

# Japanese Culture

## *A Comprehensive Training Guide*

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## 1.1) An Introduction – Jay

### History

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Japan's history has been broken down into eleven different periods. The prehistoric period, also called Jomon period, began around 10,000 BC. Around the fourth century Japan started to organize and its empirical household becomes well establish with the reign of the Yamato court. During this time Japan is introduced to manufactured articles, weapons, and agricultural tools from China and Korea.

As you enter the Nara period, Japan evolves and becomes a structured country with law codes, known as the "Ritsuryo System." As Japan begins to imitate some of its fellow Asian neighbors, Buddhism becomes an essential ingredient in the Japanese culture. An influenced with such an impact, it is in this period that in the Todaiji temple the Great Buddha is built. Once Japan's capital is moved from Nara to Kyoto, so does the culture of the people. The Chinese ways where a major influence in the Nara period, but Japanese indigenous style of living became more prevalent in the Heian period.

Japan's new culture starts to flourish in many ways. A new culture revealed in Japan's agricultural and architectural designs showed signs of a new Japan emerging. Just like the agriculture changed so did the politics. It was in the Kamakura period were Japan's politics start to emerge with hostile takeovers. Families begin to dominant the country with military force. In this period the Minamoto family overthrew the Taira

family, making Minamoto no Yoritomo the shogun by the court. He structured the government in a military fashion, making warriors the top of the food of the social class.

Military had such an impact that most of the literature works in this period were tales of celebrated warriors and their adventures. With this military styles came many conflicts. With political turmoil came hope for the lower class of Japan. With Emperor Go-Daigo and Ashikaga Takauji, the head of the Muromachi Shogunate, clashing warlords were weakened and the some of the misfortune and under privileged managed to improve their circumstances.

The political situation did not heal until the attempts of restoration by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi happened. Even though the rule was brief Japan improved and progressed forward. It was in the 1600's where Tokugawa Ieyasu came in total control, by defeating the loyal servants of the Toyotomi Hideyoshi, again giving Japan only one ruler to follow. He established the Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo and Tokugawa shoguns ruled Japan for over 260 years. During the Meiji period, Japan began refining and becoming heavily infused by the western culture. With victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, modern Japan was now becoming a world power. Change was visible in Japan's culture, literature, and military power during this period. It was in the Taisho period were the educated class of Japan began getting ahold of a diverse option of literary works. With many western literary works being translated in Japanese, a change in literature, drama, music, and painting was surfacing.

Japan was experiencing a dramatic change. As the interest in literature grew, so did mass media. According to The Central Review, "New kings of mass media - large circulation newspapers, general monthly magazines like Chuo koron and Kaizo, and

radio broadcasts - added to the richness of cultural life.” Although Japan was riding high in culture Japan was also experiencing a economic collapse; it began right after World War I. The market in Japan collapse and banks were not able to help. With the banks collapsing and the Great Kanto Earthquake causing havoc in Japan, the future was looked hazy for Japan. As bank seemed to get back in order, with the help of the large zaibatsu (family-owned financial and industrial groups), Japan slowly began to improve. Japan true help came from its military forces. While Japan had economy had weaken their military was growing strong. During this period Japan had invade China and some British and Dutch colonies in the Asian region. With Japan’s need for resource and the United States ceasing trade negotiations, Japan rested on hostile takeovers in order to survive. With these plans in placed, Japan had to eliminate the United States in order to gain complete control. With the attacks on Pearl Harbor and the American harbors in the Philippines Japan looked to have gained complete control of the Eastern world. But with the attacks on the US Military came Japan’s downfall. Japan was hit very hard by the United States weakening the power. They slowly began to lose all the land they had conquered and soon found themselves under the control of the United States.

As Japan recovered and restructure itself, government began to regain control. With Japan becoming a democratic country the United States so fit to loosen the reign. In 1947 Japan wrote its constitution and by the following year the United States were no longer in control; Japan gained total sovereignty over its land. From that point Japan has manage to maintain a healthy economy, allowing them to build relationships with other world powers, and eventually becoming one itself.



## Topography

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Japan is located in the eastern hemisphere. Geologically speaking Japan is fairly young. Japan is composed of multiple islands. The upper islands belong to what is known as the Circum-Pacific Ring of Fire. Most of Japan is made of mountain and volcanoes. In fact, over 70 percent of Japan is made up of mountains. This topography leads many geologists to believe that Japan is “fairly young” (Encyclopedia of the Nations).

Japan is an amazing place, with magnificent geological features. Through the central part of Japan, the province of Honshu, runs the Hida (Japan’s Alps) and the Akaishi Mountains. Japan has 25 mountains, the highest being Mountain Fuji; recorded to be 12,388 feet high.

Volcanoes are spread throughout Japan. 265 volcanoes are currently recorded, and 20 of them remain active. Because of Japan’s location and topography some of the natural disasters that have devastated Japan include earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruption. Last volcanic activity was stated to be in 2006 (Akan Hokkaido, Japan).

Plains cover twenty percent of the islands with most of them located by the seacoast. The largest is the Kanto Plain located by the Tokyo Bay Region.

Rivers and lakes are sparse. The longest river is the Shinao, which is 228 mile long and the largest lake is Lake Biwa.

## Weather

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Japan is known for having four beautiful seasons. The amazing weather provides Japan with comfortable conditions for tourism. Spring is considered, “the best time of year to be in Japan”, with autumn being a close second. The warm weather and light rain allows Japanese festivals to be experienced in all their beauty. Japanese summers have increased (and almost unbearable) rain, temperature and humidity. Most tourist websites discourage visitors from coming during this time. One of the sites says summer is “probably the worst possible time to visit.” As summer transitions to autumn, the temperature becomes tolerable again. Winters are cold and windy, but not terribly extreme (Japan Climate).

## Resources and Minerals

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Given the shortage of domestic minerals and resources, Japan has relied largely on innovation to compete in the world market. HarperCollege.com states that Japan's limited resource base includes its access to the ocean and minimal agricultural resources and mineral resources. Historically, since overland travel in the mountainous interior of Japan is difficult, the surrounding seas have been its greatest source for resources. As a result, fishing and shipbuilding have become large Japanese industries. Japanese fishing vessels travel all over the world, supporting fish markets in Japan. Japan's dependency on its aquaculture is one that causes concern. With Japan prone to natural disasters, because of its geological location, Japan holds risks of market collapse. With the recent tsunami, Japan is currently experience market distress due to the destruction of fisheries in northern Japan.

While Japan depends heavily on the aquaculture, it also has some agricultural resources. Japan's agriculture is made up of small farms, labor-intensive technologies, great use of fertilizers, and the dominance of rice. A small portion of the land area is suitable for agriculture, but the remainder consists of forest-covered mountains. As a result, farmland is fragmented and limited to narrow coastal plains, mostly contained in the Kanto Plain around Tokyo, the Nobi Plain, and the Kansai District surrounding Osaka. Despite its poor soils, Japanese agriculture is highly productive. Climatic conditions allow for double cropping in most areas. Other major crops include: wheat, barley, oats, apples, tea and citrus fruit.

Japan's significant investment in education has positioned them to world leaders in the technology market.

## 1.2) Demographics - Jay

### **Subcultures**

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Japanese subcultures create a unique differentiation factor that separates Japan from other countries. Japan's culture has a conservative tone to its structure, but its subculture is expressive and far from the norms of traditional customs. Japan's fashion has become the platform for exposing the different ideas and interest. It is the younger generation, within Japan, that has taken the task to become the face of the divergent styles. Japan's innovative and unique styles have a history that dates as early as the 1960's.

The Sukeban, one of Japan's most bizarre styles, was known for girls who caused disorder through violence and unlawful acts. The word itself defines the woman as a female boss, completely defying Japan's culture. It seems that the common theme for its subcultures is the distaste towards conformity.

The Yanki and Bosozoku style were also prevalent during the sixties. Yanki and Bosozoku were male and female biker gangs that took Japan by storm during this time period. During the eighties, the number of male biker groups began to decrease more and more girl biker groups began to pop up. (listverse.com) Furthermore, as time progressed Japan's trends and styles became more visible through women fashion.

The Ko Gal were girls who "wore their school uniforms with the skirts shortened, tanned their skin, and bleached their hair." They were known for wearing sensual school uniforms (Frater).

In the 1980's, the Nagomu indie record label influenced a dark style of dressing known as Nagomu Gal.

Both the Ganguro and Manba styles were unique in the sense that they both aiming to present Japanese women with dark skin, either through beauty cosmetics or extreme tanning. The variation in accessories was the only characteristic that separated the two. Ganguro girls were known for bleached hair, short skirts and high platform shoes. Manba had the distinct look of white lips and large white circle around the eyes. This was described as "always trendy and garishly bright."

The Lolita style is Japan's newest fashionable style. Lolita's accessories include bonnets and headdresses, rocking horse shoes, parasols, petticoats, and frilled knee socks. Just like Lolita, Japan's subcultures are elaborate and original, expressing Japan's innovative style and uniqueness; something that separates Japan from the rest (Frater).

## Education & Literacy

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Japan's education is regarded as one of the best in the world. After World War II Japan adapted the American system of 6-3-3-4, six years of elementary, three years of middle school, three years of high-school, and four years of university. While most educational levels have teacher specialist, the elementary level seems to lack the specialist. It has been said that in 2005, Daily Yomiuri, brought the idea of integrating elementary and middle schools for the purpose to combine resources.

The enrollment numbers are outstanding in Japan, according to May 2003 figures, "about 20.7 million students were enrolled in educational institutions in Japan." Here are the numbers by grade: 760,442 in kindergarten, 17,226,911 in elementary schools, 3,748,319 in junior high schools, 3,809,801 in senior high schools, 250,065 in junior colleges (usually two years), 2,803,901 in universities (four years) and graduate schools, 57,875 in technical colleges, 786,135 in special training schools, and 189,570 in other types of schools.

Even with such a high number of students, Japan maintains a healthy teacher to student ratio. Graduation rates at all levels are high and students are surrounded by a culture that promotes healthy education. "More than 90% of all students graduate from high school and 40% from university or junior college. 100 % of all students complete elementary school and Japan is repeatedly said to have achieved 100% literacy and to have the highest literacy rate in the world since the Edo period.

The Japanese educational system has been highly regarded by many countries and has been studied closely for the secrets to the success of its system, especially in the years before the economic bubble burst” (Education in Japan).

