

Many international students come to study at Hitotsubashi University, moving on after graduation to contribute their talents to a range of areas back in their home countries, in Japan, or even further afield.

By tracing their paths, we can help undergraduate and postgraduate students considering their own future careers, while also providing a valuable reference regarding Hitotsubashi's future outlook as it pursues globalization.

In this new series, we catch up with some of our international graduates to see what they have been doing with their lives. We begin with Cui Jun (now Shun Takami), who remained in Japan after graduation and is now Fuji TV's reporter on Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry affairs.

# Ties **and** bonds



## Taking a neutral stance to see and talk to both sides



### **Cui Jun (Shun Takami)**

Reporter  
(Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry news desk)  
Fuji TV

Graduated from the Faculty of Commerce and Management,  
Hitotsubashi University in 2000

Born Cui Jun, she changed her name to Shun Takami on becoming a Japanese national. Jun came to Japan in October 1994 when she was 18. Her grandfather was Japanese and her grandmother Chinese, while both her parents are Chinese. She spent 18 months learning Japanese at a Japanese language school before entering the Faculty of Commerce and Management at Hitotsubashi University in 1996, where she studied under Professor Itami. After graduating from the Faculty in 2000, Jun went to work for Fuji TV, where she is still working today. After starting to work she decided to become a Japanese national for work reasons. She is married to a Japanese husband and has one daughter.

### **Visit by grandfather after 42 years brings Jun to Japan at age 18**

In 1985, an elderly Japanese man came to Jun's family home in China. It was her grandfather, searching for the family he had left in China 42 years before. Her grandfather had arrived in Manchuria before the war and moved around China doing building-related work. Along the way, he met Jun's grandmother and married her. They had two children, a boy and a girl. After Japan lost the war, Jun's grandfather went back to Japan, but because her grandmother was Chinese, she remained behind with the two children. And that was all they had heard of the grandfather for a long, long 42 years.

"My grandfather invited my mother and uncle to come

back to Japan with him, but they were both in their 40s, and they didn't speak any Japanese. They weren't unhappy with their lives in China, either, so they chose to stay. They offered instead to send his grandchildren across to Japan to study," recalls Jun.

That promise was fulfilled on October 1, 1994 when 18-year-old Jun arrived in Japan.

"At the time, I was a university student, and I really wanted to study abroad. In China the way it was then, I already had a fair idea of what my life would look like. I was already in university, so I would enter a state enterprise and work my way up to senior management—not such a bad future, really. But it just wasn't that interesting. I felt strongly that if I went to a foreign university, it might open up a whole new life for me."

At the beginning, Jun imagined herself eventually returning to China to work. If she went back, graduates who had studied at universities offshore were much more attractive to companies than those who had stayed at home. She would also get credit for being able to speak a foreign language and having built up a personal network. The same holds in China even today.

"I thought that if I had the opportunity to go offshore, it would be better to go early."

In those days, the Chinese government covered university students' fees, so students funding themselves to study at foreign universities had to pay back that portion of their fees. In other words, if you studied at a university in China for one year before going to a foreign university, you paid back one year's fees. Jun's uncle's daughter decided to stay in China.

### **Japanese language school full of Koreans helps to build Jun's language skills**

"At a time when there were so few opportunities in China to go abroad, here was a chance right in front of me to go to Japan."

Nowadays anyone with a certain level of savings can enter Japan, but back then there were a lot of restrictions, including needing a guarantor. In view of the great burden, few people who were not relatives were willing to take on this role. In addition, for students planning on attending Japanese school when they arrived in Japan, procedures were difficult to complete unless you had an acquaintance in Japan. Knowing that she wouldn't have been able to come to Japan without her grandfather, Jun remains grateful to him to this day.

For the first 18 months after she arrived in Japan, Jun threw herself into studying Japanese at a Japanese language school and preparing for university entrance exams. The school was chosen by her grandfather. Over 80 years old and out of touch with education, he apparently thought that all Japanese language schools would be much the same, and if so, it would be better to go to one close to home. The school he chose had Japanese teachers and one Thai student—and all the other students were Korean. It also had no track record of getting students into university, and has since gone out of business.

"When I sat my university entrance exams, I was really nervous. I had no idea what my level would be

compared to other students. My teacher had never sent a student off to university either, so we ended up writing the application together, and that didn't inspire a lot of confidence in me either. In the end, though, that environment was excellent in terms of improving my Japanese. It was great that for a year and a half I spoke only Japanese in an environment where I couldn't use Chinese even if I wanted to."

