Language and Culture Learning with "Kyoto, Nara: Hyper-Travel"

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Key words: **computer-aided learning, historical sights, Hypercard, language-and-culture learning, pop-up dictionary**

This article introduces " Kyooto, Nara: Hyper-Travel," a computer-assisted Japanese-learning program made by the author. The program is for students at the elementary to intermediate level of learning Japanese language and culture. In this paper, computer display-screen examples are given to illustrate how the program is used, and how its lessons are linked with a pop-up dictionary, a map, and other learning aids. (These features were made by applying Hypercard for Macintosh computers.) In addition, the usefulness of cultural learning in language study will be discussed; this program introduces historical sights in the Kyoto-Nara area, which is considered to be the cultural center of Japan.

" What is the most difficult aspect in learning Japanese? " This question is often asked to Japanese instructors. Like other languages, there are various difficult problems in every stage of learning Japanese, and individual students have different problems. However, kanji and culture are two major problems which confront students after having learned the basic grammar at the elementary level of Japanese.[1]

Knowledge of a country's culture is very important in many aspects of language learning; without understanding the background of the people, it is difficult to communicate with them. Without knowing the culture of the country, one cannot understand the content of documents, newspapers, novels, and so on, even if he or she knows the language.

This article introduces a computer-assisted lesson " Kyooto, Nara: Hyper-Travel,"[2]

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[1] The word culture includes many social phenomena, from daily customs to sophisticated traditional arts.

[2] " Kyooto, Nara: Hyper-Travel " can be used a Macintosh SE or any Macintosh II with a hard disk, Hypercard, and Kanjitalk 6.0.

Kyooto and Nara prefectures are located southwest of Tookyoo, the capital of Japan. They are reached in one hour by plane from Tookyoo (to Oosaka), or in three and one half hours by bullet train.

The author purposely uses the romanization Kyooto, Tookyoo, and Oosaka, instead of Kyoto, Tokyo, and Osaka usually used in English documents, because it is important for students of Japanese to distinguish the long vowels from the short ones.

the content of which is oriented to cultural learning of historical sights in the Kyooto and Nara area. First, a general description of " Kyooto-Nara: Hyper-Travel " will be given, followed by examples in the program. Second, cultural learning in this material will be discussed.

General Description

When we study a country's language, we learn its society and culture at the same time. Each resource for language learning has its own cultural background in some way. " Kyooto, Nara: Hyper-Travel " (henceforth KNHT), however, emphasizes cultural content rather than language skills and grammar.

KNHT, designed for students who have learned basic Japanese grammar,[3] provides knowledge of Japanese culture in such areas as arts, history, and geography, through the sights in Kyooto and Nara. Since this region is considered to be the center of Japanese culture, learning about it could be a first step toward obtaining an idea of Japanese culture.

Students may be able to learn Japanese culture or history in relevant courses or books in English. However, KNHT will satisfy them in the sense that they can learn it in Japanese.

At present, after learning elementary Japanese, students cannot find any sophisticated college-level materials that satisfy their intelligence. Japanese children's books are interesting, but they are, after all, children's books. Textbooks for elementary Japanese may be readable, but it is not fun to read ordinary textbooks all the time. KNHT is for those who wish to use their elementary language skills and learn something useful.

KNHT is a Hypercard application for the Macintosh SE interfaced to Kanji Talk 6.0 which is available directly from Apple.[4] The content of KNHT consists of the following sections: (1) Introduction, (2) History, (3) Sights, (4) Maps, (5) Dictionary, (6) Guide, and (7) Index.

You will see the relationship between the seven sections in the Directory (Fig. 1) appearing at the beginning of the program.[5]

The Introduction explains the program briefly and shows how to use the program. The History and Sights sections contain the texts, the main part of the program. There are two topics in the History: (1) History and Culture of Kyooto, and (2) History and Culture of Nara. In the Sights, nineteen scenic spots are introduced: seven from the Nara area, and twelve from the Kyooto area. These sites, from among hundreds in the area, were selected from the view point of significance in history, architecture, art,

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[3]　Basic Japanese grammar roughly means what is taught in one year to one-year-and-a-half of Japanese in college. However, those who have mastered the grammar of relative clause sentences will manage the program with the help of the Dictionary section.

[4]　Kanjitalk 6.0 is also part of MacKanji 6.0 by Linguists' Software.

