

「伊勢」と日本スタディ・プログラム レポート

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Participating in the “Ise and Japan” Study Program at Kogakkan University was a very rewarding experience. I got to see Japan from a quite different perspective than during my previous stay as an exchange student of Tohoku University three years ago, and learned a lot about the cultural and religious background.

However, recounting each and every location visited and lecture heard would fill this page without saying much about each of them, so for this report, I've picked two things that were particularly interesting to me, one of them an abstract topic, and the other a location I enjoyed very much.

Saiku Historical Museum and Itsukinomiya Hall for Historical Experience

The Saiku (齋宮) was the location of the place of the Saio (齋王), a princess who was sent by the emperor to serve at Ise Jingu in a tradition that existed from the late 7th to the 14th century. After the tradition ended, the Saiku fell out of use and decayed. Excavations officially started in 1970, and now the Saiku Historical Museum stands on top of part of the former Saiku area. We visited the museum on March 1st.

As expected from a museum at an archeological site, the Saiku Historical Museum shows many artifacts found during the excavations, as well as models describing the history of Saiku and life of the Saio. Due to my personal interest in the Japanese writing systems, I was particularly interested in some pottery shards with Hiragana writing on them, which are some of the oldest known examples of Hiragana usage. We also saw a movie showing how Princess Nagako traveled from Kyoto to Ise as newly appointed Saio in the 11th century.

At the Itsukinomiya Hall for Historical Experience we could try some activities related to the time of the Saiku. I tried a game of Bansugoroku (盤雙六). I found the place to be both interesting and relaxing.

All in all, I got a lively impression of history at the Saiku, and in terms of tourism it is important to mention that it also appeared to be quite suitable for families.

Shinto-Buddhist Syncretism (神仏習合)

I had long known that Shinto and Buddhism are the major religions in Japan, but I made the mistake of thinking that they were distinct, even though many Japanese practice both. The truth is that since Buddhism arrived in Japan (6th century, possibly earlier), both religions heavily influenced each other, to the point where it was more appropriate to consider them one syncretic belief system. Even when the Meiji government tried to remove the “foreign” Buddhist influence from Shinto, success was limited.

During the program I've collected several examples, the most interesting ones are the following:

- The Amaterasu-omikami statue and shrine in Kongōshō-ji temple,
- the many similarities Yasaka-jinja in Kyoto has with a Buddhist temple despite being a Shinto shrine,

- and the Hachiman guardian shrine at Tōdai-ji temple in Nara.

Hachiman is a particularly interesting example, because he's worshiped both as a *kami* in Shinto and a *bodhisattva* in Buddhism, although with a difference: The samurai honored him as a *kami* of war, an aspect which is missing in the Buddhist variant.

「伊勢」と日本スタディ・プログラムに参加したきっかけは、その内容がとても興味深く、日本のことをより深く学ぶことができると思ったからです。このレポートを書くにあたり、様々な体験と授業の中から二つに選びました。

一番目は、三月一日に見学した齋宮歴史博物館といつきのみや歴史体験館です。昔の齋宮は、齋王が住んでいた所です。七世紀から十四世紀まで、天王が伊勢神宮に仕えるために一人の姫様を京都から齋宮に送りました。私は日本の古い書物に興味がありますので、古いひらがなで書かれている焼物が非常におもしろかったです。いつきのみや歴史体験館を体験しました。大人と子供の両方で楽しめる場所だと思います。

二番目は、神仏習合についてです。神道と仏教は日本の二大宗教であることを知ってはいましたが、その関係や歴史は知りませんでした。仏教が日本に入った時から、二つの宗教の間で様々な影響がおこり、やがて融合し、神仏習合になりました。明治時代の政府は神仏分離を進めましたが、現在でも神仏習合の用例がたくさんあります。例えば、朝熊山の金剛証寺に天照大御神が祀られています。京都の八坂神社は昔仏閣でもあったことから、本殿の奥には古い仏像が安置されています。そして、奈良の東大寺を守るために八幡神社があります。われわれの住む西洋圏では、考えられない宗教の融合に驚きました。