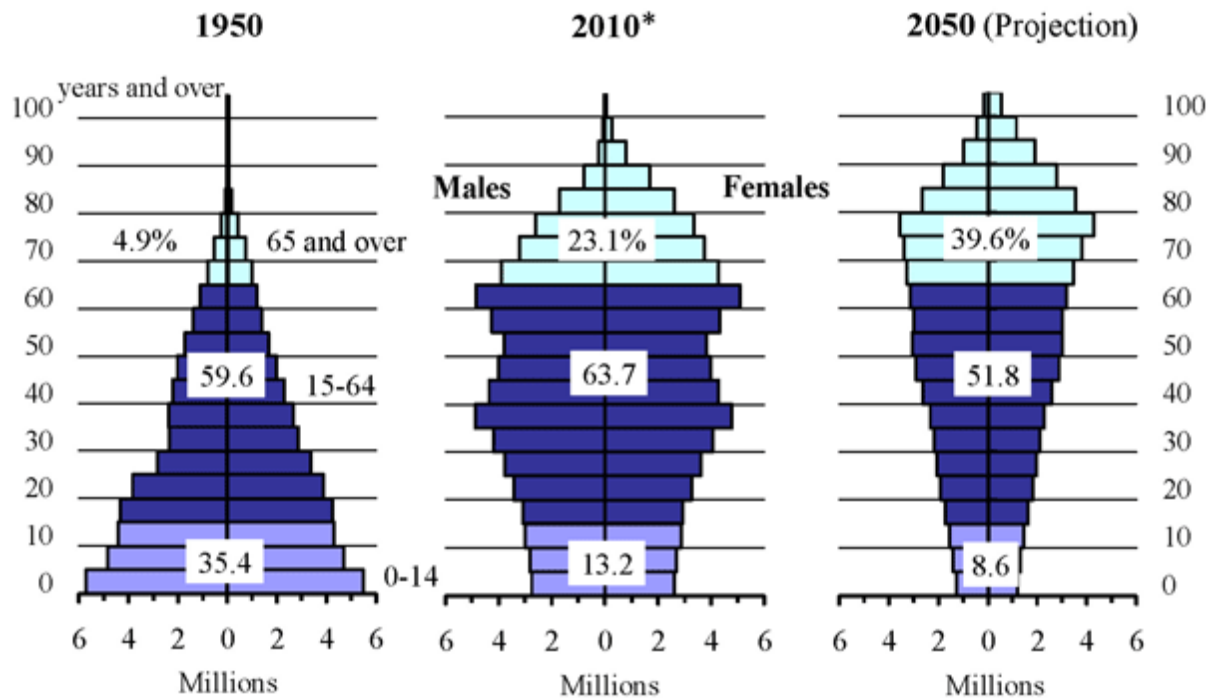
## **Birthrate, Death Rate, Population – Lazar**

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According to the U.S department of state, Japan’s population was estimated in 2011 to be at 126,475,664 people. Their growth rate in the same year was estimated at -0.278%. Japan enjoys one of the highest life expectancies in the world, 79 years for males and 86 years for females. 99.1% of the population is considered ethnically Japanese, with the largest minorities belonging to Chinese and Korean decent.

According to the Japanese 2010 census, the percentage of the population 65 years and older has risen since 2005, and is the highest in the world. The number of single-person private households is the single largest category of private households, for the first time since the census in Japan began in 1920. This implies that the Japanese are moving away from traditional families. Japan also has a low birth rate. The percentage of the younger age population in Japan (0-14 years) has been shrinking since 1982. In 2010, the younger age population amounted to 16.80 million, accounting for 13.2 percent of the total population, the lowest level on record since the Population Census began. Because of this the Japanese people’s long life expectancy their population is aging, and it is expected that it will continue to do so.

**Figure 2.3**  
**Changes in the Population Pyramid**



Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

## 1.3) Politics & Legalities - Jay

### Political System

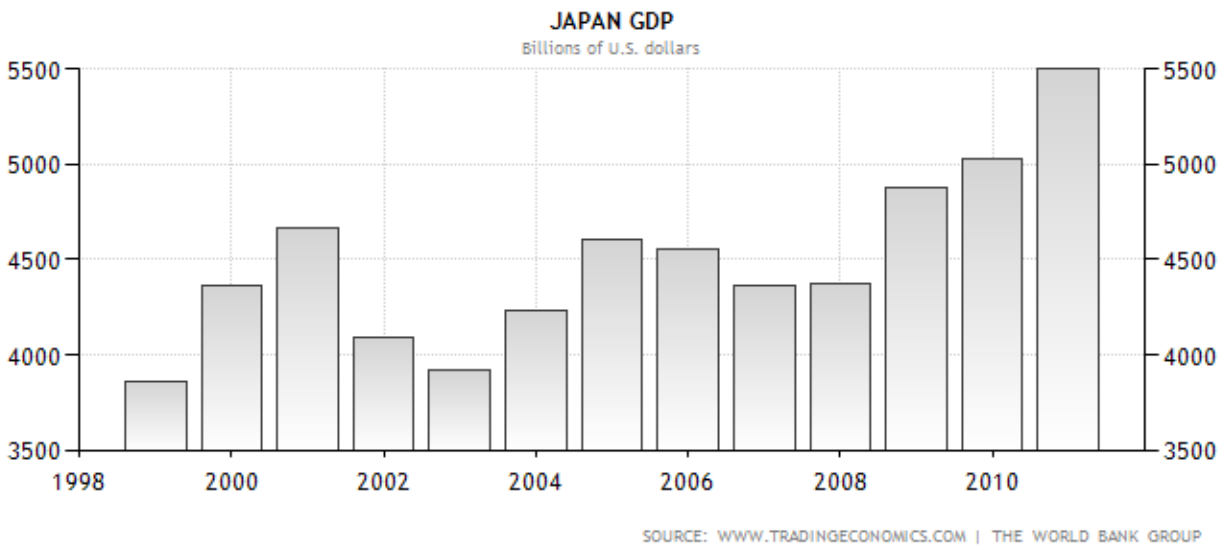
Japan has a constitutional monarchy political system; based on a parliamentary cabinet system. The Japanese constitution, effective in May 3, 1947, has 103 articles. The constitution states the structure of government it has adapted.

The cabinet consists of the prime minister with no more than 17 ministers of state; all have to respond to the cabinet. According to their political structure, the Diet is the one who appoints the prime minister. The Prime Minister must be a member of the Diet and he has the power to appoint and dismiss the prime ministers of states. The current prime minister is Yoshihiko Noda. He is Japan's 95th Prime Minister and he is part of the Democratic Party of Japan. Japan has several political parties; Democratic Party of Japan, People's New Party, Liberal Democratic Party, New Komeito, Japanese Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party. Japan's Constitution, effective in May 3, 1947, has 103 articles. The constitution states that the emperor has no power but has the permission to perform ceremonial acts. The current emperor is Akihito who is married to Michiko; they both have three children ("Government / Political System").

## 1.4) GDP, Income, Wealth – Corey

Japan's industrialized and free market economy is the second largest in the World. Japan's currency is the Yen. One dollar in the United States is equal to 82.46 yen. The GDP in Japan is \$5,468 billion dollars, which is equal to 8.87 percent of the world's economy.





The annual growth rate for the GDP of Japan is .6 percent and the GDP growth rate is .2 percent. The GDP per capita is \$39,310 and the GDP per capita PPP is \$33,753. The difference between the two is that the GDP per capita takes in to consideration the inflation and the GDP per capita PPP is the most useful because it takes in to account the relative cost of living and the inflation rates of the country (Japan GDP).

According the to the Nationals Encyclopedia Japan's distribution of wealth is mostly spent on health insurance. This is because the Japanese must take part in the public or semi-public health insurance policies in Japan.

## 1.5) Industries, Products, MNCs – Jeff

Japan's economy is the third largest in the world behind the United States and China (Lah). Japan has a per capita GDP of \$34,362. Also, 68 of the Fortune 500 companies are located in Japan.

The country imports about 60% of its caloric intake, as only 12% of its land is suitable for farming (The CIA World Fact Book). Japan does boast one of the largest fishing fleets in the world, accounting for nearly 15% of the world catch. Japan's service sector accounts for about three-quarters of its total economic output (Economy of Japan).

Japan is one of the largest creditors in the world since it consistently runs a trade surplus (Chandler). Due to this, banking has become one of the largest industries along with other service-based businesses insurance, real estate, retailing, transportation, and telecommunications (Chandler) (Economy of Japan). These service based activities account for three quarters of Japan's economic output.

### **Top Multinational Corporations**

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The largest MNCs in Japan fall into one of two categories, chain-type food service companies (i.e. McDonalds or Starbucks), and financial services companies (i.e. Citigroup and Metlife) (Langlois). One of the most recent challenges to these MNCs was the earthquake in 2011. Starbucks was forced to close 100 of its 900 locations and McDonalds closed about 300 of theirs. The Multi-National financial firms suffered much less as they were located mostly in Tokyo.

Japan's multinational corporations face some unique challenges. Japan is subtly culturally diverse. While they do have a very strong nationalism ingrained in their culture, many Western executives have the tendency to treat businessmen from Osaka the same as they treat a Japanese businessman from Tokyo. Another challenge the MNCs face is the very different corporate work environment in Japan. It is often expected for Japanese businessmen to spend a majority of their leisure time with coworkers or clients. This is an important part of doing business in Japan since so much is based on the personal relationships formed (Chandler).

## 1.6) Trade Statistics – Lazar

### **Imports**

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Japan has a surplus in its export/import balance, according to TradingEconomics.com. Over the past 25 years Japan has seen a steady rise in imports. They have grown considerably over the last three years and are close to their level before the economic crisis of 2008. As of January 2012, Japan had imported \$77,455,788,000 worth of goods, year-to-date. This is a 17.7% increase from the previous year.

Of all the countries Japan imports from, China is far and away their largest trading partner. Japan imported 17.2 billion dollars worth of goods from China. That's almost three times as much as the 6.4 billion imported from the United States, Japan's second largest good supplier. Other significant suppliers include Australia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates.

The most important import goods are raw materials such as oil, foodstuffs and wood.

