

Ise and Japan Study Programme 2019 (Final Report)

I feel very honoured and lucky to have been chosen to participate in the 6th year of the Ise and Japan Study Programme conducted by the Kogakkan University. This year, the atmosphere might have been unusual, as the programme was taking art in the midst of a worldwide corona virus outbreak. Nevertheless, everyone, who took part in organising the programme has done an amazing job in ensuring the safety of all participants and at the same time providing us with as much mental stimuli as possible under the given circumstances.

Despite some parts of the programme being cancelled due to the virus outbreak, we managed to take part in very rewarding lectures, field trips, discussions and experiences. It is almost hard to imagine that all this happened in just 3 weeks – the programme was indeed very intensive, but it was absolutely worth it. We received detailed lectures on the Grand Shrine of Ise, history, dialect, present of Ise city as well as numerous aspects of Shinto, including a detailed explanation of the priests' robes. The level of Japanese was very high and while I understood most of the content, depending on the topic, some lectures felt more overwhelming, either due to the lack of vocabulary, or the high technicality. But in either case, I was able to take away valuable new information, that has helped me in broadening my knowledge about Japan, its culture and especially Ise.

This was my third visit to Japan, second to Ise, although the first time, I spent only 6 hours in this amazing town, visiting Naiku and Geku as a part of a special guided tour. I have to say that this time belongs to one of the best I spent in Japan, simply because I was able to learn so much in such a short time. The lectures were packed with information, and the participants had a lot of very interesting questions, however for me personally, the fieldtrips, visits to shrines and experience classes were the absolute highlight of the whole programme. The fact that we were able to visit parts of shrines which are usually closed to visitors, and witness and be a part of a Shinto ceremony/ritual is the best way to learn. All the visits to the shrines in Ise, Kyoto and Nara belong to my absolute favourite. Receiving explanations from Shinto priests and priestesses is invaluable. Same goes for the Saiku Historical Museum in Meiwa. Having the chance to try on clothes worn by Shinto priests and priestesses is a great additional bonus and as it turned out a very fun experience too! Other parts that were very valuable to me were the classes on making wagashi and the tea ceremony class. But in general, having the chance to go to places I would never have even thought of makes my thankful.

It is very difficult to find negative points, although I am sure there is always room for improvement. In this programme, the organisers tried to fulfil most of our wishes and were making sure we are satisfied with the activities, facilities and schedule. I was lucky to meet all the amazing people, especially my fellow participants made this learning experience a hundred times better and I enjoyed every single day spend in their company. In a funny coincidence, I celebrated my 30th birthday in the middle of the programme and even got a surprise birthday party before classes. This just shows the amazing atmosphere that all the participants were able to build.

I would therefore like to thank Kogakkan University, the city of Ise and everyone who has been involved in the realisation of this programme, from the bottom of my heart, to have gotten the chance to participate in this years round, despite the scary situation around the virus. Thank you for taking care of us and making sure, that while we do our best to stay safe, we still get to experience the world of Shinto and Japan as best as possible. I promise to utilize my new knowledge on Japan, Ise and Shinto and use it to better understand the research I am conducting on contemporary Japanese society.

2020年「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラム 最終レポート

第7回皇學館大学「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラムに参加させていただき誠に光栄に存じます。今回、新型コロナウイルスが流行したにもかかわらず、参加者の安全が守られ、刺激を受けるプログラムとなりました。

新型コロナウイルスの影響でプログラムの一部は省略されましたが、参加した講義・見学・ディスカッション・体験は、全てが非常に有意義でした。全ての行程が3週間で行われ、想像できないほど集約的なスケジュールでありましたが、それは効果的で非常に価値がある内容となりました。伊勢神宮、伊勢市の歴史・文化だけでなく、神主の衣装を含め神道の様々な事柄について詳しく説明していただきました。私は新しい情報を得て、日本、日本の文化や特に伊勢に関する知識を広く学ぶことができました。

今回、私が日本を訪問したのは3回目となり、伊勢市を訪れたのは2回目でしたが、以前は内宮と外宮を参拝するだけの団体旅行で、この素晴らしい伊勢市には通算6時間しか滞在できませんでした。今回、3週間という短い間ではありましたが、伊勢で過ごした時間は沢山の知識を得ることができ、最高の経験の一つになったと言って間違いありません。講義には有益な情報が詰まっており、参加者はとても熱心に質問をしました。私にとって、神社の見学・参拝、神道行事の体験型授業がこのプログラムで最も興味深いものでした。神宮や各神社など、一般の人々が見学できない場所や祭りを実際に体験することは貴重な学びとなります。すべての行事や体験を存分に楽しみました。明和町にある齋宮歴史博物館、衣装体験・和菓子作り・茶道などもとても楽しい経験でした。本当にありがたく思います。

企画者の皆様は、私たち参加者の希望を十分に満たしてくれました。参加者たちも最初の期待より素晴らしいグループを作り、滞在中にめぐってきた私の誕生日にはパーティーまで行ってくれました。このような素晴らしい雰囲気の中で過ごせた私は、本当に幸運です。

皇學館大学、伊勢市やこのプログラムに携わる皆様、今回の「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラムに参加させていただいたことに心の底から感謝申し上げます。大変お世話になりました。これからも日本研究者の一人として日本の現代社会をもっと理解できるように、私が得た知識を研究に活用していきます。そして伊勢のことを世界の人々に伝えていきます。

以上