

ジョナサン・ストックデール
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“Ise and Japan” Study Program Report

The three-week “Ise and Japan” Study Program at Kōgakkan University was an incredibly rich experience, and I would highly recommend the program to others at the post-graduate level and beyond who are interested in Japanese religion, history, and culture, as well as contemporary Japanese society and education.

Even if the program consisted only of the classes that were taught by the Kōgakkan professors, I would have found it completely valuable. The opportunity to receive lectures in Japanese from Kōgakkan professors about myth, literature, archeology, history, pilgrimage, ritual, translation, trade, and Buddhist-Shinto interaction, all related in one way or another to the Ise shrines, was a dream experience for me. The on-site learning experiences and additional field trips—sometimes to sites we had been studying in class the very same day—made the learning extremely rich. On top of that, our visits to the different manufacturing sites around the city of Ise that contribute to the shrines (the traditional Japanese paper factory, the lumber & carpentry mill, the salt fields) gave the overall program a craft and economic dimension that I hadn’t expected at all and which was quite meaningful.

The program is extremely well-organized, and it’s clear that a lot of thoughtful planning (and countless hours of work) have gone into the structure. One example of this that jumps out for me was the field trip to Kyoto and Nara that ended up underscoring the deep connections between the Ise Shrines and the old imperial capitals; another was the trip on one of our last days to the Buddhist temple in the mountains high above the inner shrine, which underscored the deep connections between Buddhism and Shinto in Japanese history. I also appreciated the tension between having “free-time” but also having a research presentation due at the end of the three weeks; I was able to utilize my free time to visit the mountaintop grave of Motoori Norinaga, which then became the subject of my research presentation.

In addition to receiving an extensive education related to the Ise shrines, one of the goals of the program was to make sure that we posted to social media about the many experiences available to visitors who might come to Ise, and based on the responses I was receiving to the photos I was sharing, my friends and contacts in the U.S. were awed by the beauty we were experiencing. I think it’s also fascinating that some of the most exquisite sites we visited were off-limits to photography, and one of the things I’ll be thinking about going forward is how to convey to others the experiences we had that were “beyond photography.”

All in all, I remain extremely grateful for this rare opportunity to learn about Ise and Japan, and to have visited places that even many Japanese will probably never have a chance to see. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime learning experience.

ストックデール・ジョナサン

「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は、大変貴重な体験となりました。日本について研究する人々、特に宗教、歴史、文化史、あるいは現代社会について興味を持つ人々にとってはとても素晴らしいプログラムであったと思います。

皇學館大学の先生やスタッフ、伊勢市のスタッフ、各神社の関係者、各種見学先のスタッフ、学生サポーター、そして伊勢市民の皆様のおかげで、広い視野をもって伊勢神宮や伊勢市を捉え、深く理解することができました。講義で学んだ直後に、その場所を実際に訪問するので、講義で学んだことがより具体的に理解できました。そして神宮について学ぶばかりではなく、例えば、神社で使われる御札の製造過程等も見学でき、神宮と伊勢市、社会間の繋がりをよく理解することもできました。

このプログラムを私は一生忘れることはありません。深く感謝申し上げます。

以上