

СОФИЙСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
„СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“

ФАКУЛТЕТ ПО КЛАСИЧЕСКИ И
НОВИ ФИЛОЛОГИИ



SOFIA UNIVERSITY
ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI

FACULTY OF CLASSICAL AND
MODERN PHILOLOGY

Report of the Academic Organizer

The 20th EAJS PhD Workshop took place June 25-28, 2024 at the Sofia University “St.Kliment Ohridski”, Sofia, Bulgaria. It was organized by Prof. Dr. Gergana Petkova (SU, Sofia).

The EAJS received applications from 37 eligible students from all parts of Europe and from EU nationals affiliated with Japanese and US universities as Ph.D. candidates. 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 20 workshop participants based on the ranking and the expertise of the invited academic advisors. All 20 invited candidates submitted their project reports of 5,000 words in good time before the workshop, addressing research questions, methodology, current state, and future work plan, so that all participants could read each other's reports and the advisors could prepare comments and advice.

Prof. Dr. Petkova invited the following five 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 literature, art & culture, politics, economics, history, international relations, social anthropology, contemporary society, linguistics and teaching methodology.

Prof. Dr. Brigitte STEGER (University of Cambridge)

Prof. Dr. Hans THOMSEN (University of Zurich)

Prof. Dr. Frank ROVEKAMP (Ludwigshafen University of Business and Society)

Prof. Dr. Judit HIDASI (Budapest Business University)

Prof. Dr. Ljiljana MARCOVIC (ECPD of the UN University for Peace)

They acted together with Sofia University Japanese Studies Specialists – Assoc. Professor Vyara Nikolova (literature), Assoc. Professor Anton Andreev (Linguistics), Assoc. Prof. Evgeniy Kandilarov (History and International Relations), and colleagues from the department – assist. Prof. Stella Zhivkova, assist. Prof. Tsvetomira Ivanova, assist. Prof. Martin Dimitrov, assist. Prof. Nikolay Bakalov, assist. Prof. Aleksandar Ivanov, researcher Iliyana Kostova.

The workshop was held in the regular format – each PhD candidate had a time slot of 30 minutes, starting with a 10-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute comment by a senior advisor and then 10 minutes open discussion. The 20 presentations were grouped in 5 sessions in which projects

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from similar fields were pooled where possible. While the projects themselves varied in their thematic focus and theoretical approaches, grouping them in sessions with similar methodological approaches and thanks to the always constructive comments of the senior advisors and to the active participation of the PhD students, a very constructive discussion culture developed. This remarkable atmosphere was further enhanced by the location: the Rectorate of Sofia University, established in 1888, also allowed for many gatherings outside of the main conference room in its inner garden, where the candidates could further discuss their projects during the various breaks or in the scheduled one-on-one consultations with the assigned senior advisors.

This very constructive and alluring spirit of intense intellectual exchange continued throughout the three dinners and lunches inside and outside the Sofia University, and the workshop was a very good experience for everyone involved. The accommodation of advisors and students differed yet were within walking distance from each other and from the venue place and were reachable also by subway. Due to the very intense schedule of the workshop and the short time of the event, it was not possible to enhance the cultural experience of participants in one of the oldest cities of Europe and the organizers did their best to incorporate cultural experience as it is believed to be of vital importance for the intercultural communication of young academics of the future.

The research topics covered wide range of Japanology scholarship and the selection of students from different parts of the world and from various universities allowed the participants to get a better picture of the development of Japanology field worldwide. In general, participants were very disciplined in sticking to the time limits during their presentations, and thanks to the session chairs and the comments by the senior advisors, a very open and friendly, but intellectually challenging atmosphere was established.

The final feedback session was held on the 3rd day in the morning and was also very constructive, and the enormous importance of these workshops was reaffirmed by the participants. All participants, PhD candidates and senior advisors alike, were convinced that EAJS workshops are *and will be* an important powerhouse for academic training and network-forging for excellent young-career researchers conducting research on Japan.

The organizer of the workshop would also like to express her explicit gratitude to all funding institutions for making the workshop possible. For the Japanese Studies Department of Sofia University to host one of the most prestigious events in the field of world Japanology was a challenge and a great opportunity to become for 3 days a focal point of Japanese Studies in Europe. We are

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deeply grateful to EAJS for the given opportunity and we hope that all participants left Bulgaria with excellent impressions from the workshop despite the heat and the intensity of the program. Although we are aware of the financial restrictions in organizing such events, we would like to share our opinion that an extra day would have mattered much in the experience of intercultural communication and long-lasting network potential.



Gergana Petkova, SU, Sofia

We gratefully acknowledge financial support for this event from:

