

ISE AND JAPAN STUDY PROGRAM 2017 REPORT

I was extremely lucky to be chosen as a participant in Ise and Japan Study Program 2017. These three weeks in Ise were maybe busiest in my life, but also most fulfilling period I have experienced. This was my ninth time in Japan, but first one in Ise and Mie prefecture. Until now I have mainly studied contemporary Japanese society, so almost all the knowledge about shinto, its history and Ise were something new for me. However, in order to understand contemporary society better, it is always useful - and interesting - to learn things from the past. And especially in the case of Ise, past is really entwined with present. During these three weeks Momofune classroom became our place of learning. The teachers had prepared lessons for us about various topics, including shinto gods, Ise Shrine, history of pilgrimage to Ise Shrine, history of Ise city, language of Ise, relations of

Shinto and Buddhism in Japan and so on. The amount of information was ample, but personally I struggled quite a lot to understand the contents of all the lectures. This was only due to my low level of Japanese skills, although there was a lot of quite special vocabulary included in lectures. Those of us who had better Japanese skills surely enjoyed lessons, which were not modified for non-Japanese audience.

The information we received during the lectures worked as a great basis for our field trips. I am sure that for example going to Ise Jingu's inner and outer shrine wouldn't have been such rewarding experiences without all the knowledge we were provided beforehand and on site. The variety of places we visited was impressive: some other shrines in addition to

Ise Jingu, and also the beautiful Buddhist temple of Asamayama, many bigger and smaller museums, Edo period ryokan guesthouse, traditional Japanese paper (washi) factory, site of salt production and many others. Although many of the shrines and museums were freezing cold, we always had a feeling to be warmly welcomed.

We didn't only see many awesome places but were also able to try out new things. Making kamaboko fish paste buns, preparing paintbrushes and wearing traditional shinto attire were all special experiences for me. There was a lot to do and see in Ise alone, but our trip

to Kyoto and Nara made these three weeks even better. One of the best experiences was the opportunity to have a tour in Yasaka shrine guided by a friendly shinto priest, and possibility to ask any questions we had in our minds. In this way the contemporary every day Shinto religion became more familiar to us. Even most Japanese don't have this kind of opportunity, so we were really lucky.

On the top of the educational part of the program, it was also great fun! All the parties and

outings we had will stay in my memories. Delicious food in many restaurants and in our

university and dormitory cafeterias, daily furo, nice walk to university. The best part, however, were the people - togetherness our wonderful group had. This was of course due to extremely good luck, but nonetheless I am thankful. Fourteen of us came to Japan from different countries and all of us had our different educational and other backgrounds, which was only a good thing in the end, since we were able to learn a lot from each others as well. I have to thank all the teachers, volunteers and staff who organized our program: everything went smoothly and we got all the support we might need. In the end special thanks to awesome Tamada-san, who took best care of us from the beginning until the end!

まずは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深く感謝いたします。3週間の滞在中に私たちはとても多くの学びを得て、色々な経験をさせていただきました。私は今回日本を訪問したのは9回目でしたが、これまでは伊勢はもちろん三重県を訪れたこともありませんでした。これまで日本の現代社会についてはいろいろと学習をしてきましたが、今回の神道や伊勢の歴史等についての学習プログラムはとても新鮮な学びでした。現代社会を理解するためには過去や歴史についても学習しなければなりません。実際に授業で学んだ後に、フィールドスタディで伊勢神宮やその他の場所を訪れる学習方法は理解を深めるのに非常に優れています。また、様々な実体験もどれもが楽しいものでした。祭式や十二単の着付け体験、伝統的な筆や蒲鉾作りは強く印象に残っています。

皇學館大学の先生方やボランティアスタッフのおかげで3週間の日常は問題が起きませんでした。特にコーディネーターの玉田さんの働きは、私たちに何も心配を与えませんでした。他の国からの参加者はみんな優しく、すぐ打ち解けることができました。それぞれの観点や研究領域は異なり、それも有益であることに気付かされました。私はこのプログラムを通じて伊勢が大好きになりました。帰国したら、周囲の人々に伊勢訪問のアピールをしたいと思っています。