

# Friends of Japan

In this report we introduce the life and work of two friends of Japan.



## Nhat Minh Be

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at The University of Tokyo.

## Japan: The Perfect Meeting Place for Students From All Over the World

I came to study in Japan in 2012 at The University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Public Policy. Before that I used to work for a Japanese logistics company in Hanoi and had to interface with custom officers and government officers, and I realized there was a lot of corruption everywhere. Bribing is just part of the system and even I myself had to bribe tax officers in order to get anything done. I decided I would like to make a change in the system and make my country a better place; Japan seemed like the ideal place for me to come to study as it has made great advances in developing its country, and that is the reason I chose to come here.

I have been studying here now for two years and it has been a marvelous experience. The University of Tokyo is the best place to study. The faculty and staff are really professional and kind and the university has excellent facilities. The academic standards are very high and we get an excellent training.

I think that Japan and Viet Nam have a lot of things in common and we can learn a lot of lessons from Japan. Japanese public policy is based on the Japanese spirit of everyone working together in harmony, which is an excellent model for my country.

For an introvert Asian like me, Japan is an ideal place to study. I always feel safe in Japan, and it is easy for me to communicate with the Japanese. I think Japan shares with my country a knowledge of the importance of not having to talk all the time, and also I love the fact that Japanese are comfortable with silence. People in other Asian countries are also very comfortable with silence, and I think that makes for deeper communication in the long run.

I really enjoy living in Japan. The Japanese are so well-mannered, and one can see this especially in public spaces. People queue properly and do not eat on trains, and respect the others in public spaces. In Viet Nam people sometimes have less respect for public space. In Japan people show great respect for the space of others.

I hope many students and westerners come to Japan and accept this society as it is. I have some American friends who are studying with me. When they first came to Japan they were confused for the first month but they could find themselves here. They learned about the beauty of silence and came to enjoy a really precious time in Japan.

After getting some work experience I really want to come back to Japan to do my doctorate, and it would be great if there were an opportunity to work here. I would like to be a professor and teach public policy.

Japan is a bridge between the East and West; it is a perfect meeting place for students from all over the world. Studying here is such a precious time in my life. I really hope that students from all over the world will come to this great country to study.



## Shen Minghua

Shen Minghua, a fluent speaker of Japanese, Korean and Chinese, supports Japanese manufacturing businesses expanding into Asia.

## Supporting Japan's Deepening Ties with Asia

“Convenience stores and ATMs are available 24 hours a day and the trains always arrive on time. Everything runs so smoothly and convenience is taken so seriously in Japan that I think it's really a great place to live.” These are the words of Shen Minghua, a Korean Chinese who has lived in Japan for eight years and works for an IT company in Tokyo. She uses her fluent Japanese, Chinese, and Korean to support small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses from Japan as they expand into continental Asia.

“When you visit a traditional Japanese inn (*ryokan*) you are taken aback by the courteous and meticulous customer-centered service. The meals have a planned order so dishes arrive at the perfect moment. I'd only read about the spirit of Japanese hospitality (*omotenashi*) in books so I couldn't quite imagine it before. It's something that I think foreigners can only understand for the first time if they actually come to Japan and experience it for themselves.”

Shen first became really aware of Japan when she was in high school. She was spellbound by the glamorous city lives depicted in the Japanese TV drama, *Tokyo Love Story*, when it was broadcast in her hometown in Jilin Province, China.

“I wanted to go and see the streets from the drama for myself. I longed for a lifestyle where people got together and had fun with their friends after work.” She immediately began to study Japanese on her own and later majored in Japanese at university. Later she could fulfill her dream to study in Japan.

After studying in Japan, Shen thought she would return to China and become a Japanese teacher, but she got used to her life in Japan; she came to understand the way Japanese people felt, and decided to stay in Tokyo.

“In Japan, it's considered very important not to cause any inconvenience to the people around you.” At first, she thought this tendency was excessive, leading to a society where people rarely show their individuality. However, as she adapted to her environment, she changed her mind. “If you follow this rule, ultimately it's a quick route toward feeling good and living an easy life.”

At the same time, she came to sense the rich individuality of Japanese people through working with business managers in her job. “I've been responsible for dealing with around 30 companies, and the majority of the presidents have displayed strong personalities and clear preferences. But when we talk, they will also quietly discuss their problems and listen to advice. I don't find it difficult to talk directly person-to-person, so it's very motivating,” Shen stresses.

“I like China as well, but my life in Japan is also full and satisfying, and my mother lives in South Korea now, so that's where I go to visit her.” A new generation who can easily operate across international borders, like Shen Minghua, is supporting Japan's deepening economic ties with other Asian countries.