

## **Fifth EAJS PhD Workshop at Lecce/Italy**

### **Reports of the EAJS PhD Workshop Participants**

The fifth EAJS PhD Workshop, held at Salento University, Lecce from September 18-20th, was a fantastic opportunity to meet and discuss a variety of issues with other graduate students doing research on Japan.

I found working with people from very different disciplines and time frames to be both useful and illuminating. As I begin the thesis rewrite I find that the questions asked and advice given has been a timely reminder of particular themes to explore further in the next phase of writing. The individual feedback I received from my senior advisor was particularly useful.

The intellectual debate and general conversation that occurred in presentations and over meals was both inspiring, interesting and enjoyable. It was a great opportunity to meet with people working on diverse projects in Japanese studies and I hope to continue meeting them in years to come.

I would like to thank EAJS, the Tōshiba International Foundation, the Japan Foundation and the organisers – Harald Fuess and Maria Chiara Migliore – for the opportunity to take part in the workshop, and to my senior advisor and fellow participants, for such an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating three days.

*Workshop Participant*

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The 5th PhD workshop of the European Association of Japanese Studies has provided me with a great forum for the discussion of my PhD project. I would like to thank the organizers for their efforts and for giving me the opportunity to join this meeting of young Japanese studies scholars. Not only through the presentation and discussion, but also because of the advice of senior scholars I have received essential input for my dissertation topic. It was also very interesting to watch the presentations of my fellow PhD students, which were all at different levels in their PhD studies so that I could profit from their experience. For me

personally, it was one of the very first chances to talk about my topic with people who are doing research on similar fields. But also the comments of fellow PhD students with totally different research interests were quite helpful and inspiring.

Especially useful, of course, was the extended session of special advice with my supervisor Brigitte Steger, who put a lot of effort into helping me refine my research topic. Our discussions not only took place during the sessions, but also at lunch and dinner time (with excellent food). These three days were quite energy-consuming, but also very encouraging for my future research.

*Workshop Participant*

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The EAJS 2008 Doctoral Workshop offered me not only the opportunity to receive feedback on my research project, an activity that I consider indispensable at such an early stage in my doctoral degree, but also the chance to discuss in an informal setting about the experience of researching on Japan with academics from different disciplines and doctoral students at different levels of their degree. I believe indeed that this casual exchange of stories related to the difficulties faced and solutions found by people undertaking fieldwork in Japan was the most interesting part of the EAJS Doctoral Workshop, especially because of the great diversity of nationalities and institutions represented by my fellow participants. It is this unique combination of cultural, educational and interest background-based opinions heard during the 3-day activities that opened my eyes to new perspectives on my subject of research and to alternative methods which I could use to collect my data. Finally, I am really happy to have got in contact with and befriended individuals with whom I intend to share information and probably work with in the future. For all these reasons I consider my participation in the EAJS Doctoral Workshop a very enriching experience which I would recommend to all PhD students.

*Workshop Participant*

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As a first experience for me, the EAJS PhD workshop was of course very useful. Apart from the input I got from speaking with teachers and colleagues who are working in the same field as me, I realized a few important things about my own work.

The most important thing I realize is that I need to restrict my subject and my corpus. "Purity" being THE main theme in Mishima's literature, it is necessary for me to be more precise about exactly what my focus is. I am still in the process of defining that. At the moment I can say that my aim is:

- 1) To define at a thematic level the notion of purity in Mishima's oeuvre. This will lead me to a structural analysis of the theme of purity. This analysis should enable me to define some schemes at work in my corpus. I would like to show the importance of those schemes to understand the organization of characters and plots in the corpus.
- 2) To focus on the weakness and contradictions inherent in those schemes (I should try to go beyond the structural analysis and examine what threatens the structure). My main objectives here will especially be to question the problematic relation between purity and literature.

I shall show how Mishima tried to transcend the opposition of those notions. The question of "genre" (novel or epic?) which has not really been raised in the criticism I've read about Mishima seems to me essential.

It is finally thanks to the EAJS workshop that I realized I should change the subject a little and the title of the thesis itself. The new title would be something like "The schemes of purity and narrative strategies in 仮面の告白 (Confessions of a Mask), 憂国 (Patriotism, and 奔馬 (Runaway horses)".

