

COMPLETION REPORT

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

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Subject of Research Project: **The evolution and political economy of Japan-funded energy infrastructures in Southeast Asia**

In 2020, countries in the Southeast Asian region received a cumulative \$367 billion in total investments from Japan. Compared to China's \$255 billion, Japan leads in terms of infrastructure support to the region. This volume, however, was reported in its aggregate and little is known about their country and sectoral distribution. We also know little about the political economy of these investments. Chinese investments, by contrast, are being studied more detail. This project uncovered the scale, evolution, and political economy dynamics of Japanese energy investments in Southeast Asian countries. The project asked the question: how Japan invested in Southeast Asia's energy sector, at what scale and volume, and in what political economy it was embedded in. Understanding the development of Southeast Asia's energy sector - as supported by Japanese funding – is important not only in terms of the region's economic development, through power provision to industries, but also to their sustainable development. Knowing these are crucial given the region's persistent energy poverty, aging grids, increasing energy demand, population growth, and rapid urbanization. The project looked through the past twenty years (2000-2020), a particular era of Southeast Asian history punctuated by large-scale stresses and shifts, including the global economic recession of 2008 onwards, the rise of China and China-Southeast Asia geopolitics, the infrastructure boom in Southeast Asia, the institution of normative agreements on climate change and sustainable development, and the Covid pandemic. The project considered (1) the evolution of Japanese energy investments, looking particularly at the scale, volume, and trends of bilateral energy financing; (2) the rationales and drivers for flows and ebbs, and peaks and valleys, in these trends, especially with regards to climate actioned energy security; and (3) the influence of national customs, policies, and governance - as well as oilier political economy drivers, particularly those arising from China's Belt-and-Road Initiative, to the scale, volume, and trends of Japan's bilateral energy financing with Southeast Asian countries. This research employed desk review techniques of extant databases, peer-reviewed materials in journals, pertinent websites of related public and private agencies and NGOs, and news accounts. The project also conducted primary data gathering using key informant virtual interviews of academics, scholars, policymakers, development practitioners, and other stakeholders to ascertain the interactions of Japan-funded energy investments with national cultures, policies, and governance arrangements in various Southeast Asian countries.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

26 November 2022, University of Tokyo-Komaba Campus, "Focusing on Regions, Connecting Individuals: The Cebu Japanese Community in Peace and War". Presenters: Dr. Jose Eleazar R. Bersales and Dr. Taihei Okada

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Publisher and Date of the Book: Tres de Abril General Services Inc., March 2023

Title: The Japanese Community in Cebu, 1900-1945

Authors: Jose Eleazar R. Bersales and Taihei Okada