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## “Ise and Japan” Study Program Report

I applied to this program first of all out of curiosity, as the applicant was required to be from Western part of the world. Not being related to the Western part of the world geographically or by research, however, having lived in Japan for two years by the start of application period and holding my great interest in Shinto and Japanese identity related to Shinto, I still decided to apply. To my surprise, I was accepted. At that point I had almost no knowledge in Japanese history, let alone Shinto. Knowledge of Japanese language was limited to my two years of 4 semesters of studies, so I was worried if my proficiency was enough for the program.

Nevertheless, when the program started in February, I was relieved a bit regarding my Japanese as I felt comfortable listening to mostly understandable Japanese used by instructors. Instructors were very flexible with language they used and aware of possibly difficult terminology and helped to comprehend lectures to the fullest. Personally for me, everyday was filled with totally new information about Japan, Shinto and Ise itself - both historical and present. Lectures paired with field trips had a great educating effect on all of us, I believe. From what I lacked practically in terms of daily life in Japan before participating in the program was the proper way of purifying oneself before entering shrines and paying respect and gratitude to gods at shrines. And of course, I have gained a massive piece of theoretical and practical knowledge having graduated from this program along with establishing an enormous network of Shinto and Japan related scholars.

It should be noted that the program could not be as smooth and effective as it had been without the all-time help, support and understanding of Tamada-san. If Ise is the spiritual heart of Japan, I believe, Tamada-san and the office staff along with student supporters are the heart of the “Ise and Japan” study program’s organization. They created a cozy and friendly air at all times so that all participants felt comfortable during the breaks, lunch time and at field trips.

To sum up, I can surely say that my initial curiosity has resulted in a massive knowledge about Ise, Shinto and Japan as a whole and meaningful connections that affected how I view Japan and how I differently spirituality and religion can be perceived. I feel very grateful for professors, who took their time to share their knowledge with us, Tamada-san, office staff, Ise city staff and student supporters for making our time in Ise full of knowledge, precious and worthy.

私は、欧米文化圏出身者を募集していたこのプログラムに、初めは好奇心から応募しました。ウズベキスタンは欧米文化圏には属しませんが、2年間日本に住んでいますし、神道に大きな関心があるので、私は応募することを決めました。思いもかけず、選考に通りました。その時、私には神道と日本の歴史についてほとんど知識がありませんでした。日本に留学して日本語を学ぶのは4学期間の2年間だけなので、日本語すら不安でした。

しかしながら、2月にプログラムが始まった時、私は先生の話す日本語が大部分理解出来たので、少し安心しました。先生は、分かりやすい日本語で話してくれたので、講義がとても理解しやすかったです。個人的には、日本、神道、伊勢に関する歴史等、毎日新しい情報で満たされました。見学旅行の事前講義は、私たちにとってとても勉強になったと思います。神域で参拝する前に自分自身を浄化するという日本の常識を、私はプログラムに参加する前は知りませんでした。そして、このプログラムを修了した時、私は神道と日本に関するたくさんの知識を得ました。

このプログラムは、玉田さんの支援のおかげで、円滑で効果的なものでした。伊勢が日本の心ならば、玉田さんとスタッフの皆さんは「伊勢」と日本プログラムの心だと、私は思います。昼食や見学の時など、彼らは私たちにとって心地よく親しみやすい雰囲気を作ってくれました。

最終的に、私の最初の好奇心は伊勢と神道、日本の宗教、その精神文化を理解することにつながったように思います。私は、先生方をはじめ、私たちのために貴重で価値のある時間を作っていただいた、玉田さん、スタッフの皆さん、伊勢市の皆さんに感謝します。

以上