3. Japan Studies Program, Department of History and Area Studies De la Salle University
4. The University of Santo Tomas
5. National Defense College of the Philippines
6. Far Eastern University

In 1986, there are 19 institutions for Japanese language teaching including the above mentioned universities. It is estimated in 1994 that there are 50 such programs in institutions of higher education across the country.

A glance through a list of publications and journal articles, including thesis and dissertations from Greater Manila covers very broad and substantive field. A new book based on field research inn Japan should be noted: The Filipino Entertainers in Japan (1992) by Ma. Rosario P. Ballescas.

Recently, there is an organized efforts of 15 Japanese studies researchers from Metro Manila universities to form what is to be called a Japanese Studies Society of the Philippines (Hilipin Nihon Kenkyu Gakukai)

Japanese Studies Scholars in Southeast Asia 1986

| Country | No. of Scholars | No. of Institutions of higher education providing | |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|--|
| | | Japanese language teaching program | Other related social scientific teaching program |
| Indonesia | 60 | 15 | (1) |
| Singapore | 17* | 5 | 1 |
| Thailand | 88** | 18 | (1) |
| Malaysia | 12** | 3 | — |
| The Philippines | 32 | 19 | 4 |

Calculated from: Japanese Studies in Southeast Asia, The Japan Foundation, 1987.

* excluding visiting lecturers.

** excluding 70 people who are not doing research or teaching or writing on Japan, but are included for their practical interests on or for their social interests on Japan.

Key Features, and Problems, and Challenges Ahead

We now may briefly discuss the trends of Japanese studies in Southeast Asia reviewed so far. There are clear evidence that Japanese Studies has during the recent decade entered in a booming period. Key features could be listed as follows.

1. Japanese studies has entered a booming-period in major higher institutions of learning of the region, both in terms of teaching and research. There is also a growing demand for the knowledge of Japanese development experience, and Japanese language at educational levels lower than universities. Dramatic increase in students of Japanese language, in printing materials related to Japan and more research interests particular on economic and management are such evidence.

2. The environmental factors so far conducive to this growth and in some case include institution building are external funding especially from Japan, increasingly powerful Japan's status within the rising Asia Pacific economic predominance, individual government policy, and also awakening and active academic communities.

3. The strength lies in Japanese language programs, responding to the practical relevance, as source of most practically valuable skill, with relative strength of economic development related research.

4. The acceptance of universities in Southeast Asia of language-focused Japanese studies created complex set of issues.

(1) Japanese language is in effect regarded as sufficient qualification for Japanese studies persists in competition with or rather, at the expense of more comprehensive and interdisciplinary Japanese studies.

(2) The very weak relationship between existing Japanese studies and the social sciences in each national academic contexts, and the regional academic contexts.

5. An very brief examination of the extent of convergence and divergence in approaches

and subjects of research and research-based seminars among the countries in the region shows a remarkable concentration of interests on economic growth, economic relations, management and policy issues with far lesser emphasis on security and peace issues. Very much neglected areas are the socio-cultural and intellectual aspects.

6. Narrowing down Japanese studies to Japanese language have in effect isolated the booming student public from a broader social science perspective or even from some humanities like philosophy resulting in readily acceptance of simplistic Nihonjin-ron literature rather than search for more universal and global perspective.

7. As undeveloped area of Japanese studies in the region is that of poorly equipped database and not well systematic libraries with the exception of Singapore. We need an awakening of an appreciation of the roles of libraries and multi media infrastructure in the very process of knowledge development.

8. In the Post Cold War present we can say that Japanese Studies in the region is experiencing a silent crisis which is characterized by a booming field with no clear intellectual and global relevance.

9. In order to tap the existing potentials to overcome this crisis, higher level of academic, intellectual and cultural policy-oriented forum in the region with a global perspective is called for. There need to be well prepared and systematic surveys and seminars on the state of the fields, on theoretical implications, of the academic communities, and their contributions. There need to be new directions of more balanced emphasis of Japanese studies program, and establishment of interdisciplinary linkages both domestically and regionally.

10. The booming investments and economic change lead by private sector and market mechanism have put Japanese studies in yet another crisis especially on the professional issues: negative effects on recruitment, maintaining qualified and motivated personnel, and development of professionalization. To cope with this, a inter-institutional in a country and inter-country partnership collaboration to respond to the issues may be necessary.

11. One of the things to be expected in the next decade is the establishment of new types of facilities and infrastructure both social, intellectual and physical, for study, for exchange, and for field research collaboration, beyond Japan and existing ASEAN neighbors to include new regional neighbors. Encouragement for professional networking, and professional association where ready and exchange between the region and with relevant Japan is necessary.

12. There was a first international seminar on "Japanese Studies in ASEAN: A Survey of Strengths and Weakness"⁸ organized by the Japanese Studies Center, Thammasart University, in cooperation with the Japan Foundation in 1984, participated by ASEAN member countries including two speakers from Australia and one from Japan. Since then the situations have change greatly.

Discussion on the significance and role of Japanese Studies with other area studies as field of knowledge and as a academic network in invigorating regional intellectual community with human and global concerns should be examined and promoted. Perhaps one concrete

mechanism would be series of well prepared regional seminars on the teaching of, and the production of necessary textbooks related to, Japanese and domestic area studies across the region.

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Notes

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- 1 Published in 1987. This directory is based on a survey conducted from late 1985 through 1986 in 4

Southeast Asian countries, the writers are I. Ketut Surajaya for Indonesia, Lam Hua Sing for Singapore, the late Banyat Surakarnvit for Thailand, and for the Philippines a group of writers. The writer is not able to include a recent state-of-the field in some major area of and on more focused Japanese studies research roster done by Japan Studies Center, Thammasat University under the then Director Dr. Chullacheeb Chinawong.

- 2 Chulacheeb Chinnawanno, "Japanese Studies in Thailand Issues and Trends", Thai Japanese Studies Journal 1992.
- 3 Japan Foundation, Japanese Studies in Southeast Asia, Directory Series XI, 1987 p. 91
- 4 Ibid, pp. 47-86
- 5 Ibid, pp. 3-46
- 6 Ibid, pp. 193-204
- 7 Ibid, pp. 143-192
- 8 Ross Mouer and Banyat Surakanvit, "Sime Reflections on Pattaya Seminar on Japanese Studies in the ASEAN Nations," and Lihkit Dhiravegin, "Note from an International Seminar." Thai-Japanese Studies, Special Issue March 1984, pp. 70-82.