

Caitlin Meagher  
JSPS short-term fellowship report

I was fortunate to spend the months of March, April, and May of 2012 as a short-term visiting researcher at Osaka University's Graduate School of Human Sciences, department of cultural anthropology, thanks to JSPS's generous sponsorship. This three-month period marked the beginning of extended fieldwork research for my doctoral dissertation at Oxford University's Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology (ISCA) on the topic of Japanese behavior on commuter trains.

Osaka University's department of cultural anthropology is widely recognized as among the very best in Japan and the world. Its strengths include its long-standing emphasis on material culture (including its relationship with Minpaku, the National Museum of Ethnography, which is located virtually at its doorstep in Suita-shi) and the engagement of its faculty members with experimental theories and methodologies, including the anthropology of science and technology. These orientations made the department an especially appropriate place to pursue an experimental ethnography grounded in material practice like my own.

During my fellowship I had the opportunity to interact with a number of members from the department's stellar faculty, but I owe a special debt of gratitude to my host researcher, Morita Atsuro, for his generous guidance and support beginning long before my arrival in Japan and continuing beyond the term of the fellowship. I approached Morita-sensei to act as my host researcher because he is an intellectually agile scholar who produces theoretically progressive work and is actively engaged in international collaboration and exchange. During my very first weekend in Osaka, for example, I was invited to an international conference on the current and future state of anthropological epistemology and methodology titled "Translational Movements," which he co-chaired, and which featured contributions from European, American, and Japanese scholars on a variety of anthropological topics. I have benefited throughout my stay in Osaka from Morita-sensei's eagerness to engage with new ideas and to cross national and disciplinary boundaries, having been invited to participate in a number of similarly stimulating events throughout Kansai.

I am indebted to Morita-sensei, to the Graduate School of Human Sciences at Osaka University, and of course to JSPS for enabling me to begin my research, and for having provided me with such support and encouragement as they have. I would encourage any new JSPS short-term fellows to embark on this exciting opportunity with an open mind to the possibilities made available to them for intellectual and cultural exchange. I am happy to answer any questions about conducting research in Japan and can be contacted at [Caitlin.meagher@new.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Caitlin.meagher@new.ox.ac.uk)