

**Eighth EAJS PhD Workshop
Newcastle University, Newcastle, UK
May 30 - June 2, 2012**

Reports of the EAJS PhD Workshop Participants

The 8th EAJS Workshop for Doctoral Students at Newcastle University was a unique opportunity to receive practical advice and critical questions within a rich multi-disciplinary environment. Being at the first stage of my dissertation, I could learn very much from more experienced colleagues who had already dealt with methodological, structural and investigation issues and this helps me to feel more confident in my research.

Particularly, I became aware of the strongest/weakest points of my project getting important feedback that can really help me to progress in my thesis.

I also found the group sessions very accurate and useful, providing us with professional advice on how to improve our communicative skills and job-searching techniques. Moreover, we had fruitful exchanges of ideas at any given moment at coffee breaks or at dinner enjoying a friendly atmosphere.

I would like to express my gratitude on this occasion to all participants, PhD students, supervisor Professors and EAJS organizers for the highly motivating group discussions and enjoyable conversations. Special thanks go to Dr. Laura Moretti for her expertise, organization and kindness in making this event a wonderful experience, and Prof. Isolde Standish for her constructive criticism and her generosity in sharing her rich and valuable knowledge.

I hope that we will have more chances during the years to come to meet again and to share the developments in our individual research and personal careers, building a stronger Japanese Studies network in Europe.

Alejandra Armendariz
University Rey Juan Carlos (Madrid)
Japan Foundation Fellowship at Meiji Gakuin University (Tokyo)

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The 8th EAJS PhD Workshop that took place in Newcastle University was a truly interesting and motivating experience. Newcastle is a very beautiful place we were able to discover, in spite of the rain, through the walks and the places we went all together in a very friendly atmosphere.

It was, of course, very stimulating in terms of research. I have been able to hear from researchers in many topics, from sociology to history, popular culture, that were discussed with different approaches and methodologies, and it was always, of course, an occasion to discover things I didn't know. But one of the most important things is that there was always some kind of material, in the talk or in the questions, however related or non-related the

talk was, that enabled me to look back at my own practices – and I think this was the case for all of us. It was all the more the case with the feedback that was given after the talk, or with the colloquial discussions at a deeper level that we had under the direction of the professors at the end of the day.

These discussions were also important because they were a unique occasion to actually hear about concrete aspects of doing research, writing for a journal or other publications, doing talks, searching for funding and for jobs – all matters that we usually tend to forget because we are too absorbed by the problems we encounter in writing the thesis itself.

These writing and research problems were addressed in the individual supervision, and it was very fruitful to have some time with the professor in our field to receive more in-depth advice than public feedback during the talk, which was (as always at such events) very short. That helped a lot to localize the gaps and the missing things in my research. I gained through this experience a broader view of what I want to write, and of what I want to achieve through my PhD.

My deepest thanks to Japan Foundation and Toshiba International Foundation for the funding, to Dr. Laura Moretti for the organization, and to the supervisors, Dr Rosina Buckland, Prof Stephen Dodd, Prof Andrew Gerstle, Prof Caroline Rose, Dr Isolde Standish, Dr Brigitte Steger and Dr Shiro Yoshioka.

Marie-Noëlle Beauvieux
Université Jean Moulin Lyon III

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I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to the EAJS for raising enough funding to make this workshop happen. The 8th PhD Workshop hosted by the EAJS in Newcastle, England, was my first opportunity to present my work to such a wide range of other scholars, both PhD candidates and experienced researchers, and get detailed and professional feedback.

The schedule was tough, but it was enjoyable to focus on all sorts of different subjects, methodologies and academic backgrounds in an environment that is very different from the usual environment at my faculty. Many contacts were refreshed, as well as new ones made, and it was very inspiring to get in touch with people from all over Europe in such an extended period of time. Indeed, the fact that the workshop lasted nearly four days contributed to getting in touch with all other participants, which would not have been possible in one single weekend.

