

## Chapter 9: Myanmar



Population	52.4 million (2019)
Land Mass	677,000 km <sup>2</sup>
GDP per capita	1408 USD (2019)
Religion	Buddhism

The World Bank Development Indicators

### The overall theme of this chapter: The Impact of Multinational Corporations

- Production plants of large corporations
- Southeast Asia's last great emerging power
- Political instability



### Section A: Let's Learn About Myanmar! Pre-study about Myanmar

Choose one of the following topics and research about it in more detail on the Internet or at the library.

1. Research the historical relationship between Japan and Myanmar.
2. Research the current relationship between Japan and Myanmar.
3. What kind of country is Myanmar today?
4. Research about Myanmar's culture and society.

## **Myanmar at a Glance**

Myanmar, officially known as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, is a republic located in the western part of the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. The country's official name is the Union of Burma. The official language is Burmese. The capital is Nay Pyi Taw (Yangon until 2006). The currency is the kyat. The country is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The country is bordered by the Bay of Bengal to the southwest and the Andaman Sea to the south. Eastern India and Myanmar are located across the Bay of Bengal from each other. It is bordered by Thailand to the southeast, Laos to the east, China to the northeast and north, India to the northwest, and Bangladesh to the west.

It is a multi-ethnic country, with the Burmese accounting for 60% of the population, and other ethnic minorities such as the Karen, Kachin, Rakhine, and Mon. Many ethnic groups have their own languages. Buddhism is practiced in the country, and it is said that 90% of the population is Buddhist.

The history of the country shows that it became a British colony in the middle of the 19th century and was ruled by the British until it was occupied by Japan during World War II. After World War II, the country gained independence in 1948; a military junta took control after a dictatorship in 1962; after the military junta was dissolved in 2010, Aung San Suu Kyi and others were released after elections in 2011; in 2021, the military detained key regime figures, including State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, and staged a coup d'état. In addition, the massacre of Muslims and ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar military in 2016 continues, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has condemned the Rohingya refugees.

Myanmar's primary industry is agriculture, with rice as the main agricultural product and paddy fields accounting for 60% of the farmland. The country is also a major producer of precious stones, producing 90% of the world's rubies. The quality of sapphires is also high.

## **Section B: Let's Learn About Japanese Entrepreneurs Working in Myanmar**

### **Pre-reading Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever been to Myanmar? When did you go? What did you do there? What are some of the most memorable things you learned?
2. What do you know about the history of Myanmar?
3. Is there anything you would like to know about Myanmar?
4. What kind of image do you have of Myanmar?

**Main Task:** Please read the following cases 1-3 and answer the questions about their career path. Don't forget to visit the websites listed at the end of the profile and learn more about the businesses.

## Case 1

### **Mr. Keisuke HAGA**

#### **Profile**

Born in Sagami-hara City, Kanagawa Prefecture, he entered the Faculty of Information Science and Technology at Kansai University. In his senior year, he took a year off and traveled as a backpacker. He played baseball in high school and worked part-time in university. After graduating from university, he worked for a temporary staffing company specializing in IT engineers, left after 9 years, moved to Myanmar, and founded Growth, a chauffeur-driven car rental company, in 2014. Currently, he is the CEO of Growth.

#### **Website**

Growth: <http://www.growth.bz/>

Mr. Haga's father was a company employee, but he left his job to run a sports store. In his senior year at university, Mr. Haga took a year off and traveled to London, various European countries, Morocco, Turkey, and China as a backpacker. In high school, he played baseball, and in university he worked part-time. He concentrated on his part-time job rather than attending classes and went abroad about twice a year. After graduating from university at the age of 24, he joined Intelligence, a staffing company specializing in IT engineers, where he worked for six years. For the first three years, he worked as a salesman, and for the second three years, he oversaw career counseling for job seekers.

At the age of 30, he started working as a sales manager for three and a half years before quitting in 2012. At that time, he started to think about his future more seriously, contemplating what he would do when he turned 40, what would happen if the company went under? What value would he have left? It was at this point that he decided to change careers. He was torn between the following two options for several years:

- 1) Taking over the family business (sports store) with his brother
- 2) Working abroad.

After much deliberation, he decided to challenge himself by moving overseas while he was still young, as he felt he only had one life to live. At first, he thought he would work as a sushi chef in Europe, but then he soon realized that making sushi was monotonous and not suitable for his character, so he gave it up. Around that time, he received a job offer from a Japanese company in Cambodia. He considered the offer but began to think that there were many more countries in Southeast Asia and became interested in Myanmar.