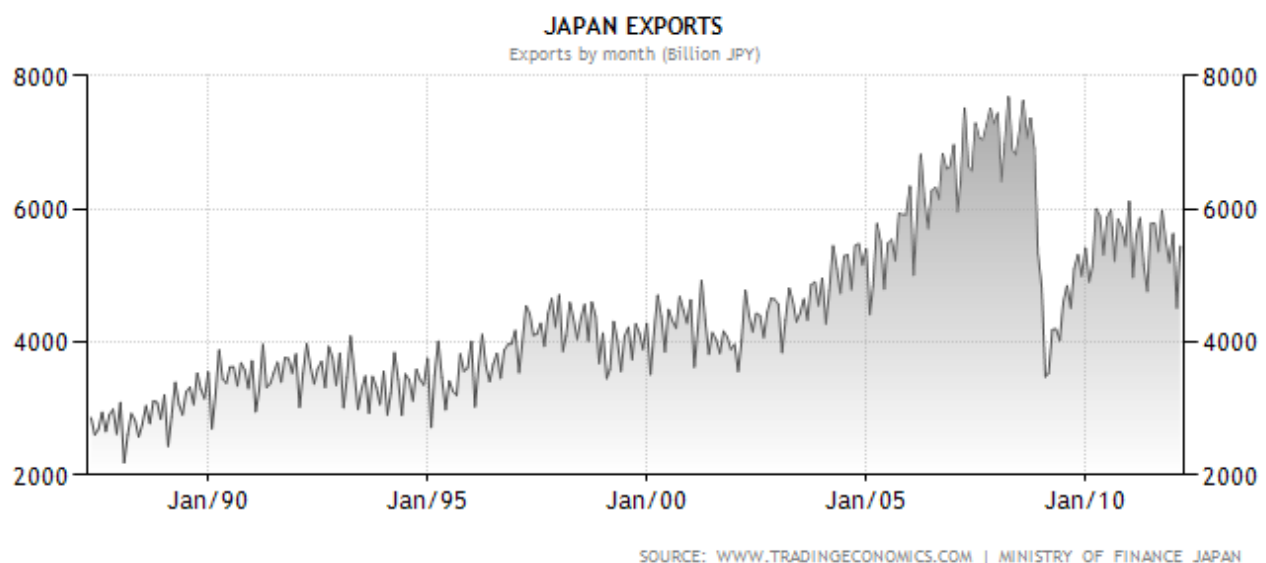


## Exports

The information provided by TradingEconomics.com shows that as of January 2012, Japan has exported \$58,448,231,000 worth of goods, year-to-date. This is a small, 2.6% decrease from the previous year, showing that Japanese exports largely holding steady. Over the last 25 years Japan's exporting activities have mirrored their importing activities, and they have also shown significant recovery since 2008.

Japan's largest trading partners are the United States and China, who purchased 9.8 and 9.6 billion dollars of Japanese exports respectively. Other important trading partners are South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Germany.

Japan-guide.com reports that the country's main export goods are cars, electronic devices and computers.



## Trade Balance

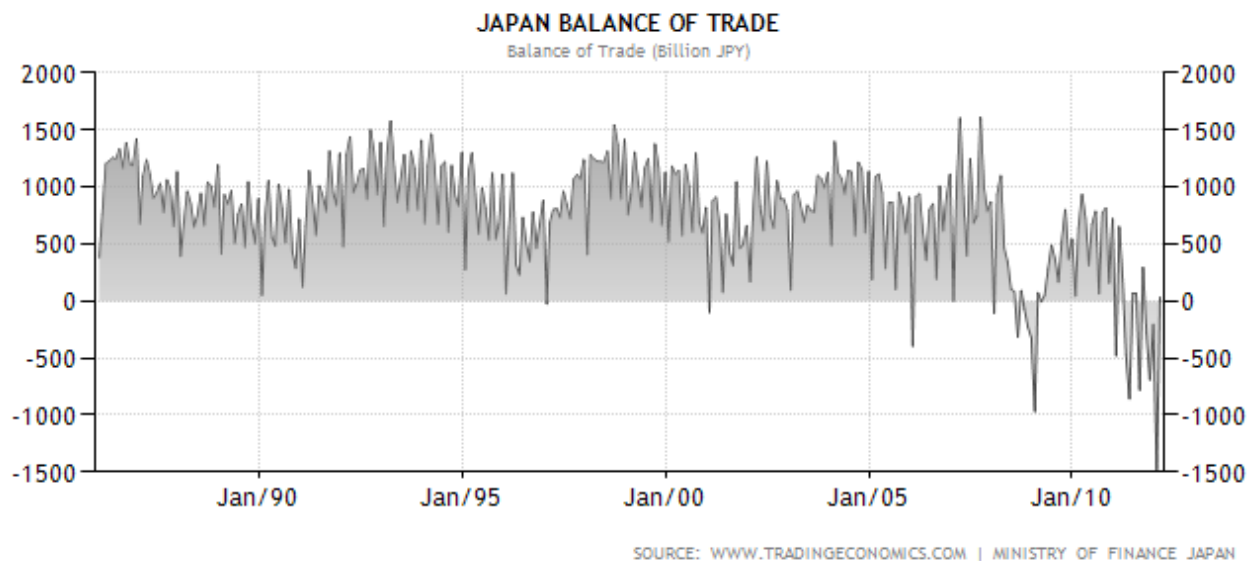
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According to TradingEconomics.com, Over the past twenty-five years, Japan has enjoyed a general trade surplus. The global economic downturn that began in 2008 had a significant effect on the Japanese economy, causing a sharp decline in

both imports and exports. After 2008, Japan showed a significant trade deficit for the first time in over two decades, and its current deficit is even larger. Year-to-date, Japan has run a 19 billion dollar trade deficit, up from 13.25 billion in the previous year.

The following graph displays the balance of trade in Japan from January 1987 to April 2012. It should be noted that as of the most recent data, Japan's balance of trade is showing a very small surplus. The cause of this is related to a large increase in imports because of the Tsunami disaster of 2011. According to The U.S. Department of State:

In order to ensure stability, the Bank of Japan injected more than \$325 billion in yen into the economy. Estimates of the direct costs of the damage--rebuilding homes and factories--range from \$235 billion to \$310 billion. In August 2011, the government revised downward its fiscal year inflation-adjusted GDP forecast to 0.5%. Government plans called for massive spending, as high as \$295 billion, on reconstruction efforts in disaster-affected areas to stimulate economic growth.



The Bank of Japan under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance creates the Balance of Payments.

## **Trade Per Capita**

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According to the WTO, from 2008-2010 Japan's trade per capita was \$12,418

## 1.7) Labor – Lazar

### **Labor Force**

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Japan's labor force is made up of 64.97 million people and of this, 48.5% are women. The force is concentrated in urban areas, and less than 1% of the population works in agriculture. Because of Japan's limited natural resources, even less work in the mining industry. Most Japanese people work in the manufacturing, construction, distribution, real estate, services, and communication industries. Approximately 70% of the labor force is service and the remainder is industry ("Background Note: Japan").

### **Unemployment Rates**

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Statistical information on TradingEconomies.com shows unemployment rates have been historically low in Japan, from the late 70's to the early 90's they were

estimated at around 2-3%. Those rates rose steadily through the 90's and early 2000's, peaking at around 5.5% in the early 2000's. The economic crisis of 2008 resulted in another spike in unemployment, which Japan has been steadily lowering. The unemployment rate fell slightly is currently about 4.5 percent.



## 1.8) Technology & Infrastructure – Jeff

Only a few years ago Japan was the world leader in memory chips, semiconductors, TVs, phones and other technology hardware products. In the last three years Japan has experienced a precipitous drop in this sector (Bremner). This is widely thought to be because most manufacturing is now done overseas by Japanese



multinationals. In a recent Business Week article by Brian Bremner, the Japanese technology sector was referred to as an empty shell.

Despite this recent loss of technology manufacturing activity, Japan leads the world in Internet broadband speeds with an average speed of 63.6 megabits per second (Alvarez). The United States ranked 15<sup>th</sup> on this same list with an average speed of 4.9 megabits per second (Alvarez).

As of 2010 over 78 percent of its population was connected to the Internet with many of the major Japanese providing high-speed, free, public Wi-Fi (Japan Internet Usage).

Even though Japan already leads the world in broadband speed, it is reported that they are taking part in a joint venture with a Canadian company to connect London and Tokyo via an undersea cable through Canada's Northwest Passage. As the sea ice continues to melt this becomes increasingly possible. This would add a level of speed and connectivity between some of the largest financial markets in the world, as long as bringing high-speed internet to the far north of Canada (Boswell).

Despite the quick drop in technology manufacturing, Japan continues to lead the world in technological hardware innovation. This is due, in large part, to the high amounts of engineering talent Japan continues to produce.

# 1.9) Japan's Living Conditions & Lifestyle –

Corey

## Living Conditions

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Japan is one of the most expensive countries to live in throughout the world and Tokyo is the most expensive city. Housing and utilities are very expensive in Japan. If living in the city is too expensive, one live just outside the city in *gaijin* or guesthouse ("Living in Japan").

The entrance to any home is called the *genkan*. This is where one would typically remove and store their shoes before going further into the house. After entering the home many Japanese wear house slippers or go barefoot ("Typical Japanese Lifestyle and Everyday Living").

Because they share bath water, Japanese bathe very differently from Americans. First, they rinse off before even getting into the bathtub or shower. While applying soap, they step out of the tub or bath and rinse off before getting back in. If the water in the tub is still hot, they leave it for the next person to use ("Typical Japanese Lifestyle and Everyday Living").

The Japanese have two types of toilets. The western style is the kind we are accustomed to. However, to use the Japanese toilet, men and women must squat over

the toilet instead of actually sitting on it. Nothing besides toilet paper is flushed down the toilet ("Typical Japanese Lifestyle and Everyday Living").

## Lifestyle

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Because homes in Japan usually tend to be small, most socializing is done outside the home in clubs, bars and recreation centers. Crowded streets and lack of cheap parking cause most transportation to happen on foot or by subway. Their workday starts early and they typically walk to meals. A typical Japanese worker walks two to five kilometers a day. Their active lifestyle is a major contributing factor in them having some of the longest lifespans in the world (McGarry).

## 1.10) Diet, Housing, Clothing & Activities -

Corey

## Diet

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The Japanese diet is one that appeals to the eye as well as the taste (Stamos Kovac). According to the Japan Zone website, "a typical diet includes a bowl of rice or noodles, a bowl of miso soup, pickled vegetables, and some type of fish or meat".

The Japanese use many types of rice and three main types of noodles: the wheat flour noodle (*udon*), the buckwheat noodle (*soba*) and ramen noodle. Fish,

served both hot or cold, is central to Japanese meals. The average Japanese person consumes about half a pound of fish a day (JimB). Another ingredient used in a lot of food in Japan is soy. The Japanese diet is very healthy and is one factor of why the Japanese have such a long life span.

