

# Ise Study Program

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I had already spent a year in Tokyo before, and to be perfectly honest, I came away somewhat disillusioned by my experience there. There were many factors involved, some the kind that no person can ever influence and must instead try their best to make the most of, some my own fault, and some legitimate. The burden of not having properly taken advantage of my year abroad darkened my mood and made me feel bouts of jealousy when others spoke of their own time in Japan. At a certain point, I just couldn't hear about it anymore. I avoided learning, avoided speaking Japanese, even.

The first step to 'recovery' was entering grad school. This did much, but couldn't by itself reframe the past. I looked out for new opportunities, but did not get much luck until I heard about the Ise program. I was shocked when I found out I was allowed to go. It felt a bit surreal to have gotten that lucky. Even so, leading up to it I felt anxious. How good would the others be?

How much will this confront me with the past?

None of that happened. Never before had I been able to build my confidence as effectively as did the past three weeks. The other grad and doctoral students all filled a niche into our collective past experience, never truly overshadowing one another but instead helping to broaden each other's knowledge and way of thinking in novel ways. No matter how much you try, it's impossible to replicate the feeling of sharing experience across borders instead of with your own university's immediate peers. This was what I did wrong. I compared myself too close to home. I lost track of the fact that in a globalised, multinational society, my own experience, good and bad, can become valuable to others.

But the past three weeks would have never worked out were it not for Tamada-san's incredible efforts in keeping the organisation on track. I have never seen such competence and caring at my own university in Tokyo. He was always understanding about our issues and did his best to accommodate us. In return, we never overslept, nor did we ever skip a lecture. The only way that was possible, I believe, was due to the fact we knew the schedule would be abided by, rain or shine. If things changed, he notified us immediately and without equivocation. We felt we could depend on him, and we hope the university and the Ise program continues to do so, too.

Naturally, the university's lecturers and professors also occupy a special place in our hearts. We valued their efforts to impart their knowledge on us in the extremely limited time they were allotted. We could not always follow, and sometimes we perhaps looked tired or confused, but we did our best to take in everything we could. All I can comment on is that lecturers be a bit more self-conscious about the things the Japanese natives may take for granted. Of course, this is not an easy thing to do no matter how competent you are as an educator.

Seeing Ise was like the completion of a circle in my life. Perhaps the first thing I truly learned about Japan was about Amaterasu and Ise. This was perhaps over ten years ago. I remember looking at images of Meotoiwa back then, as well as Ise Jingu. That point marks the beginning of my legitimate interest (meaning: not anime and manga) in Japan and further lead to my studies. And now it lead me to Ise. I simply hope that the completed circle will from now on shine brightly on my future, and that the connections I made in Ise, personal and spiritual, remain forever intact.

## 伊勢スタディプログラム

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私は 2013 年に東京に留学した頃、多様な個人的な理由で《日本の心》を掴むことはできませんでした。従って、私は帰国してから、幻滅してしまって、他の国々からの留学生に対して恨みまで抱くようになりました。勿論、私の日本留学には極めていい経験もありましたが、頭の中には悪い記憶の方が強く残っていました。そのため、日本語をあまり使いたくなくなりました。その苦い経験を払拭するために、私は大学院に入学して、日本研究の新しい道を探すことにしました。そんな時、先輩から伊勢プログラムのことを聞いて、私はすぐに応募しました。そして、幸いなことにプログラムに参加することができました。

この三週間のうちに、日本の知識を深めるだけでなく、日本語を使う自信も蘇らせることができました。それはなぜかという、他の学生との深い交流と、日本人の教授とスタッフの必死な努力のおかげで、伊勢のことはもちろん、自分のことをもっと深く理解することができたからです。端的にいうと、教授達に教えて頂いた神道と神社のことは私にとって、今後必要不可欠な知識になりました。これらのおかげで、私の研究活動は今後、あらゆる日本に関連する分野で上達するに違いありません。他の参加者の方もそのように話していました。そして、私は伊勢の地でいわゆる《日本の心》をつかんで、自分のやる気も、再び湧き出してきました。この恩を一生忘れることはありません。