In 2013, he decided to move to Myanmar and got a job at an online venture company called Web Crew, where he worked for less than two years. He left to start his own company, Growth, a chauffeur-driven car rental company, in 2014. He borrowed \$50,000

of the startup capital from his parents. In 2017, the year of the interview, the company had been in business for three years. The company operates more than 80 cars and employs 95 full-time employees, including drivers, and two part-time employees to provide rental cars to customers and client companies.

Currently, Mr. Haga is working as the representative director of Growth, but he also works as the editor-in-chief of a free paper magazine called Myanmar Business Partner. In addition, he is planning to start a third business related to education.

He is currently living in Yangon with his wife, a housewife, and their three children. At the time of the interview, he was 38 years old. In his first job he had a mentor who was two years his senior. His second mentor was also a senior who engaged in critical thinking. The third mentor was a senior who taught him the importance of empathizing with others. His current mentor is a Japanese company executive living in Singapore, whom he still sees about once every six months. He met this person when he was in his second year of working. The advice he got from this mentor was "Don't do anything that will make your employees and wife cry" and "Just keep on growing your business."

His professional network consists of expatriates from Japanese companies, local managers, and local business owners. His magazine network is with Japanese writers and designers. In his personal life, he has friends through being a manager, and a coach for his children's baseball team, which he coaches weekly.

Regarding job satisfaction, he answered that he is currently enjoying his job, but has yet to see any results. He enjoys it much more than when he was a salaried employee because in this position, he can make 100% of the decisions by himself.

Regarding the usefulness of his experience of working in Japan, Mr. Haga thinks that prior work experience was very useful. This is because he was able to learn in depth about the structure of a business and business manners. In some ways he feels that making new sales in Myanmar is easy compared to doing the same work in Japan. By living abroad, he can see both the strong points and challenging points of Japan.

Mr. Haga's career anchors in work are to "enjoy working," "increase customer satisfaction and growth through work," and to "utilize employee growth and strengths." The philosophy of his company is that "it is not about providing cars and drivers, but about providing a comfortable space for people to move around, increasing customer productivity and, as a result, growing the customers' business."

When asked about the decline in income, he replied, "*Income will follow. Right now, the company is still in the process of development, and we consider value added to be gross profit.*" He feels he can get more gross profit from services with high added value. If the company has a lot of people supporting it and a lot of employees shining and working, profits will increase. He is hoping to increase their sales hundredfold.

When starting Growth, Mr. Haga consulted with his wife about his decisions and borrowed

\$50,000 of the start-up capital from his parents. The debt has not been paid off yet. The profits are being used for future investments, but he plans to pay back the entire amount in the future.

Now, his main concerns are:

- (1) Business risks due to the decline in the price of rental cars caused by the entry of major companies.
- (2) The spread of self-driving cars
- (3) His own health
- (4) Drivers' education

In addition, since his customers are Japanese companies, the company is conducting value-added education for drivers to enhance their services to suit the needs of the Japanese customer.

In response to the 5-point rating question regarding satisfaction, Mr. Haga gave 5 points for job satisfaction, 4 points for life satisfaction, and 5 points for overall satisfaction.

### Mr. Haga's Career Path

19	Entered the Faculty of Information Science and Technology, Kansai University
23	Took a leave of absence from school in the fourth year and went backpacking overseas
24	Worked for an IT staffing company
33	Quit the company and moved to Myanmar to work for an internet venture company
35	Founded Growth, a car rental company with drivers
Present	Currently expanding the business



### Case 1 Career Path Questions

1. Mr. Haga took a leave of absence in his fourth year of university. What do you think he learned from his overseas experience?
2. What preparations would you need to make to take a leave of absence to go abroad at your university?
3. Why do you think Mr. Haga decided to quit his job in 2012?
4. Why do you think Mr. Haga decided to enter the car rental business in Myanmar?
5. Please comment on Mr. Haga's career anchor. What do you think this tells you about his character and approach to business?

## Case 2

### **Ms. Kyoko TANI**

#### **Profile**

Born in Saitama Prefecture. Worked as a beauty consultant and store manager. Quit her job after marriage and became a housewife. Her hobby of making bracelets led her to visit Myanmar. After her divorce, she offered beauty services at her flat in Myanmar, opened a jewelry store, Culumtio, and became CEO.