## Housing

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The high cost of living makes small apartments the most popular housing in Japan. The average apartment is approximately 400 square feet. The Japanese use tatami mats made of thick straw and measuring about 180cm x 90cm ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)) to determine the size of apartments, unlike Americans who use square feet ([www.web-japan.org](http://www.web-japan.org)).

Most apartments use the tatami mats; this type of flooring has been used for more than six hundred years. Some apartments still have tile or wood flooring, but carpeted floors are very rare.

Both modern and traditional styles of decorating are used. Homes are traditionally centered around the living room and the rest of the house (bathroom, bedrooms, and kitchen) are extend outward. When searching for modern day homes in Japan you would look for them by listings which include the number of the rooms followed by the letter of which room it is. For example 1R and 2LDK. This means one designated room, 2 living rooms, dining room, and kitchen.

Because of how small they are, homes are kept organized and clutter-free.

## Clothing

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The fashion in Japan ranges from street fashion to traditional fashion. The most known traditional fashion in Japan is the kimonos. There are many different types of kimonos that would be worn for different occasions. Everyday clothing is pretty much like Western Style clothing. Men and women wear business attire to work and when not working would wear jeans and t-shirts and dresses for women. One of the more popular fashions in Japan is Lolita. The Lolita style is for the girls and is made for them to look kind of like porcelain dolls. There are many different types of the Lolita style such as Punk, Gothic, and Classic. As with any culture fashion is always changing and the more traditional style of Japanese fashion is fading but still worn on certain occasions ([www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)).

## Recreation & Leisure

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The Japanese like being active and participate in numerous activities including swimming, surfing, skiing and snowboarding, scuba diving, marathon running, gate ball, among others (Hayes).

Nearly every school in Japan has an outdoor swimming pool and swimming lessons are taught in the school curriculum in elementary school to get the kids to feel safe around the water. When weather permits, pools and beaches are usually packed with people. Not only does Japan have natural beaches with breaks to surf they also have many indoor beaches that offer surfing (Hayes).

Northern Japan is where most of the ski resorts are located, but Tokyo also has the largest indoor slope called Lalasport Ski Dome (Hayes).

Marathon running is so popular that when marathons are announced they often fill their quota within days of the announcement. In 2011 the Tokyo Marathon had only 36,000 openings but receive 336,000 applications (Hayes).

Gate ball is modeled after crochet and is a team sport with usually up to five members on a team. Gate ball keeps the older community entertained and is becoming more popular with the younger generations (Hayes).

There are also many theme parks including Disneyland and a Universal Studios (Hayes).

## 1.11) Regional Trade Agreement

### Participation – Jeff

Japan's participation in regional trade agreements is complicated at best. The organization Japan is most active in is the ASEAN Plus Three. This group includes the countries involved in the ASEAN trade organization (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) along with China, Japan and South Korea (the "Plus Three"). This is an institutionalized forum for

cooperation between ASEAN and the East Asian countries. There are several proposals concerning an Asian Currency Unit (ACU) to be modeled after the European Union's Euro. However, there are few trade policies heavily enforced between the countries and tends to serve as more of a loose affiliation. This is thought to be due, in part, to the nationalism that is presenting many Asian countries (ASE12).

Japan is currently pursuing other economic trade agreements with Canada and Australia who are both large trade partners. Japan is also seeking to strengthen ties with the signatories of NAFTA (ASEAN Plus Three).

However, free trade agreements are not incredibly popular with Japanese citizens since they are seen as the cause of the first trade deficit in 30 years in 2011 (RTE Business). In truth, the earthquake is one of the main causes of the trade problems as the trade deficit with China was five times larger than it was in 2010.

## 1.12) Religion – Jeff

### **Secularism**

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Over the past century, religion in Japan has decreased in popularity and the country has become overwhelmingly secular. While some studies conclude up to 96% of the population adheres to either Shinto or Buddhism, these figures are based on family affiliation with a temple. When based on self-identification surveys, about 70% of Japanese claim no religious membership, 64% identify as fully atheist and 55% do not believe in Buddha (Scheid).

Japan has the highest literacy rate in the world at 99.9%. Literacy is linked to Japan's religious decline as citizens stay in touch with the scientific world and view religion as mostly superstition (Lockard).

Marquis Hirobumi Ito, four time Prime Minister of Japan, said, "I regard religion itself as quite unnecessary for a nation's life; science is far above superstition, and what is religion - Buddhism or Christianity - but superstition, and therefore a possible source of weakness to a nation? I do not regret the tendency to free thought and atheism, which is almost universal in Japan because I do not regard it as a source of danger to the community (Lockard)."

## Shinto

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Shinto is the most commonly practiced religion in Japan and is indigenous to the country. Most citizens (83 percent) have some affiliation with Shinto. Shinto is not rigid in its rules for acceptance, accepting some of the tenants is enough to be considered a member.

Shinto began with a deep respect for nature and through their respect each evolved into a separate deity. This formed a large polytheistic mythology with no clear leader or dogma (Scheid). Each of the many sects of Shinto has a different leader and a different dogma. After the arrival of Buddhism to the country in the sixth century, Buddhism and Shinto began to be practiced together (Scheid).

In 1868 The Emperor Meiji instituted State Shinto or the belief that the Emperor was a deity. This merged the most commonly practiced versions of Shinto, Imperial Shinto and Folk Shinto. This made Japan a Theocracy and Shinto spread to Taiwan



and Korea as Japan conquered them. This lasted until the United States' occupation of Japan forced the Emperor to admit that he was a normal person (Lockard).

## **Buddhism**

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Buddhism is the second largest religion in Japan, claiming 93 million members. The school of Buddhism most commonly adhered to in Japan is Mahayana (Lockard).

## **Other**

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Japan has full religious freedom and several minority religions are practiced. The percentages are small but some minority religious ceremonies and celebrations, such as the Christian holiday, Christmas, have become mainstream, secular celebrations (Lockard).

## 1.13) Family Structure – Jessica

Family, the Japanese word “kazoku” has always played an important part in Japanese culture. The idea that the family includes not only those living, but also the spirits of ancestors and that the family is a “unit that continues through time” has been a prevalent one throughout history. This is especially true among those with a “livelihood to pass down” such as farmers or small business owners or those in the countryside, as opposed to urban salaried employees (Long).

The family structure has evolved over time. During the Agricultural Age, the Japanese were primarily an extended family society wherein several generations lived together or very close to one another and often farmed the same land (Tatikian). This took on various forms: matrilocal (living with the wife's family), patrilineality (based around the father's family), (Long).

By the 20th Century this changed dramatically. The Industrial Age itself caused a gradual shift as people moved out of the country and into cities (Tatikian). The establishment of the Domestic Relations and Inheritance Law had a significant impact when it instituted the *ie* (household) system which all families were mandated to conform to. Essentially, *ie* legislated the family unit into a formalized patriarchy where the designated heir became the head of the household and was legally responsible for all members. Because most males who were not the head of the household formed their own households, most families rarely consisted of more than two generations (Long).

According to the Library of Congress “after World War II, the Allied occupation forces established a new family ideology based on equal rights for women, equal inheritance by all children, and free choice of spouse and career.”

As in many countries today, modern Japanese families come in many shapes and sizes. While *ie* is no longer the norm, its influences are still felt today. For example, the *ie* mandated the paternal grandparents live with the oldest son's family. In the government's perspective, that is still the case today (Muragishi). While formal arranged marriages have disappeared, introductions and negotiations still take place (Long) and some women avoid marrying eldest sons for fear of complications with in-

laws (Muragishi). As compared to the United States, gender roles are much more traditional in Japan and the Japanese have a much lower divorce rate (Long).

## 1.14) Social Issues – Lazar

### **Social Classes**

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Social Classes do not exist in modern day Japan. Like all democratic, free market economies, Japan's class distinctions are based on wealth; the upper, middle, and lower class familiar with any democratic society. About 90% of Japanese consider themselves middle class, and there is less class difference than in most countries with modern economies. There is still some stigma for and discrimination against the Burakumin people, which are not a race but rather the decedents of those in the lower end of the now abolished Japanese caste system. According to international humanist and ethics union:

*Burakumin are a Japanese social minority group: Japan's "invisible race."*

*No physical characteristics distinguish them, unlike other main minority groups, from the majority population. There are about six million burakumin in modern Japan (about 2 per cent of the population).*

*Originally, those people were called senmin ("despised citizens"). The Japanese caste system was formally abolished by the Kaihorei (Emancipation or Liberation Edict) in August, 1871. The term "new commoner" (shin-heimin) was used in government documents and the*

*word “burakumin” (literally “hamlet people”) came into use as another euphemism for “senmin”. Their settlements were called hisabetsu buraku (“discriminated hamlets” because they live in their own secluded places, originally outside the city walls)*

According to an article in the Harvard Human Right Journal, “*Burakumin* still face outright discrimination in education, in employment, and in marriage. According to a survey of residents in Asaka *buraku*, thirty percent of *burakumin* have experienced discrimination, mostly verbally but thirty percent demonstrated through “attitudes, actions or gestures.” Some were investigated by detective agencies for matters related to employment or marriage, or their homes marked by discriminatory graffiti.”

## **Women’s Rights**

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Discrimination in the workplace is not limited to social class. The problem of sex discrimination in Japan is much more rampant. According to the Washington Post:

The number of working women in Japan picked up after the burst of the economic bubble here in 1991, when companies began hiring more of them as a cheaper source of labor. Many of those new hires were brought on as part-time or contract workers without benefits or job security. Although many assumed that those positions would evolve into better-paying full-time jobs, statistics show that hasn't happened.”

Japan has also falls well behind even the minimum Western legal standards in the workplace in terms of sex discrimination. The article goes on to say that “A U.N.

study released last year said Japan ranked behind all other industrialized nations in terms of empowerment of women.”

A few facts about sex discrimination in Japan:

- 10.7 percent of senior corporate and political positions held by women, compared with 42 percent in the United States.
- Japan has a record 8 million part-time workers -- more than 90 percent of them women.
- In Japan, women on average earn 44 percent of what men earn -- the widest income gap between the sexes in the developed world.
- Although the percentage of women in the workforce rose from 37 to 41 percent between 1980 and 2005, the number of women in top management positions climbed only slightly, from 1 percent to 2.8 percent
- Women occupy only 9% of parliament seats.
- Women make up 3.7% of university department heads and 11% of researchers;
- Only 20% of university science graduates are women.

