"Ise" and Japan Study Program Report

The Ise and Japan Study Program offers international graduate students an unparalleled opportunity to deepen their understanding of the history of Ise, learn about Shinto ritual practices and beliefs, and network with professors at Kogakkan University and graduate students from across Europe. While the lectures covered a wide array of topics from annual rituals performed at Ise Shrine to the historic industries and trades of salt production and boat-manufacturing in the region, many discussions repeatedly converged around the theme of Buddhist and Shinto syncretism. For example, Professor Fukatsu examined waka poetry describing kami as local manifestations of Buddhist deities while Professor Sakurai discussed the fundraising activities of Buddhist nuns at Keikōin convent who reconstructed Ise Shrine during the Sengoku and early Edo periods. Since my main objective for participating in the program was to explore this complementary relationship between Buddhist and Shinto institutions in pre-modern Japan, I focused my final presentation topic on the Keikōin convent and the nuns' methods of soliciting donations for Ise Shrine. While the lectures explored the history of Ise, the tours extended my knowledge of contemporary Shinto beliefs, customs, and practices throughout Japan. At the Yamatohime-no-miya Shrine, we were educated on the proper methods of purification and veneration. Shinto priests also conducted private tours for us at Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto and Kasuga Shrine in Nara. These visits gave us the exceptional chance to converse with Shinto priests about their beliefs and reasons for entering the priesthood and showed us how Shinto practices have evolved through time.

Finally, while the Kogakkan University professors and staff make up the heart of the Ise and Japan Study Program, this program would be lacking without the camaraderie among the fourteen participants. There are not many situations where graduate students from eleven different countries can come together to learn, to share their research, and to debate their ideas. Especially coming from the United States, there are few opportunities for me to travel to Europe and meet my European colleagues. I am thankful not only for the chance to learn more about Buddhist-Shinto syncretism and contemporary Japanese religious practices, but am truly grateful that the Ise and Japan Study Program functions as a platform for collaboration, communication, and exchange among the new and future scholars of Japanese art, culture, and history from around the world.

伊勢と日本スタディプログラムでは伊勢の歴史や神道をはじめとする日本文化について学び、皇學館大学の先生方や西欧諸国の大学院生たちとのネットワークが構築できる 非常に有益な経験をした。

講義では様々な課題(伊勢神宮でのお祭りやそれにまつわる伊勢における塩作りや廻船業等)について学び、何名かの教授は神仏集合についても解説した。たとえば深津先生は和歌を使って本地垂迹思想の展開について話し、櫻井先生は慶光院の比丘尼の戦国時代・江戸時代初期の勧進活動について講義した。私は中世の仏教と神道の深い関係について詳しく調査したかったので、プレゼンテーションでは慶光院の比丘尼と伊勢神宮との関係について発表した。講義では伊勢の歴史についての知識を習得し、フィールド・スタディでは現代神道の考えや習慣や行事についてさらに理解を深めた。倭姫宮では正しい参拝作法を習い、八坂神社と春日神社では神職が本殿などを特別に案内してくれ、特別な機会にも恵まれた。皇學館大学の計らいによる神社での実地学習では、神職との交流ができ、神道の考えや行事の展開についても学ぶことができた。

伊勢と日本スタディプログラムは皇學館大学の教授や伊勢市と大学のスタッフの努力によって支えられているが、他の国々からの大学院生との交流がなければ成立しない。 11 カ国からの大学院生と共に学び、活発な意見交換や討論ができる環境は滅多にない。特にアメリカの学生はヨーロッパの学生たちと交流する機会が少ない。伊勢と日本スタディプログラムに参加して、神仏集合や現代日本の宗教について学べて大変感謝している。また、様々の国々の学生と出会い、協働で日本の歴史・文化・芸術について知識を深めることができ、非常に貴重な経験を送ることができた。