

**Eighth EAJS PhD Workshop  
Newcastle University, Newcastle, UK  
May 31 - June 2, 2012  
Eight EAJS PhD Workshop**

**Report by Academic Organizer**

As it has been noted in previous reports, the EAJS PhD workshops allow doctoral students in Japanese Studies from across Europe to present their research to both fellow PhD students and senior scholars, to engage in critical discussions on their research projects and to get *ad hoc* guidance from expert scholars in a particular field.

The 8th EAJS PhD workshop took place at the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University (UK) between May 31 and June 2, 2012. This year we had an extremely high number of applications, with 79 doctoral students applying from a variety of European countries. This figure builds upon the achievements of the previous workshops — in Cambridge, Paris, Vienna, Oxford, Lecce, Cambridge and Tallinn — and confirms the success of the EAJS PhD workshop formula itself. The 79 applications went through a scrupulous process of selection conducted by the project director in tandem with senior colleagues from each of the fields that were involved. Both for financial constraints and for the coherence of the workshop, it was necessary to limit the number of presenting participants to 16.

The choice was far from being an easy task, as we received many excellent proposals. As in previous editions of the EAJS PhD workshop, our choice rewarded quality while maintaining a balance between the disciplines, the countries/institutions and the gender of the participants. We also made sure that participants could relate to each other in a constructive and stimulating way and that we could be able to provide them with competent supervisors. The 16 participants who were selected came from Spain, France, Germany, Slovenia and the UK while the 8 Senior scholars were from the University of Cambridge (Dr Brigitte Steger), SOAS (Prof Andrew Gerstle, Prof Stephen Dodd and Dr Isolde Standish), the University of Leeds (Prof Caroline Rose), the National Museum of Scotland (Dr Rosina Buckland) and Newcastle University (Dr Shiro Yoshioka, Dr Laura Moretti). The fields in Japanese studies which were covered in the 8th PhD workshop were pre-modern literature, modern and contemporary literature, film studies, international relations, modern art and popular culture.

The format of the workshop followed the successful formula inaugurated by EAJS in its series of PhD workshops. Each student handed in a research project outline (1500 words) and a long essay (3500 words) one month before the workshop and each participant, including both students and supervisors, read all the materials beforehand. During the workshop each doctoral student made a 15-minute presentation. This was followed by a 10-minute discussion with one of the other doctoral students in the same field and by a 10-minute discussion with the senior supervisor and all the other participants. All the discussions were conducted in a lively, engaged, respectful and constructive manner. At the end of each day, each of the presenters had a 30-minute individual session with their supervisor. Those participants who did not present were engaged in group discussions about methodological

issues and other recurrent questions regarding how to conduct proper research. This format allowed students to confront their research with other fellow students who study in different academic environments and with senior scholars other than their usual supervisor.

The commitment, hard-work and investment that have been put into this workshop on the part of both doctoral students and senior supervisors have given highly satisfactory results. Students were given an opportunity to reflect upon the contents of their research, the organization of their dissertation project, the application of specific methodological tools, skills in presenting their research in a limited amount of time and styles in conducting a fruitful discussion on their research with peers and senior scholars. We believe that both the doctoral students and the senior scholars were stimulated, gained useful insights and new perspectives by the three days of the workshop.

Alongside the academic engagement, buffet-style lunches, a dinner at a Japanese restaurant and one at a traditional English restaurant — renown for being the oldest dining hall in the country — provided an informal and relaxed atmosphere whereby the doctoral students and the senior scholars could chat freely and create the basis for future cooperation together.

Travel, accommodation and food expenses of all participants were paid for — with financial support by the Toshiba Foundation, EAJS and the School of Modern Languages of Newcastle University, which we acknowledge gratefully.

This workshop has created a new and intellectually vibrant network within the field of Japanese Studies that connects younger and more senior scholars across the Country and Europe. Here are some reactions from participants at the end of the workshop (reports of the participants will be published in the upcoming EAJS bulletin):

‘It was a great opportunity for me, as a first-year PhD student, to: 1) present my own work to a wider audience of like-minded and very interesting colleagues and receive feedback; 2) expand my knowledge of other sub-fields within the field of Japanese Studies, to get to know many new topics in the fields; 3) expand the network of my professional contacts. The feedback I’ve received has been extremely helpful and I will now try to re-consider some parts of my work according to these recommendations.’

‘This workshop really met my expectations and for that I am feeling very grateful. To be able to listen to different fields of Japanese Studies made us think about our own approaches and research. To be able to discuss our own work with actual specialists feels very valuable and, on another level, comforting, encouraging for our further research.’

‘I think the selection of people was well done, the panels well put together and the supervisors suitable for the papers, very helpful and willing to engage with the work. The participants were also very open to discussion, polite and interesting people.’

‘An excellent group of supervisors. One of the things that I found really useful was observing/participating in consideration of people’s PhD projects: feasibility, methodology, etc. This was a unique aspect of the workshop. While other conference/seminar presentations would focus on content, this workshop gave me, as a

1<sup>st</sup>-year student, a much better idea of what might make a good overall project. The individual supervision was also very useful for very specific and targeted advice.'

'This was a wonderful opportunity to receive guidance, supervision and training to develop as a PhD student. And I greatly enjoyed meeting all the students and supervisors.'

'I consider that this workshop was really good to help my self-confident feeling and to improve my research.'

Laura Moretti  
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