In addition to hiring and advancement discrimination practices, the culture of a Japanese office is beyond politically incorrect by American standards. Women are hired not for their skills in the workplace, but for their friendly disposition and attractiveness. Many Japanese companies separate their employees into

‘administrative’ and ‘career’ tracks. These separations occur almost entirely along gender lines. Women with ‘administrative’ career paths are paid less, and given meager benefits if any. “Office Ladies” are routinely hired to do the same work as men, for less pay, and also are expected (or even required) to pour drinks for the men, arrange flowers in the office, and perform other duties that are considered ‘women’s work.’ Despite a 2007 law that bans the discriminative hiring practice, it is still a widespread issue.

## **Child Labor**

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Child labor, unlike the rest of Asia, does not seem to be a large problem in Japan. Child labor laws restrict parents from contracting their children, and restrict specifically the type of work available to children, and at what age they become eligible for which types of employment. According to the Library of Congress:

The Constitution [of Japan] provides that children shall not be exploited. The Labor Standards Law has provisions to protect child workers. The Labor Standards Law prohibits employers from employing children until the March 31 immediately following the child becoming fifteen years old. March 31 is the end of a school year. Children are obliged to go to school usually until that time. Children thirteen years old or older, however, may be employed if the labor is light and not injurious to their health and welfare, and if the employer obtains permission from the local Labor Standards Administration office. Children under thirteen years old can be employed only in motion picture production and theatrical performance enterprises, upon permission of the Labor Standards Administration office. An employer cannot employ a person under eighteen years old for extended-hour or nighttime work. An employer also cannot

assign a person under eighteen years old to dangerous work, *e.g.*, maintenance or repair of machinery during its operation and mining.

A parent or a guardian cannot make a labor contract for a minor, in this case a person under twenty years old. This provision aims to prohibit a parent or guardian from forcing a minor to work for a parent or guardian's economic benefit. The parent or guardian cannot receive the wages earned by the minor in place of the minor.

Japan however is a destination for human trafficking, including Children, according to [humantrafficking.org](http://humantrafficking.org). Organized crime syndicates traffic women and children from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe to work as forced laborers and prostitutes. In response to the tarnished image it received by being placed on the second tier of the 2007 U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report, Japan has increased its efforts to stop human trafficking. Laws have been created to make it a crime, and punishments increased for sexual trafficking were made as well.

## 1.15) Aesthetics – Corey

The Japanese is a highly artistic culture with beautiful music, dance, fashion, sculptures, gardens and paintings.

The ancient Japanese art of paper folding which usually involves no scissors or glue is called Oragami. Some of the most popular forms of origami are cranes, flowers, balloons, frogs, and gold fish ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

## Bonsai & Gardens

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Bonsai is a form of cultivating miniature pine trees, practiced by many in Japan ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)). It takes much skill and knowledge to know exactly when to cut the stems or change the trees into other pots. Another form of art that deals with plants and trees is Japanese gardens. This form of art has been practiced over a thousand years. The strolling gardens are large and include islands, artificial hills, and ponds that can be viewed from many different viewpoints from the path. Some of the most famous gardens are Kanazawa's Kenrokuen and Tokyo's Rikugien ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).



Modern gardens in Japan have some aspects of the strolling garden but is hard because the cities have grew and there is not enough space needed to build the



garden. Some of the more popular gardens today are the Zen gardens in Kyoto and the stone gardens on Koyasan ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

## Theater

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The Japanese also have many different types of theater that they practice. These include Bunraku, kabuki, and the Noh Theater. The Bunraku Theater is a form of puppet theater. It has been around since the Edo period and has similar story lines to the Kabuki Theater. The puppets are accompanied by music performed on traditional Japanese instruments. The Kabuki Theater is a form of theater created for the townsfolk during the Edo Period. The plays are about historical events, moral decisions, and love relationships. The stage is a rotating stage equipped with trap doors and gadgets that make the actors appear and disappear. Because women were not allowed to act, many men specialized in playing roles of women during the plays. The Noh Theater is a very old form of theater for the Japanese. The actors traditionally wore masks and spoke in monotonous voices. This type of theater was formed during the fourteenth century. The stages are outdoors with a roof over the stage ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

## Music

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Music in Japan is big. J-Pop is the popular music with young kids and is much like music in America except the lyrics and songs are in Japanese. Many of the artists are famous and appear on many television ads such as in America. Enka music was a popular form of music and is still listened to today but mostly by older people.

Traditional enka musicians especially the women would have performed in kimonos. The traditional Japanese music has many forms ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

Gagaku is the oldest type of Japanese traditional music and was played in the ancient courts. Other types of traditional music include biwagaku, nohgaku, sokyoku, and shakuhachi. These types of music would be the ones heard during theater performances ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

## Martial Arts

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Martial arts play a big role in Japanese culture. There are many different forms such as Judo, Karate, Sumo, and many others. Judo is known as the gentle way, and was formed in the nineteenth century. The art of Judo means that softness exceeds hardness and technique is very important. Not only does it focus on winning the fight but also trains one's body and spirit. Karate is a form of martial art that is similar to the Chinese Kung-Fu

and Koreans

Taekwondo. Karate

translates into the

way of the open

hand and is used by

ones fists, elbows,

and feet. No

weapons are used

when taking part in



Karate ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

Sumo is the Japanese style of wrestling and is Japan's national sport. Because sumo has been around for a long time many religious practices are still going strong today when it comes to Sumo matches. The matches take place on a dohyo which is an elevated ring made of clay and covered with sand. The rules are simple. The first wrestler to leave the ring or have any other part of the body other than their feet loses the match. The matches are quick and rarely last a minute ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

## **Dance**

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Japanese dance is very important and the most famous form of dance is called the Bon dance. The Bon dance means welcoming ancestors' souls and holding memorial services for them. Every summer in August the Japanese take a week for Bon festivals. The dance usually involves some of the traditional music and the dancers dress in appropriate kimonos for the dance. It usually takes place at nighttime because that is when the Japanese think their ancestors' souls return. So as you can see the Japanese take great pride in their aesthetics and have many different types they partake in ([www.japan-guide.com](http://www.japan-guide.com)).

## 1.16) Greetings, Gift Giving, Titles – Corey

### Greetings

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Greetings in Japan are very important. Greeting and parting phrases are called *aisatsu*. If someone does not give an *aisatsu* then they are considered cold and dysfunctional. Like many languages there are many different phrases for different parts of the day. For example, *ohayou* means good morning and is usually used until eleven in the morning, *konnichiwa* means hello, good afternoon, and *konbanwa* means good evening. Some other forms of greetings are *sayounara* which means goodbye and many people have heard this before. The Japanese have many formal and informal ways of using words when greeting someone or saying goodbye. It all depends on the context of you leaving or coming (Hanson).

### Gift Giving

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Gift giving in Japan is a frequent occurrence. In December and June, *Oseibo* and *Ochugen* gifts are given. These gifts are from co-workers, relatives, and friends. This is when many people receive bonuses from work and the gifts include food, alcohol, or some type of gift for the house. These gifts usually cost are five thousand yen. When receiving and giving gifts in Japan, it is customary to use both hands. When thanking somebody, one will give him or her a gift called *temiyage*, which is usually some sort of sweets or sake. Souvenirs from business trips or vacations are called

*omiyage*. When giving gifts in Japan you should be careful because many gifts that we think are appropriate could mean bad luck in Japan (Giving Gifts).

## Names & Titles

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In Japan the family name comes before the first name. Usually when addressing someone in Japan you would address him or her by his or her family name. When addressing children or close friends then you would use their first name.

Japanese accompany family names with titles such as *San*, *Sama*, *Kun*, *Chan*, and *Sensei*. *San* is the most neutral and common and can be used almost anywhere except in very formal situations. *Sama* is a more polite form of *San* and is used in letter writing and in formal situations. *Kun* is a title given to young men and boys who are younger than you. *Chan* is informal and is used when talking to close friends, family members, and children. *Sensei* is a title given to teachers, doctors or other people in which you receive teachings from. Titles are very important and need to be used in the right context.

## 1.17) Holidays & Conversation – Jeff

### **Holidays**

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Holidays in Japan stem from varied sources, from ancient religions to adopted western holiday's the Japanese enjoy a chance to escape and enjoy time with their families.

The largest holiday in Japan is the New Year (shogatsu or oshogatsu) where most businesses close from January 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Years are viewed as completely independent with each year starting with a clean slate. It is traditional to watch the first sunrise of the New Year. It is also widely held that the day should be stress free and no work should be done on that day (Japanese New Year).

Another popular traditional Japanese holiday is the Coming of Age Festival (seijin no hi) (Coming of Age). This is celebrated the second Monday of January. Celebrations are held nationwide with all the men turning 20 attending in formal dress.

### **Conversation Topics & Blunders**

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Social conversation in Japan can be a treacherous place for westerners. Japanese view themselves as one and are very proud of their Japanese heritage. It is always a safe bet to discuss the country, national pastimes such as baseball, Japanese food and places to visit.

Subjects that should be avoided are questions about professions, prices, economic questions, topics pertaining to their social life or direct comparisons between your country and theirs.

The Japanese try to avoid conflict when all possible so it is always important to stay calm. Restraint and self-respect are viewed as very important to Japanese culture. This can lead to difficulty between Japanese executives and their western counterparts. The Japanese avoid direct “no’s” as to avoid conflict, so western business people must focus on reading between the lines so as not to force the Japanese executive into a situation where they may lose face. Directly related to the avoidance of conflict is eye contact. In Japan, eye contact is viewed as confrontational and should be kept to a minimum or avoided all together.

Silence is also a very large part of Japanese conversation. This is viewed as an opportunity to reflect on the conversation as a whole. Westerners, often uncomfortable with silence, may try to fill this space with jokes or a topic change. This is viewed as impolite or impatient in Japanese culture.

One of the most important blunders that can be made in Japanese conversation is physical contact. This is considered a gross infringement on a person. Also hand gestures and loud outburst should be avoided.

As a general rule, in Japanese conversation, one can be safe if it is remembered to remain as subtle and reserved as possible. The indirect routes are always the best routes and avoid topics that can lead to any type of disagreement or confrontation (Nguyen).

## 1.18) Business Entertaining – Jeff

As mentioned earlier, there is a very strong culture of doing business based on personal relationships. This is a key factor for any MNC attempting to move into Japan. It is very common for businessmen to entertain clients and potential clients after hours at hostess and karaoke bars.

