

**THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOWER LEVEL THAI STAFF  
TOWARD JAPANESE MANAGEMENT CULTURE IN JAPANESE  
ORGANIZATION**



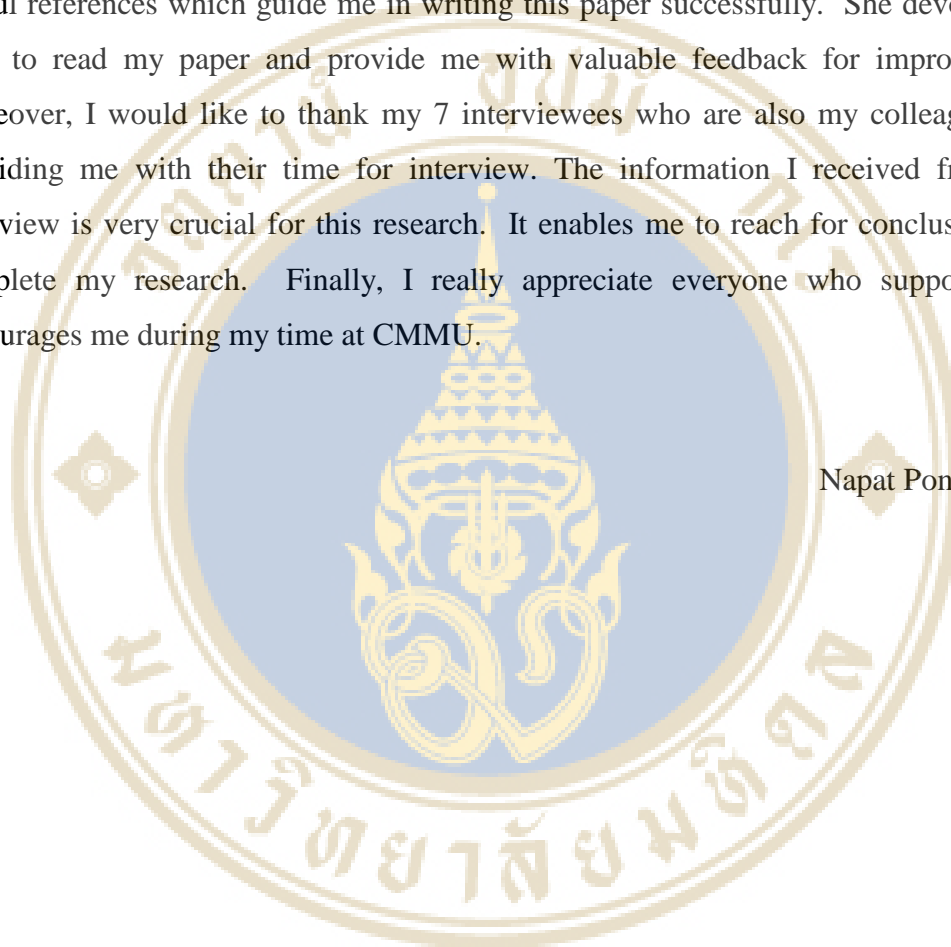
**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
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Napat Pongsamart



## **THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOWER LEVEL THAI STAFF TOWARD JAPANESE MANAGEMENT CULTURE IN JAPANESE ORGANIZATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, globalization has expanded to most countries around the world. Organizations that decide to start their business in another country will inevitably be facing with the cultural differences. This paper discusses about the differences between Japanese and Thai culture in a workplace. The research focuses on the perception of the Thai employees toward the Japanese management style. The information was gathered from Thai employees who are working in a Japanese organization by using an unstructured informal group interview to get an overview picture and using an in-depth interview for detailed analysis. The findings are divided into 5 cultural contexts along with their advantages and disadvantages. Then, they are linked back to Thai culture to compare similarities and differences. Recommendation for adjustment was proposed to improve cooperation and avoid conflict in the workplace.

**KEY WORD:** Cultural Conflict/ Japan/ Japanese Organization/ Thailand

32 pages

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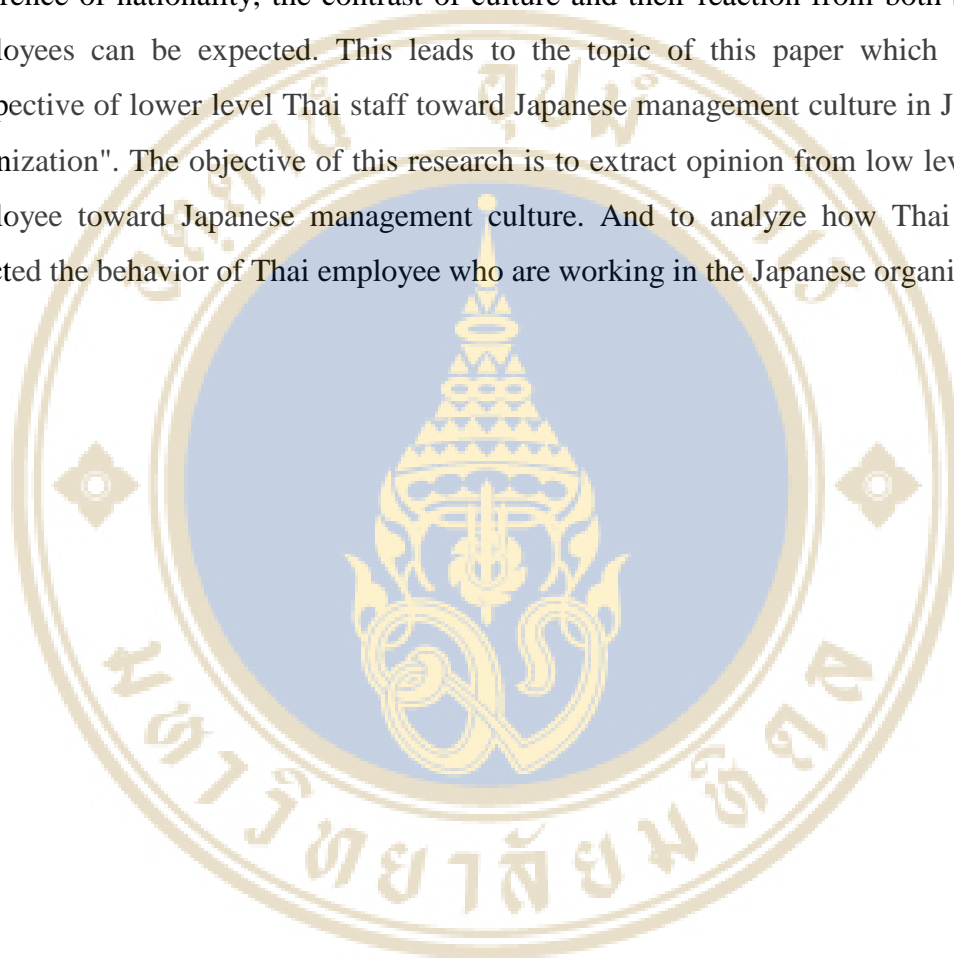
## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the modern business world today, the globalization is one of the key factors for a company to expand and grow. Many organizations decide to expand their business to another country in order to be success. But to do so, they must face with the difference of external factors in many ways such as geographical, customer demand or law. In particular, the difference that they must face and have to handle from the beginning when they establish their organization is about hiring people to work for them. They will face with the different culture of people in those countries which is considered as an internal factor. This difference can be the one of the most difficult obstacles that one organization must face. It can either drive the organization to success or failure. Therefore, it is very important for one organization to adapt their way of work according to difference culture in order to make their employee works effectively and survive in the business world. For those purposes, every organization has to create a method to deal with the difference of culture in its way while still maintaining the organization's value and culture. Since there are many international companies that do business in Thailand, we have to narrow the scope of this research into one country's culture. The final decision for choosing the nation of organization is Japan due to their differences in working culture as we know from many studies that had been done in the past.

