

During my time at Clemson University, I unfortunately was not able to do the traditional study abroad. However, I was able to gain an understanding of Japanese culture while studying. During my time at Clemson, I have been in a class studying Japanese every semester. So that roughly translates to about four years of learning. I have come to learn though that Japanese culture has an emphasis on harmony and working as a group. Though I would like to look further into the ideas of status, and I would also like to look at Japan's rituals.

As many people know Japan is an extremely popular tourist destination. To many it is the place to get cute clothes or even merchandise for different anime and manga. But what many don't know is that Japan likes to live in harmony. By this I mean that compared to how we live in America, those in Japan must always be aware of status. I do not mean in the sense of kings and peasants. No, in Japan depending on your age and/or sex and your status, you would talk to someone differently. You would use a more respectful language than if you were talking to a close friend. There are a few different forms of polite speech in Japanese each depending on your rank and the situation. You wouldn't talk to your boss the same way as an older stranger. It's called keigo and there are three total forms honorific, humble, and polite. Following these rules is taught at a young age.

While Japan is not religious in the same sense as America, they do still follow certain rituals. To them it is just part of their daily lives. These rituals are typically held around important or large life events. For example, a baby being born it meet with rituals while the women is pregnant and after the birth. One example of a ritual for pregnancy would be going to a shrine or temple and buying a sash. Though these sashes are typically signed with a character that means "good fortune". This is meant to help with ensuring that the muscles don't end up in pain. It can also help with recovery later after birth. Though after the birth there is a time period

where the mother and child are considered “dirty” by these it means that they are not allowed to enter a shrine or temple. They also use this time for the mother to heal as well. While these examples are just centered around pregnancy and birth these types of rituals are seen in other parts of life as well. For Japan these rituals lead back to the Shinto and Buddhist shrines/temples that are seen throughout the country. This can also be seen when a family member passes. The rituals are usually done by a Buddhist priest. They will change the way traditional clothes are worn and even have large wraths with the colors blue, green, and yellow.

Understanding these parts of Japanese culture definitely helps me understand what I see online about the country. Though learning the language and the culture has changed how I view myself and my outlook on life. With the importance of being respectful in Japan it has made me more aware of how I might sound talking in English actually. For many, having a tone can change the ultimate meaning in what is said. So I have started watching how a text might come across someone or how my voice sounds as I speak. This has changed a few relationships I have had. Though when I think about how this has changed how I think about my self I definitely feel more humble then I was in the past. I have a feeling this is connected to the way certain forms of polite speech in Japanese work. In the past I used to think that I could do no wrong but trying to learn another language and how respect works in Japan has made me change that thought. I know for certain that I am not perfect and need to be kind to others.