

## Report of the Academic Organiser

The 14th EAJS Doctoral Studies Workshop in 2018 took place 8–11 October 2018 at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. The objective of the workshop was to give outstanding doctoral students from European and world universities in their early and mid-term stage of dissertation writing the opportunity to present their work to peers and senior academics and to receive constructive feedback from both groups to support them in completing a high-quality doctoral thesis. Emphasis was placed on a frank exchange of ideas in an intimate setting and intellectual 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, which will be crucial for their scholarship and career in the future and thus contribute to creating a bond that will hopefully lead to further integration and advancement of the discipline of Japanese Studies in Europe and throughout the world.

The selection of candidates was based primarily on the academic quality and relevance of the proposals submitted by the candidates, but also with a view of the abovementioned objectives. Thus, the selection committee aimed at the broadest possible distribution among European universities and, in particular, encouraged students from Eastern Europe and the non-European realm of Japanese Studies 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.

This year, 28 candidates responded to the call for papers. From these, the selection committee, consisting of the EAJS Council members and the academic organiser of the workshop, selected 20 students. The applications were evaluated on the basis of the quality of their proposals, their academic excellence and the state of their research. As all proposals submitted were of a high scholarly quality, the selection was naturally very difficult. The selected students were asked to submit reports on their research project. These became the basis for their presentations and for the comments by the senior academic advisors.

As senior academic advisors, the local organiser was fortunate to be able to invite the following colleagues to discuss the doctoral projects within their respective field(s) of expertise:

Prof. em. Dr. Andrej Bekeš, University of Ljubljana  
Prof. Dr. Judit Hidasi, Budapest Business School  
Dr. Simon Kaner, University of East Anglia  
Prof. Dr. Wolfram Manzenreiter, University of Vienna  
Prof. Dr. Ljiljana Markovic, University of Belgrade

Thus, we had a broad spectrum of scholars who were able to comment on the whole variety of the selected PhD projects.

All doctoral projects and research results presented were of outstanding quality, showing interesting as well as relevant and original results of a long and committed research work in Japan, conducted under the guidance of excellent doctoral dissertation supervisors.

The overall impression of the Workshop gave us confidence that the future of Japanese Studies in Europe with these excellent doctoral candidates and their well-trained and mature research capabilities is secure and better than ever.

The workshop began on the evening of 8 October 2018, with a welcome dinner at a local Restaurant. 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 doctoral projects. The venue for both days (9 and 10 October) was the Faculty of Philology Conference Room. The horseshoe seating arrangement provided a spacious, comfortable and intimate working atmosphere and very much encouraged lively discussion.

On the first day, the participants began their official proceedings at 8:30 am and worked until 6 pm. On the second day, the Workshop began at 8:45 am, and lasted likewise until 6 pm. Each day, 10 candidates presented their PhD project, grouped into four panels of 2 or 3 participants, with lunch and coffee breaks in between. Each participant was given 20 minutes for his or her presentation, another 10 minutes for the advisor to comment, and the last 30 minutes for the general discussion. To ensure a concentrated atmosphere, we heard all presentations in sequence, followed by the comments and finally the general discussion.

Despite the wide diversity of topics, the doctoral projects naturally fell into a sequence of intrinsically well-linked panels. On the first day, the doctoral projects were grouped into the following sessions: 1) Session 1: Pre-modern and Meiji Japan; 2) Session 2: Japan's Early Modern Wars and Their Influence on Japan's Artistry; 3) Session 3: Education in Japan; 4) Session 4: The City of Tokyo. The second day had the following panels: 1) Session 1: Japanese Culture and Literature (1); 2) Session 2: Japanese Culture and Literature (2); 3) JSPS Presentation; 4) Session 3: Japanese Culture and Literature (3) & Religion; 5) Session 4: Gender Issues in Contemporary Japan. Each Session was followed by a short wrap-up session. Each panel was chaired by a senior advisor.

Due to the consistently high quality of the presentations and comments from the senior advisors, the discussions on the projects throughout the workshop were lively, constructive and inspiring until the very end, despite the rather challenging schedule. The participants were able to identify common problems of research design and possible solutions to them. Moreover, despite the diversity of topics and disciplines, the discussions yielded common threads and motives that enabled the participants to view their projects in new contexts and thus 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 deepen contacts and friendships.

We therefore consider the 14<sup>th</sup> EAJS workshop for doctoral students to be successful in achieving the abovementioned objectives and hope that it will also contribute 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 colleagues, Prof. Verena Blechinger-Talcott, Prof. Em. Andrej Bekeš and the EAJS Office at Freie Universität Berlin, particularly Mr. Lorenz Denninger, for the expert advice and logistic assistance.

**Workshop Director**

Prof. Dr. Ljiljana Markovic, University of Belgrade

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