To manage people who have different culture effectively is the hard work and also requires a long period of time. It requires understanding of people's culture to find the acceptable point to adapt to the organization. Forcing people to change too much can diminish their work's effectiveness. Changing their organization too much can also ruin their organizational culture as well. Many papers offer the aspect of the people in management level about this difference in culture which can lead to effective management method. But for a Japanese company, most of the managers in the organization are Japanese which makes those methods reflect only the aspect of the

Japanese toward Thai people. To reach further understanding of Thai culture, studies for the aspect of Thai people who work in the Japanese organization can help to understand more in culture. To enable this study to show the contrast of perspective from both cultures, the company that is used in this paper focuses on having a clear difference of nationality in term of position. In this company, only 5 out of 20 people in management level and the rest of 100 non-management staff are Thai. With the difference of nationality, the contrast of culture and their reaction from both sides of employees can be expected. This leads to the topic of this paper which is "The perspective of lower level Thai staff toward Japanese management culture in Japanese organization". The objective of this research is to extract opinion from low level Thai employee toward Japanese management culture. And to analyze how Thai culture affected the behavior of Thai employee who are working in the Japanese organization.





## **CHAPTER II**

### **LIERATURE REVIEW**

The differences in culture always create conflict, not only the way of thinking but also the action that person decides to take as well. Japanese organization that does business in Thailand must face with the difference of working culture as well. But in order to achieve their goal, understanding in both cultures is a good starting point and will help creating a great organization in the long term. However, the difficulties of working in different culture still exist.

From the study of Hyan and Randell (1991), they state a factors that researcher interest in the cause of conflict. Their research said the conflict occurs by misunderstanding in communication between parties. There are varieties reasons leading to misunderstanding such as value, goal or language. Every international organization has to face with the difficulty in managing cultural differences. From the assumption, keep in mind that conflict always exists whenever two groups of people associate. Because when one group judges another group using their own values without understands the others, conflict will occur. To understand the cause of conflict and manage it effectively, understanding the culture of the opposite group also is required. As said, managing conflict requires understanding in the culture of both sides. But before focus on one group, overall cultures of both parties in which Japanese and Thai have to be stated.

For understanding culture, Hofstede's study can be used as a tool identifying difference of two cultures by separate them in five dimensions. The difference of figures in each dimension tells the difference of culture in workplace of Japanese and Thai. The table below will show those five dimensions with explanation of each dimension.

**Table 2.1 Hofstede's five dimensions of Japanese and Thai**

Cultural Dimension	Japanese	Thai
Power Distance (PDI) : higher mean more hierarchy	54	64
Individualism (IDV) : higher mean more individualistic	46	20
Masculinity (MAS) : higher mean more masculine	95	34
Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) : higher mean more uncertainty avoidance	92	64
Long term orientation (LTO) : higher mean more long term orientation	80	56

Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com>

The figures in table 2.1 show the difference of the culture between Japanese and Thai which can be used further to analyze the characteristic of both nations. The figures in each culture dimension show the contrast between Japanese and Thai. The Japanese have significantly higher in the Masculinity and moderately high in the Uncertainty avoidance and Long term orientation. The vast difference of Masculinity figures shows that Japanese have a competitive society while Thai prefer cooperation. Also, Japanese tend to avoid uncertainty situation more than Thai and be more long term oriented while Thai aim for short term goal. The figure of Individualism states both Japanese and Thai as a collective society, but Thai tend to be more collective than Japanese. Also, Thai society prefers more hierarchy than Japanese. By the information from Hofstede's study, we can see the overall difference between the two cultures. But Hofstede's dimension is only the surface that can tell only the big picture of one culture. To continue a research further, the specific characteristic of both cultures must be discussed in more detail.

For Japanese side, in Earley and Erez research (1997) state the cultural value that influences the Japanese management philosophy and held as a principle of working culture follow these characteristic.