### **Hitotsubashi campus inspires love at first sight, and it only gets better!**

Jun chose her university from a perspective fairly typical of Chinese students at the time.

"Back then, the only Japanese universities I knew were the University of Tokyo and Waseda. Private universities were too expensive, so I thought I would aim for the University of Tokyo. But for Tokyo, you had to sit the entrance exams within two years of finishing high school. Because Chinese universities start the new semester in September, I would be six months over the limit. There was no getting past that, so I gave up on the University of Tokyo."

Jun turned her eyes to other national and public universities in the Kanto region, and discovered Hitotsubashi University. "I got off at Kunitachi station and the moment I set foot on campus, I knew that this was the university for me."

"I had never heard of Hitotsubashi University before, but somehow I was sure that anywhere that had such a wonderful campus had to be a great university. And in fact, the more I learned about it, the more I realized just how great it was. I was attracted to the cultural atmosphere of the Kunitachi area, and I also thought that because student numbers were relatively low, students were likely to receive more individual attention."

But first Jun had to pass the entrance exam. To qualify to sit entrance exams, international students first had to achieve a certain level on the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) and a national examination for privately-funded international students. In the case of Hitotsubashi, students had to attain a score of at least 330 at Level 1 of the JLPT (out of a maximum score of 400) and at least 300 (out of 400) in the national examination. Only then could they sit Hitotsubashi's own entrance exam.

Because Jun was planning on going back to China after graduation, she wanted to learn something that would be universally useful, so she opted for the Faculty of Commerce and Management. She went into the entrance exam still feeling nervous, but was able to demonstrate her knowledge and abilities and sailed through with ease.

### **Not long at university, Jun feels the power of the Hitotsubashi brand**

"The Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Management at the time was Professor Hiroyuki Itami. He taught one course that was compulsory for all undergraduates in the Faculty, and his lectures were so easy to understand—you felt as though you were just soaking

them up. That's when I decided that if I was going to study, it had to be with him, and I chose his seminar. According to Professor Itami, if something can't be explained in a way which is easily understood, it's because the person explaining doesn't really understand it either. I've carved that message into my heart, and even now it's the compass needle for my working life."

Looking back at the international student situation at the time, there were around 20 other international undergraduates in the Faculty in the same year. Four of the privately-funded students were Chinese, two Korean and one Taiwanese, while all the other students—from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Romania, the Philippines, and elsewhere—were government-funded.

International students tended to stick together, but there was a further division within that group into privately-funded and government-funded students. It seemed to Jun that the government-funded students had it easy and were rather relaxed. Eventually, however, she realized that this preconception was mistaken. "I was surrounded by all these outstanding people." At graduation, the student chosen to represent all the graduates was from Singapore. After graduation too, many of the government-funded international students have gone on to work at leading financial institutions in Japan and around the world, while one graduate who went home to become a diplomat is now in the number-two position in an embassy in Japan.

"Good universities attract top people from around the world, so you're a step up just entering a university like that. It was the strength of Hitotsubashi's credibility that first brought that advantage home to me. International students don't have any credibility, but when you are a Hitotsubashi university student, it changes the way soci-



ety sees you. For example, when I was studying Japanese before entering Hitotsubashi, people looked at me as though I might have come from China as a migrant laborer, but as soon as I became a Hitotsubashi student, they started looking at me in a different light."

### Jun's grandfather becomes a huge Hitotsubashi fan

Jun was impressed not just with the campus and the town, but also the people she came in contact with.

"The lecturers in the Faculty of Commerce and Management are all leading figures in the Japanese economic and academic worlds, and they're also very familiar with world business and academic trends. Having contact

with them really widened my perspective."

"The people I met both on and off campus were also different. Up until that point, I had lived with my grandfather in an older part of Tokyo, so the Kunitachi area was a real contrast. I really loved the mothers who live in that area. The international students all had host families, and received a huge amount of support from these very strong women, just as though they were the students' own mothers."

"At the university we were also lucky enough to have various opportunities to travel around Japan. I climbed Mt. Fuji, was overwhelmed by the heavy snow by the Sea of Japan, and fell in love with Shirakawago's traditional Gassho-style thatched houses—all first-time experiences for me, and I learned so much from them. It would be safe to say that I traveled more during my student years than at any other time."

"The people I met during my Hitotsubashi years were all outstanding. They were all people I could respect, and I felt respected as well."

"The university was also great in terms of fee exemptions and generous scholarships."

