

「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラム：参加者レポート

I would like to start this report by expressing my sincere thanks to all the staff at Kōgakkan University and Ise City who made this programme possible, who were our guides for 3 weeks in the journey that was the Ise and Japan Study Programme. My eternal gratitude goes out specifically to Tamadasan, Mayosensei, Sanosensei, Hayashisensei, Tanisan, and all the other staff, teachers and students who supported us daily. Thanks to all of you, it has been an absolutely wonderful experience. I would also like to thank Yasmine, a KU Leuven participant of last year's programme, for recommending me to this year's programme. Finally, thanks to Professor Schmidt of KU Leuven, for supporting my application and writing a recommendation letter for the programme.

The things I have learned and experienced in Ise are numerous and unique. Two years ago, I spent a year studying Japanese language and culture at Kōbe University. In hindsight, it is strange to think how close Ise was in physical distance, and how little I know about this very big part of Japanese culture, namely Shintō religion and the Grand Shrine. I am very happy to say that my Japanese level appeared to be sufficient to understand most of the lectures, and so I was able to learn an incredible amount about the history of Ise, the pilgrimage to the shrines, Shintō architecture, safeguarded cultural values, and language and literature.

The lecture about language ("Ise kotoba") especially stuck with me, and so I decided to write my final presentation about the Ise dialect and a comparison with Kansai dialect as well as standard Japanese. Developing surveys and doing field research was a very fun method to study this topic, and it brought me very close to the people living in Ise. Though the preparation time available for the presentations was limited, I am quite satisfied with the result and was especially amazed by the interesting and original topics the other participants managed to produce.

However interesting the programme's contents were, my experience from participating in several similar short-term study programmes has proven to me time and time again that it is the people who really make the experience. When I got off the plane in Nagoya more than 3 weeks ago, I was slightly nervous about meeting 13 strangers from all over the world, as I usually am. But starting with Tamadasan, who immediately took care of us as if we were his own children, and continuing with the other participants who gradually arrived at the airport, this was a gathering of nothing but marvellous people. Being of various backgrounds – different age, country, and academic specialty – the only thing that really bound us was our interest in Ise, be it from many different perspectives. Asian art teachers, Japanese language majors and architects all joined to study Ise in their own way, and the academic cooperation, friendships and intercultural understanding that resulted from this was incredible. Already after a few days the group felt like family, and this enriched our Ise experience immensely.

Personally, I also learned a lot. I had never written a blog before in my life, although I had thought about it frequently. This programme was a perfect opportunity to combine my relatively new interest in photography (with a camera I bought during my exchange year in Kōbe) with an experiment in writing. I was very happy to find out a lot of people liked my blog, because it means both me and the Ise Programme succeeded. I succeeded to attract the attention of friends and family at home with my writing experiment, and the Ise Programme proved interesting enough to keep them hooked to new updates. In this way, I think the requirement of posting about Ise on social network sites can be turned in a very useful and nice way for all parties.

I also learned a lot of Japanese, of course. As I mentioned before, though my Japanese improved immensely during my year in Kōbe, the world of Shintō and its specific vocabulary was far off, and now I feel like I finally have the words in Japanese to explain what Ise is all about. After all, even to Japanese

people it is not always clear what is being done at Ise, and why. I think I came at least a little closer to the answer during these three weeks, which shows another success of the Ise programme.

In the end, I have a very specific opinion about what is the ultimate benefit of a programme like the Ise and Japan study programme. The number one reason I will always continue to grasp opportunities like this one is the network of international friendship that one can build through it. Looking back on a thousand memories of my year in Kōbe it was definitely the best year of my life so far, but what's even better is the friends that remained after the programme, returned to their home countries, to the US, Indonesia, Turkey, Finland, Korea, or staying in Japan. This network has now again been expanded greatly with people from Russia, Spain, Ukraine, Poland and many more. Travelling for me will never be the same; I will always have a place in the future of these wonderful people, just as they will have a place when they come to Belgium or wherever I end up.

So even though the Ise programme may not have been related to my academic specialty in a direct manner, the general experience, broad learning possibilities of an important but relatively unknown culture, and the resulting network of international friendship and academia are priceless elements that I will carry forever and be forever grateful for.

「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラムに参加させていただき、誠にありがとうございました。皇学館大学と伊勢市のスタッフ、特に玉田さん、メイヨー先生、佐野先生、林先生、谷さんなど、日常生活を支援して下さった方々に心より感謝を申し上げたいと思います。去年の参加者のヤスミンさんにも推薦していただき感謝しております。最後に、KU Leuven 大学のシュミット先生も応募にあたり推薦状を書いてくださり、感謝申し上げます。

このプログラムを通して学んだことが数えきれないほどあります。神戸大学に一年間留学したことがあるのにもかかわらず、神道や伊勢についてほとんど何も知りませんでした。優秀な先生方から様々な講義を受けて、伊勢神宮、日本文化、宗教と日本人などについて深く学習しました。

私は特に「伊勢言葉」という齊藤先生の講義が大変気に入りました。私は日本語学を専門としていますが、伊勢方言というのがあると知ったときにむくむくと興味がわいてきて、最終発表のトピックを伊勢方言と関西弁・標準語の比較に設定しました。発表の準備時間は限られていたにもかかわらず、他の参加者の発表の内容とそれぞれの面白い視点に感心しました。

日本文化の講義、神宮とその周辺の見学、京都・奈良への旅行は全て素晴らしい経験でした。これまで私が参加した短期留学プログラムでも実感してきたことですが、今回また新たに世界 11 カ国出身の新しい友達ができただことは大変嬉しいことでした。参加者の皆さんとはあっという間に家族のように親くなりました。世界を結ぶ絆は、プログラムの思い出が次第に薄れていっても一生記憶に残っていくものです。