[5]　This is a feature of Hypercard in which the cards link to each other by a button; therefore, the relevant information is accessible whenever necessary.

京都 奈良 ハイパー 旅行
Kyooto, Nara: Hyper-Travel

じしょ
Dictionary

れきし
History

You are
here

めいしょ
Sights

あんない
Guides

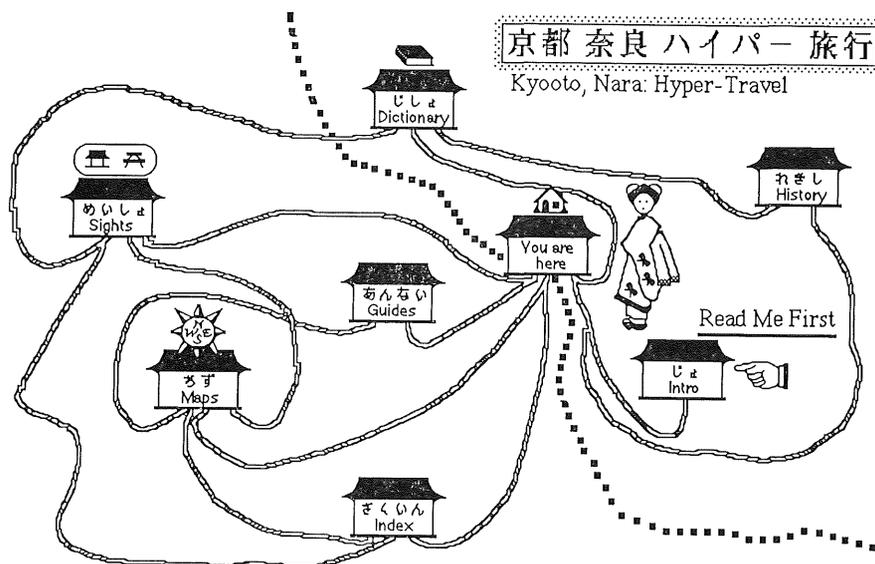Read Me First

ちず
Maps

じょ
Intro

さくいん
Index

Fig. 1   The Directory

religion, and natural beauty.   Each sight's features and attractions are summarized in about two hundred kanji and kana (hiragana and katakana).[6]

It is presumed that the students using the program have learned kana, since almost all schools introduce the writing and reading kana at the elementary level, although the number and kinds of kanji differ depending on the school.   Therefore, all kanji have a kana reading given in parentheses.   The kanji appearing in the text are limited to proper names and useful words for the sights and history; the kanji introduced are those taught in the first and second year of Japanese primary schools.[7]

There is much unknown vocabulary for the elementary students, since the content differs somewhat from ordinary textbooks of elementary Japanese.   However, the Dictionary section is useful to check or learn new words.   Each text links to its Dictionary entry by clicking on a dictionary icon.[8]   In the Dictionary, one sentence of text is written on one card, and the characters are large enough for beginning students

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[6]   The two types of kana, hiragana and katakana, consist of forty-six basic symbols.   Each symbol is one syllable.   Katakana is usually used for borrowed words and foreign names. Kanji are Chinese derived-characters and are used and mixed with kana in forming sentences.

[7]   The standard kanji required to be taught in primary and secondary schools by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture are called Jōyō kanji.

[8]   Terms, such as "clicking," are part of the modern-day lexicon of computer culture. "Clicking" means to move a cursor to a part of the computer screen (usually a word or picture) and press a button on a Macintosh mouse.

to read.   As the student reads the sentences, he or she can check a word or phrase by clicking on it whenever necessary.   The meaning or explanation will pop up under the sentence.   This dictionary uses features advantageous in learning with a computer; quick response and by a pace set by the individual.

The author recommends that unless the student is at an advanced level the sentences in the Dictionary section, rather than those in the sections of Sights and History, should be read first.   The text in the Sights section can be used for review reading.   The text is useful to grasp the whole idea of the sight, since all the sentences about it are written on one card.

The Map section locates the nineteen spots in the Sights section.   A sight location in the Map and its text in the Sights are connected to each other (Fig. 1).

The Guide section provides examples of travel routes on maps.   This is not a serious part of the program, but I hope it is enjoyable.   The examples are based on my experiences and may help the student plan a trip.

