

- February: Prof. Dr. Huber, Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, Germany
- March: Dr. Thomas Hase, Leipzig University; Prof. Dr. Viggo Mortensen, Aarhus University
- April: Ms. Doris Grohs, East Asia Secretary of Basel Mission; Mr. Lutz Drescher, East Asia Secretary of Evangelisches Missionswerk in Suedwestdeutschland (EMS), Stuttgart
- May: Sr. Dr. Maria Di Giorgi S.X., Shinmei-zan, Ms. Gisela Koellner of Evangelisches Missionswerk in Südwestdeutschland (EMS)
- July: Prof. Dr. Notto Thelle, Oslo University; Prof. Dr. Ulrich Dehn, Berlin.
- October: Mr. Yukka Vanska, Helsinki University, Prof. Dr. Michael Pye, Marburg University (Otani University, Kyoto)

Report of The Interreligious Studies in Japan Program (ISJP) Fall Semester 2005

On January 17, 2005 the ISJP Board hosted a farewell dinner for the students of the 2004 class, their teachers and the host families. Members of the ISJP Board met on July 28 in order to prepare the fall semester. On Sept. 28, the ISJP Board hosted a welcome dinner for the new students. The fall semester began with an orientation for the students (Sept. 20-22). The ordinary classes started September 27, and ended on December 2. With this semester, the ISJP has now been conducted for the fourth year

Participants

Full-time participants of the ISJP fall semester 2005 were Kai Arne Olsen (Ph.D. student of Religious Studies, Tromso University (Norway), Simon Paschen, student of Theology, Greifswald University (Germany), and Constantin Plaul, student of Theology, Göttingen University (Germany).

The following persons participated in classes of their choice: Prof. Dr. John Dougill (Ryukoku University), Mr. ICHIKAWA Sadataka (Ph.D. student, Bukkyo University), Mr. ISHINO Satoshi (researcher of the NCC Study Center), and Ms. Agnoek Spranger (student of Japanology and Law, Leiden University, presently Kyoto University).

List of classes and teachers

Shinto: Prof. Dr. Knecht (Nanzan University), Prof. Sakurai (Kōgakkan University, Ise), Dr. Ogaki (formerly Ise Shrine)

Buddhism: Prof. Dr. Robert Rhodes (Otani University), Dr. Anna Ruggeri (Kyoto University for Foreign Studies), and Rev. Teramoto (NCC Study Center)

Japanese New Religions: Prof. Dr. Repp (Ryukoku University), Dr. Higashibaba (Tenri), Dr. Yoshinaga (Maizuru)

Japanese Church History and Theology: Prof. em. Mizugaki (Kyoto University), Dr. Awazuhara (NCC Study Center), Dr. Higashibaba (Tenri), Prof. em. Dr. Yuki (NCC Study Center)

Theology of Religions: Prof. em. Jan van Bragt

Japanese Language: Ms. Tochihara.

Fieldtrips and Extra-curricular Activities

The following fieldtrips were organized:

Shinto: Shimogamo Shrine and Yoshida Shrine (Kyoto), Tamuke-yama Hachiman Shrine and Kasuga Shrine (Nara)

Buddhism: Enryaku-ji (Mt. Hiei), Daitoku-ji, Nishi Hongan-ji, and Tenryu-ji (Kyoto), Todai-ji and Kofuku-ji (Nara), Byodo-in and Manpuku-ji (Uji).

New Religions: Tenri-kyo (Tenri); Soka Gakkai HQ in Osaka.

Christian church: Anglican Church in Nara.

In October, the students visited Kobe, where Prof. Nakamichi (Kwansei Gakuin University) lectured on problems of indigenization of Christianity in Japan.

In November, they visited Tenri, received a guided tour, heard a lecture on Tenri-kyo's history by Dr. Higashibaba, and experienced interreligious encounter with Tenri students. Also in November, Prof. Dr. Michael Pye (Marburg University, presently Otani University) gave a special lecture for the students on "Interreligious Dialogue from the Perspective of Religious Studies (*Religionswissenschaft*)."

Fieldtrip to Kyūshū

After completion of the regular courses, this year's fieldtrip took place in Kyūshū from December 5-11 under the guidance of Mr. Ichikawa, Ph.D. student of Bukkyo University. The students first stayed at Seinan University (Fukuoka) where Prof. Terazono (President of the University) gave a lecture on Japanese Theology. Afterwards they met the university's students of theology and had discussions with them. Then, they travelled to Nagasaki where they visited the memorial for the victims of the atomic bomb, the Museum of the Martyrs, the Church in Urakami, and other places. Finally, they visited Shinmei-zan, a Catholic monastery involved in interreligious dialogue and spiritual exchange between Christians and Buddhists. Fr. Franco Sotocornola S.X. and Sr. Maria Di Giorgi S.X. gave lectures on their work, and the students participated in the monastic life. During the whole trip, Mr. Ichikawa guided them with his expertise through various local delicacies, including horse *sashimi* on the final day in Kumamoto.

Media Reports

Kyoto Shinbun published an article about ISJP on Nov. 29, 2005 (evening edition) in Japanese, entitled “Learning from the coexistence of religions in Japan — Studies of European students of theology in Kyoto.” In its *Dokumentationsbrief Ostasien 03/2005 (Der Weg der Götter – Im Dialog mit Japans Religionen 1)* EMS published reports by the previous ISJP students Christiane Banse, Heinrich Busch, Martin Engels, Michael Fröhlich, Verena Kuttich, and Philipp von Stockhausen. These contributions were delivered at an Eastasian-German Encounter meeting in Bad Boll in March 2005. The title of the reports is “Lernen in Begegnung — Das Interreligiöse Studienprogramm in Ostasien — Teilnehmende berichten.”

Reports by Participants of the ISJP Fall Semester 2005

REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES IN JAPAN PROGRAM (ISJP)

by Constantin Plaul

Introduction

My time here can be structured into two main periods, (1) the study program and (2) the internship. The beginning of the stay consisted of two weeks of free time, in which we were able to adjust to the new surroundings. Following the 10 week study program, and before the internship, we enjoyed another period of three weeks, to use as we wanted. The four week internship concluded the formal part of the program.

Study program

In the following I would like to concentrate on the personal benefits I have gained from this program. Being provided with some knowledge in different areas of the study of Japanese religions gave me a basis from which to start understanding Japan. This, of course, is quite a general remark. So what does it mean? To me coming to Japan meant not only being a student in the field of religious studies, but it was also the personal challenge of entering a new culture and being forced to deal with it. The Japanese society is quite different from the Western or European one. When talking to people, reading the newspaper or looking around in general, there are many things which differ strongly from those that we are used to in our normal context. In Japan, people often belong to more than one religion — something that is not as usual in Western cultures. Some public debates seen in the media, such as the Yasukuni-Shrine or the Okinawa problem, also appear foreign to Europeans, although the