

During my stay in Japan (March 19-April 9, 2017), I lectured at Osaka university on 'Divination in Athens' (a response on old Japanese tortoise shell divination was given by Professor Oe), at Kyoto university on 'Polis Religion', and at Tokyo university on both these topics and on 'Interpretatio Graeco-Romana'. I also met graduate students/younger scholars and heard presentations by them at Kyoto university and the International Christian University, Tokyo. My main hosts were Professors Yasunori Kasai (Tokyo), Asako Kurihara (Osaka), Noboru Sato (Kobe), Takashi Minamikawa (Kyoto), Yoshinori Sano (International Christian University, Tokyo), and also in Tokyo Professor Emi Matsumoto (Law, Aoyama Gakuin University), whom I had long known from the Tokyo/Oxford Law and Classics summer school . In addition to receiving hospitality from them which I can only describe as superb , I was able to discuss many academic matters with them; it was also a pleasure to meet old friends, Professors Mariko Sakurai and Akiko Moroo, in Tokyo, while I was very honoured that Professor Masaki Kubo attended one of my lectures. Other scholars of classics whom I enjoyed meeting for the first time were Professors Hiroshi Notsu (Shinshu University) and Taro Hyuga (Tokyo). I was particularly pleased to have met several scholars from outside classics and ancient history: Professor Oe in Osaka, and in Tokyo Professors Kozo Ogawa (Law, Senshu University), Noburu Notomi (Philosophy, Tokyo), Kazuo Matsumura (Transcultural Studies, Wako University), Norichika Horie (Death and Life Studies, Tokyo); the last four named attended most or all of my lectures in Tokyo in a display of interdisciplinarity which much impressed me.

Apart from interesting discussions with the scholars named above, a unique academic benefit for me, as a student of ancient Greek religion, was to observe a flourishing non-Christian religious system. I visited as many temples and shrines as I could, and was provoked and excited by observing, for instance, votive and divinatory practices; the extraordinary range of Buddhism from the most worldly to the most other-worldly concerns; the truly remarkable co-existence of Shintoism and Buddhism; and the paradoxical omnipresence of flourishing shrines and temples in a society many members of which describe themselves, as I am told, as not (very) religious. We always repeat that ancient Greek religion was 'embedded' and emphasised practice over belief: here was an extremely stimulating opportunity to observe embedded religion in action. As a keen student of Greek festivals, I wish I could have witnessed some in Japan. But I was able through the kindness of my hosts to attend fine performances of both Kabuki and Noh drama, a stimulating experience for anyone interested in ancient Greek theatre.

I and my wife cannot praise enough the kindness, courtesy and willingness to give up their time to us of our hosts, which made the trip a wonderful experience. I am grateful above all to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for the fellowship that made it possible, and to Yasunori Kasai for suggesting and organising it.

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