

London, 27 July 2018

In the summer of 2018, I had the opportunity to conduct research in Japan as a Short-Term Postdoctoral Fellow. From May 27th to July 27th, I was hosted by the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tokyo and was under the care of Professor Takahiro Nakajima. I am currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Oxford (Oriental Studies), reading under Professor Dirk Meyer. My research is on Chinese intellectual history and specifically I am looking at the largest ‘encyclopedic’ book compilation undertaken in the late 18th century. My research looks at questions of knowledge organization from a theoretical perspective aiming to unearth the latent theoretical – and not merely socio-historical – conditions that gave rise to the way in which knowledge was organized in this massive book collection.

Undertaking research at University of Tokyo was incredibly important for advancing my doctoral thesis. The university not only has a complete collection of primary and secondary sources but also many of the foremost scholars on China. Accessing this rich body of literature – with its own questions and concerns – has been instrumental in advancing my own understanding of the topic I am researching and enriching my own research in diverse and unexpected ways.

During my stay in Tokyo, I was given excellent support from my research host, Professor Nakajima and from all the administrative staff. The office I was given – with a beautiful view over the University parks – most definitely ensured I was working in an environment conducive to research. I could not feel more grateful for all the support and assistance I was given throughout my stay.

I would recommend future JSPS fellows or prospective applicants to make the most of their time in Japan by attending as many events as possible, even when not directly related to their research topics. Virtually all scholars I met at the University of Tokyo were very keen to converse and exchange ideas and perspectives. It was through such serendipitous meetings that many new ideas relevant to my research came up. Make use as much as you can not only of the physical infrastructure there (libraries, research stipends etc.) but more importantly of the invaluable intellectual capital that Japanese scholars have to offer.



View of the University of Tokyo gardens from my assigned office