"Until I entered Hitotsubashi University, my grandfather had in fact never heard of it. After hearing all about it from me, he started boasting to everyone he met that I was at Hitotsubashi, and that it was even better than the University of Tokyo."

Jun lived with her grandfather for two years before he died. He must have been deeply satisfied to spend his twilight years with his beloved grandchild and to have had her there to care for him right to the end.

### A pleasant surprise: "We hired you like any other student!"

"My job-hunting ended just like that."

Jun was interested from early on in the mass media, becoming involved at Hitotsubashi in editing the PR magazine "Bridge," an on-campus publication targeting international students, and working part-time at a news agency. She flew through the interview process at Fuji TV and soon received an unofficial offer, becoming the first international student that Fuji TV had ever hired.

Jun had originally planned to go to graduate school before finding a job. However, mass media firms at the time had age restrictions in place, and because Jun had spent 18 months studying Japanese before she started university, she knew that graduate school would put her past the limit. Job competition was supposed to be extremely fierce in the Japanese mass media world and there were apparently almost no foreigners, but Jun was encouraged by a comment from the teacher in charge of international students that no matter how high the ratio of applicants to jobs, for successful applicants it was 100 percent. Buoyed up by that comment, Jun resolved to take the entrance exam.

"I really enjoyed the interviews. Because I was Chinese, I was asked why I had come to Japan, so I told them the story of how my family hadn't seen my grandfather for 42 years. They were fascinated, and we ran out of time before they could ask any other questions. It

was then that I noticed I had reached the final interview. I was really lucky. They say that job-hunting is like a formal marriage interview, so I guess I was just well suited to Fuji Television.”

Jun wanted to be involved in reporting on Japan-China relations. The broadcasting company also did a lot more than broadcast, engaging in a range of international activities and events, and she thought she could be useful there too. But when she started work, Jun was instead told that the company hadn't hired her to handle China-related work, but just the way they would have hired any other student. Language was only a tool. She would be expected to do the same job as any new Japanese employee.



This came as a pleasant surprise to Jun, and since then, just as she was told, she has been operating on exactly the same playing field as

people had started to eat tuna. This was certainly one cause. Not only were resources beginning to dry up, but Chinese, Russians and other nationalities were starting to eat raw fish for the first time. They had also become wealthier, so it was becoming more common for the Japanese to find themselves outbid at the market. In January 2007, an international conference on tuna was held in Kobe, with the world's five resource management institutions coming together for the first time to discuss tuna resources.

“I sent a program outline to China and accompanied a top Chinese agricultural official and the president of a major Chinese frozen tuna company who came over to Japan to a Japanese sushi restaurant for an interview. When I asked them if more Chinese people eating tuna would take tuna out of the mouths of Japanese people, they noted that it was Japan which had spread tuna to China. There is basically no raw food in Chinese culture, so while Chinese people might be eating tuna now as a novelty, the custom wasn't likely to take hold to the extent that it would threaten Japan. At the same time, they felt that with people around the world waking up to the existence of tasty food, Japanese people would have to realize this and be more prepared to compete.”

Jun's program was well-received, with Reuters coming to ask about broadcasting rights.

“I think it was an idea that wouldn't have occurred to another reporter, and it was because I have that dual cultural background—Japanese and Chinese—that I was able to pull it off,” says Jun.

The Chinese agricultural official too at first found it strange that a Japanese television company would want to have an interview, but once he found out that a Chinese woman would be handling the project, he went along with the plan. “Even if it is only in a small way, I really want to do my bit to deepen mutual understanding from my

own particular position.” Jun will continue to use her own unique viewpoint to spot such chances.

“I am very satisfied with my current job,” she says, “but eventually I would like to work at our Beijing office. I want to report on areas that Japanese reporters haven't covered or would find it difficult to cover. I think that I would find it easier to get in and handle even quite sensitive issues.”

“As neighbors, Japan and China have to get along well. Because I can understand both sides from a neutral position, I can also talk to both sides. My own particular mission as someone involved in the media is, I believe, to promote that mutual understanding.”



Japanese staff. Some of her work is China-related—for some programs, she might find herself being sent off to China or Taiwan, or interviewing a key Chinese figure visiting Japan—but that is not the bulk of her work. However, Jun's desire to “do the best I can, taking advantage of my position as a Chinese person” is fulfilled in her work.

### Is tuna vanishing from Japanese tables because of the Chinese?

Back when she was in charge of reporting on Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries affairs, there was a big hue and cry that tuna was disappearing from Japanese dinner tables and that Japanese people would soon find tuna out of their reach, purportedly because Chinese

