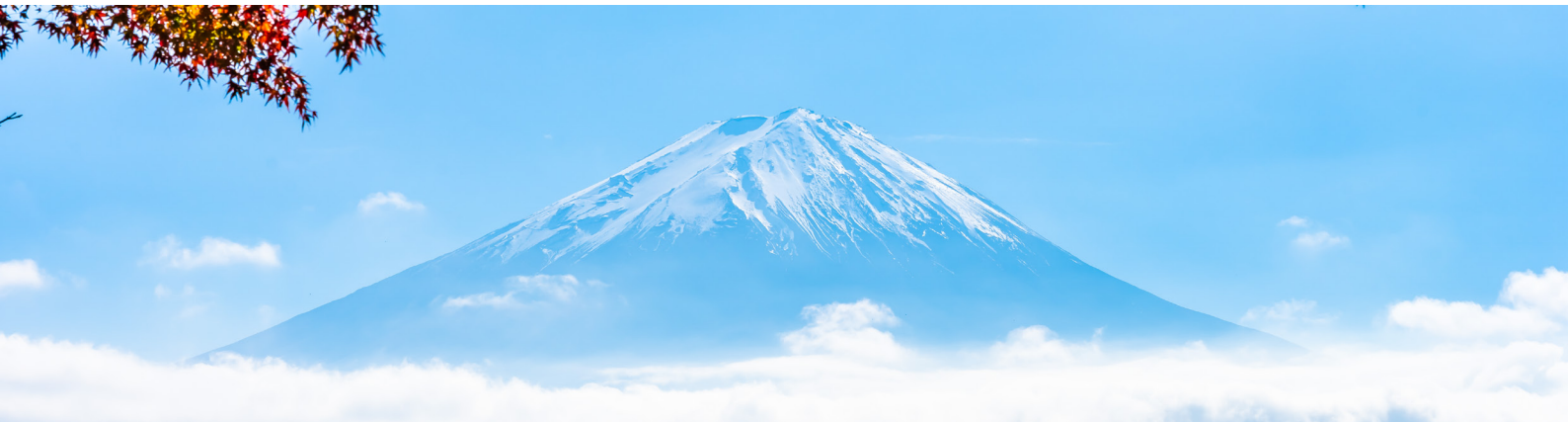


# GALL



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**April 2020**

## **Q&A with Gall Secondee Takashi Ugajin**

Registered Foreign Lawyer Takashi Ugajin was seconded to Gall from Mori Hamada & Matsumoto (MHM), one of the Big Four law firms in Japan, last September. He shares how the opportunity to be seconded arose, what he enjoys about working at Gall and how the legal industry differs in Hong Kong to Japan. He also offers his advice to other Japanese lawyers exploring secondments.

Visit our new Japanese language page on Gall's website by clicking [here](#).

### **Tell us about yourself**

I am a Japanese lawyer specialising in China-related disputes and employment law, and am fluent in Japanese, English and Mandarin. I am one of the few Japanese litigators who are familiar with, and have practical experience of, multi-linguistic and multi-jurisdictional matters.

I was seconded to Gall from Mori Hamada & Matsumoto (MHM), one of the Big Four law firms in Japan and have been here since September 2019.

### **How did the opportunity to be seconded to Gall come about?**

MHM and Gall have collaborated on several big cross-border disputes involving Japan, Hong Kong and other jurisdictions. The senior management team at MHM were always very impressed with Gall's professionalism and high quality of work.

When I was studying my LLM at Georgetown University in Washington DC about 2 years ago, I was looking for an opportunity to work in Hong Kong after graduation. I thought I should be somewhat familiar with the legal practice in Hong Kong because I was a China practice litigator and Hong Kong legal practice is closely related to Mainland China. I asked MHM to introduce me to suitable firms in Hong Kong and they introduced me to Gall. I was eager to work at Gall and, fortunately, the team here welcomed me.

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## **What do you enjoy about your role at Gall?**

The diversity of the firm always surprises me. My colleagues are from various jurisdictions including Hong Kong, England, India, Australia, and Japan. Various languages – English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Japanese – are used at the firm, whilst the majority of matters we deal with are cross-border involving multiple jurisdictions. I am happy to be part of the firm's diversity.

## **How is the legal industry in Hong Kong different to in Japan?**

Hong Kong has many more lawyers than Japan. In my rough calculation, Hong Kong has more than 1500 solicitors/ barristers per 1m population, whilst Japan has less than 350 lawyers per 1m population! Therefore, in my view, Japanese lawyers tend to be expected to be (and in fact are) generalists, while Hong Kong solicitors seem to specialise in a relatively narrower practice area.

Japan also has far fewer female lawyers than Hong Kong too. Only 18.8% of Japanese lawyers are female. On the other hand, more than 70% of my solicitor colleagues here at Gall are women! I hope Japan's legal industry can be more diverse.

## **What do you miss about Tokyo?**

Sushi. Although we can enjoy sushi all over the world these days, there is nothing better than sushi in Tokyo.

## **What do you like about life in Hong Kong?**

"Work-life balance" is the key word. I usually work from 9 am to 6 PM in HK, while I occasionally worked from 9 am to 6 AM in Tokyo (emphasis added)! I now enjoy not only my work but also my private life with my lovely wife, including having dinners together, hiking mountains together, watching movies together, etc. I wish I could stay in Hong Kong forever!

## **Do you have any words of advice for other lawyers exploring secondments?**

Be confident in yourself. Some of you (especially, some Japanese lawyers) might be concerned about your language ability but it's not a big problem. You are a lawyer. You can explain what the law is and how the law works in your jurisdiction. That is what only you can do.

## **Contact**



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