#### **Website:**

Culumtio: <https://culumtio.co.jp/company/>

Ms. Tani was born in Saitama Prefecture in 1976. Her father ran a pharmacy. After her parents divorced, she was raised by her grandmother in Tokyo. She is an only child and has no siblings. As a child, she traveled to Australia with her parents, and after she started working, she traveled to Paris, Hawaii, Guam, and Hong Kong. Due to these experiences, Ms. Tani has always wanted to live and study abroad. She attended elementary and junior high schools in Saitama Prefecture until high school, where she graduated from Josai High School's regular course. After graduating from high school, she worked for Kao Corporation, selling cosmetics in department stores for six years. At the age of 24, she moved to a foreign cosmetics company, Sephora, where she worked as a shop manager, specializing in skincare, makeup, and perfumes, and oversaw sales at the Ikebukuro store. When Ms. Tani was 29 years old, she got married, and at the age of 30, she gave birth to a baby boy.

From the age of 29 to 31, she was a full-time homemaker and did not have a job, but she obtained beauty-related qualifications to administer esthetic extensions and head spa treatments. At that time, she began to think about starting her own business.

At the age of 31, she started making bracelets as a hobby at her home in Tokyo. Through her connection with stones, she met a woman from Myanmar, and she encouraged her to visit Myanmar in July 2012 to buy rough stones. Around this time, she separated from her husband and divorced him just before her child started elementary school in March 2013. With her child's school bag and 2 million yen in hand, she moved to Myanmar.

From 2013 to 2015, she rented a 3-bedroom apartment in Yangon for a year and provided beauty treatment services to expatriate wives to earn income. She enrolled her child in a Japanese school in Yangon.

Ms. Tani also sold bracelets online in Yangon, and they started to sell well. She also went to hotels and marinas in Yangon to sell her works to Japanese expatriate wives living in Yangon.

In August 2015, she opened the Culumtio jewelry store, where Culumtio is the Latin word for healing and bonding, and the store's philosophy is to heal the mind and strengthen

bonds through the wearing of jewelry. She taught herself how to make jewelry but returned to Japan from time to time to take courses at a jewelry school to master her craft.

At the end of 2015, her child wanted to return to Japan, and since then her son has been living in Japan with his father. After opening a salon in Aoyama, Tokyo in 2017, she has been living in Tokyo as her base, and splitting her time between spending three weeks in Tokyo and one week in Yangon.

In her first job at Kao, Ms. Tani did not find a mentor and neither does she have one now. Her professional network includes local craftspeople who make jewelry in Myanmar, local employees, customers, colleagues in Japan, people in charge of events at Japanese department stores, and teachers at jewelry schools. In her personal life, her network is through her family and friends.

Regarding satisfaction, job satisfaction is the most important to her because she really enjoys her work. Ms. Tani feels that her work experience in Japan was beneficial for her entrepreneurial career. For example, she learned from her experience working in Japan to think about and practice how she can be used effectively and what will allow her to do the work she wants to do. She also learned what exactly she wanted to do.

Her career anchor is "When times are tough, the customer will save me." As for income, she answered that she considers her income to be not money, but the amount she makes her customers happy.

Ms. Tani started her company with a start-up funds of 1.5 million yen; 1 million yen was borrowed from her father and 500,000 yen was prepared by herself. The 2,000,000 yen that she brought with her to Yangon was used up by moving expenses and rent for one year. She earned enough money to live for a year by providing beauty treatments such as esthetics in her apartment. Part of the funds for opening the business and the money she brought with her to Myanmar were saved from her days as a beauty consultant.

Before she started her business she consulted with a president of a company in Myanmar and a Japanese friend in Myanmar. She has some concerns now, firstly, she works in Tokyo for three weeks out of the month and spends only one week in Yangon, so she is worried about whether she can maintain the store with only Myanmar local employees. Secondly, one of the reasons for her extended stay in Tokyo is to take care of her grandmother who is now 92 years old, and she is concerned for her grandmother's health. Finally, her child lives far away from her.

When asked to rate her level of satisfaction on a 5-point scale, she gave 5 points for job satisfaction, 1 point for life satisfaction, and 3.5 points for overall satisfaction. The reason for the low level of life satisfaction was that she was living apart from her son. Her next goal is to open a store in Japan.