The Index section summarizes the sights and their features.   On the left-side column, nineteen sights are listed, and on the right-side column, ten categories or features are listed.   When you click on a name of a sight, the appropriate features among menus are highlighted.   When you click on a feature, the appropriate sights will be highlighted.   For example, when you click on sight 2; Hooryuu-ji temple, features such as the temple, pagoda, and Buddha statue, will be highlighted.

One sight will take about one to two hours of study, depending on the level of the student and the depth of his or her study.   The total study time will be twenty to fifty hours.

If this program is used as courseware, the author suggests it be used as a supplement to the class, since the content is specialized.   KNHT would be useful for Japanese majors and independent study students.   It would be ideal material for individuals who have taken first-year Japanese and are motivated to study further by themselves.

Examples

When the student opens the program, the Directory (Fig. 1) appears.   As is indicated, the student is supposed to click on the Introduction section.

The student can go to any section from the Directory.   Suppose the student clicks on the Sights.   He or she will see the list of the sights (Fig. 2).

The student can start from any sight by clicking on its name.

Suppose the student clicks on the name of the Katsura-Rikyuu Palace listed on number sixteen, then Fig. 3 will appear.

Each sight is introduced in one "card," that is, one screenfull of information.   There are three small windows on the left side of a card.   In the top window, the name of the sight (Katsura-Rikyuu in this case) is shown in both kanji and kana (in parentheses).   In the middle window, the address and telephone number are listed.   In the bottom window, information about a sight is provided.   This is the main text about this sight.

There are five icon buttons on the top right-hand corner of a card.   If the student clicks on a Dictionary icon, the top leftmost button, The first sentence of the text for Katsura-Rikyuu Palace appears (Fig. 4).

Suppose the student wants to check the last word of the sentence which reads *tsuku-*
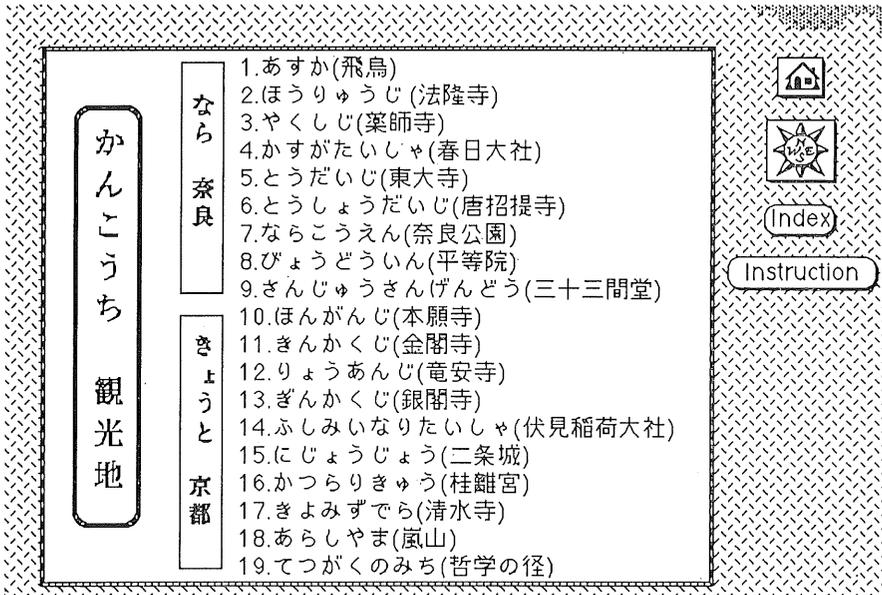
かんこうち　観光地