Besides the content related presentations and individual supervisions, also the group discussions with an insight into possible career opportunities were very helpful, since it is not always easy to bear in mind the necessities of certain activities in order to build a career while at the same time completing the thesis. As important as working on a high quality thesis is, getting an idea of what lies ahead is as important and, at least to my knowledge, more often than not neglected in most other contexts. The idea of entering the tough competition for positions, research funding after having finished the PhD thesis and also the

rapidly changing environment in the (academic) job market can have a pretty intimidating effect (which also seemed to be the case during some of the group discussions), and I am sure that there is only one way to deal with the anxiety deriving from this: Getting to know about it sooner rather than later.

From this point of view, the workshop not only contributed to each individual project, but also delivered a broader perspective that went beyond the research- and content-centred focus, which is what most of the participants are probably used to.

A truly enriching and constructive event.

Thomas Hüllein
University of Zurich

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I was very delighted to be selected for the 8th EAJS Workshop for doctoral students and to be given this precious opportunity to present and discuss my thesis at Newcastle University.

The exceptionally interdisciplinary workshop brought together young researchers who presented their projects in a wide range of fields, including art, film, literature, history, sociology and political sciences amongst others. Despite the different backgrounds, all participants engaged in lively discussions and found common tropes or issues, such as the pitfalls of *nihonjin-ron*. I enjoyed the many presentations and gained insights in a plethora of perspectives, methods and theories, of which French philosophy appeared to be a prominent thread binding a number of the projects together.

For my own research I received encouraging comments during and after my presentation, not the least of which was the valuable feedback from my individual supervisor, Dr Shiro Yoshioka, including detailed hints for my project. I was also made aware of how to clarify difficult theoretical points of my research.

In sum, the workshop was a wonderful occasion for meeting fellow PhD candidates from all over Europe as well as senior researchers and resulted in a valuable networking experience, which has already been augmented via Internet technologies.

I am therefore very grateful to the EAJS, the Japan Foundation and the Toshiba International Foundation as well as Dr Laura Moretti and each involved scholar for making this workshop possible. I hope that the experiences from this workshop will crystallize in many more similar opportunities for researchers in the field of Japanese Studies.

Björn-Ole Kamm
Heidelberg University, Cluster "Asia and Europe"

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I believe the EAJS PhD Workshop was an excellent training opportunity for aspiring academics. It gave us a first taste of presenting and discussing our research at academic meetings in a friendly and supportive environment. People at different stages in their PhDs participated, and could get advice on the specific problems they were facing at that point in their research from supervisors and peers. Not only did we get to practise our presentation skills in front of an international academic audience of colleagues, we also had to act as discussants for others. Consequently we had to put thought into how to best give constructive feedback and comment on a wide range of topics from different disciplines, often not our own. Workshop sessions at the end of the day provided useful information on all types of soft skills and relevant topics like academic publishing or job hunting. Pure academics aside, the social aspect of the workshop was not missing, and over dinner or a beer at the pub discussions continued and branched out.

I would urge anyone to take this rare chance to share one's research with people from such a diverse set of fields, who are all willing to engage with each other's work in depth and so enthusiastically provide feedback. I would like to thank the EAJS and Toshiba International Foundation for making this workshop possible, Prof. Moretti and all the supervisors at the workshop for organizing the event, and all the participants for helping to make it a successful one.

Angelika Koch
University of Cambridge

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The 8th EAJS workshop in Newcastle, UK, was a unique and stimulating experience for me, and I am very grateful that I was offered the chance to participate.

First of all, I would like to thank the Toshiba International Foundation and the Newcastle School for Modern Languages for their sponsoring, and also the organizer, Dr. Laura Moretti, and the supervisors, Dr. Rosina Buckland, Prof. Stephen Dodd, Prof. Andrew Gerstle, Prof. Caroline Rose, Dr. Isolde Standish, Dr. Brigitte Steger and Dr. Shiro Yoshioka for all their generous efforts.

The feedback I received both in the individual feedback session and from the group was thought-provoking and definitely helped give my research a more and better pronounced direction. I also found the other presentations very inspiring, maybe because of the variety of academic disciplines present. The participants' work covered the fields of healthcare, politics, media studies, art, early modern sexuality, popular culture and literature. Due to the various disciplines and also the various methodological approaches, the group discussions frequently raised ideas or questions that the participants had not yet considered, and there was a lively exchange of opinions and ideas.