My only criticism of the workshop is that the groups were a little bit too large and spanned too many fields. I know, however, that it is probably difficult to narrow them down. The only possible solution would be to have more students and more teachers, but I can imagine the financial problems it would cause. But as you can see from my feed-back, the EAJS workshop was very constructive for me. For that and all the good times we spent in Italian restaurants, I want to express my gratitude to EAJS.

*Workshop Participant*

The EAJS workshop in Lecce 2008 for doctoral students was an amazing experience and I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to participate. Such a workshop is a great chance to get to know other scholars of Japanese studies, to exchange ideas and to reflect about general methodological, topical and conceptual problems concerning dissertation projects. We had plenty of time to discuss each project intensively with other doctoral candidates, and to profit from the professional experiences from our individual advisors in order to improve our projects. Beside the constructive atmosphere the workshop was well organised, it was enabled to stay at a nice hotel and to eat delicious Italian cuisine each day.

It was an unforgettable time and I would recommend everybody to try to participate in such a workshop!

*Workshop Participant*

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First I would like to thank the Tōshiba International Foundation for sponsoring this PhD workshop in Lecce. I also would like to extend my gratitude to those who did make the decision to invite me, in spite of a rather cobbled-together abstract.

In my anthropology department at the UCL I am the only person working on Japan and both my supervisors, while being well versed in theory and methodology, have no first-hand ethnographic experience of Japan. I cannot stress enough how important it is to have some kind of external supervision with Japan expertise. Both the one-on-one supervision which provided me with a highly perceptive critique of two completed chapters (including many details that my supervisors would not have been able to detect) and the good 'grilling' we received during the presentation helped me to address unanswered issues.

Another important benefit – among many others – was the possibility of making friends, nowadays called 'networking', I believe. It is quite astonishing to think that Emma Cook and I have been working on complementary topics (masculinity/femininity) literally within a 300 meter radius (UCL/SOAS) without knowing

of each other. We finally met because we were on the same panel and decided to have regular meetings to discuss work in progress.

Finally, it was very nice to extend the stay and attend the EAJS conference to see the state of the art of the discipline and meet potential external supervisors for my thesis, something that many PhD students cannot afford to do. I think it gave us all a boost in motivation from which we can draw throughout the bleaker periods of writing up.

*Workshop Participant*

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I started my research about Modern Japanese Literature five years ago in Japan. During this time, I tried to take in “the Japanese way” as much as possible, by participating in conferences, study groups etc. Unfortunately, this also meant losing contact with the European world of Japanese studies.

By taking part in this year’s workshop in Lecce I was able to discover new perspectives that will complement the research I have to carry on in the following years in Japan, until the completion of my doctor’s thesis. The individual session with the Mrs. Abe, my advisor, was very helpful, as it provided me with the specialist’s insight, while the common sessions with my peers were very interesting and challenging, as I was able to hear opinions and answer questions that were sometimes coming from people specialising in other branches of the Japanese studies.

What I appreciated the most was the open and friendly atmosphere of the workshop, and I am referring here both at the presentations and advisory sessions themselves, as well as to the time we were able to spend together, exchanging ideas and information about Japanese studies and Japan, about our research and career plans, over the lunches and dinners generously offered by the sponsors.

All in all, it was a very fruitful experience, during which I was lucky enough to meet and talk to senior scholars of Japanese studies as well as to my peers, and

I am grateful and honoured I could take part in it.

*Workshop Participant*

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I am very thankful for having been offered the opportunity to take part in such a prestigious event as the EAJS Doctoral Student Workshop is.

First of all, it was a unique chance to get a critical response from other doctoral students and scholars of Japanese Studies from all over the world. Each participant was supposed to have read the papers of the other students in order to make suggestions and give appropriate feedback on the speaker's research which I found very constructive and inspiring.

