
2014-15 Field Notes

Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person

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Person to Person in Japan

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Mid-Semester Assessment, IDST 031

NAME: Van Ha **COUNTRY:** Japan **DATE:** April 14th

Cultural similarity:

Vietnam and Japan are both influenced by Buddhism and ancient Chinese culture so we share many beliefs, ways of thinking, and tastes. My friend and I both grew up with many Buddhist concepts. We are not Buddhist, but some Buddhist practices have blended in our traditional culture. We go to the temple or pagoda in the New Year or on special occasions to pray for good things in life.

Japanese people are reserved and do not like to say things straight. I have many European and American friends that find it annoying. But as growing up in another Asian country, I understand Japanese ways of thinking. Of course, in some situations, it is better to say your opinions straightly and resolve the problems. But it depends on the situation and relationship with the partner; my Japanese friend will be really vague to avoid hurting the others. Is this better to hear from a girl that she is busy so she cannot go with you or to hear that she has no interest in you?

Japan and Vietnam are geographically close to each other; we share many similar ingredients and eating habits. We eat rice every day in every meal. We also share some similar snacks like sweet potato chips, or dried plums. We also grew up with many TV shows so my friend and I can talk about many childhood related shows.

Cultural differences:

Japanese can be considered as the most hard working and disciplined people in the world. As for my friend, she works from 9 am to 8pm, and with her, it is normal working hours. She spends her whole weekday on work. My friend is having problems

with her boss due to his lack of detail information. She said sometimes she was so stressed that she has to take a day off. Same as her, many Japanese people get stressed at work but still keep with the job.

The most surprising difference is family bond. It may be similar in America but it's totally different from Vietnam. I learned about Japan as a traditional country with strong family values. However, younger generations (from my generation and after) don't seem to have strong family bonds. Parents and children do not talk much, and siblings are not close with each other. My friend has two older brothers but she has never had a real family talk to them. It is good that Japanese are independent, but I think they become too independent that they somehow grow apart from their only family.

I really enjoyed the interview. Since I have been here for seven months, I have learned many things through observations and experiences; my perception about Japan and the U.S. did not change.

Interviewee: Mariko Toguchi

Rikkyo University alumni

Interview date: Apr 10