なら　奈良

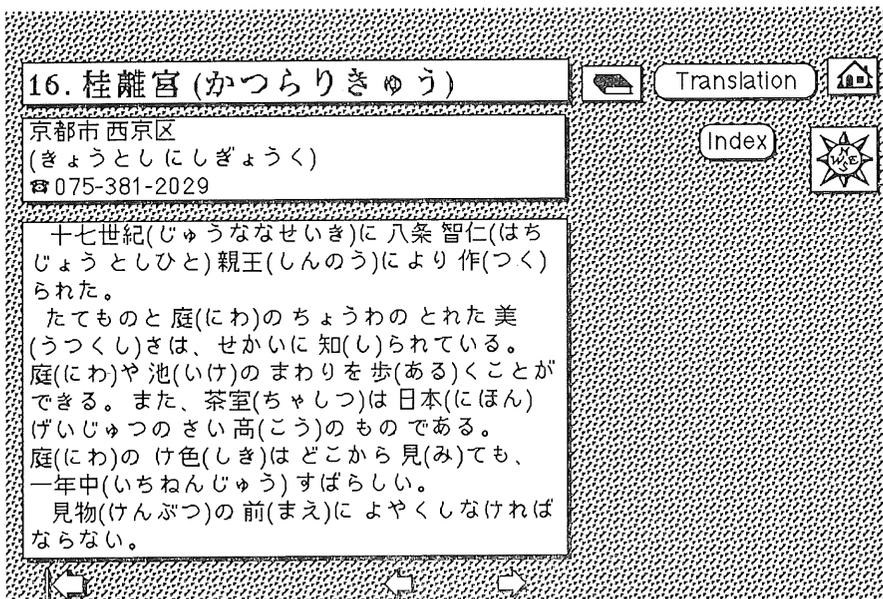1.あすか(飛鳥)
2.ほうりゅうじ (法隆寺)
3.やくしじ(薬師寺)
4.かすがたいしゃ(春日大社)
5.とうだいじ(東大寺)
6.とうしょうだいじ(唐招提寺)
7.ならこうえん(奈良公園)
8.びょうどういん(平等院)
9.さんじゅうさんげんどう(三十三間堂)

きょうと　京都

10.ほんがんじ(本願寺)
11.きんかくじ(金閣寺)
12.りょうあんじ(竜安寺)
13.ぎんかくじ(銀閣寺)
14.ふしみいなりたいしゃ(伏見稲荷大社)
15.にじょうじょう(二条城)
16.かつらりきゅう(桂離宮)
17.きよみずでら(清水寺)
18.あらしやま(嵐山)
19.てつがくのみち(哲学の径)

Fig. 2　List of Sights

16. 桂離宮 (かつらりきゅう)

Translation　Index

京都市 西京区
(きょうとし にしぎょうく)
☎075-381-2029

　十七世紀(じゅうななせいき)に 八条 智仁(はちじょう としひと) 親王(しんのう)により 作(つく)られた。
　たてものと 庭(にわ)の ちょうわの とれた 美(うつくし)さは、せかいに 知(し)られている。
庭(にわ)や 池(いけ)の まわりを 歩(ある)くことが できる。また、茶室(ちゃしつ)は 日本(にほん)げいじゅつの さい高(こう)の もの である。
庭(にわ)の け色(しき)は どこから 見(み)ても、一年中(いちねんじゅう) すばらしい。
　見物(けんぶつ)の 前(まえ)に よやくしなければ ならない。

Fig. 3　Sight 16:　Katsura-Rikyuu Palace

桂離宮 (かつらりきゅう)

(1)　十七世紀(じゅうななせいき)に 八条 智仁 (はちじょう としひと) 親王(しんのう) により 作(つく)られた。

Return to Text

Fig. 4   Dictionary I

桂離宮 (かつらりきゅう)

