

### **Bao Shuangyue(Graduate School of Arts and Letters)**

The HeKKSaGon workshop was an event of a truly international scale involving not only Japanese and German students, but also exchange students from both universities. Presenting there was a highly instructive and stimulating experience. I was particularly surprised and impressed by the difference between German and Japanese educational and research philosophies: Japanese scholars tend to build their argument up from a small point, while their German counterparts prefer to approach a narrow issue from a broad perspective.

The presentations themselves went smoothly, but the participants had some trouble communicating in English during the discussions. Of course, it is largely a problem of individual learning, but I hope that our university will create an environment conducive to mastering English and provide more opportunities for international exchange. This may facilitate our students' international activities and contribute to the internationalization of the university on the whole.

### **OKHLOPKOVA, Evdokiia(Graduate School of Arts and Letters)**

I didn't know much about the HeKKSaGon consortium before I went there, and I'm afraid that many other students at Tohoku University similarly have little idea about what it is. So I hope that this report will help young researchers get familiar with the purposes and structure of the consortium and maybe encourage others to apply and take part in its future events.

First of all, what is a "consortium"? Based on the opinions of fellow scholars and definitions I found in several dictionaries, consortium is an association of people from different institutions who work together to achieve a common objective - something like a conference that involves joint projects and meetup activities with a very limited number of participants. The HeKKSaGon consortium specifically, is a network of six outstanding research-focused universities in Germany and Japan.

Second, why "HeKKSaGon"? As you might remember from middle school, a "hexagon" is a geometrical figure, a six-sided polygon. You may wonder why the word is spelled in such a peculiar way, and the reason is indeed quite ingenious. The capital letters in the word HeKKSaGon stand for the cities where the partnering universities are based: Heidelberg, Kyoto, Karlsruhe, Sendai, Göttingen and Osaka. Established in 2010 as a conference for the six universities' Presidents, the consortium is now held every year and a half, with each university hosting it in rotation. This year it came back to Heidelberg University after making a full round.

Finally, I would like to share my own experiences as a participant in the student workshop of the HeKKSaGon 2019. Although the main event is the Presidents' meeting, the consortium also brings together professors and students. It provides space and opportunities

for international partnership through joint projects or workshops, all aimed to find ways of reaching the sustainable development goals (so-called SDGs) set by the United Nations. As Tohoku University's team of three, we prepared a presentation "Life Below Water". In the student workshop, each team presented the background of the current research on the assigned topic, then collectively generated and discussed ideas on how to achieve the corresponding SDGs. At the final plenary meeting, we presented those ideas to the presidents, professors, and staff members of all six universities.

Besides the workshop, we had a tour around the Heidelberg University campuses and its libraries, went bar-hopping with local students, and even danced in a German nightclub during our final night in Heidelberg. We were also invited to fantastic dinners on a river cruise and even inside a medieval castle! It was an unforgettable and absolutely delicious experience, but for me the best part was getting to meet brilliant people from different spheres of academia and spending incredible time together. Learning new things, making valuable connections, and simply being a part of such an academic network was definitely a smart investment in myself and my future. The next HeKKSaGOn consortium is going to be hosted by Tohoku University in 2021. I strongly encourage everyone to participate!

#### **Yoko Kagami(Graduate School of Arts and Letters)**

This was my second presentation abroad. I keenly felt my inexperience and lack of English skills, but overall could stay much calmer compared to the first presentation. Apparently, experience makes the difference! During the discussion I received some genuinely interesting and enlightening questions from non-native speakers about the Japanese language, which is my major field of study. Other presentations on transcultural encounters from various disciplinary perspectives were also quite instructive. In addition, I was able to socialize with not only local students, but also my Japanese peers from other universities. Finally, a tour around the campus of Heidelberg University provided some information that might help me decide on my future destination as an exchange student. To summarize, participating in this workshop contributed a lot to my current and future research activities.

#### **Miki Matsui(Graduate School of Arts and Letters)**

The workshop on transnational encounters in Heidelberg involved student presentations quite diverse in terms of methodology, as well as target region and period. To facilitate a productive exchange of opinions within the limited time span, participants from distinct research fields and cultural backgrounds had to search for universally important and pressing issues. In other words, everyone, including myself, had to explain the relationship between

the contents of his or her presentation and the challenges that humanity faces today.

Studying the Heian period together with my fellow Japanese students in the past, I developed only a vague notion of those various problems. The multinational workshop in Heidelberg University brought them into focus and gave me an opportunity to contemplate the significance of Japanese studies in a globalized society. I was already aware of the problems inherent in my field of study, but this experience allowed me to observe it objectively and estimate its place in contemporary society.

As a member of the modern international community, I will do my best to address and solve the global issues we discussed at the workshop.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deepest thanks to those who gave me the invaluable opportunity to participate in this event and those who helped me with travel arrangements and presentation preparations.