

## Report of the Academic Organizers

The 16th EAJS Doctoral Studies Workshop took place August 28-30, 2020 as a virtual event. It was organized by Prof. Dr. Verena Blechinger-Talcott and Prof. Dr. Urs Matthias Zachmann of Freie Universitaet Berlin.

Originally, the 16th EAJS Ph.D. Workshop in 2020 was scheduled to take place in August at KU Leuven. The EAJS had chosen Leuven as the venue for the workshop following the tradition of holding EAJS Ph.D. Workshops directly before the EAJS International Conferences at locations not too far from the conference venue. However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic forced the EAJS to reschedule the workshop to the end of October and to reduce the number of participants to 12. As new workshop venue, FU Berlin was chosen. When it became clear in early Autumn that the once more rising Covid-19 cases and the countermeasures taken by the Berlin city administration would make it impossible to hold a face-to-face event, the EAJS decided to hold the Ph.D. Workshop as an entirely virtual event for the first time.

The EAJS received applications from 23 eligible students from all parts of Europe. The EAJS Council reviewed the applications and ranked them according to the quality of their project description and the reference letters. The workshop director decided on the final composition of the 12 workshop participants on the basis of the ranking and the expertise of the invited senior scholars. All 12 invited candidates submitted their project reports of 5,000 words, addressing research questions, methodology, current state and future work plan in due time for the senior scholars to prepare comments and advice.

Prof. Blechinger-Talcott and Prof. Zachmann (FU Berlin) invited the following four senior scholars to join them as academic advisors during the workshop. The advisors were selected to cover a wide range of fields within Japanese Studies, including social science, culture and literature, linguistics, and history:

Dr. Anna Andreeva (Universitaet Heidelberg)

Prof. Christoph Brumann (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology)

Dr. Guibourg Delamotte (Senior Lecturer, Political Science, National Institute of Oriental Languages (Paris))

Prof. Melanie Trede (Universitaet Heidelberg)

The workshop was held in the regular format - each Ph.D. candidate had a time slot of 45 minutes, starting with a 15-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute comment by a senior advisor and then 20 minutes open discussion. The 12 presentations were grouped in 4 sessions in which projects from similar fields were pooled where possible. While the projects themselves varied in

their thematic focus and theoretical approaches, similar questions relating to the right way to tackle, rationalize and present a research project and also how to work under time pressure became evident. For the participating Ph.D. candidates, discussing these issues in a constructive, non-competitive environment with peers in a similar situation proved to be very fruitful.

Since it was a digital workshop without the opportunity to follow up on the discussion over coffee or during a joint meal, an additional 20 minutes time slot per Ph.D. candidate for individual consultations after each panel was added. Furthermore, three informal sessions, one on the evening of October 28 as a "virtual joint dinner" to allow everyone to get to know each other, and then two panels at the end of each workshop days, in which senior advisors and local organizers shared their personal experiences during their Ph.D. research and writing periods were included. On October 30, a "virtual lunch break" without a fixed program to allow for open discussion has also been organized.

The workshop was a very good experience for everyone involved. Participants were very disciplined in time keeping during their presentations, and despite the virtual format, we succeeded in creating an open atmosphere that led to lively discussions. The senior advisors were very well prepared and some of them even provided written remarks to the doctoral students whose projects they were commenting on.

During the last panel, we received very positive feedback from the Ph.D. candidates, and also the senior advisors told us that they enjoyed the workshop. The positive impressions of the participants were also confirmed by their workshop reports. Therefore, we are glad that the digital format provided a viable alternative to conduct another successful Ph.D. workshop.

Verena Blechinger-Talcott and Urs Matthias Zachmann, Freie Universitaet Berlin

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