- Lifetime employment
- Compassionate among employees include personal problem

- Participative management and group responsibility
- Bottom-up decision making and emphasis on harmony
- Seniority based reward system
- Authoritative and participative management
- Standardized training to enhance uniform competence
- Job rotation and no limit to specialized work function

To link with Hofstede's research, Japanese organization has a culture of pragmatic (long term orientation) which can be seen from long term employment and seniority base system. The Japanese also contain of moderate power distance and individualism from compassionate, participative management and standardization. But there is a contrast of masculine dimension in overview and working culture. From the high figure of masculine dimension, Japan should be one of the most competitive countries in the world. But within Japanese organization itself, employee prefer more harmony and teamwork which opposite to this figure.

Also with the research of Haghirian (2010) which explains most of the Japanese organization characteristic. A Japanese organization has created many management principle or philosophy such as Continuous Improvement, Quality Circles, 5S or Reflection Meeting. The principle and philosophy require time to train, implement and improve which consume time in employee's private life. This may be matched with the typical characteristic of Japanese workers who devote to their job. The human resource management in this research describes about Lifetime Employment, Seniority Principle, Employee Union, Job Rotation and Lone-Life Training which have their own pros and cons. The explanation in this research provides more detail of Japanese management characteristic which can be used for further research to identify the difference between Japanese and Thai in term of working cultures.

For Thai culture, there are many working cultures that are different from Japanese. Swierczek and Onishi (2002) made a research on the conflict between Japanese and Thai culture. The difference of characteristic that contrast with Japanese culture will be stated by following bullet.

- In Thai employee perspective, lifetime employment believed not to be effective and lead to decrease the effectiveness of work because it not based by performance.
- Seniority base reward discouraging the employee and prefer performance base evaluation.
- Thai employee does not favor the consensus decision making that come from different language which create a communication gap between Japanese and Thai. Both sides prefer to speak with the person who can understand them or speak the same language.
- Thai employee have a difference to employee union by seeing as a tool to smooth the relation between Japanese and Thai rather that see it as an employee's right protection follow with a trust and reliability issue.
- The activity such as Continuous Improvement or Quality Circles consume employee's private time and Thai employee consider it as intruding private life
- For low hierarchical culture, both Japanese and Thai have similar characteristic in workplace. But the difference is that Japanese manager will act as a superior when working and become relaxed after work while Thai manager will act the same both in working time and after work. This makes Thai employee mistakenly consider Japanese manager as two-faces.
- Japanese and Thai have a difference of culture for giving a punishment, Japanese have a reason to scold or criticize their subordinate as training and socialization but Thai only does it when their subordinate made a major mistake. Adding with a scold or criticize in front of other people, while Japanese consider it as an educational purpose for to let others learn from one's mistake but Thai see it to be an embarrassment.
- And the difference in Hofstede's dimension such as Thai employee prefer more hierarchy in workplace, individual work, work to live not live to work, more flexible rule and being short term oriented

With these differences of many working cultures between Japanese and Thai, It can create the difficulty for the two cultures to understand each others. It will also stay as a source of conflict between manager and their subordinate.

For seniority based promotions or seniority based reward system, McCampbell, Jongpipitporn, Umar, and Ungaree, (1999) explains that this system seems not to be very effective for Thai employee. The result of this research came from questionnaire that was made by US and Thai organizations. This paper focuses on the results that were answered from Thai organization only. From this questionnaire, it asks about the attitude toward seniority based promotion and the effect that can cause to the organization. The result shows that 79.50 percent of Thai respondents accept that respect for seniority is practical within their organization which is normal in high power distance society like Thailand. With only 35.30 percent of Thai respondents perceive that respect for seniority adversely affects the company's efficiency, it supports that Thai employee does not mind to have a hierarchy in their organization. But when it comes to seniority based promotions system, 70.20 percent of Thai respondents give an opinion toward seniority based promotions as an unfair action and will have negative effect to the company's performance. This research shows the evidence of Thai employee's perspective toward seniority based reward system.

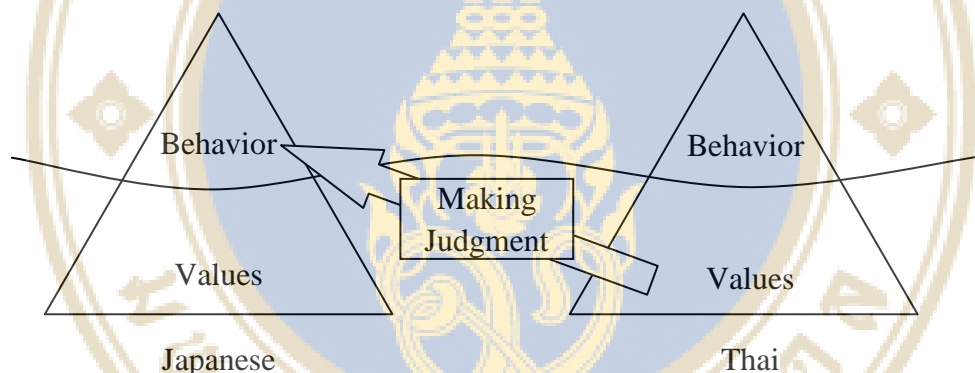
Another research from Swierczek (1988) about the job satisfaction factor of Thai employee shows many conflicts between Thai and Japanese working culture. The research's result shows the positive and negative factors that create job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the organization. There are negative factors and missing positive factors that can affect Thai employee who work under Japanese culture which are

- Efforts aren't rewarded is linked to seniority based reward system because the employee will get the reward from seniority not from their accomplishment
- Good communication with superior is not happening when there is a gap from the language they used
- Paid a fair amount is not exist as well because Japanese paid based on seniority but not base on effort that gave by the employee

- Job rotation cannot create a clear goal for Thai employee

This research adds more information about the difference in culture and the root of the conflict between Japanese manager and Thai subordinate.

By gathering all information from each article, the conflict that lives in Japanese-Thai organization can be described by using Schein's Iceberg Model (1980). Schein Iceberg Model can be used to describe how one group of people judges the other. The first one uses their value to judge the behavior of the other which will create misunderstanding and lead to conflict. Link to this research, Japanese and Thai represents different parties within one organization. Japanese uses their value to judge Thai behavior and in opposite, Thai uses their value to judge Japanese behavior. Picture below is Schein's Iceberg Model which explains that Japanese and Thai think in a different way by their fundamental value and use it to judge each other.



