

Melandra Castle Fund 2026

The Melandra Castle Fund enabled me to travel to Japan to conduct essential activities to further my research during the second year of my doctoral degree. Having previously had limited opportunity to visit Japan, the trip was crucial to pursuing two complementary objectives: improving language skills and gathering primary and secondary sources for my research.

During my time in Japan, I attended the Summer Program in Advanced Japanese of the Inter-University Centre for Japanese Language Studies in Yokohama. This is a renowned centre whose programs are designed for advanced doctoral students from leading universities in the United States to develop the necessary language skills to conduct research in their specialised fields. During the program, I attended classes five days a week that centred on revising grammar patterns, improving listening and reading skills, and developing proficiency in the honorific language. Through the program, I gained more confidence in my language skills and was able to convey part of my research in Japanese during an end-of-program presentation.

During my time in Japan, I also had the opportunity to attend the Asian Studies Conference Japan at Sophia University in Tokyo, an interdisciplinary conference dedicated to the study of Asia. The conference allowed me to engage with other researchers through several panels and presentations whose topics were relevant to my own research, including the conditions of migrant caregivers, representations of ageing, and responses to the demographic transition.

My research focuses on the representation of caregiving in contemporary Japanese literature and popular culture to define how such representation reflects and challenges societal norms and understanding of care. While caregiving is a pressing issue within an ageing society, the topic has been underexplored in scholarship. The second objective of the trip has been to gather secondary sources in Japanese that are not readily available abroad. For this purpose, I visited the National Diet Library in Tokyo several times. Here I managed to access crucial secondary sources. Among these were research articles and reviews on the literary and media works I am analysing in my project, as well as research that explicitly addresses caregiving within Japanese literature, such as the volume *'Kaigo shōsetsu' no fūkei. Kōrei shakai to bungaku*, which addresses the representation of elder care in modern literature. Moreover, I have gathered articles on care ethics and social reproduction theory by Japanese scholars, both a part of the main theoretical frameworks of my research project.

I am extremely grateful to have been awarded the Melandra Castle Fund; it provided crucial support for this trip. Thanks to it, I have had the opportunity to access primary and secondary sources for my research while furthering my language skills, both critical components for the development of my thesis.