(1)　十七世紀(じゅうななせいき)に 八条 智仁 (はちじょう としひと) 親王(しんのう)により 作(つく)られた。

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[tsukura-re-ta];[tsukur-u];[tsukut-ta]
was made
[-re/rare-] is a passive marker.
cf: In this sentence, the subject [Katsura-rikyuu wa/ga]
    is omitted.
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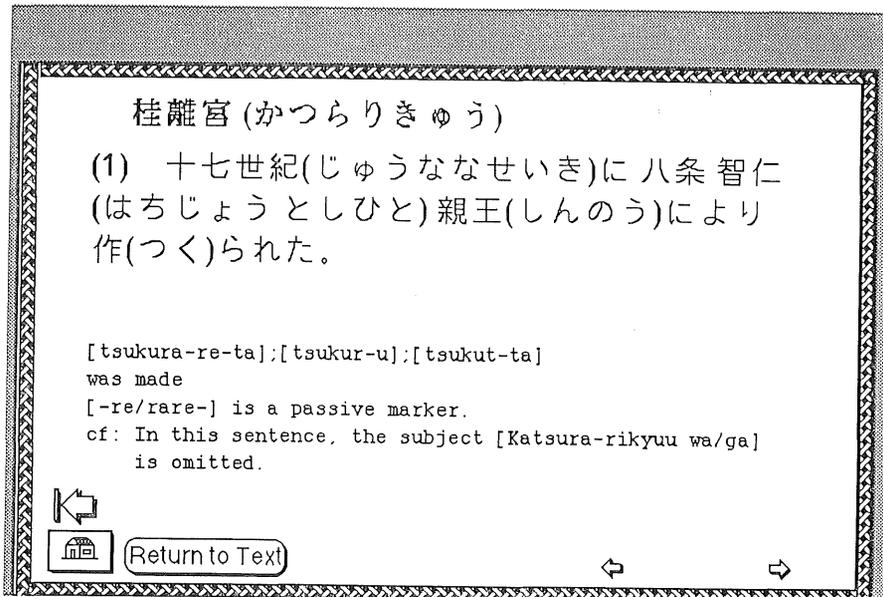
Return to Text
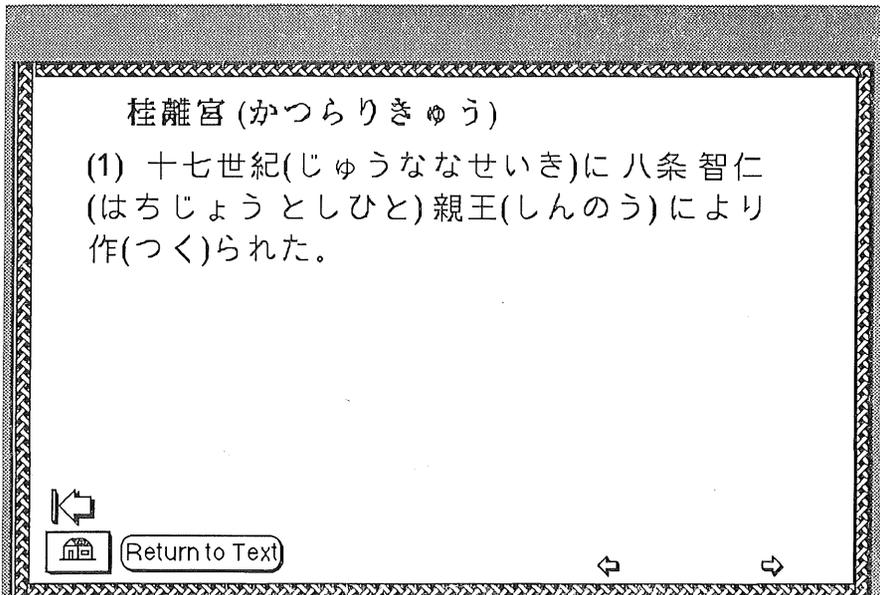
Fig. 5   Dictionary II

16. 桂離宮 (かつらりきゅう) | Translation | 🏠

京都市 西京区
(きょうとし にしぎょうく)
☎075-381-2029

　十七世紀(じゅうななせいき)に 八条 智仁(はちじょう としひと) 親王(しんのう)により 作(つく)られた。
　たてものと 庭(にわ)の ちょうわの とれた 美(うつく)しさは、せかいに 知(し)られている。
庭(にわ)や 池(いけ)の まわりを 歩(ある)くことができる。また、茶室(ちゃしつ)は 日本(にほん)げいじゅつの さい高(こう)の もの である。
庭(にわ)の け色(しき)は どこから 見(み)ても、一年中(いちねんじゅう) すばらしい。
　見物(けんぶつ)の 前(まえ)に よやくしなければ ならない。

16. Katsura-rikyuu Palace
　It was made by Prince Hachijyoo Toshihito in the 17th century.
　The harmonious beauty of the building and garden is known world-wide. You can walk in the garden and around the pond. Also, the tea rooms are supreme in Japanese arts. Wherever you look at it, the scenery in the garden is wonderful all year around.
　You have to reserve before your visit.