**Figure 2.1 Schein Iceberg Model for Japanese-Thai organization**

## **CHAPTER III**

### **CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

The organization used in this research is my current organization which is Japanese-Thai Company. This company has an office located near Asoke road, Bangkok, Thailand which is the office that this research focuses on. This company operates as a 1st tier supplier for many automobile companies in Thailand such as Toyota, Honda and Isuzu. This company has three manufacturing factories located in Chachoengsao, Phitsanulok and Samut Prakan of Thailand. There is a management center office located in Prompong, Bangkok. For management system, there are cooperation between offices in Bangkok and factories to achieve common objectives. But within individual branch, management style and working process are different. The management team also separated in each branch. The recruitment system is similar for whole organization but there are difference interview team and recruitment criteria. This company has the head quarter in Japan and expands its branches to many countries around the world such as America, Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, etc.

For Asoke branch, it is the newest branch that was established 9 years ago. The function that this branch performs is to support engineer who works with customer and cooperate with Production department at the factory. The number of employees working in this branch is approximately 120 people which have portion of Japanese employee at 20 percent. There are many departments working in this branch such as, Administrative, Research and Development, etc. Research and Development department is the department that this research focuses on. In this department there are 5 Thai employees who work in management level while there are 15 Japanese managers. Other employees are Thai who have position in team leader and normal staff. With this imbalance in the number of Japanese and Thai manager become an issue which will be focused in this research.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study focuses on Thai employees who are working under Japanese managers. To collect data, adopting in-depth interview techniques is required. Diminish stress atmosphere in the interview session by arranging a private interview to eliminate peer pressure. Helping interviewee to feel relax will allow them to be better to express their feeling (McDaniel and Gates, 2013). Using one-on-one interview session allows interviewer to search for more detail in each question. By asking questions continuously, it creates a flow of answer which improves linkage between topics. Keep asking for detail with provided question and not pressure interviewee with time will enhance them to analyze question. Then, they can answer with analysis and consideration. It can encourage them to review more information such as the reason behind answer or the connection with their characteristic. And in-depth interview in private session with low pressure environment can reveal sensitive issue with personal opinion.

This research prefers to use “qualitative” data collection interview which focuses on detail of each interviewee rather than use high number of interviewees. Information for this research was gathered from Thai employee who works as a team leader and normal staff. There are 7 people attending this interview, 2 of them are team leaders and other 5 are normal staff. They come from two departments which are Research & Development and Purchasing. But in Research & Development department, it separated into sub-department such as Designer, ASEAN Development and Global Development. Every interviewee has at least 3 years working experience in this company which will have sufficient knowledge about the Japanese management system.

To create an effective interview session, bias from faction and nationality must be eliminated. Company's goodness, advantage and impression can be blinded by bad experience they faced (Gregory, 2006) and they will unable to express positive



side of the Japanese management system. Creating neutral question and give information to them in detail about the purpose of this research to give them time to separate their emotion from answer. Still, information about emotions that link to the question is also relevant. Reduce strong emotion by give interviewee time to think and ask interviewee to describe their feelings by word then observe tone interviewee used.

Open-ended question was used to provide an advantage from a wide range of answer and be able to gather more information by ask for detail in each point they make. By using open-end question approach, it is able to encourage interviewees to reveal their personal opinion and feelings. List of questions was provided to the interviewee at least one day prior to the interview session. Interviewer asked the interviewee for confirmation of understanding and explained the points that they confused. The reason for using this method is aiming for well prepared interviewee so that they are able to answer correctly. But only main question was provided and keep in-depth question such as their feeling or reason to ask them in an interview session. The interview sessions were conducted in their native language which is Thai. By conducting interview in native language, it provides ease for interviewee to express their opinion and feelings. It reduced their distraction from translate their though into other language which allow them to focus answering the question. Using native language helped decreasing the error in communication and confusion in language.

### **Interview Session**

Before making one-on-one interview session, overview perspective of Japanese and Thai employee was explored by using unstructured informal group interviews. In the interview session, interviewer focused on asking about the problem occurred in many departments in the company. For Thai employee, this interview was conducted by gathering a few employees in a group then asked about the problem they have with Japanese employee. Not only asking low level staff Thai employee but also Thai management level as well. And for Japanese employee perspective, the interview had been conducted by asking Thai employee who usually contact directly with Japanese employee such as Thai manager and translator. In additional, person who are closed to Japanese manager were asked for an interview as well. After finishing the

interview, gathered information were summarized together to create the overall picture of the situation and were used as a basis for further research.

For the detail of the formal one-on-one session, the interviews were arranged after work or holiday to avoid time pressure. Interview sessions took around 30-45 minutes to ask questions and gather information from answers. The order of the question will start from general question such as perspective about Japanese management, their advantages and disadvantages, etc. Each question has listed support question to gather further information about opinion and feeling. Follow by more specific questions about Japanese working culture to have common understand and avoid confusion in varieties of cultural context. List of questions was given to interviewee before interview at least half-days to let them prepare their answer. Also remind interviewees that they should not get their bias involved in identifying company goodness. They should not mix their personal feeling toward one individual person or group but should describe their opinion using overall perspective toward Japanese management system. Interviewees were asked to separate goodness and badness of one person from the company. Further information such as addition question for each person will be noted and used in research as well.

### **Question List**

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Japanese working culture, what is the greatest one?
2. Before entering Japanese company what was your opinion about Japanese working culture and does it change after enter the company?
3. What do you think about a long-term hiring system (lifetime hiring)?
  - What is its possibility to adopt a long-term hiring system with Thai employee and why?
4. What is your opinion towards reward or promote by seniority?
  - Do you think that the seniority rewarding system will affect morale?
5. What do you think about the Japanese working culture that prefers to work in group and enhance in communication?