The experimental approach of reporting not on my own paper but on a paper of a colleague was a challenging and stimulating task. Moreover, I greatly profited from the fact that a fellow student presented my research topic, as it allowed me to gain a critical view and a new perspective. I was surprised, however, that barely any Japanese was used and that working in Japan was not taken as an advantage. Nevertheless, the organization and format of the Workshop offered a possibility to establish contacts with different scholars from European and Japanese universities and to fully profit from the individual tutoring.

Last, but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to Tōshiba International Foundation, organizers of the Workshop, and all the participants for enabling me to gain practical knowledge and inspiration for the future research.

*Workshop Participant*

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First and foremost I would like to thank the organizers, Prof. Harald Fuess and Prof. Maria Chiara Migliore, the Tōshiba Foundation and Salento University for making the 5th PhD workshop possible. The workshop was a great opportunity for

PhD students, who are working in different European and Japanese universities, to meet and to get to know what kind of research other students do, and what approaches and methodology they apply. However, the most valuable thing for me was the possibility to articulate my ideas and thoughts and to try them out with the professors and my fellow colleagues. The very useful feedback came not only from the discussion of my research, but also from listening and discussing other students' proposals. The workshop and the professors managed to create a very lively and positive atmosphere in the classrooms so as to involve and hear the opinion of all participants. I would like to recommend and encourage PhD students to attend the EAJS PhD workshop, or any similar one, as it provides an invaluable opportunity not only to broaden one's perspective on the research, but also to expand one's network within the Japanese Study community.

*Workshop Participant*

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I personally enjoyed the workshop in Lecce very much and took great advantage from the advices I got from the large number of highly experienced scholars in the field of Japanese Studies.

Especially the Individual Advising Session with Dr. Angus Lockyer from London University I found very helpful for the further development of my research project.

Furthermore the intellectual exchange with so many students in the field of Japanese Studies from various countries and universities was very exciting to me and truly a great experience. I am really grateful for the large input I got from the academic advisors as well as from my fellow students and I am sure this will help me a lot in the further conduct of my research and will also positively influence my dissertation project as a whole.

After all it was a great and insightful experience for me participating in this workshop and whenever I might have the chance to attend to such a workshop again I would be delighted to do so.

*Workshop Participant*

The EAJS PhD workshop has been a really enlightening and stimulating experience for me.

I feel very lucky as the only Italian student allowed to participate to the workshop, held in my country for the first time; I'm very grateful to the EAJS persons in charge for the really perfect organization and to the hosts of Lecce University for the warm welcome in their beautiful town.

I really appreciated the workshop's format: I have to admit that at the very beginning I was pretty perplexed by the idea to present someone else's research proposal, but I definitely changed my mind when I understood how useful it can be to see our own work from new, different perspectives.

I'm sure that not only this fruitful exchange of points of view between doctoral students with different interests and different approaches, but also the personal contact with the individual advisors provided each one of us a unique insight into our own research field but also into the present status of Japanese studies in a wider perspective.

The benefits were very practical – the advices we received will be decidedly precious in the development of our doctoral researches – as well as personal: this important experience deepened my firm belief that to do good research is not only necessary to link up things, but also people.

I would like to thank here all the advisors that give us not only their important scientific support but also an example of great passion for research.

Last not least, I want to thank, of course, the generous supporters of the Workshop, the TIFO and the Japan Foundation that makes this event not only possible but also extremely agreeable.

*Workshop Participant*

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I was not coming to the workshop with very high expectations, for I could not

quite imagine how twenty people with so completely divergent research interests provisionally grouped under the heading of Japanese studies might end up having much of a meaningful conversation. The more pleasantly surprised I was when the occasion turned out to be not only thoroughly enjoyable, but actually very inspiring. So much so I actually thought that this must be one of the more meaningful forms of academic interaction and that, having tried the student's perspective, some day in the future I would very much enjoy taking part in some such gathering in something like the role of an academic supervisor. To even embrace such ambition is no doubt at least in part down to the fact that the academic advisors in Lecce overall did a very good job in their turn and showed a genuine commitment. Another part of the success was the plentiful opportunity for social interaction outside of the framework of the workshop itself, strictly speaking. The atmosphere would have been infinitely different if it were not for the common midday and evening meals, which were an invaluable opportunity to continue in a much more informal setting many of the discussions started during the sessions. There is also the contingent but very fortunate circumstance that the setting was that of a relatively cheap and relatively untouristic Lecce, which proved therefore eminently affordable and hospitable in terms of such informal venues.