Another key factor to the Japanese is the notion of “face.” Face can be earned through praise and thanks and lost through criticism. The Japanese will try to avoid direct “no’s” in business dealings. Instead, they will respond with, “It is inconvenient” or “It is under consideration.” Both of these statements should be interpreted as a “no.”

Also, since conflict is seen as such a negative thing, more can be interpreted from body language and non-verbal communication than any verbal communications. According to a Japanese etiquette guide, “Expressions to watch out for include inhaling through clenched teeth, tilting the head, scratching the back of the head, and scratching the eyebrow.” (Japan Country Profile)

## 1.19) Languages – Jeff

Japanese is the official language of Japan and is spoken by the vast majority of residents of the country. The language is written in a mixture of three characters: Chinese characters, a script of modified Chinese characters and a Latin script. While



Japanese is written using Chinese characters and has imported many words from China, the two languages are not related.

Japanese is a member of the Japonic languages family, which includes languages from the Ryukyu islands. These languages are so close they are often confused as dialects of Japanese.

The Japonic language family as a whole is entirely unique from any other languages in the world. This is due to their historical isolation from outside cultures. Also, Japan is a mountainous country and this has led to extensive internal isolation and the formation of many Japanese dialects as well (Miyagawa).

## 1.20) Sample Travel Itinerary – Jessica

It would be impossible to fit all the amazing sights in Japan in a single trip, but this tour from Japan Package Tours attempts to hit the highlights in just one week.

### 7 Day East to West Tour - Tokyo, Hiroshima & Kyoto

<b>Day 1: Arrive in Tokyo</b>	<p>Upon arrival at Narita International Airport, activate your 7 day Japan Rail Pass at the train station within the airport. Reserve your seat and take the Narita Express train to Shinagawa Station.</p> <p>Walk to the Shinagawa Prince Hotel. After checking in, take a Yamanote Line train to Harajuku. Walk through the densely wooded park to the Meiji Shrine. There is no better example of classic Shinto architecture in Tokyo.</p> <p>Return to Harajuku Station and walk down Takeshita Street for one of the busiest shopping areas in Tokyo.</p> <p>Next, board the train from Harajuku Station one stop to Shibuya. Use the Hachiko-Guchi exit for one of the busiest shopping and entertainment districts in Tokyo and an amazing scene each time the pedestrian lights turn green.</p> <p>In the evening, take a JR Yamanote Line train to Shinjuku Station, the largest and busiest train station in Japan. Use the West Exit and walk past the high rise buildings to the N.S Building. Make your way to the Observation Deck that is free to visit. Here you can marvel at the spectacular panoramic view of Tokyo that is best seen at night.</p>
<b>Day 2: Tokyo Sightseeing</b>	<p>Board a Yamanote Line train from Shinagawa Station to Ueno Station. Use the Central exit and walk through the long lanes of the Ueno Markets which run alongside the railway line. Here, a wide range of goods is sold from food to clothing.</p> <p>Next take the subway 3 stops to Asakusa, one of the most historical parts of Tokyo. This area is famous for the Asakusa Kannon Temple and the surrounding Nakamise Shopping Arcade. Explore the long arcades full of souvenir shops selling authentic arts and crafts.</p> <p>Return to Ueno by subway and then travel two stops to Akihabara or Electric Town as it is known to foreign tourists. Akihabara sells the latest in computers, TVs, videos, DVDs and everything electrical. The 'window shop' alone is worth the visit to see all of the latest models of electronics.</p> <p>In the late afternoon, board a subway from Tokyo Station to the bright lights of the Ginza. Exploring the great shopping and nightlife of Ginza is an unforgettable experience. Make sure you visit the basement of the department stores for the most lavish food courts.</p>
<b>Day 3: Tokyo -</b>	<p>Check out of the Shinagawa Prince Hotel and board a Hikari bullet train from Shinagawa Station to Hiroshima Station. This trip will take about 5.5 hours. Depending on the timetable you may need to swap trains at Shin Osaka on the way</p> <p>Your accommodation at the New Hiroden Hotel is a 5 minute walk from the station.</p>

<b>Hiroshima</b>	<p>Hiroshima was a city left in ashes after the Atomic bomb was dropped. Hiroshima has made a remarkable recovery and has been rebuilt as a modern thriving city. The area which felt the full force of the bomb has been transformed into a Peace Memorial Park with gardens of great beauty and nearly forty memorials to the victims of the atomic explosion. Hiroshima is now known as the International City of Peace dedicated to a total ban on the use of Atomic weapons. To visit the Park, board a tram in front of Hiroshima Station and get off at Genbaku Domu-Mae stop (cost 150 yen - 15 min.).</p> <p>On the way back to station visit the Hiroshima Castle. This castle was first built in 1589 until its destruction in 1945. Having been rebuilt in all its glory, it is now used to exhibit historic artefacts from Japan's feudal past.</p> <p>In the evening, visit one of the many okonomiyaki restaurants surrounding Hiroshima Station. Okonomiyaki is a famous dish in Hiroshima - a noodle layered pancake.</p>
<b>Day 4: Hiroshima - Miyajima - Hiroshima</b>	<p>Take a day trip to Miyajima Island - a very popular Island with foreign tourists who want to see the 'Old Style Japan'.</p> <p>Board a local train from Hiroshima Station to Miyajima Guchi Station. (25 min) Using your Japan Rail Pass, board the JR ferry to Miyajima Island. (15 min)</p> <p>Miyajima is famous for the Itsukushima Shrine whose long wooden corridors reach out into the sea. Miyajima is also famous for Mount Misen which boasts one of the three best panoramic views in Japan. Make sure you take the cable car to the peak and if you have the energy, take the long walk to the base. Spend the day exploring the many walks, temples and gardens of Miyajima.</p> <p>Make your way back to Hiroshima in the late afternoon.</p>
<b>Day 5: Hiroshima - Kyoto</b>	<p>Check out of the New Hiroden Hotel and board a bullet train from Hiroshima to Kyoto Station. (2 hours) You may need to change at Shin Osaka on the way.</p> <p>After check in at the New Miyako Hotel, take a Limited Express train to Nara. (50 min) All the sightseeing is within comfortable walking distance. Walk through the town toward the park and feed the many deer which roam the area. At the end of the park is Todai Ji which is the star attraction in Nara as it is the largest wooden building in the world.</p> <p>Return to Kyoto late in the afternoon and visit the Observation Deck on top of Kyoto Station. Take the many escalators to the peak from where you can see a impressive view of the surrounding area of Kyoto. The entrance is free.</p>
<b>Day 6: Kyoto Sightseeing</b>	<p>At 08:55am you will be picked up for your Kyoto 'Sunrise' Morning Bus Tour of Kyoto. Your tour will take you to Nijo Castle, the Golden Pavilion, Kyoto Imperial Palace and will terminate at the Kyoto Handicraft Centre. Return to Kyoto Station by Courtesy Bus.</p> <p>In the afternoon, board a local bus to Kiyomizu Temple. Take the entertaining walk to the peak past the many souvenir and craft stops. From Kiyomizu's famous giant wooden verandah, you can see a spectacular panoramic view of Kyoto.</p> <p>In the evening, take a subway from Kyoto Station to Shijo Station and walk towards Gion which is Kyoto's famous entertainment district open until late at night. Gion is the one place in Japan where you may see Geisha or Maiko walking between appointments. As darkness falls watch the traditional lanterns gradually come to life as you wander down tiny alleys housing a variety of restaurants offering tempting cuisine.</p>
<b>Day 7: Depart</b>	<p>Spend your last morning in Kyoto completing any final sightseeing or shopping.</p> <p>Take the train to your departing airport.</p>

## 2.1) Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck – Jay

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck researched to prove their theory that humans share biological traits and characteristics which form the basis for the development of culture, and that people typically feel their own cultural beliefs and practices are normal and natural, and those of others are strange, or even inferior or abnormal. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck measure cultural profiles by the Relationship to Nature and Supernature, Innate Human Nature, Human Activity, Time, and Relationship to Other People.

The Japanese culture embraces the concept of harmony with nature. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, this means that man is not controlling or trying to conquer nature but rather, both man and nature live together as one and are accepting of each other's forces. Because of their spiritual beliefs, Japanese culture refuses any thought of managing nature, instead they feel a spiritual connection with it that allows them to be part of a relationship where both parties are respected. Through their practices, the Japanese show their appreciation to nature. For example, "Japanese gardening, such as rock gardens, expresses their belief in living harmoniously with nature." ([academic3.american.edu](http://academic3.american.edu))

Innate nature of man deals with whether man is good, evil or a mix of the two. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's research, the Japanese believe they are inherently good, with an immutable predisposition, meaning men are good and that is unalterable. This is not a shocking belief for the Japanese since most of their practices are influenced by Buddhism. It is a Buddhist belief that humans are born good because

they are a creation of nature, which is good. So the fact that man is part of nature makes the good.

Human activity measures how culture views the importance of accomplishments. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's research, the Japanese society believes man's activity is defined by his relationships and not by development or materialism. Relationships, family, birth, and rank are valued highly in the Japanese culture. While Japan values success, they do not make it their priority. The feeling behind it is that one works to live, not the other way around.

Time is valued differently in different cultures. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's research, the Japanese are past time oriented country because it is a traditionalistic culture. Japanese measure time by great events and specific moments. The Buddhist religion, influencing the Japanese, promotes the conceptions of reincarnation and karma are widely practiced. Time must be use wisely and for good. It is a belief that each life is present life, which is dictated by the past. This is one of many reasons why the Japanese view time the way they do.

The relationship to other people measures three integral parts of this value orientation include: individual, collateral and linear. Valuing individual relationships means you maintain a healthy relationship with your immediate family; mother, father, brother and sister. Collateral extends a little further by not only remaining close with your mother, father, brother and sister, but also grandparents, uncles and aunts and cousins etc. As you move on to linear relationships, this includes all of the above family members and distant relatives. According to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's research, Japan's culture has linear relationships. They appreciate all family members. Even in

business, any decisions made are examined carefully considering the impact it will have on the entire family.

So overall, according to Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, the Japanese culture believes in harmony with nature, that men are good and that is unalterable, values family and groups, and value tradition and experience.

## 2.2) Hofstede's Five Value Dimensions – Jay

Hofstede is a great source for insights information about national and organizational culture around the world. Hofstede research measures a country's Power Distance (PDI), Individualism versus collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus femininity (MAS), Uncertainty avoidance (UAI), Long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO), and Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR).

