

2020 Ise and Japan Study Program Final Report

It has been my great pleasure and privilege to participate in Kogakkan University's 2020 Ise and Japan Study Program. As a PhD student studying Shintō, this study program has been an invaluable experience. I would heartily recommend graduate students, professors, and independent researchers interested in learning more about Ise's distinct characteristics as Japan's "divine capital." Over three short weeks, I have learned a seemingly impossible amount of information about Shintō, the Ise Grand Shrines, and other significant cultural, historical, and economic dynamics of Ise.

Though I was originally worried that I would not be up to the challenge of a short, but intensive study program on complex topics delivered in Japanese, all these anxieties shrank away as I became immersed and energized by what I was seeing, learning, and doing every day. The program was a well-organized mix of diverse lectures from knowledgeable professors who thoughtfully answered our many questions, as well as field trips to various sites and other experiential activities relevant to what we were learning in the classroom. From lectures ranging in topic from Ise Grand Shrine's twenty-year renewal project and the palace of the *saiō*, to architecture, literature, linguistics, mythology, economics, tourism, tea ceremony, and material culture, I found that there was so much more to Ise than I had previously imagined. Outside of our scheduled activities, the other participants and I enjoyed exploring the many shops and shrines around the city and connecting with local residents.

Studying Shintō in the United States is quite difficult, as I rarely have the opportunity to witness, let alone participate in, Shintō rituals and interact with Shintō priests. As a result, one particularly inspiring and thought-provoking part of the program for me was our trip to the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara and our participation in three official Shintō rituals, the *seishiki sanpai*. After receiving a tutorial in Shintō rituals from priests in training in Kogakkan's Shintō department, I was prepared to notice the many intriguing similarities and differences between the rituals conducted at Yasaka Shrine, Iwashimizu Hachimangū Shrine, and Kasuga Grand Shrine. Moreover, what I learned from the tours of the shrine grounds and personal conversations with the priests went so far beyond what I could have gleaned on my own from reading the signage and pamphlets.

Besides the multifaceted knowledge that I gained, I will forever treasure the friends and colleagues that I met during the Ise and Japan Study Program. Mr. Tamada, the international exchange office staff, volunteer guides, lecturers, and local hosts were incredibly gracious, patient, and friendly. It was real privilege to be able to share my research on the globalization of Shintō with professors from Kogakkan, and I look forward to continuing conversations and collaborations with the university faculty. In just three short weeks, a group of strangers and an alien city became an international family with Ise as our shared home. We learned, struggled, celebrated, and grew together. Even in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak, we made the best of our precious time in Ise.

On the whole, I am deeply grateful for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to really become familiar with Ise, and I hope that the program will become the first instance of a much longer and deeper engagement with the city.

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2020年「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラム 最終レポート

皇學館大学の2020年「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、私にとって偉大な名誉となりました。

私は神道について研究しているので、全てが貴重な経験でした。三週間という短い間に、伊勢神宮の式年遷宮と斎宮、建築、文学、言語、商業、神話、観光など、伊勢に関する様々なことを学習できました。

毎日の講義のみならず、フィールドスタディと体験型授業を通し、伊勢の深い歴史と文化について多くのことを学びました。伊勢は、想像していたよりも遥かに多様で複雑な場所であることを発見しました。

伊勢で出会った友人たちも貴重な財産となりました。その関係は永遠に続いていくものと思います。伊勢をより深く理解する機会を得られたことに厚く御礼申し上げます。

以上