The organisation of the workshop throughout was competent and well-managed at all stages, with perhaps the sole possible reservation that the detailed information regarding the actual form of the sessions (paired-up presentations on the partner's project) was delivered in a way that clearly left many people not entirely certain. The participants came in general very well prepared, approached the workshop with interest and seriousness and tended to do a good job both in presenting other people's research outline and responding to questions regarding their own work. It was also useful to talk to and hear from other junior researchers who face similar difficulties both in terms of progress towards PhD and as regards future positions in the academic job market. I would warmly recommend taking part in the PhD workshop to any graduate student who might in the future ask my opinion.

*Workshop Participant*

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The opportunity to participate in the 5th EAJS PhD workshop was a “once in a lifetime” chance which I grasped with both hands. Even when difficult to catch in a few words, some catchwords might be “internationalization”, “networking” and “feedback”.

Indeed, this international character is illustrated by the institutional affiliation of the participants, who came to Lecce from a wide range of European research institutes: ranging from major centres in Germany such as Hamburg or Bochum, to Anglo-Saxon universities in Oxford, London, Sheffield and Leeds; French academies in Paris and Lyon, up to the Japanese Studies Department in Crakow. In addition, there were European doctoral students who are currently active in the US (e.g. Chicago) or are doing their PhD research at renowned Japanese universities in Ōsaka or Tōkyō.

Meeting all these people with a vast variety of backgrounds and fields of expertise was very interesting, and the many hours spending time with them has been extremely fruitful on the level of establishing contacts, some of which promise to evolve into lasting networks of cooperation between our respective universities.

The format of the workshop that focussed on the presentation and evaluation by peers was a highly fruitful form of feedback, and contributed to my intention to reconsider some structural issues in the layout of my project. Especially the private sessions with senior chairs whose expertise is in a related field were greatly productive in terms of research content, and their remarks encouraged me to re-appreciate my own specialised work.

I am therefore very grateful to the Tōshiba International Foundation (TIFO), who sponsored this highly not only in academic but also social terms beneficial event. Thankful I am also to Harald Fuess and Per Larsen of the EAJS committee for their dealing with the practical side of organizing this PhD workshop, as well as to Maria C. Migliore and her students at Lecce University, whose endeavours for hosting these unique days in an inspiring and welcoming environment have largely contributed to making the 5th EAJS workshop for doctoral students into an unforgettable experience.

*Workshop Participant*

How to say it?

“Wonderful” would be fair. I have been in contact with so many people I could not have known otherwise, many thanks to the Advisors and the participants having come from all over the world.

I would add that for me, not only for the evolution of my work and the maturation of my PhD, but also for the professional connections that have been made possible, the EAJS Workshop in Lecce has been a very positive land mark. I could not have imagined better results and consequences for me from the Workshop and the Conference. It is very hard for me to imagine how the EAJS Workshop + Conference in Lecce could have been more positive than it actually was.

It was simply great (and I affirm this even though I had no time to visit Lecce and its beautiful surroundings! I would make it again and again without any hesitation).

Big thanks and congratulations to the EAJS and its sponsors.

*Workshop Participant*

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The 5th EAJS doctoral student workshop at Lecce, Italy was a unique opportunity to meet doctoral students from other European countries as well as senior scholars who are currently working in the field of Japanese studies. It was also a stimulating experience to present the doctoral dissertation project to a broader audience and receive constructive criticism from students and experts of different fields of research, like anthropology, literature, etc. I am very grateful for the given opportunity to take part in this workshop which I found very beneficial to me. The workshop not only gave me an insight into a wide range of topics on Japan, but also into the current trends of Japanese studies in Europe. The format of the workshop when a fellow participant had to summarize my research proposal and give questions or suggestions on it as well as the comments on the project's contribution to Japanese studies in general, allowed me to look at my own work from a different angle and consider its weaknesses. I also have to

mention the friendly atmosphere of the workshop created by the senior scholars that encouraged us students to discuss our research, exchange opinions and valuable information not only during the presentation sessions, but also after them.