According to Hofstede power distance expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Countries who have high a high power distance appreciate and respect hierarchy. Low power distance countries have a horizontal structure. They believe in equality of power, and “demand justification for inequalities of power.” (Hofstede) Japan, according to Hofstede's research, has a power distance of 54. While most Asian countries are viewed as highly structured and hierarchal, Japan is “mildly hierarchical.” (Hofstede) Business in Japan is structure but at the same time their is a horizontal style of management were decisions have to be considered and

approved by all top executives. This business approach is one of the reason Japan's score is moderate.

Individualism is consider to be the preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only, while collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

(Hosftede) By their definition alone is easy to understand both concepts. Analyzing both terms, with the Japanese culture, Hofstede came to the conclusion that Japan has a collectivistic society; Japan scored a 46 on the Individualism dimension. Japan, like most Asian countries, believe in harmonious group settings creating an environment where group work is highly valued. While most Asian countries are considered collectivist, Japan is considered to be slightly less than their neighbors. According to Hofstede research, the main reason why is because, "that Japanese society does not have extended family system which forms a base of more collectivistic societies such as China and Korea." Overall, Japan still values group harmony while maintaining a level of personal privacy.

Societies can also be considered masculine or feminine. According to Hofstede, a masculine society is one who measure achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success. While, a feminine society prefer a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Masculine societies tend to be competitive in nature. As for feminine countries, they tend to be more "consensus-oriented." (Hofstede) Hofstede's research show Japan as a highly competitive society. Japan's competition is interesting. While they do not compete between individuals, they compete against teams. We cannot forget

that Japanese are collectivist, but they have a deep passion for competition; they always want to be part of the winning team.

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. (Hofstede) When examining uncertainty avoidance you are measuring whether a society feels the need to control the future or whether they let things happen the way they were meant to. A country with high uncertainty avoidance is strongly passionate about their beliefs, never going astray. Weak societies are relaxed where "practice counts more than principles." (Hofstede) In Japan, uncertainty avoidance is very high; Hofstede has them at a 92. Their score makes them one of the highest uncertainty avoiding countries. According to Hofstede's research, one of the main reasons why Japan has such a high score is due to natural disasters. Many devastating earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons and volcano eruptions have hit Japan. The threat of a natural disaster occurring pressures the Japanese to prepare themselves for any situation. In Japan everything is prepared, analyzed and ritualized; for natural disasters they prepare, for business they take a risk-free approach, and "life is highly ritualized." (Hofstede)

Determining whether a society is Long-term versus short-term orientation, is determined by the values they hold. Hofstede states that, "The long-term orientation dimension can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue." Countries with a long-term orientation believe that virtues are formed by situations, context, and time. They have tendencies to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results. On the other hand, short-term orientation societies have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth. They have respect for traditions, lack savings, and focus heavily on short-term results. Japan is, according to Hofstede, a



long term oriented society; scoring an 80. Japan is a society that believes in fatalism. In a religious viewpoint, Japan is not a Christian country, they don't hold the belief of one God, and rather people are guided by their virtues. Even in business, Japanese are not influenced by the economy when investing in research and development. This means that Japanese companies are not motivated by quarterly numbers rather prefer to create a future for its company even if it means sacrificing in the short run; hence creating a brighter future for the next generation.

## 2.3) Schwartz's Values Survey – Jay

## 2.4) Hall's High and Low Context – Corey

Japan is a high context culture. According to Hall, high context cultures have many factors and reasons why the culture is considered high context. In high context cultures like Japan they convey and implicit messages with a metaphor and read between the lines. Also emotions are reserved and rarely shown. The Japanese are big on family and in high context cultures there is a strong sense of family and people bonds as well as they tend to care more about the relationships they form rather than the task. Time care for the Japanese is complex and includes both monochromatic and polychromatic traits. For example when making business meetings they are usually

precise and on time but once the meeting starts polychromatic behaviors take place. So when using Hall's high or low context, Japan is considered high context because of their business traits and how they view certain aspects of business and culture.

## 2.5) GLOBE's Cultural Dimensions – Lazar

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

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Japan has extremely high uncertainty avoidance. Their reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices is rigid and standard in the business world. Change can be difficult to come by in Japan as managers seek all the details before making a decision. Part of the cause of their uncertainty avoidance is rooted in their location, where they are continually the victims of earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, and even volcanic eruption. The Japanese have adopted a culture that prepares for any uncertain situation and the recent tsunami and nuclear disaster no doubt further reinforced this.

### **Power Distance**

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Surprisingly, Japan does not have a great power distance. Though it may score slightly higher than the U.S. on a Hofstede rating, there are key differences. There are a lot of formalities in how one approaches and interacts with another in a higher position. Japanese negotiation can also be much slower as someone in a higher position must approve each decision. However, as much as 90% of Japanese people

think of themselves as middle class, and pay differences are nowhere near as much as in the United States.

## **Collectivism I**

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Japan can have a very collectivist culture at times, however this is more of a middle of the road rating. On their Geert-Hofstede National Culture Dimensions ratings, Japan scored a 46 for individualism. A somewhat individualistic society (meaning they only seek to benefit themselves and their closes family and friends), sometimes when a Japanese person shows extreme loyalty to their company it may not be because of a collectivist nature, but because they have placed their company within the realm of their individualist inner circle.

## **Collectivism II**

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Japan has a medium to high collectivist culture. It places a great deal of pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organization and families. However, expression is typically subtle. Loud expression is not a part of traditional Japanese culture.

## **Gender Egalitarianism**

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In Japan this would be a high rating. Japanese women are routinely and structurally discriminated against. The discrimination would be considered blatant in the U.S.; however, even the Japanese legal system does not reflect a practice of equality among genders.

## **Assertiveness**

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Japan would have a medium rating. The actions of Japanese are fairly deliberate, yet they tend to seek a minimal confrontation. For example, the decision of a Japanese manager may seem deliberate and assertive, yet his or her implementation of that decision may seem passive.

## **Future Orientation**

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Delayed gratification is a staple of Japanese culture. Their future orientation scores very high, as Japanese students and employees alike are very hard working and will sacrifice much of today for the pride of building their tomorrow.

## **Performance Orientation**

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The Japanese are notorious workaholics and work best when competing against one another. Because they are a somewhat collectivist society, there are not as outspoken about their performance. They would score in a medium to high range.

## **Humane Orientation**

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As both a matter of cultural pride and a reflection of their collectivism, Japan does believe in doing their part to help the world, most notably as a leader in innovative green technologies and international environmental movements. However, there is little funding of a relatively small number of NGOs, making their score relatively

mediocre (Hofstede).

## 2.6) The World Values Survey – Lazar

### **Traditional Vs. Secular/Rational Values**

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Japan's centuries of isolation may have officially ended over 150 years ago; however, the country did not truly modernize and become intermixed within global society until after World War II. Meaning that Japan was almost entirely traditional, with almost no exposure to other cultures, until the past 2-3 generations. Japanese people value extremely their feeling of national pride, respect for authority, and obedience in general. Yet the most recent WVS survey found they were the absolute highest in terms of Secular-Rational Values. This is likely attributed to Japan's cultural respect for privacy. Japan does not infuse religion into their culture. In fact, the Confucian religion is not one that actively seeks conversion or a loud voice in society, the way other mainstream religions do.



## Survival vs. Self-Expression Values

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Japan's high uncertainty avoidance gives reason that, although they are a democratic society with increasing civil liberties (most notably for women, all be it a slow and disappointing process for many), they would somewhat walk the fence of these two values as a society. In terms of their views on homosexuality, for example, Japanese people are neither accepting nor actively hostile to gays. Being a high collectivist society, gays are somewhat ostracized for not being part of the group. Yet there is not a pattern of bigotry in the society.

### 2.7) Gannon's Cultural Metaphor – Jessica

Understanding different cultures is challenging, especially when time is limited. Martin Gannon came up with “an innovative method, the cultural metaphor, for understanding easily and quickly the cultural mindset of a nation and comparing it to those of other nations.” In *Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys through 30 Nations, Clusters of Nations, and Continents* (among others), Gannon finds a “phenomenon, activity, or institution of a nation's culture that all or most of its members consider to be very important and with which they identify cognitively and/or emotionally”. He then uses that metaphor as the “basis for describing and understanding the essential features of the society” (8).

For Japan, Gannon's metaphor is the Japanese Garden. Gannon correlates numerous aspects of Japanese history and culture to the Garden. For example:

*Like the water flowing through a Japanese garden, Japanese society is fluid, changing yet retaining its essential character. Alone, each droplet has little force, yet when combined with many others, enough force is produced to form a waterfall which cascades into a small pond filled with carp. (37-38)*

In his book *Working across Cultures: Applications and Exercises*, Gannon outlines how his simple approach could be used in the form of an exercise. To follow through this exercise participants first discuss their idea of a Japanese garden. Next the metaphor is discussed, and finally, various aspects of culture are correlated back to the metaphor (134).

## 2.8) Nonverbal Communication – Corey

Nonverbal communication is very important in business in Japan. When first meeting with someone, you should bow. Bowing shows status and in business meetings business inferiors must bow lower than their superiors. Another form of nonverbal communication used in Japan is eye contact or lack of eye contact. In Japan try to avoid long eye contact because it tends to show disrespect and can mean you are being too aggressive. Pointing with the index finger is also considered rude or disrespectful so when in Japan you should point with your whole hand. The Japanese do not like physical contact but have accustomed to the Western Style handshake for business, but other than that it is rude to hug or show any other physical contact when doing business. Nonverbal communication is very important and if you are doing



business abroad in Japan it would be beneficial to understand the Japanese culture and forms of nonverbal communication (Onken).

## 2.10) Ting-Toomey's Four Verbal

## Communication Styles – Jessica

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey's four verbal communication styles as they relate to Japan are outlined below:

**Indirect Verbal Communication Style:** (Vs. direct) words are used to “conceal a speaker's wants needs and goals” (Bayo 4).

**Succinct Verbal Communication Style:** (Vs. elaborate) being praised makes the Japanese feel uncomfortable, they try to avoid talking, they avoid repetition and exaggeration (Bayo 5).

**Contextual Verbal Communication Style:** (Vs. personal) formality and the “asymmetrical power relationships” are a priority (Bayo 6).