OK

Fig. 6　Translation

漢字 | Index | Guides | 🏠

Instruction

きょうとし

ふしみいなりたいしゃ

おおさかふ
きょうとふ

びょうどういん

ならけん
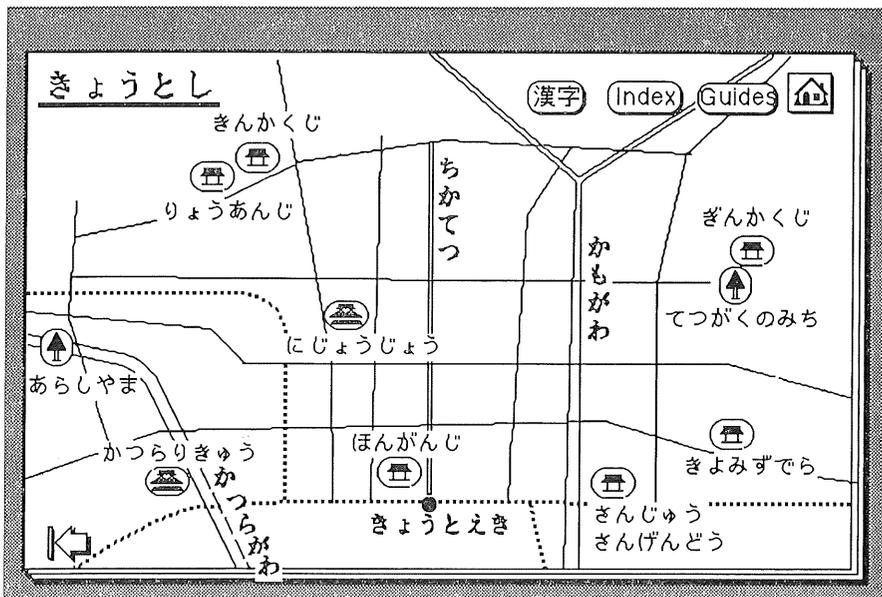
ならし

とうしょうだいじ
やくしじ

ほうりゅうじ

あすか

Fig. 7　Map I

Fig. 8   Map II

rareta.   He or she will click on the word, then its meaning or explanation appears under the sentence (Fig. 5).

Next to the romanized reading of the word [tsukura-re-ta], the verb's root form [tsukur-u] for present and [tsukut-ta] for past are shown.

If the student wants to know the meaning of the sentence, he or she can click on the " Return to Text " button, which takes him or her to the text again.   Next, the student clicks on the " Translation " button, and the translation column pops up (Fig. 6).

Perhaps the student wants to know the location of the Katsura-Rikyuu Palace on a map.   To go to the Map section, he or she clicks the OK button for the translation, which causes the translation column to disappear,[9] and clicks a compass icon to go to the Map section (Fig. 7).

This is a map of the Kyooto and Nara area.   Since Katsura-rikyuu Palace is in Kyooto City, the student clicks on the name of Kyooto City in a rectangular box at the top of the map.   Katsura-Rikyuu Palace is in the bottom left corner of the map (Fig. 8).

The student can return to the text by clicking on the name or icon of Katsura-Rikyuu Palace on the map.   The text shown in Fig. 3 appears again.   The student can try a kanji version of the map by clicking the kanji button, if he or she likes to practice reading kanji.

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9   All pop-up windows in this program disappear when the user closes the card, for example, or goes to the next card.

Cultural Learning

First, the students using KNHT will learn the types and unique features of the temples and shrines. There are many temples and shrines in Japan, and they are distinguished from each other. For example, Yakushi-ji is a temple to cure sick people, as the name Yakushi (Healing Buddha) indicates, and Byoodoo-in is a former villa of the Fujiwara clan. There is a shrine dedicated for agriculture and business called the Fushimi-taisha shrine. Hongan-ji, a temple of the Shinshuu Buddhism sect is the main temple for the majority of Japanese people. The uniqueness of these temples and shrines literally shows the diversity of Japanese culture.

The second point is to learn the history and who was the man in power through the sights. Every man of power has left some symbol to the world, and in Japan history the symbols of past power are most likely to be temples, shrines, villas, and castles. In ancient days, huge tombs were made for many emperors as well as powerful men. Examples are the Ishibutai Tumulus and the Takamatsuzuka Tumulus in the Asuka area. In the past, aristocrats built temples and shrines for themselves and their families. The Kasuga Taisha is the Fujiwara's family shrine. The shoguns typically built villas and castles. Examples are the Kinkaku-ji, a temple built by Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, and the Nijō castle by Tokugawa Ieyasu.

The third point is that Japanese culture has had a strong religious influence, and these magnificent sights indicate the power of various religious sects.

Some temples show the influence of relations with other countries such as Korea and China. Students can also learn the lifestyle of the aristocrats and shoguns of the time. For example, the elaborate tearooms in the garden of the Katsura Rikyū were part of an aristocrat's pastime.

The history and culture handed down from generation to generation are cherished by the Japanese people today. Learning the historical sights can help students understand Japanese society and its language. The author hopes that the computer-assisted program "Kyooto, Nara: Hyper-Travel" meets the needs of students learning the language and culture of Japan.

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