I especially would like to thank Prof. Angus Lockyer for the useful suggestions and warm encouragement for my dissertation project. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Tōshiba International Foundation and Prof. Harald Fuess for organizing the workshop.

*Workshop Participant*

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In this letter I would like to express my profound gratitude for having had the opportunity to participate in the 5th EAJS Doctoral Workshop held at Salento University in Lecce from September 18 to 20. It was a remarkable experience and I am absolutely sure that my PhD project will benefit immensely from the feedback I received from my fellow workshop participants and the supervisors. There were several factors to be named which in my opinion make participation in the EAJS Doctoral Workshops a valuable experience for all PhD candidates in Japanese studies. The selection of participants and supervisors proved to be excellent. 20+ highly motivated PhD students from different fields brought together with experienced scholars as supervisors guaranteed fruitful discussions which were academically thorough and raised valuable points for every participant, including myself. The idea of having individual sessions with one supervisor gives one the opportunity to get in-depth feedback and to discuss open questions in a rigorous and focussed one-to-one discussion. I am especially indebted to my individual advisor, Prof. Kweku Ampiah (Leeds/NIJS), who did a great job in helping me with some critical points in my own project. As I heard from the other participants and experienced myself as well, all the supervisors took a lot of time during the breaks to discuss with the participants individually, not only those they were assigned to advise. I myself have to thank especially Prof. Harald Fuess (Sheffield/NIJS), Prof. Angus Lockyer (London/SOAS) and Prof. Michael Lucken (Paris/INALCO) who shared with me their vast experience and gave me some very good pointers and detailed feedback. The organization was

perfect and – thanks to Prof. Fuess and to the help of the local staff of Salento University – we could all deepen our talks during lunch and dinner in very well chosen locations. It is quite clear that the EAJS Doctoral Workshops help to form networks and long-lasting contacts between otherwise somewhat isolated young scholars and thereby raise the scholarly level of Japanese Studies in Europe and beyond. I will warmly recommend the workshop to every young scholar I know in the field.

*Workshop Participant*

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Having attended the Fifth EAJS doctoral students' workshop I am pleased to say that it has been of great benefit to me in a number of ways. Firstly, the seminar offered a chance to practice academic presentation skills, which was a valuable experience for me. Secondly, the workshop's participants have been drawn from diverse methodological backgrounds in Japanese studies which provided an opportunity for an exchange of ideas. I also found the individual advising session helpful and the feedback from my advisor valuable. In light of this feedback I was able to reappraise a few points of my research project. In my opinion the workshop was a great success and I would like to express my gratitude to its organisers (H. Fuess, M. Migliore) and sponsors (The Tōshiba International Foundation, Japan Foundation).

*Workshop Participant*

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The EAJS PhD workshop had two main benefits from my point of view. First, it allowed me to broaden and deepen my understanding of what a PhD in Japanese studies can be. By hearing from other PhD candidates about their thesis plans and progress I was able to place my own thesis in a wider context of possibilities and methods, which was inspirational in terms of considering other possible approaches to framing my topic and designing a methodological framework. Also, I was very much impressed by some of the presentations which have helped me to

form ideas on how far research can go in a PhD thesis. Such standards can be rather arbitrary, and apart from the guidance one receives from one's supervisor, it can sometimes be hard to know what to aim for in terms of breadth and depth of research objectives and what may constitute 'successful' results.

The second way in which the PhD workshop was helpful was in making contact with others working in related fields of study and in institutions or places which offer possibilities for more enduring scholarly or social interactions – particularly in the fieldwork phase of writing the thesis. I am about to go to Tokyo for a year, and I am confident that I will be in touch with a few of the people I met through the EAJS workshop over that period and beyond.

*Workshop Participant*

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Between 17 and 20 of September, 2008, I was privileged to take part in the 5th Doctoral Workshop organized in conjunction with the triennial conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies.