6. For a long-term orientation culture that is adopt in Japanese company, what is your opinion about it? What about possibility to achieve or act according to those plans?
7. In your opinion, does the language barrier affect you when working with Japanese peoples?
8. Why did you decide to stay with Japanese company until now?
9. Things that you want to change the most in Japanese management system?



## **CHAPTER V**

### **RESEARCH FINDING**

#### **Big Picture - Thai and Japanese perspective**

The issues in this company are accounted from the lack of understanding in management system by Japanese and Thai employee. With the difference of culture between Japanese and Thai, it creates misunderstanding from difference values they hold. After summarizing the information from unstructured informal group interviews, the information provides factors that create conflict between Japanese and Thai employee. There are many contexts that Japanese and Thai employee identified as a problem that lead to difficulty of work and create conflict between them.

For an overall perspective of Thai employee, the major problem for Thai employee is an ineffective communication between Japanese and Thai. Thai employees usually do not hear about decision making from Japanese manager and unable to find an explanation from them. Sometime they enforce their plan into Thai employee without asking for agreement or inform them in advance. With this situation, Thai employees have less opportunity to make suggestions about a plan that made from Japanese management level. Some interviewees said those problems were caused by the language barrier and power distance in Thai culture. But even in the department that Thai employee exists in management level, the communication between Japanese and Thai is still low. When a Thai employee has a question to ask Japanese manager, calling Thai manager to be a translator is not appropriate in from Thai power distance culture. And calling translator to discuss personal problems with their manager is not appropriate as well. Even suggestion and question from Thai manager, some question receives no answer or explanation from Japanese manager. Failing to receive an explanation, it led to misunderstanding. When Japanese made a mistake by not listen to Thai employee, it then led to dissatisfaction. This situation had created an awkward atmosphere for Thai employee in the office. There are examples

that Thai employees have discussion in group for problem they faced or stated in common which will be listed using bullet below.

- Asking for future plan but receive an uncertain of plans and strategies
- Asking for an explanation of unclear contract agreement but receive unclear answer
- Have no place to make a demand for change
- Mismatch work and department function
- Request for working plan from Thai employee but have no adjustment into their plan
- Rotate employee without informing them in advance
- Unfair rule enforcement between Japanese and Thai

These major problems exist because Thai employees were unable to find the explanation for their curiosity. It created dissatisfaction among Thai employee and those who have no place to express their feelings. They had to keep this dissatisfaction within themselves and increasing day by day. When this reaches the limit, some of them solve this problem by leaving the company. When the employee resigns, it follows by problem of lacking manpower within those departments and unable to perform work effectively. These were the problems that Thai employee stated and still wait for a solution.

For Japanese management level perspective, all information was gathered from asking Thai people in many positions. Information from Thai manager came from the meeting that discussed about the problem of Thai employee. Translator also provided this information from involvement in meeting as well. Some information gathered from employees who are close to Japanese manager, they can ask for personal problem and opinion toward the situation in the company. Fundamental of the problems are similar to Thai employee perspective which are language barrier, misunderstanding culture of Thai people and ineffective communication with lower level employees. But the difference is Japanese use overall behavior of Thai employee. For the strength of Thai employee, they are good at equivocating, flexible, keep harmony and respect the elder. But there are also negative characteristic of Thai people that Japanese managers see as well. These will be state by the bullet below.

- Avoid to act according to working contract
- Impatient and prefer not to do routine work
- Not fully cooperate in company activities such as 5S, Information Security, Continuity Improvement, etc.
- Thai employees have unclear plans for the future such as aim for further study (have to resign), desire for working aboard, etc.
- Thai employees are not following the rule strictly

These are the major problems according to Japanese opinion that revealed to Thai manager and have been discussed in the meeting. This existing problem not only creates ineffective communication and work within the company. But it also creates a negative perspective from Japanese manager toward Thai employee. Lower in trust against Thai employee makes them avoid to assign long term project and can't fully utilize manpower effectively are in the Japanese manager mind.

With the problem stated above, one way communication from both Japanese and Thai can be identified. It has created a negative relationship between Japanese manager and Thai employee which caused chronic problem and effect to overall performance of the entire organization. In this research, understanding Thai employee perspective is the first priority.

### **Thai Perception of Japanese Management Culture**

After interviewed Thai employee, all gathered information was summarized and separated into 5 topics. Each content was separated by difference of cultural context. Before using the information that was received from interview, the emotional issue had diminished and not to blind interviewee to see the whole picture. But those emotional factors were still used to analyze further result in this research which will be explained together within each topic. Also the bias against one individual group as well, repeating the question with more explanation was required to use to make interviewee think carefully and answer with clear judgment. Using personal experience they faced was able to use as an example to explain about the problem they actually face. For all 5 topics, they contain the detail about the perspective against Japanese management system and culture. Also distinguish advantages and disadvantages of each factor.

### **Standardization**

Most of the work done within Japanese organization has a standard which was set by experienced employee. Each standard exists to support employee by providing step of each process, format of document and identifying responsible personal that are involved in each work process.

Start from the advantages of standardization, 5 interviewees said by standardizing every work, junior or new employee will be able to learn faster than learning by themselves. Clearly stated work procedure helps everyone in the department be able to rotate their function to assist another function in time of need by working through those standards. Not only helping personal within the same department, but it also helps personal who came from difference departure as well. Having standard document in hand, verbal explanation is less required and it reduces time that need to explain. Besides that, it allows employees to make an improvement. By making a proposal, explain to the team, summit and wait for the conclusion. If is passed, it will be used in the future. This system also increases the speed of communication by a standardized communication process between branch and manufacturing factory. Only filling form and sign are requires completing the communication. Then, it will be sent to responsible person. For this advantage, 5 out of 7 interviewees stated the existence of this system.