### Ms. Tani's Career Path

18	Began working as a beauty consultant for Kao Corporation
24	Moved to a foreign-affiliated company became a store manager
29	Married and became a full-time housemaker
30	Gave birth, obtained esthetic qualifications
31	Started making bracelets as a hobby
37	Divorced and moved to Myanmar with her child
39	Opened a jewelry store in Yangon
41	Opened a salon in Tokyo
Present	Continuing to expand her businesses



### Questions about the Case

1. During the period between the ages of 29 and 31, when Ms. Tani was working as a full-time housewife, she acquired several beauty-related certifications. Why do you think Ms. Tani acquired the qualifications?
2. What kind of difficulties do you think Ms. Tani faces in delegating tasks to Myanmar local staff? Consider the possible differences in culture and society.
3. How did Ms. Tani raise the funds to open a jewelry store in Myanmar? How would you finance the opening of your business if you opened one?
4. Explain the difficulty of balancing work and child-rearing from Ms. Tani's case.
5. Visit the Culumtio homepage and imagine the future direction of Ms. Tani's business.



### Case 3

#### **Mr. Yuichi IWAYA**

##### **Profile**

Born in Kasukabe City, Saitama Prefecture. His wife is from Myanmar, and they have a daughter. He lived in his hometown and entered the Faculty of Commerce at Senshu University, where he participated in a short-term study abroad program during the summer vacation of his first year. In his third year, he took a year off from university and stayed in New Zealand on a working holiday visa. After graduating from university, he obtained a domestic travel manager certification and worked as a tour guide for domestic trips. Worked at hotels in Asia, starting with the Nikko Hotel in Palau. Later, he worked for a Japanese company as an expatriate employee in Egypt. Wanted to live with his family, so he returned to Myanmar and established a Japanese restaurant Kamakura Marina in Yangon at the age of 43.

Born in Kasukabe City, Saitama Prefecture, Mr. Iwaya lived with his parents until university. His father was a teacher and his mother worked at the city hall. After graduating from high school, he entered the Faculty of Commerce at Senshu University, where he studied abroad for 45 days during the summer vacation of his first year. In his third year of university, he took a year off and stayed in New Zealand on a working holiday visa, during which time he traveled to Australia for a month, New Zealand for a month, and the Fiji Islands for a month. After graduating from university, he went to Australia for one year to study English. His parents paid all the expenses related to this overseas experience.

At the age of 26, he worked as a sales manager at the Nikko Hotel, a Japan Airlines operated hotel, in the Republic of Palau for seven years until he was 33. With the closure of the Japan Airlines Hotel, he was introduced to a position in Myanmar. He worked as a hall manager at the Benkei Restaurant of the Japan Airlines Hotel in Myanmar. Mr. Iwaya then worked as a sales manager at the Shangri-La Hotel in Myanmar from the age of 34 to 36.

At the age of 35, he met and married his wife who was working at the Nikko Hotel, and at the age of 36, he worked as a sales manager at the Myanmar branch of a Japanese company selling pencils and cosmetics but was laid off when the head office merged with another company due to the Lehman Shock. He returned to his parents' home in Kasukabe, Japan with his family of three, but was unable to find a job. At the age of 40, he was hired locally by an electronic parts trading company in Singapore. That same year, he was headhunted by a Japanese company and became a full-time employee and representative of their subsidiary in Egypt. This company exported fruits and vegetables to Japan, and its factory was located 50 kilometers away from Cairo, the capital city. He went to Egypt alone and his family lived in Myanmar. He would work for this company for three years.

At the age of 43, he decided he wanted to live with his family, so he moved back to Myanmar and started his own Japanese restaurant, which he still runs today. When considering who he thinks of as his first mentor, Mr. Iwaya said he was influenced by the

third general manager of the Nikko Hotel in Palau. Currently, he has one mentor who was the president of a large Japanese company stationed in Myanmar, but he has now retired and returned to Japan. He is 12 years older than Mr. Iwaya and they have a relationship which is like family.

Mr. Iwaya's professional network consists of Japanese businesspeople, regular customers who come to his restaurant, golf, tennis, mahjong buddies, people working for NGOs, and other customers of various levels. In his personal life, he has a network of friends from his university days and old friends he keeps in touch with through Facebook and a network of people he has met through his children and their activities.

In response to a question about job satisfaction, he answered that his life is work-centered, he enjoys his work, 90% of his life is work, and 10% is family. He answered that Saturdays are family days and he makes sure to only spend time with his family on that day. When questioned about his work experience, he stated he has never worked in Japan.