**Instrumental Verbal Communication Style:** (Vs. affective) the listener is responsible to understand (Bayo 7).

## 2.11) Ethics & Social Responsibility – Lazar

Japan has a long history of whaling. The controversial practice of hunting endangered several endangered species has been part of Japanese culture for at least centuries. According to Discovery.com, there have been findings of whale harpoons that date back over 12,000 years. As recently as 1947, whale meat made up almost half of the country's animal protein consumption. To the Japanese, the consumption of whale meat is part of their culture and tradition. Despite an international moratorium on whaling, Japan continues to do so by exploiting a loophole that classifies the hunt as scientific research. The international community vehemently disagrees, according to The USA Today, "research does not require killing the animals, and Japan's scientific program amounts to commercial whaling in disguise because surplus meat is sold."

The issue become even more of an ethical dilemma after the 2011 Tsunami disaster. In addition to the ethical issue of hunting whales, The USA Today article goes on to say that "Japan is spending 2.3 billion yen (\$29 million) from its supplementary budget for tsunami reconstruction to fund the country's annual whaling hunt in the Antarctic Ocean." Japan's budget for tsunami reconstruction includes foreign aid. Critics, among them GreenPeace, have stated that money intended for disaster victims is being used on controversial commercial fishing. A fishing agencies official in charge of whaling, Tatsuya Nakaoku, claimed that the funding would help towns that suffered as a result of the tsunami.

## 2.12) Negotiation and Conflict Styles – Corey

### **Negotiation**

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The Japanese negotiation style is calm, quite, and patient. When negotiating with the Japanese they would rather get to know the person first before starting negotiations. They like to develop long term, personal relations before any negotiations begin. When negotiating with the Japanese you should understand their culture. The Japanese tend to be polite and hide their emotions very well when discussing business. It seems they always have a smiling face on when discussing business in serious situations. Another negotiating style that the Japanese use is they would rather leave the room or be evasive than give a negative answer. This is because they value harmony. Another aspect of Japanese culture is they tend to have concern for the welfare of the group and view decisions very carefully for long-term consequences. When making decisions from negotiations they tend to use objective, analytic thought patterns, and take time for reflection about the decision that is going to be made.

### **Conflict Styles**

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Conflict styles in Japan are usually hidden because Japan tends to want to keep the illusion of harmony. The Japanese tend to see the ability to hide their feelings and interests when conflict arises as a sign of maturity. Self-control, duty, and endurance are highly valued and in a conflict many Japanese may fall silent or use humble gestures but would not express their anger outright. The only time someone would lose their temper or say what they feel is if they hold a higher status than someone else. So

as you can see, the Japanese have the ability to put their personal feelings on the back burner when dealing with conflicts in business and tend to value harmony very much.

## 2.13) How U.S. Culture Is Viewed – Jeff

Most views of Americans in Japan center on general cultural differences and the context in which Japanese and Americans interact. On a whole Japanese perception of American and western culture is a positive one. Many aspects of western culture have found their way into Japanese mainstream culture.

There are three main ways Japanese come in contact with Americans: business, American military presence, and tourists. Each context can translate into varying degrees of acceptance and allowance for cultural differences.

In business, most Japanese recognize that American ways of doing business is very different than the Japanese way. What tends to take place is that both sides make an effort to be accommodating to the other party's cultural norms, which tends to lead to very harmonious dealings. The Japanese value the trade relationship they have with the United States so this can often result in a certain amount of accommodation for differences. The Japanese tend to view American business people to be overly direct and aggressive, focusing too little on the development of personal relationships.

American military presence has been a point of contention since the end of World War II. Many Japanese view members of the American military to be entitled, rude and disrespectful to Japanese culture. This is considered a greater affront than a business partner or client ignoring cultural norms since they actually reside in Japan.

There has been an effort in recent years by American military leaders to increase efforts to educate American military members on Japanese culture before they are deployed.

American tourists are usually very welcome in the larger Japanese cities. As long as tourists don't live up to stereotypes of being loud and rude they will be welcomed into most Japanese establishments and treated courteously. There have been reports of tourists having police being called on them in smaller communities that are not accustomed to foreigners.

## 2.14) Interview – Jessica

### Interview with Shay

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**A Little About You: Name/ age/ location**

Shay [Last name and age not provided] Honolulu, Hawaii

**Job/education... Are you in school still? How formal is your company?**

**What is your role there?**

I am a graduate student.

**Do you identify with a particular religion? Did you grow up with it?**

[Not answered]

**What do you see as the biggest differences between Japanese and American culture?**

Social hierarchy

**What are all the ways you see American culture migrating into Japan?**

Things are getting less formal and companies are conforming to American ways.

**How is WW2 (the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Pearl Harbor) viewed in Japan?**

I'm sure there are impacts, but I haven't personally observed any.

**What are some of the biggest social issues you see in Japanese culture?**

Not being able to think outside of the box. Everything is cookie cutter.

**What are your favorite holidays? Why?**

Valentines Day, it's close to my birthday.

**What is the political climate in Japan?**

I don't follow politics, so I'm not quite sure.

## 2.15) Japanese Proverbs – Jeff

Proverbs are used frequently in Japanese culture. Many of them stem from Japan's agricultural heritage. Below are some favorites and a brief interpretation of them (Japanese Proverbs).

### **Deru kui wa utareru**

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**Literally:** The stake that sticks out gets hammered down

This is a fascinating look into Japanese culture and reflects the attitude of oneness that permeates it. To stick out is considered bad form

### **Koketsu ni irazunba koji wo ezu**

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**Literally:** If you do not enter the tiger's cave, you will not catch its cub.

This means that if one doesn't take risks one cannot succeed.

### **Saru mo ki kara ochiru**

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**Literally:** Even monkeys fall from trees.

This means that even someone very skilled in a certain activity fails from time to time.

## Kaeru no ko wa kaeru

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**Literally:** Child of a frog is a frog.

Similar to the American expression, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” meaning that one can’t escape one’s heritage. This is an important concept in Japan because much is placed on who your parents are.

## Nito woo u mono wa itto wo mo ezu

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**Literally:** One who chases after two hares won’t catch even one.

This saying is about focus. If one doesn’t focus on a single goal, nothing will be accomplished.

## 2.16) Japanese Current Events – Jeff

One of the major events in past few months has been the ongoing disagreement with Japan’s North Korean neighbor. A recent announcement that North Korea was planning to launch a long-range missile test has the entire region up in arms, literally. Japan has promised to shoot down any part of the rocket that enters its territory. The Japanese defense minister issued an official order to prepare its missile defense shield.



China has attempted to defend the North Korean regime internationally and will likely block any resolutions against North Korea in the UN. The missile launch will likely provoke a response from the United States, South Korea and Japan, which could lead to an escalation of tensions in the region (Crawford).

In the financial sector Japanese stocks have seen some of the strongest gains in recent memory in the first quarter. The growth has been attributed to changing monetary policy and economic improvement of trading partners. It is unsure whether or not these trends can continue (Turner).

## 2.17) NGOs & Nonprofits – Lazar

The scope of work that NGOs are doing is growing in Japan. In the past, there was a large government reliance to provide foreign aid. More recently, there has been a question by Japan's citizens and political parties of the potential for corruption, causing a shift towards NGO's. Many still partner with the government to focus on issues such as poverty, famine, the AIDS epidemic in Africa and especially Southeastern Asia, and most notable environmental causes. Most every NGO can be labeled one of four categories: development, environment, human rights, and peace. There are also chapters of the World Wildlife Federation and Green Peace in Japan, in addition to locally established and operated NGOs (JANIC).

However, the actual number of NGOs in Japan has decreased since 2000. They are considered a relatively small body, especially given the country's large economy. Most NGOs struggle to find continuous funding and are supported largely by single-

donation. There has been a recent push to create a larger culture of NGOs, especially since the Tsunami disaster of 2011 (JANIC).

## 2.18) Relevant Employment Laws – Jeff

The Labor Standards Act of 1947 set the majority of the standards for working conditions now experienced in Japan. The act has been amended numerous times, most recently in 2003.

The basics of the act provide standards for hiring and firing. There can be no discriminatory hiring, although discrimination of women continues to be a problem in the workplace. If an employee is fired they must receive thirty-day notice or thirty days of pay. Firing is prohibited during maternity leave and for thirty days after and hospitalization following a job-related illness or injury and for thirty days after.

Japan has minimum wage laws but it is based upon the local cost of living and varies by region. Maximum full-time working hours are eight hours per day and forty hours per week. Regulations for overtime provide for a twenty-five percent premium for additional work on a workday, thirty-five percent on a holiday and twenty-five percent for shifts between 10 PM and 5 AM. Despite these regulations, Japanese employers and employees often dispute overtime premiums.

The Labor Standards Act also provides for paid annual leave after six months of service and minimums correspond to seniority (Law).

## 2.19) International Entrepreneurship – Jeff

American fast food chains are becoming increasingly popular in Japan. According to one article, when Japan opened up its first Krispy Kreme, there were hour-long lines for months after (Lutyne).

Most large franchise restaurants that have large international presences can be found in Japan. Also, there are several financial franchises that have spread to Japan, mainly in the insurance industry.

Some in Japan find the increased presence of American fast food to be a serious health concern. In recent years studies have shown that forty percent of men and women over forty are overweight. This has led to a government program that requires Japanese firms to measure the waistlines of all their employees over forty years old. Anyone over a standard waist size (33 inches) will be referred to counseling. If the employee fails to trim down the company will be fined (Fujita).

## 2.20) Must See Places in Japan – Lazar

According to MSN.com, seven of the ten most visited destinations are in Tokyo. The most prominently visible would be Shinjoko. Its many skyscrapers offer beautiful views of the city, several of which are equipped with restaurants and observation decks. Millions of tourists visit the Kabukicho district each year for its many bars, restaurants, clubs, and other nightlife attractions. The Ginza district of Tokyo is best

known for shopping, and is considered the fourth most visited destination by tourists in all of Japan. Unique and intriguing to many tourists are the basement food halls that exist in nearly every major department store in Japan (just remember to sit down, it is considered rude to eat standing up). More traditional destinations offered in Tokyo include the zoo, it's many museums, and of course the historic district of asakusa filled with temple's from centuries past.

For those visiting outside the capitol, Osaka's Osaka Castle (depicted below) is a must-see. An hour's train ride to Kyoto offers a beautiful view of Japan. Kyoto itself has some of the best surviving historic structures of Japan. As the MSN article points out "In fact, that's the hallmark of any visit to Japan. Rich in history yet obsessed with the modern and the new, it's key to absorb equal amounts of both to fully experience Japanese culture."

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