The participants and supervisors were very likeable and it was a nice and relaxed atmosphere with discussions carrying on into the night after the workshop had ended. It provided me with a great opportunity to meet and get to know other PhD students from across Europe, many of whom I will likely meet again in the near future.

In addition to the presentations and individual feedback sessions, there were sessions on how to format academic papers, how to present in a conference environment and how to find a job in academia. Especially learning that public speaking is still difficult even for the supervisors among us was rather eye-opening and receiving creative ideas on how to best prepare for it has been very useful.

I really benefitted a lot from the experience of this workshop and would again like to express my thanks to all those involved.

Katharina Koppert
University of Tübingen

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The EAJS PhD workshop in Newcastle, UK, was a wonderful experience and I would like to express my gratitude for having been chosen as a participant.

The workshop was a unique opportunity to present the current state of my research and to receive feedback on the problems I was facing. Attending the workshop shortly after the completion of my fieldwork phase in Japan proved vital for developing a clearer concept of my findings and the way they contribute to the study of Japanese popular culture. The insights gained during these four days have helped me in restructuring my thesis in key areas. The feedback I received from PhD students of various areas as well as experts of Japanese studies also gave me new ideas for developing my ideas. On the other hand, listening to the presentations of the other participants introduced me to a wide range of interesting research topics and has widened my knowledge of Japan.

I recommend participation in this workshop to every PhD student working on Japan. You will not only get precious feedback on your own field, but will also meet a lot of friendly and helpful people that will help you build your research network.

I thank the EAJS, the sponsors of the workshop, the organizer Dr. Laura Moretti, the advisors who coordinated and led the discussions, and the other participants, for making this workshop such a rewarding experience.

Verena Maser
University of Trier

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I would first like to thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to participate in the 8th EAJS PhD Workshop held at Newcastle University in England. I am extremely grateful to have been selected to attend.

The workshop brought together PhD students and supervisors from a range of countries and academic disciplines, offering the participants a diverse group with which to share research experiences and test out ideas. The format of the workshop allowed students the chance to

act as discussants as well as plenty of time to discuss each presentation with the group as a whole. Conversations were lively and included a diverse range of academic perspectives. Furthermore, the group discussions after the sessions offered the chance to explore other topics that are relevant to PhD students, such as preparing oneself for an academic career.

As I am at the beginning of my PhD work, I had some hesitation about presenting my research. However, the atmosphere was encouraging and supportive. The thought-provoking feedback and questions from both supervisors and participants helped me to work through some of my difficulties and to find new direction in my research. All of the supervisors showed a genuine interest in each student's project and continued to informally offer helpful feedback throughout the duration of the workshop. I would especially like to thank my EAJS supervisor, Dr Brigitte Steger, who gave a useful critique of my research thus far and helped me to reconsider my project.

I would highly encourage PhD students researching on Japan to apply for the next workshop. It is an excellent opportunity to interact with researchers from around the world in a stimulating and welcoming environment.

My special thanks go to everyone involved in the workshop, in particular Dr Laura Moretti, the members of the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University, EAJS, and the Toshiba International Foundation for facilitating such a wonderful program. Finally, I would like to thank all my fellow participants for the advice, insight, and interesting conversation.

Jennifer McGuire
University of Oxford

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Reading through the written project summaries and papers before the 8th EAJS PhD Workshop gave a tantalizing taster of the range of projects to be explored: from manga to prime ministers, care workers to cinema. Coming from an art history department, it was fascinating to see the breadth of projects, and also consider the connections with my own research on ceramic tableware used in the court of the Meiji Emperor.

Being able to present my project as a whole (and as a work in progress) to such a multi-disciplinary audience was an incredible opportunity that set the EAJS Workshop apart from the typical conference. I was very grateful for the comments, questions and suggestions that followed. These highlighted theoretical approaches I could use and areas I should consider. During the individual supervision, Dr Rosina Buckland offered me expert guidance on my project as a whole, as well as specific suggestions and advice that will be of great benefit to my research. As I near the end of my first year of PhD studies, receiving such fresh perspectives and constructive feedback on my research at this early stage is invaluable and I feel that my project is already stronger as a result.

