

**Masters Programme in Asian Studies**  
**Statement of Purpose**  
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In ten days, I will celebrate my 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, the third birthday I will have celebrated in Japan, my adopted home for the last two and a half years. I chose to come here on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme to work as an Assistant English Teacher in local schools as my next step in life after graduating from Harvard University with a degree in Government. I came looking for adventure and discovery and to immerse myself in fascinating culture that I had previously known only through books and university lectures. I wanted to experience first-hand rich culture of contrasts between the traditional and ultra-modern resulting from the incredible pace of change and development in the last century.

This juxtaposition is readily apparent in my everyday life here. In my neighborhood, high-rise apartment buildings stand next to rice paddies. I frequently see cars decorated with Shinto shrine good luck charms as well as Hello Kitty dolls. Now I am sitting on the *tatami* floor of my one-room Japanese house, legs crossed under the heated *kotatsu* table. I take a sip of my hot green tea and continue typing on my laptop. I can hear the faint sound of cars and trucks passing by, punctuated by the occasional rumble of the *bosozoku* motorcycle gangs speeding down the main road through town. Through one window I can see the flickering fluorescent lights of the *karaoke* club and the *pachinko* parlor down the street. Through another window I catch a glimpse of my next-door neighbor's carefully tended *bonsai* garden.

I pause for a few seconds to gather my thoughts and continue typing. I am plotting the next big step for my life after JET when my third and final contract year expires at the end of July 2006. After these few years of experience in Japan, working as a teacher myself, I feel it is time to become a student again. Borrowing words from the program prospectus, I would say that I am looking for "analytical perspectives and context for my experience in Asia."

To better understand this point where I am at today, let us look briefly at the past. I have had a deep interest in East Asia from a young age. This comes naturally since the historical and social changes and patterns of migration are reflected in my own family history. My Chinese paternal grandparents fled to Taiwan after the Chinese Nationalist Party's defeat in the Chinese Civil War. My Taiwanese maternal

grandparents grew up and were educated during the Japanese colonial regime. My own parents were part of the emigration of educated Taiwanese professionals in the early 1980's, when they went to America to pursue their graduate degrees and ultimately settling and raising me and my sister there. Exploring my own family's story has enticed me to further study East Asia in the "big picture" of historical and social context. Now I have come to Japan as a Taiwanese-American, participating in both linguistic and cultural exchange in the process of "Internationalization," which is very much a buzzword in Japan these days.

So what is it in particular about the Masters Programme in Asian Studies at Lund that makes it my ideal next step after Japan? The interdisciplinary character of the academic curriculum is a big plus for me. Because I have a diverse range of academic interests and also because much of my undergraduate education looked at the "big picture" of intellectual understanding through interdisciplinary methods. In this quest for interdisciplinary and international perspectives, I am also looking forward to gaining a Swedish/European perspective on East Asia. Another thing that interests me about studying at Lund is the opportunity for exchange study at a university in Asia as well as the opportunity to pursue fieldwork in the region. I believe that the Masters Degree in Asian Studies will give me the insight and competitive edge to seek a position at a government agency or NGO related to East Asia.

Finally, I would like to add that I have previously studied at Lund University. During the summer of 2002, I took the course in Human Rights at the Department of Law as part of the Øresund Summer University. In addition being captivated by the idyllic charm of the historic town and university campus, I was also especially impressed by the welcoming feeling of the university and its openness towards foreign students. The accessibility and dedication of the professors and the intellectual engagement of my fellow students particularly inspired me as well. This experience left me with fond memories of Lund and a lingering desire to return one day. Now as I embark on my next big step after JET, I sincerely hope that I will have the opportunity to continue my academic studies at Lund in the Masters Programme in Asian Studies.