His career anchors are "once in a lifetime" and "never give up." In terms of income, Mr. Iwaya answered that the more he has, the better. However, at the very least, it is necessary to have enough income to educate his daughter and feed his family. Once he knows he has enough to protect his family, he would like to use money to take on new challenges.

He raised 15 million yen in start-up funds to start the business, 2 million yen was borrowed from his parents, and the remaining 13 million yen came from his own savings. Ten million yen of his savings came from when he worked in Myanmar and in Egypt.

When Mr. Iwaya started his business, he consulted with his wife and parents beforehand. Currently he has three main concerns, to be able to secure a high quality of staff, to build a business that is sustainable and able to be run without him and he wants to be able to try other businesses within five years. His wife is also entrepreneurial and is engaged in an esthetic business and a real estate business. In response to the five-point rating question regarding satisfaction, he gave a score of 3 for job satisfaction, 5 for life satisfaction, and 4 for overall satisfaction.

### Mr. Iwaya's Career Path

19	Entered the Faculty of Commerce at Senshu University
19-23	Participated in a short-term language program in the U.S. Stayed in New Zealand on a working holiday. Traveled to Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji Islands
24	Studied English language in Australia
25	Worked as a tour guide in Japan
26	Worked as the Sales Manager of Nikko Hotel, Palau Island
33	Worked as the Hall Manager of Nikko Hotel, Myanmar
34	Worked as the Sales Manager of Shangri-La Hotel, Myanmar
36	Worked as the Sales Manager, Myanmar Branch of a Japanese Company
40	Headhunted by a Japanese company to work in Egypt for a Japanese company
43	Established a Japanese restaurant, Kamakura Marina, in Yangon, Myanmar
Present	Currently expanding the business



## Questions About the Career Path

1. Mr. Iwaya experienced short-term study abroad and a working holiday during his university years. What do you think he learned from these overseas experiences?
2. What procedures do you need to follow to participate in a working holiday program?
3. Why do you think Mr. Iwaya decided to work at a hotel in Palau?
4. Why do you think Mr. Iwaya decided to open a Japanese restaurant in Myanmar? Who do you think are his customers?
5. Mr. Iwaya's career anchors are "Once in a lifetime" and "Never Give Up." Imagine you are Mr. Iwaya, why do you think he values these two career anchors? What do they mean?



## Section C: Deepen Your Understanding

**Write a report or prepare a presentation on the following topic:**

Using a search engine such as Google, research one Japanese or multinational company that is doing business in Myanmar. Next, think about what kind of business you could engage in Myanmar that would support the multinational or their expatriate or local employees.

### English Supplementary Reading

Collignon, S. et al (ed.) (2001) *Burma: political economy under military rule*, London: Hurst & Company.  
Cook, P. and Minogue, M. (1993) 'Economic Reform and Political Change In Myanmar (Burma)', *World development.*, Vol 21(7), pp 1151-1161.

Than, M. (1991) 'Asean. Indo-China and Myanmar - Towards Economic Co-Operation?', *ASEAN economic bulletin.*, Vol 8(2), pp 173-193.

Than, M. (1992) 'Myanmar's external trade: an overview in the Southeast Asian context ', *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.* (WE) HF 3832.2 M9

Than, M. (2004) *Economic development of Myanmar*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Than, M. (2005) *Myanmar in ASEAN: regional cooperation experience*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

### Japanese Supplementary Reading

地球の歩き方編集室(編)(2020)『地球の歩き方 ミャンマー(ビルマ)』地球の歩き方。

福森哲也他(2012)『ミャンマー・カンボジア・ラオスのことがマンガで3時間でわかる本』明日香出版社。

板坂真季(2018)『はじめてのミャンマー』東京ニュース通信社。

ジーン・シャープ(2012)『独立体制から民主主義へー権力に対抗するための教科書』ちくま学芸文庫。

春日孝行(2020)『黒悪魔がひそむ国ミャンマー政治の舞台裏』河出書房新社。

根本敬(2019)『飛び立つミャンマー』(オンデマンド) フジ参詣ビジネスアイ。

根本敬(2014)『物語 ビルマの歴史』中公新書。

西澤卓(2014)『ミャンマー仏教—出家・迷走・学問・聖者たち』(ディスカバーebook 選書) Kindle 版。

椎名誠(2006)『秘密のミャンマー』小学館文庫