



Activity Report

AEARU Young Researchers International Conference (AEARU-YRIC) 2015

- Dates
September 28 – 30, 2015
- Theme
Transmission, Preservation and Applications of Culture in the East Asian Region
- Venue
 - Tsukuba International Congress Center, Tsukuba City, Japan
 - International Conference Room, University Hall, University of Tsukuba
- Support
 - Association of East Asian Research Universities (AEARU)
 - Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences, World Heritage Studies Program, University of Tsukuba
 - Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Doctoral Program in History and Anthropology, University of Tsukuba
 - Office of Global Initiatives, University of Tsukuba

- Overview
University of Tsukuba hosted the AEARU Young Researchers International Conference (AEARU-YRIC) 2015 on September 28 - 30, 2015 under the theme of “Transmission, Preservation and Applications of Culture in the East Asian Region”. The conference has been made possible under the auspices of AEARU, University of Tsukuba’s Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Office of Global Initiatives.

We selected and welcomed 24 young researchers from 11 AEARU member universities in China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan namely: Nanjing University, National Taiwan University, National Tsinghua University, Peking University, Seoul University, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tsinghua University, University of Science and Technology of China, University of Tokyo, University of Tsukuba, and Yonsei University.

The conference consisted of oral and short oral presentation sessions. The selected 24 participants gave their presentations based on their submitted papers. A total of about 50 attendees came to the conference. The conference provided the participants with the opportunity to present their latest research and studies. Although the presentation theme was related to “culture”, the participants’ backgrounds and fields of studies are diverse, including language, architecture,



history, ethnology, engineering, science, and others. During the Q&A session, both presenters and audiences engaged in stimulating discussions and sharing of opinions freely and actively. Senior researchers gave encouraging words and advice to the young researchers.

All papers for oral and short oral presentations were compiled into a booklet and distributed to all conference participants.

■ Conference Program (Appendix 1)

On the first day, September 28, AEARU-YRIC was held at Tsukuba International Congress Center in Tsukuba City. University of Tsukuba's Vice President Caroline Benton gave the welcome address, followed by the Keynote speech from Professor Nobuko Inaba, Faculty of Art and Design and Chair of World Heritage Studies. With four oral sessions scheduled during the day, two sessions in the morning and two in the afternoon, 15 participants gave presentations. Each presenter was given a total of 15 minutes including presentation (12-min) and Q&A (3-min). A welcome reception was held after the sessions.

On the second day, September 29, still at the same venue, nine participants divided into two Short Oral Sessions, gave presentations. Each presenter was given a total of 10 minutes including presentation (7-min) and Q&A (3-min). The whole program ended in the morning.

Since the conference was held in conjunction with Tsukuba Global Science Week 2015 (TGSW) attended by over 1,200 participants with about 200 presenters from 90 institutions and from 25 countries, the AEARU-YRIC participants were able to check out some of the sessions going on in the same venue.

After the conference, in the afternoon of September 29, the participants were treated to traditional cultural performance at the University of Tsukuba Hall. A classical Japanese theatrical art called *Noh* was presented by the Tsukuba Noh-Kyogen Club, while traditional Japanese martial art called *Kashima-Shinryu* was presented by Tsukuba Kashima-Shinryu. Both are student clubs of the University. A campus tour was then conducted by University students from China, Korea and Taiwan.

On the last day, September 30, a one-day cultural tour to Kashima Shrine and Sawara Town exposed the participants to traditional Japanese culture. Kashima Shrine is known as one of the three most famous shrines in the eastern region of Japan, which was founded in 660 BC. Two senior volunteers with deep historical knowledge of the shrine served as guides. Sawara Town is a typical Japanese traditional townscape from the Edo Period that has been preserved. It has been

designated a national preservation district for historic buildings. (Appendix 2)

■ Expenditures

AEARU funding of USD 10,000 (Appendix 3) was used to partially subsidize costs for students' accommodation, meals, and the cultural tour.

■ Presenters

Total Number (24)

Japan

- ◇ The University of Tokyo (1)
- ◇ Tokyo Institute of Technology (2)
- ◇ University of Tsukuba (5)

China

- ◇ Nanjing University (8)
- ◇ Peking University (1)
- ◇ Tsinghua University (1)
- ◇ University of Science and Technology of China (1)

Korea

- ◇ Seoul National University (1)
- ◇ Yonsei University (2)

Taiwan

- ◇ National Taiwan University (1)
- ◇ National Tsinghua University (1)

■ Conclusions

It was the first time to host a conference targeted especially at young researchers that also included undergraduate students. Although the depth of the papers and presentations varied among the participants depending on their academic year, we believe it was a valuable experience for young researchers to have the opportunity to give presentations in an international setting.

The conference has been planned to comprise both academic and practical aspects. In the former, participants had the opportunity to be enlightened and stimulated in the knowledge bases that can enrich their intelligence and lead to further insights into our shared Asian culture and the research fields of other participants. In the latter, exposure to traditional Japanese culture through *Noh* and *Kashima-Shinryu*, and visits to Kashima Shrine and Sawara Town, a preserved traditional town, the participants were able to actually experience what cultural transmission, preservation and application means in our present society.

The purposes of convening an AEARU conference on the theme of East Asian Culture are not only to provide the participants with an opportunity to present their research and studies, but also to rediscover and appreciate culture in the East

Asian Region that has been nurtured through the course of long history. Appreciation of cultural diversity as well as similarity in this region can lead to better understanding of the values of people and society that can build mutual respect and friendship, which can then expand interest and appreciation to culture and society in areas other than the East Asian Region.

The conference also attracted student participants from Russia/Germany, Mexico, and Nepal, whose active participation facilitated the conference. We think this conference provided opportunities to make friends beyond borders, as well as providing impetus for them to sustain their passion to seek for knowledge and contribute to human well-being worldwide.

■ Recommendations

Strengthening the review process of presentation selection with an international selection committee may contribute to enhancing the quality of papers. Publicizing news of our activities on the AEARU website may help showcase and disseminate about AEARU.

■ Comments and Feedback

A brief open-ended questionnaire was sent to participants by email after the conference.

【Some of the participants' comments】

1. I was able to meet with a wide variety of people from diverse background. They have truly contributed to a much more illuminating and fruitful session as we develop deep into different issues concerning Asian culture throughout the conference.
2. I am particularly fond of the free and harmonious environment during the conference.
3. After the conference, we could talk with others, and then I got ideas to develop my research.
4. As an undergraduate, I hadn't had such chances before to attend a conference, so this is the first conference in my life. And it was a very good start.
5. It would be better to invite more people, even those in the West to join the conference.

■ Appendices

1. Program
2. One day cultural tour (Kashima Shrine and Sawara Town)
3. Financial Statement
4. Photos