Within the advantage, interviewees said it is not only reflexes good point of this culture. 3 interviewees stated the drawback of this system. Standardizing work will eliminate the difference of working style. Difference attitude toward each process that stated in those standards come from difference employee. For people who feel suitable with it will find comfort to work under those standards. But for those who is not, they found it difficult to work and sometime lose their work efficiency. Some of them request for a freedom in working process or some adjustment to match with each employee characteristic which hardly to fulfill. Some employee prefers to use verbal communication rather than filling document in minor task. And some do not like to write the report for minor change every time. 3 interviewees said that standardization is not appropriate to every function. Working under standard create difficulty to innovate new procedure and not suitable for work that require innovation.

### **Teamwork**

Japanese organization always prefers employee to work in groups. But not only mean to cooperate in the same one department but go across to another department as well. This working culture stays deep inside the organization which also enhance Thai employee to do so. After asked all interviewees, the understanding of the culture from the interviewee is also concrete. They understand company action by training them to work in a team. Enhance group working start by training session that mixes employees from difference department. After those trainings, they will know each other and easier to cooperate with.

All of the interviewees gave a positive opinion toward teamwork culture. Within an organization, everybody allows to work with their team, discuss their work and solve problem base on team agreement. 4 out of 7 interviewees had purposed about the system that supports teamwork. They say working in team allow each employee to separate one task into smaller pieces which lower the workload. It also improves communication within the department, this made each of them become closer and work according to each characteristic. And for culture context, working in teams is the culture that matches to Thai people. It does not create dissatisfaction for Thai employee. Thai people prefer to have discussion in a group contain with the same rank employee or so call their friend more than have an official meeting between Japanese and Thai employee. It may be difficult for Thai employee to make any suggestion at the meeting with their Japanese manager. But having a meeting within their department, the atmosphere becomes softer and most of the people willing to state their suggestion in the meeting.

For working with difference department, 3 interviewees said it increases cooperation between department and provide more information and idea that come from different department. Knowing each other provides speed and decrease error in communication. It reduces the process of communication by eliminated paper work. If group working is not applied, the communications between departments start by meeting between managers from each department to come and talk to each other. But if normal staff can work together by themselves it can eliminate those processes. Having discussion in the group also increase innovation and acquire the result that can satisfy everyone.



However, interviewees said there are drawbacks from teamwork culture as well. 4 interviewees said working in group requires the common goal that can satisfy every department. If there was a conflict of interest, it would take longer time to reach for agreement and create a goal that everyone satisfied. Personal bias against one group or individual is also a problem that can breakdown the corporation within the group. For another problem, 3 of the interviewees said working in group requires clear separation of task and work. Otherwise, it can create confusion for not knowing which person have a responsibility to which task and it will collapse the strength of group working. And again, effective team is built from effective employee. If one group is full with inefficiency employee, effective team couldn't be happened and it will also affect the overall quality of the work of their team.

For culture context, Thai people prefer to work in group and have ease to contact with people who have the same age or position. And a teamwork culture of Japanese can apply to Thai characteristic smoothly which lead to a positive result from their work. But for its drawback about the conflict between group and individual, it showed that Thai people are unable to separate their personal feeling from their work. When they have a conflict against one person, those feelings will be used in their workplace which creates the problem. If conflict happens between people in the same group, it tends to affect the whole group as well. And sometimes, Thai people prefer to avoid arguments by stay quiet in every meeting even among Thai employee. With a person who has this characteristic in team, full potential of teamwork can't be reached. 2 interviewees said that high quality works come from high quality team. But for low quality team, the outcome of implementing group work may not increase work efficiency. The efficiency of the team depends on every person in the team which can be a drawback by inefficient employee. Also the conflict between person can prevent them from working successfully.

### **Long term orientation**

In Japanese organization, long term plan have been implemented from the start. By having Thai employees working inside their company, Thai employees have to understand their plan and act accordingly. From interviewing the interviewee, positive opinion were responded from all of them. They said long term plan give them

an overall picture of their work from present to future. It provides information for what is the action they should take to achieve that goal. Within long term plan, Japanese also creates a short term plan. A goal they should reach in short term period of time provides ease in work for Thai people. In each plan, standardized work and good planning are exist to support employee in achieving their work as well. Long term goal gives employees a time to prepare themselves to face workload in the future. It provides time for an adjustment and makes that plan become more appropriate. Not only the action should employee take to achieve those goals, they can plan their private time to support those plans. Interviewees said that with a long term plan, they are able to plan their life in advance not to affect their work and prevent those work to affect their personal life as well.

But for the disadvantage this culture context, Thai people prefer short term goal which can see result them in short time. But for long term plan, Thai people consider it as an uncertainty that can change when time flow. With this characteristic, Thai people will focus on short term goals and have a possibility to forget the whole plan. Interviewee also said if the employee who takes responsibility for those plans resign from their work, it will create difficulty to continue the work and delay the whole plan. And a plan come with expectation, disappoint from changing the plan can affect to employee morale by making their work into waste. For culture context, it can be seen clearly that their difference between perspective from Japanese and Thai people which come from the value that people in both nations hold. Thai people look at short term goal while Japanese look for the longer one. This can be the problem when they work together to make a plan for the company.

Another culture that relates to Japanese long term orientation is long term employment. For Thai employee, long term employee is already well recognized as a culture that stays within the Japanese organization and it is the same with the interviewee. Interviewees recognized and learn about this culture by the company role model, and their expectation. When the interviewee was a junior, there was an expectation from Japanese that they would work with the company for a long time. And they showed disappointment every time someone has resigned. After asking their understanding about long term employment culture in Japanese organization, there are common understandings in this cultural context which are

- Japanese organization prefers to hire employee for a life time
- Japanese organization will not fire their employee unless those employee done a fatal mistake against organization rule
- Japanese organization give a bad credit for person who change their job frequency

After stated their understanding toward long term employment, the advantage and disadvantage about this system was described.

For the advantage of this culture, interviewees described it is about having high experienced employee who have been working in the field for a long time. Those who stay with one company for a long time would know all about the process that they have to do, the flow of each work process, who to contact when a problem occurs, and a way to achieve a goal. Those employees will have a higher understanding of company culture and know how to deal with it. This type of employee can also train new employees with more effective method because their understanding and experience. 2 interviewees also said this system provides career stability for them because they will not be fired if they did not do fatal mistake.

