

My first encounter with Japanese culture came when I saw Miyazaki Hayao's *Spirited Away*. The movie's vivid imagery and incorporation of Shinto elements, such as the respect of nature and the power of kamis, made me interested in the culture of Japan. To feed my curiosity, I watched more of Hayao's movies, including *Princess Mononoke* and *The Wind Rises*. The latter's portrayal of the relations between Japan and Germany before and during WWII immediately caught my interest, and from that moment on, I turned my academic focus towards learning as much as I could about Japan's international relations.

I first turned to Glenn D. Hook's *Japan's International Relations* from which I discovered how Japan and the US shifted towards each other after WWII, because of China's growing economic influence.

This had an enormous impact on the post-war Japanese society and culture, which manifested itself in linguistic innovations, the absorption of American pop-culture elements, and the country's democratisation. These concepts were further explained in *Modern Japan: Social and Political History* by Elise K. Tipton, which also introduced me to how the government tried to define

Japanese nationalism with Shintoism. To have a clearer image about the social order of Japan, I read *Japanese Society* by Yoshio Sugimoto, and I was fascinated by how the generational variations affect the working morale of Japanese people. This book made me realise how the society of Japan isn't as homogenous as it seems as it is divided by social factors that are not common in the West. I also started to attend the Milestone Institute, a centre of advanced education, to learn more about international relations and East Asia. There, as part of an Introduction to Political Thought module, I first encountered the topic of multiculturalism. I read parts of Samuel P. Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations*, which argued that in the future international conflicts are not going to be about ideology or economic, but about cultural differences. I also took a *China and Capitalist Diversity* module, where I learned about China's economy from a historical perspective, starting from the Opium Wars until current times. I wrote an essay about how China became a capitalist country, and what it means for the future of democratisation. In Milestone, I and fellow students with similar interests put together an academic journal about the emergence of East Asia. I contributed to by writing an academic article about the importance of the Meiji restoration, especially the educational, military, and economic reforms, for the modernisation of Japan and a book review on *Modern Japan: A Social and Political History*.

To understand Japanese culture even more, I started to learn the Japanese language by memorising hiragana and katakana characters. A few years later, I had the opportunity to start taking Japanese classes at a private language school. I attend a Hungarian-German bilingual school, where parts of the curriculum are taught in German. I was also admitted to a talent development program at Corvinus University, where I completed all the international relations courses with excellent marks. This program gave me the opportunity to understand modern international relation issues, for example, European energy politics with Russia, and to analyse such cases. I also participated in several competitions in connection to social studies, including the International Geography Olympiad, where I finished in 8th place in the national finals, a German-language debate competition, Jugend Debattiert International, where I made it into the semi-finals, and a competition with Amnesty International, where my team and I made it into the national finals. In addition, I participated in the UN Sustainability Project by volunteering in Iceland.

Studying in the UK would enable me to continue to learn about Japan and international relations in one of the most prestigious university systems in the world.