

Report of the Academic Organizer

The 11th EAJS workshop for doctoral students in 2015 took place at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. As previously, the objective of the workshop was to give outstanding PhD students from European universities in their early and mid-term stage of dissertation writing the opportunity to present their current work to peers and senior academics and receive constructive feedback from both groups in order to improve their final production of the dissertation. Emphasis was placed on a frank exchange of ideas in an intimate setting and cross-fertilization through interdisciplinary panels. As a secondary effect, the workshop also aimed to create an environment in which young scholars could forge and deepen their academic network across national confines that would be instrumental for their scholarship and their career in the future and thus help to create a bond that would hopefully also lead to a further integration and advancement of the discipline of Japanese Studies in Europe.

The selection of candidates first and foremost put emphasis on the academic quality and relevance of the proposals submitted by the candidates, but also was undertaken with the above objectives in mind. Thus, the selection committee aimed at a spread as wide as possible across European universities, particularly also encouraging students from Eastern Europe to join the workshop. Equally, the committee tried to select proposals that came from a variety of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences that, despite their thematic variety, could relate to and benefit from each other.

In this year, 49 candidates responded to the call for papers. From among these, the selection committee, consisting of members of the Council and the senior academic advisors, selected 20 students, ranking the candidates according to the quality of the proposals, the academic excellence of the candidates, and the state of their research. As all of the submitted proposals were of a high scholarly excellence, the choice was a naturally very difficult one. The selected students were asked to submit reports on their research project until the end of May 2015. These became the basis for their presentations and for the comments by the senior academic advisors.

As senior academic advisors, the local organizer was fortunate to be able to invite the following colleagues to cover the PhD projects within their respective field(s) of expertise: Reiko Abe Auestad (University of Oslo) for literature, Sharon Kinsella (University of Manchester) for Japanese culture and society, Mark Metzler (University of Austin at Texas) for history and economy, and Gabriele Vogt (University of Hamburg) for politics and society of Japan. Additionally, we could rely on the expertise of local colleagues, namely Ian Astley (University of Edinburgh) for Buddhist studies, Rosina Buckland (National Museums of Scotland) for art history, Christopher Harding (University of Edinburgh) for history and psychology, Helen Parker (University of Edinburgh) for literature and performing arts, and

finally myself for history and international relations. Thus, we had a broad spectrum of scholars who were able to comment on the whole variety of the selected PhD projects.

The workshop began on the evening of 11 June with a welcome reception at the School of Literature, Languages and Cultures at Edinburgh University as the institutional host of this workshop. This enabled students to get to know each other and their advisors in an informal setting.

The following two days were filled with presentations and intense discussions of the PhD projects. The venue for day 1 (12 June) was the historic Raeburn Room on Old College, one of the oldest parts of the university; on day 2 (13 June), we moved to the newly built Project Room of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. In both venues, the roundtable setting created an intimate working atmosphere and very much encouraged lively discussion.

Both days, the participants met from 9 am to 6 pm. Each day, 10 candidates presented, grouped into four panels of 2 or 3, with lunch and coffee breaks in between. Each candidate was given 20 minutes to present, with additional 10 minutes for the advisor to comment, and a final 30 minutes for the general discussion. In order to maintain a concentrated atmosphere, we collected all presentations, followed by the comments and finally the general discussion.

Despite the wide variety of subjects, the PhD projects fell naturally into a sequence of intrinsically linked panels. On the first day, the projects were grouped into the following sessions: 1) Aesthetics, Poetry and Performance; 2) The Organization of Knowledge in Pre-modern Japan; 3) The Exploration of the Japanese Self; 4) The Construction of Identity. The second day had the following panels: 1) Exploring the Cityscape; 2) The Fantastic and Magical in Japanese Culture; 3) Food, History and Identity in Japanese Relations; 4) Networks, Domestic and International; followed by a short wrap-up session. Each panel was chaired by a senior advisor on the first day, and by a volunteer student on the second day.

Due to the consistently excellent quality of the presentations and comments by the senior advisors, discussions of the projects were lively, constructive and inspired throughout the workshop until the very end, despite the rather daunting schedule. Participants were able to identify common problems of research design and possible solutions to overcome these. Moreover, despite the variety of subjects and disciplines, the discussions yielded common threads and motives that enabled participants to view their projects in new contexts and thereby gain new ideas and understanding for their progress towards completion and future research. Throughout the workshop, the atmosphere among participants was very lively and cheerful, and the dinner at the end of each workshop day enabled participants to form and further deepen contacts and friendships.

We therefore consider the 11th EAJS workshop for doctoral students as successful in terms of the immediate objectives as set out above and hope that it will also help to yield the expected long-term effects in the future. We are immensely grateful to the Toshiba International Foundation (TIFO) and the Japan Foundation for their generous financial support which made this workshop possible. Finally, I would like to thank my colleague Prof

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