And for its disadvantage, 4 interviewees said this culture can reduce their motivation. To know that there is a low chance to be fired, some employees do not feel the pressure to finish their work effectively or give extra effort to finish their work. 2 interviewees said about the backfire of this culture are to have an inefficiency employee in the company and still have no sign of improvement. Those employees will continue to stay in the company which will effect to overall efficiency in group, department or whole organization. 1 interviewee said that to implement this system effectively, hiring system have to create a system to separate bad people from people who can be a good employee.

The possibility to implement this culture with Thai employee is low. 5 of the interviewees said Thai people are not suitable for this culture because they prefer career growth by changing their job rather stay in one company. They said Thai people do not consider work stability as a first priority when choosing a job. Thai people consider welfare, challenge, career growth and salary before work stability.

This also relates to Thai culture that prefers to look at the short term result rather than plan for a long term result. 5 of the interviewees said it is about work

dedication. Thai people prefer to have a happy life in the present by not working too hard and feel exhausted from their work. When Thai people do not feel happy or comfort to do their work, they are likely to resign rather than continue to work with their unhappy working life. Thai people prefer 'work to live' not 'live to work'. It also reflexes the fundamental of both cultures that have difference of competition level in their environment. The Japanese have very high competitive social which force them to work hard, dedicate to their work and organization to survive in the business world. Comparing to Thai's easy going and lower competitive social that not forces them to work very hard. For both nation characteristic, they can refer to Hofstede's masculinity and femininity research (Hofstede, 1984). His research categorizes Japanese as masculinity social while Thai is femininity social. To relate this with culture context, it can be seen clearly that Japanese and Thai people have a different working style. Japanese prefer the long term result while Thai prefers short term result. With this difference character, it will be hard to change one into another.

#### **Seniority base reward/promote culture**

Seniority reward and promotion culture is the culture that stays within the Japanese organization. The role of this culture prefers to give a reward or promotion to those who stays with the organization for a long time. The longer they stay, the more of career and growth they will receive from the organization. The interviewee also knows about this culture before having an interview session. They acknowledge it from training session that company had conducted when they started working with the company. They describe their understanding toward this culture as a culture that gives reward to senior employee who stays with company for a long time. Each of interviewee gave a similar opinion about this culture. All of the interviewee raises the issue by talking about motivation and morale which will be summarized into advantages and disadvantages which will explain further in this research.

The advantage of this culture is quite similar to the advantage of the long term employment culture which is about ensuring the future of employee by provide a plan for career growth. Japanese organization will give promotion to employee who growth within their organization. As a result, they have employees who understand in organization to work for them more than new hired employees and putting them into

high position. Employees who have good understanding in the organization can continue their work instantly and require less training. Also having a leader or manager who is already knows another employee who works in difference department will give them speed to cooperate with. On contrary, hiring new people from outside, he or she will require more time to learn and to create good work cooperation. Interviewee also said it can create a motivation for employee to stay with the company for a long time but only for an employee who plan to work in one company for a long time. 2 of the interviewees said it can create fairness of growth that can avoid the problem from promoting junior over senior. One interviewee said high experience employee feel grateful that the company see their values and give reward to them.

The disadvantage of this culture is also about motivation and morale. For motivation side, interviewee said it can persuade employees to stay with the company longer but they said it will affect work efficiency of those employees. The fact that their career growth is certain can decrease their motivation to work hard. Because they think the reward and promotion will eventually come to them when their work experience reach company's criterion. And it will have negative impact to overall work efficiency. And for junior staff, they are also affected by this culture not to give an extra effort as well. They think they will not grow faster than another because their working experience is not enough to be promoted anyway. For morale issue, there is a negative effect from not promoting people using accomplishment as a first priority but using work experience. 5 Interviewee said this system has to be adjusted by adding other factors which are employee accomplishment and behavior to judge in promoting one employee. Because if the company uses only works experience, it not only affect to work motivation but it can also affect morale that would lead employees who put high effort and expect for reward or promotion to resign. High work experience cannot guarantee the efficiency of their work as well.

By analyzing interviewee's opinions and link with Thai people characteristic, Thai people believe in a fair exchange of effort and reward which can be seen from an employee who gives high dedication to work will expect for reasonable reward and career advancement. But the seniority reward culture acts opposite from their belief and give them disappointment and decrease their morale. This belief also reflexes on a short term orientation characteristic of Thai people. They

are more impatience and expect for reward after working for a short period of time. Comparing to Japanese who are looking for the company's growth, they think if they can make their company success in business, those success return to them as a reward or career growth. The difference between long term and short term oriented characteristic can be referred to Hofstede's research as well.

### **Thai-Japanese Communication Problems**

This topic focuses on communication issues inside Japanese-Thai organization. According to the analyzed data from interviewees, there is a problem of inefficiency in the communication between Japanese and Thai. The problem is about "Japanese does not listen to Thai employee". All interviewees said this problem happens when there is a meeting between Japanese and Thai employee. Most of the suggestion from Thai employees were ignored and not being applied into practice. Japanese tend to agree with the suggestion that was made from Japanese staff. When there was a different opinion submitted from Japanese and Thai, their tendency of agreement usually lean toward the suggestion made from Japanese. Interviewee stated this problem has affected the motivation of work and hold them back to make any suggestion for improvement because they think Japanese will not listen to them. Moreover, the interviewee said the reason which Japanese chose each suggestion was usually not explained. As a result, Thai employee prefers not to make any suggestion that have to convince Japanese manager because they will not change anyway. 5 of the interviewees said the source of this problem come from the Japanese high nationalism characteristic. The interviewee described that this factor creates mistrust from Japanese toward Thai employee and sometime increase conflict between them.

