

Column | From Turkey to Japan, My Work Experience at Hitachi

In this column, I am going to introduce myself as a foreign employee of the Hitachi Group and tell you something of my country. I came to Japan in 1999 to study geographical information systems as a graduate student. After I received my doctoral degree, I started working for Hitachi Software Engineering Co., Ltd. from 2005. I have spent the time since then working in the field of geographical information systems. The cultural richness of Turkey is in many ways a consequence of its geographical location. The country also has a very young population, making it an interesting market for new and high-technology products. Hitachi is known in Turkey for its construction machinery and household appliances. Turkey is likely to be a fertile market for the high-technology products of Hitachi.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I was asked to write a column in English to introduce myself and my country, I thought it would be an easy task since I was going to write about two things I know best, but trust me it was not as easy as one might expect. I hope that you, my readers, enjoy what I have to say and that it helps give you some idea about myself and especially about my country.

First of all, I will give you some insights about my country and the image of Hitachi. I will introduce myself shortly, talking briefly about how I came to Japan, how I started to work, and my experiences related to daily life and work life in Japan. Finally, I will talk about my future plans for my career and, while doing so, I will try to share my ideas about the market possibilities for Hitachi in emerging economies.

I hope you enjoy the column. Here we start...

TURKEY: WHERE THE CONTINENTS MEET

I am Bahadır Gultekin and I am from the Republic of Turkey. I was born in the capital city Ankara – yes, the capital city is not Istanbul, it is Ankara. The best way to summarize Turkey in a couple of words would be the title of this section: “Turkey: where the continents meet.” Turkey is located between the three oldest continents of the world: Asia, Europe and Africa. It is possible to find historical remains from cultures that are located in each of these continents from Greek city states to artifacts from Troy, from Hagia Sophia to the Blue Mosque, and so on. It is possible to find signs of this mixture in everyday life. Turkish cuisine, for example, is one of the three most popular cuisines in the world and we have our rich cultural heritage to thank for this.



Fig. 1—Geographical Location of Turkey.

Turkey has a very young and dynamic population structure with more than 65% of the population in the 15-64-age group. The young population is very interested in new and high-technology products. In this regard Japanese products are well known for the advanced level of their technology and their slick designs. Also, there are historical ties between the two countries going back to the 1890s when the villagers of Kushimoto helped the survivors of the Ertugrul Frigate naval disaster. Turkish people have never forgotten that event and the help they received from the villagers.

Hitachi, as a brand, is known mostly for construction machinery and household appliances. In the early spring of 2009, Hitachi made a big move in the household appliance sector, and refrigerators in particular, aiming to capture 10% of the refrigerator market in Turkey. Other Hitachi products, however, are not as well known by Turkish people.



Fig. 2—Images of Turkey (2009 T.C.Kultur ve Turizm Bakanligi).

WORKING AT HITACHI

You may be wondering how I came to be working for Hitachi Software Engineering Co., Ltd. if Hitachi is not so well known for its software solutions in Turkey. Well, like every story it is a long one. I came to Japan in 1999 to study GIS⁽¹⁾ (geographical information systems) as a graduate student. After six long years of research and much struggling with the Japanese language, I finally got

my doctoral degree in 2005. At one of the mapping and GIS conferences I attended during this time, I happened to visit the HitachiSoft booth. This was the first time I came into contact with HitachiSoft's GIS package software that has become a big part of my life since 2005. My initial interest in this software was largely due to its being developed entirely in Japan, making it the only Japanese GIS product that is also used overseas (in the USA, France, and elsewhere).

At HitachiSoft, I worked on research and development of this GIS software for about 3 years and since 2008 I have been working in business development and product planning. My main responsibility is to introduce the GIS software to new sectors and markets. One of the most important aspects of this work is to make this product suitable for overseas markets.

DREAMS THAT MAY COME TRUE

This is where my future plans and dreams all come together. HitachiSoft's GIS software is a specialized product for infrastructure management, mapping, and analysis. Turkey is located at the intersection of international oil and gas pipelines, the most famous being the BTC Pipeline. Turkey also provides a safe route for future pipeline projects that connect Europe to natural gas and oil resources in the Middle East and Caspian Sea regions.

This makes the GIS software a solution that is desperately needed in Turkey and my future plans include introducing this program to the country of my birth. Utilization of this GIS software facilitates efficient energy and resource administration for these infrastructure projects. Moreover, HitachiSoft developed a GIS program specifically for gas distribution companies and it features map display, network analysis, and data retrieval tools that can

(1) GIS (geographical information systems): Systems that capture, store, analyze, manage, and present data that is linked to location.

be used to manage the infrastructure companies' asset stock and to allow end-users to analyze the distribution of energy and natural resources. This analysis can detect leakage in the energy and natural resource distribution and therefore help minimize the costs associated with these infrastructure system leakages.

POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS FACING GLOBALIZATION

HitachiSoft's GIS software is only one example of a Hitachi product suitable for the global market. There are many other Hitachi products that can compete with products from other countries. However, there are, in my opinion, two big hurdles that the group needs to overcome if it is to become a global force. The first is the ability of the company to adapt to different cultures and different business habits. The second is to have the flexibility and speed of reaction needed to grasp opportunities and cope with changes in different markets. Unfortunately, Hitachi is a traditional company and, because of that, it is a little slow and inflexible in responding to changes and opportunities.

However, being a traditional company is not without advantages. For instance, there is a great depth of know-how and technology within the company, backed by years of experience. The key is to create a group synergy and share all of this accumulated information and experience horizontally between different Hitachi Group companies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bahadır Gultekin, Ph.D.

Joined Hitachi Software Engineering Co., Ltd. in 2005, and now works at the Government, Public Corporation & Social Systems Group, Solution Business Promotion Department. He is currently engaged in the business development and product planning of GeoMation Series. Dr. Gultekin Bahadır is a member of The Japan Section of the Regional Science Association International (JSRSAI), GIS Association of Japan.