Listening to the other EAJS Workshop participants' presentations and taking part in the ensuing discussions around content, theoretical approaches, methodology and scope also helped me to critically reflect upon my own research aims and how I hope to achieve them.

Equally important was the opportunity to learn from the experiences of both established scholars and fellow PhD students at different stages in their research. Even with a packed schedule, there was also plenty of time for relaxed discussion over coffee.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the organizers who gave me this opportunity and offer my sincere thanks to Dr Moretti and Dr Buckland, the other academic advisors, EAJS, Newcastle University and Toshiba International Foundation. I would also like to thank my fellow participants for generously sharing their projects and experiences. I heartily encourage other PhD students pursuing Japanese studies to apply for this unique and rewarding opportunity in the future.

Mary Redfern
University of East Anglia

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The 8th EAJS Workshop for Doctoral Candidates in Newcastle was a crucial experience towards the refinement of my PhD research. Constructive critique of my approach by the supervisor, contributing professors and fellow participants was of tremendous help in refining my topic, method and research questions. I am grateful that I was selected to contribute to this workshop and that I was able to share so many wonderful experiences with PhD candidates from all over Europe.

Working on an art historical theme, it was a great opportunity for me to be able to consult a peer supervisor of my segment of research on this occasion. Moreover, the diverse variety of topics and problems addressed by the participants in their research made the range of difficulties and questions even more thrilling and encouraging for my research. I am confident that the workshop has led to great advances in conceptualizing my project.

Herewith, I would like to convey emphatic thanks to the EAJS, Japan Foundation and the Toshiba International Foundation for sponsoring the 8th EAJS Workshop for Doctoral Candidates. I also would like to express my gratitude towards the organizer, Dr. Laura Moretti, my individual supervisor Dr. Rosina Buckland and the other subject-specific supervisors and lastly my fellow participants for a challenging and effective workshop in Newcastle.

Sabine Schenk
LMU Munich

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I would like to thank the organizers, especially Laura Moretti and Stephen Dodd, and the Toshiba International Foundation for giving me the opportunity to participate at the 8th EAJS workshop in Newcastle. It was an unforgettable experience meeting students from other European universities, who enriched my knowledge of Japan and shared their research results and ideas with me. As I had never visited England before, this workshop was also a great chance for me to explore and enjoy a nice English city, which Newcastle certainly is. As

a postgraduate student of cultural anthropology I could experience the way of life in a country which is a member of the EU, yet quite different from Slovenia.

The main purpose of my visit, however, was the workshop, which was especially well organized. All participants had enough time to deliver their presentations and all presentations were really interesting. Nevertheless, at times I found it rather difficult to make remarks or ask a question for a discussion which was held later on, since some of the research topics which were presented were so different from mine. Still, during coffee breaks I had many fruitful discussions with other PhD students and our advisers, even though sometimes we could not agree on the issues that were discussed.

Most importantly, the professors and students who attended the workshop provided me with various difficult questions and benevolent suggestions about my research. The debate after my presentation made me consider research questions which I had never thought about before. I am convinced the remarks together with the experience of the workshop as a whole will improve my PhD thesis immensely.

Klemen Senica
University of Ljubljana

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First of all, I would like to thank all the organizers for their time and effort put into bringing the workshop into fruition, and all the supervisors who devoted their private time to our, the students' benefit.

This workshop was an opportunity for me to situate my own research within the wider spectrum of the various current themes in the area of Japanese studies. It was thought-provoking to see how similar issues and theoretical deliberations underpinned and informed research dealing with topics as diverse as *shunga* and modern international politics. In this respect I found the format of bringing together students from different academic specializations and environments very useful and stimulating.

Although the participants represented a great array of specializations and nationalities, I felt that the workshop would have benefited from a greater involvement of Japanese students. I feel that Japanese participants would have been able to offer unique contributions to our debates thanks to the possibility of combining their intimate knowledge of Japanese society with a scholarly gaze.

Overall, I found the workshop well-organized and rigorous in terms of content. I believe this was thanks to the careful selection of the participants and the supervisors who were able not only to advise on individual projects, but were also willing to offer their wider expertise in the field and practical experiences regardless of specialization.

Beata Switek
University College London