With about 20 participants, covering several academic disciplines, the workshop provided an excellent opportunity for me to interact with fellow graduate students working on their degrees at universities in Europe and Japan. As interaction with fellow graduate students from European universities especially tends to be rather rare for a student pursuing his graduate work in the United States, I found that to be one of the most important benefits of my workshop participation. Their presentations and the questions asked gave me a good sense of the state of the field in Europe and also allowed me to find out about research in European languages that does not penetrate as easily the American academia.

Also, the wide area of disciplines covered by our interests represented a perfect opportunity for us to get a better interdisciplinary perspective on how we could improve our future research.

Finally, establishing connections with young researchers in the field, people with whom one might become a colleague one day, was another great opportunity

mediated by the workshop.

On the other hand, the faculty coordinators' participation was extremely productive. In my case, I found Mark Williams' and Reiko Abe's comments, suggestions and criticism of my research to be very important and they will help guide my dissertation writing process.

In the end, the only slightly critical comment that I would like to make was the format of the workshop. While it did not affect me per se, as I presented alone, I heard from other participants who were paired with another colleague, that they had a very hard time making sense of their counterparts' argument and hence presenting it to their peers. I do not have a better format suggestion at this time, but maybe one idea might be for the rules, schedule, etc. to be made very clear well in advance, and also for the participants to be asked to submit (close to) final drafts of their presentations before the workshop, so that their counterparts in the presentation session not be put in the position of getting accustomed to and presenting a completely unknown topic in a only a few hours before the workshop.

I would like to end with my heartfelt thanks to all the organizers and sponsors, and with the hope that this great idea will continue in the years to come.

*Workshop Participant*

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The 5th EAJS Doctoral Workshop at the University of Salento (2008) gathered students and world-class scholars from various academic centres, thus creating an invaluable opportunity of discussion and networking.

The form in which the proposals were presented enhanced the speakers' clarity and precision in formulating statements as well as motivated the audience to ask questions and provide feedback. Moreover, the discussions of the doctoral projects were conducted in a broader, interdisciplinary context which also proved highly stimulating.

I personally enjoyed immensely the individual session with my personal advisor, Prof. Dr Reiko Abe Auestad from Oslo University, who encouraged me to become more creative in realizing my doctoral project and more eclectic in my use of research methods.

In conclusion, I cannot but say that I feel privileged to have participated in this year's workshop which was a most successful and thought-provoking event. I would therefore like to express my gratitude to the EAJS, the Tōshiba Foundation, the organisers and the academic advisors for creating this unique opportunity.

*Workshop Participant*

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The EAJS workshop gives PhD students the opportunity to present their thesis proposal to other PhD students and senior scholars and to discuss it in a studious but relaxed atmosphere.

Attending the EAJS workshop was a chance for me. As a third-year PhD student, I already had some results to present and at the same it was the moment for me to reevaluate and sharpen my thesis proposal. I think that the fact that each workshop participant was supervised by an advisor was particularly useful and motivating, as receiving some feedback from a researcher who is not my PhD advisor helped me to think of my thesis question in new ways and to define its qualities and weaknesses on the basis of new criteria.

Moreover, I really appreciated meeting PhD students from other European universities and other departments of Japanese studies. That is also very stimulating and makes the idea of 'Europe' more concrete.

In other words, the work accomplished during those three days represents an important step forward not only for my thesis dissertation, but also in the way I conceive my research and my future prospects.

*Workshop Participant*

I was lucky to be chosen as a participant at the 5th EAJS PhD Workshop in Lecce. This workshop gave me the opportunity to discuss my doctoral thesis with other PhD students and experts on Japanese Studies. The special workshop structure arranged for all participants to present another student's topic. This was interesting as I could see how another student understands my topic. I presented this participant's topic which was a new experience for me. We had one hour to debate our two topics in detail in front of the group.

An important part of the workshop for me was being together with many PhD students from many fields and learning about their research topics and methods. It was not only interesting, but also a big motivation for me to pursue my research aim.

I am very glad I got the chance to participate. Not only as regards context, but also in regards to networking effects. I met a lot of interesting people whom I can contact in the future.

Thanks to the Japan Foundation I got to spend 3 days in Lecce, Italy, and learn much for my future research. I can only recommend PhD students to apply for this workshop.

*Workshop Participant*