Another problem is about difference of language that Japanese and Thai use. As said in "big picture" topic, translators are always required whenever there is a communication between Japanese and Thai employee. Japanese prefer to use Japanese language which not familiar with Thai employee. To communicate through a translator, it requires more time and has a chance for misinterpretation and error. Even though company provides welfare for employee for learning Japanese language, it does not reach to the level that can be used in work. 6 Interviewee said the language barrier affects the overall performance of the whole organization. Without an effective

method to communicate between Japanese and Thai, mistake from communication will continue to occur.



## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

Based on the differences between Japanese and Thai culture shown in research finding, creating the collaboration between both nations to work in one organization requires compromise. First, Japanese and Thai have to understand the differences of culture and characteristic. Acknowledging the advantage that each other have and adjust their disadvantage to coexist within the organization. Recommendation for adjustment is described below.

**Standardization:** Advantage of standardization is to be able to eliminate a variety of working processes which can eliminate confusion from using multiple formats. Using common format throughout the whole organization creates a standard flow of work which provides speed, accuracy and simplifies work. But at the same time, enforcing standard also decreases the flexibility of work and will discourage innovation. For Thai people, they prefer flexibility of work according to each person's preference. Excessively enforce those standards makes Thai employee feel uncomfortable, dissatisfied and lead to inefficient work. Reducing pressure of enforcing standard upon employee and allow them to work freely while still requests for single format output can be the solution to this issue. Allowing Thai employee to use verbal communication in some minor task which recorded document is unnecessary can be another solution. It will reduce document delivery process which facilitates Thai employee who prefers flexibility of work.

**Teamwork:** Japanese and Thai are nations that have a common culture in group working. Implementing a teamwork culture inside Japanese-Thai organization will not create conflict. But even though this culture is preferable by both nations this does not mean that it will always create an effective work. As described in research finding, the quality work comes from the quality team. If the team is filled with ineffective employees, this team cannot create a quality outcome for the organization. To prevent this problem, it requires a system to organize employee into group more



effectively. Avoid combining many inefficient employees into the same group but separate them to different group instead. Using peer pressure to push those employees to work harder and not hinders the whole group. The argument within group dividing each task and responsibility are the process that consumes time. Separating task from management level to solve this scenario is recommended. Managing employee's individual conflict by giving task that not requires verbal communication between them. Team leader should have a skill to draw a potential from team member and always motivate them to work effectively. This skill can be achieved by training and learning from the experience of each leader.

Long-term orientation: The context of this culture clearly opposes the characteristic of Thai people who have a short term orientation. Implementing long term goal cannot motivate Thai employee to work effectively. For recommendation, company should divide long term goal into short term goal and reward Thai employee when they complete their work. Manager should also explain their team member about a result from their work and give reward to them reasonably. Thai people are impatient and will not work in one organization for a long time if they do not like their work. Work rotation can be one solution. When Thai employees are dissatisfied with their work, try to give them a chance to rotate their work or to let them work in another function. But for promotion and salary raise request, each organization has to consider accord to employee performance and their policy. This must be done in an appropriate way and always give reason to the staff. For inefficient senior employees, the organization must punish them and force them to improve themselves and to work more properly. Make them not to be an example for other employee. Create positions for short term growth for Thai employee. Give a career advancement to motivate them.

Seniority-based promotion: From the research finding, opinion of Thai employees clearly stated that they do not appreciate this culture. It causes a decreasing in motivation and morale of employees which affects the overall work. Promoting employee by using work experience as one of important criteria is not fit properly to Thai. Each organization should evaluate work accomplishment, knowledge and skill together with work experience when promoting employees. Company should reduce a requirement of work experience from 2-3 year 1.5-2.5 years and focus more on

evaluating other criteria. Another recommendation is similar to that one that suggested in a long-term orientation topic which is to create a small step of career growth. Company should satisfy Thai employee by giving them career growth even a small one. Matching a period of growth with Thai short term orientation can motivate and increase morale of Thai employee.

**Communication:** The recommendation for the communication issue focuses on two major problems found in this research. The difficulty of communication from different language they use often resulted in inefficient cooperation. Unable to understand the whole meaning of discussion leads to mistakes. In addition, unable to ask for detail in task and management will lead to confusion. To solve this problem, it requires external person which is translator. The translator should be assigned in every discussion and allow Thai employee to use translator when they have a question. It may consume more time but this is worth for more effective communication. Using English to communicate can be another solution. The Second problem is one way communication from Thai employee who making suggestion and receive no answer. Also unfair adjustments toward Japanese and Thai employee issue. To solve this problem, both Japanese and Thai have to adjust their attitude. Listen to each other with reason and reduce bias are necessary. Favoritism toward nation must be eliminated and always show the reason when reject each suggestion.

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The major limitation of this research came from interviewee group. First, interviewees have length of work experience from 3-5 years and age from 25-30 years. This creates a generation cluster of the interviewee which affect opinion's tendency to be similar. In addition, cluster of work experience also gives a similar outcome. Moreover, interviewee's position does not allow them to see overall picture of the whole company. The second factor was that the information was collected from one organization and so the findings are only valid for this particular organization. Further studies should include information from a variety of Japanese organizations in Thailand in order to have broader relevance. The third issue was the number of interviewees which was limited to only 7 persons. Detailed in answer was available from in-depth interviews but the variety of answers were reduced by the number of interviewees. Again, increasing the number of interviewee is required for further research. However, a suggestion for further research could be to follow up with a quantitative study (a survey) to get a broader overview of Thais perceptions towards Japanese companies.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

This research put priority on the perspective of Thai low level employees toward the Japanese management system to understand the difference of culture and to find sources of conflict inside Japanese-Thai organization. Information in this research was gathered from 7 people consists of 5 staffs and 2 team leaders. By summarizing the collected information, it was divided into 5 categories according to a cultural context. It contains Standardization, Teamwork, Long-term orientation, Seniority-based promotion and Communication. Each topic contains advantage and disadvantage described by interviewees and linked together using Japanese and Thai's culture and characteristic. Some culture enhances cooperation between them but some does not. Recommendations for adjustment were proposed to improve cooperation and avoid conflict.

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