

University of Tuebingen, Humanities, Department of Media Studies

“Ise and Study Program 2017”-Report

My name is Lukas Wilde, I am a media scholar from Tuebingen University in the south of Germany. When I decided to participate in the “Ise and Japan Study Program 2017”, my knowledge about Ise and *shinto* was limited at best. I was thus worrying a little what kind of preparations beforehand would be necessary. On top of that, it had been about ten years that I was living as an exchange student in Japan actively learning Japanese. My reading skills are still fairly okay, but I was anxious as to whether my listening and speaking comprehension would be sufficient for the classes. In the end, I entrusted myself to the care of the staff of the Kôgakkan University, especially the wonderful Mr. Tamada. It turned out that these three weeks have been, without exceptions, a marvelous experience.

Before arriving, I was wondering what kind of activities would be available in Ise-shi to keep the 14 international participants occupied for three weeks straight. It was not only the daily lectures by a range of fantastic professors and other experts that kept us busy, however, but also a variety of field trips (*kengaku*) that revealed a side of Japan that I had rarely seen. The many trips and experiences (*taiken*) have maybe been the most rewarding part of the program, the organizers have outdone themselves with all kind of activities you could think of: from visits to *washi*-paper manufacturers, to our first attempts at the crafts of hand-producing traditional brushes or *kamaboko* (fish paste)... The schedule was extremely tight, so in spite of us having to do no homework, we were usually exhausted at night (thankfully, the dormitory is only a ten-minute walk from the university and the dormitory dinner was always fantastic– not even two times the same set menu –, so all in all I went home pretty relaxed). One of the most interesting side-effects of the program, to me, is a kind of changed perspective on other places in Japan. When I was living in Tokyo before, Kyoto seemed like a really traditional “authentic Japanese city”. During this year’s study program, when we were visiting Kyoto (and Nara) for a two-day trip, I felt surrounded by tourists and too much English language.

This brings me to another aspect: I have to give a lot of credit to the teachers within the program. They were, without exceptions, avoiding to switch to English to overcome communicational obstacles but instead exchanged Japanese expressions and synonyms with incredible subtlety and great patience. The individual skillsets of the participating students differed considerably, ranging from a close-to-native-level (to me, at least) to a rather limited understanding (here I would see myself). The instructors prepared incredible amounts of reading material for each session, however. The study of that was purely optional, but so it was always possible to get back to unclear points afterwards. Also, I’d like to thank the more advanced students to supply me with many explanations. In the end, it really felt like making progress together within the whole group, not just individually, and I would count many of the participants to my friends now. For the program, I tried to keep track of recurring questions and themes on a blog that I set up in which I also tried to express my overall impressions. It should stay online for a long time, so feel free to give it a try if you are interested in many more details: <http://isebox.kastenwesen.com>.

Taken together, these three weeks were a pretty unique experience. Participants can pretty much get out of it as much as they personally choose to. For the final presentations that everyone had to give (about 15 minutes in Japanese in a quite formal setting, press included), we were free to pursue any thoughts that interested us particularly, talk to the many *sensei* about it, interview people, whatever got our individual attention... As with everything else, the variety of responses from the participant were varied, ranging from personal anecdotes and summaries of experiences, over applications of prior studies on things in Ise, up to conceptual challenges that kept coming up during the time. Again, it was pretty much up to the individual to take the most out of this opportunity without many formal expectations (even though it was challenging to do preparations within our limited leisure time).

In any case, I can highly recommend this course to anyone who has an interest in Japanese culture and its spiritual traditions, even if you already have been there for a longer time. You should be prepared to navigate within a native speaker-environment, although it is not necessary to understand every specialized topic within the classes since there are no tests, exams, or homeworks (except for the final presentation). Thanks again, so much, to the organizers and the staff for giving me that chance, the experience was unique, on a personal as much as on an academic level.

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「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラム・参加者レポート

私はルーカス・ヴィルデと申します。南ドイツのテュービンゲン大学院で博士論文を提出した後、人文学部でメディア学者として在籍しております。「伊勢」と日本スタディプログラムに参加する前は、伊勢についても神道についてもほとんど知識がなく、どのような準備が必要なのか分からず、少し不安がありました。私の日本語能力が足りない、という心配もありました。日本語の文法や語彙を勉強したのは、だいたい10年前のことだし、日常生活の中であまり活用する機会もないし、聞き取りも会話もできるのかな、という不安を感じていました。とにかくプログラムが始まる前は、仕事で忙しくて、あまり準備できずそのまま出発しました。それでも、コーディネーターの玉田さんをはじめ、皇學館大学の皆さまに親切にいただいたおかげであらゆる点で貴重な経験になりました。

最初は、3週間ずっと伊勢で過ごして、どのような活動ができるだろう、と多少不安に思えたのですが、毎日興味深い授業の上に様々な体験もできたので、大変満足できる滞在となりました。伊勢という街自体が歴史深く、非常に特徴的でした。一年間東京に留学していた時は、「伝統的で真正な日本が味わえる町といえば、京都だ」というイメージを持っていましたが、今回の滞在でも実際に京都を訪問した際には、海外からの観光客が多すぎて日本語よりも様々な外国語が耳に入ってきました。そういうこともあり、今回は様々な面で視野が広がったと思います。

特にありがたかったことは、皇學館大学の先生方が忍耐強く、なかなか外国人には理解しにくい分りにくい内容の説明を繰り返し行ってくれたり、通じない用語を同義語に置き換えたりする工夫をしてくださったことです。おかげで、伊勢神宮の長く深い歴史や、日本全国との関係や、日本人のいわゆる精神文化についていろいろ勉強することができました。私は、毎日授業で学んだことや受けた印象を英語で個人ブログに書き込み、日本の神様や伝統のことを分かる範囲で発信してみました。興味があればぜひ <http://isebox.kastenwesen.com> で読んでみてください。

プログラム参加者の日本語能力はバラバラでしたが、できる限り補完しあいながら、共に進歩していくことができました。以前、私の専門は現在日本のポップカルチャーで、それだけに専念していましたが、伝統文化の現象や思考がそれに及ぼしてきた影響についても、少しは理解できるようになりました。再びこのプログラムに参加したいと思うほど研究領域が広がったと思います。3週間、本当にお世話になりました。心から御礼申し上げます。