



Naiku (main sanctuary) of Ise Jingu in the Sacred Forests (PHOTO: COURTESY OF ISE JINGU)

## The Chief Priest of Ise Jingu talks at length about subjects such as the *Shikinen Sengu*, the Summit, and the succession of the legacies

Why do Japanese people visit Ise? Knowledge created as a result of the *Sengu* that has been carried out for 1,300 years.

Takatsukasa Naotake, Chief Priest of Ise Jingu

**W**e at Ise Jingu recently had the honor of welcoming the leaders of the G7 countries who visited Japan to attend the Ise-Shima Summit.

Standing with Prime Minister Abe at the foot of the Ujibashi Bridge at the entrance of Naiku (main sanctuary), I shook hands with each of the leaders and delivered a short speech in English to welcome them.

Predictably, when it comes to heads of state, they understand the advantages of showing courtesy

based on the concept of “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” In the main sacred place, the guests proceeded to the Mikakiuchi zone, the inside of the outer Tonotamagaki fence, and paid their respects according to Japanese custom. Prime Minister Abe led the leaders into the precinct in a casual manner while explaining about Jingu in English in person. I still remember it vividly.

As we welcomed the leaders, I hoped that they all would experience the dignified atmosphere of Jingu firsthand and feel that “it was indeed a comfortable place” after their visits.

Jingu is dedicated to Amaterasu-omikami, the ancestor of the Imperial Family, who is revered by the Japanese as the great ancestral deity. Given its origin, Jingu is not rooted in the concept of creating a place for individual benefits. On the contrary, it is a place where prayers are made for public happiness. I hoped that this atmosphere would be understood by, of all people, the most important public figures in the world who were visiting Jingu.

It appears that my expectations were entirely met. Let me share a couple of the messages from among those left by the leaders in the guest book in conjunction with their visits.

“It is a great honor to visit this sacred place, which has brought comfort and peace to generations.” (President Obama of the United States)

“I pay my deep respects to the close connection between the people of Japan and its rich nature, which is symbolized here in Ise Jingu.” (Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany)

Needless to say, we had not provided any information from our side. Even so, we received similar messages from the other leaders as well. I was glad that they felt as I had hoped.

Jingu received the leaders under a security program implemented on the largest-ever scale since it was established as many as two thousand years ago. Apparently, policemen were deployed in every corner deep within the broad forest of Jingu. Furthermore, the schedule was so strictly controlled for security reasons that we had not been informed from where the leaders would arrive or how they

### Profile of Chief Priest



Takatsukasa Naotake, aged 71, is the Chief Priest, the highest-ranking priest of Ise Jingu. Takatsukasa, whose previous family name was Matsudaira, was adopted by Takatsukasa Kazuko, the third daughter of Emperor Showa, and became the 27th family head, succeeding the Takatsukasa family, one of the five Fujiwara regent families. After completing courses in Instrumentation Engineering at the Graduate School of Keio University, he joined NEC Corporation, undertaking assignments such as improvements to the infrastructure of telecommunication systems and serving as president of the company's subsidiaries, which reflects the other side of his career as a former engineer. In 2007, assuming the position of the ninth Chief Priest since the war, he successfully completed all the rituals related to the *Shikinen Sengu*, the rebuilding of the divine building of Ise Jingu that is carried out every twenty years, in March of last year. In May of this year, he received a courtesy call from the leaders regarding one of the official programs prepared for the Ise Shima Summit. The Chief Priest, who had completed a milestone task, responded to an interview for the first time after the rebuilding.

(PHOTO: COURTESY OF ISE JINGU)

would come here, by car or by helicopter.

Despite the extraordinary situation, we decided not to undertake any ceremonious preparations because we wanted them to see Jingu as it is. And we welcomed them in this fashion.

I hope that this summit was a good opportunity for people around the world, as well as in Japan, to become aware of the appeal of Jingu.

It has been nine years since I took up the position of Chief Priest. The role of the Chief Priest is available only at Ise Jingu among all jinja (Shinto-shrines) nationwide. Accordingly, it may be difficult to understand the role.

The Chief Priest, an administrator of Jingu, is tasked with two responsibilities. One is the duty of undertaking rituals as a Shinto priest. It goes without saying that this is the greatest mission.

The other duty is to undertake an assignment as the representative director of Jingu, which became a religious corporation after the war. There are approximately 600 staff members including priests, musicians of ancient Japanese court music and dance, guards, jinja-carpenters and forestry workers. Like the president of a general company, the Chief Priest is responsible for the organization, budgets and personnel matters.

Approximately 1,500 ceremonies are conducted every year by Jingu as a whole. This is because Jingu consists of two main sanctuaries: Naiku, which was visited by the leaders who attended the Summit, and Geku, as well as fourteen annex sanctuaries, in which small affiliated jinja called Sessha, Massha and Shokansha are also included. Jingu comprises all of these sanctuaries and jinja, which total 125 in number. They are served by more than 100 priests dedicated to Jingu. The content of the ceremonies in which they are involved differs depending on the positions of the respective priests. The Chief Priest is involved in approximately sixty ceremonies per year.

What is the appeal of being a Shinto priest? I think that it is the task of establishing the barrier between what is sacred and what is worldly. It is characterized by an effort to separate these domains in an orderly manner.

As the leaders who attended the Summit actually experienced while visiting here, this place offers an atmosphere in which people feel refreshed and cleansed, even if they are not told that they are entering the sacred zone. Ise is a place where the usual and the unusual coexist in a small space, creating an invisible difference in the atmosphere. We owe the creation of this atmosphere to the very fact that Jingu has been in existence for more than 1,000 years.

However, 1,000 years is such a long time that there has been concern that what is sacred and what is worldly will change and become intermingled over many generations. The Shinto priests have sought to draw the line between the two aspects and keep this intermingling from occurring.

Their efforts are exhibited in a prominent manner when a ceremony takes place. Priests perform the religious rituals of *Kessai*, or mental and physical purification, and *Sanro*, or reclusive training conducted in a building called the *Saikan*. While undergoing the Sanro process, the priests dress in a white kimono and white *hakama* skirt. During the ritual, they are not allowed to have contact with anyone except those who serve them. They are not allowed to eat any foods except those cooked inside the Saikan. They are eager to ensure that the distinction is maintained through these efforts, so much so that it is believed that the priests spend approximately one third of a year undertaking Sanro process and purification.

What I am explaining to you is a world that is invisible to outsiders. This is how they create the

so-called usual and unusual. I experienced Kessai and Sanro after my appointment as the Chief Priest. It was through these rituals that I thought that people who join from outside would experience a great deal of stress.

If a special ceremony is conducted, a priest undergoes Sanro process for two consecutive nights. If *Sengyo-no-gi*, a ritual for transferring the object of worship to a new building, is conducted during the Shikinen Sengu, a priest becomes very close to the object of worship. He conducts ordinary rituals to the extent that the door of the inner sanctuary building is opened, but he carries out the Sengyo-no-gi service in an area that is extremely close to the object of worship. Given the situation, a priest undergoes Sanro process for five consecutive nights.

### **Timeline that does not apply to a company employee**

People often ask us what we do in Sanro process, which lasts for many nights. Indeed, we conduct a Kessai purification and make preparations for ceremonies, but basically we do not do anything. Doing nothing is important. If you are not doing anything, you can put worldly thoughts out of your mind and concentrate.

Based on my own experience, the situation is similar to when a sports player sits quietly alone, attempting to concentrate mentally before the competition starts. If you continue doing this for many nights, you will unconsciously become free from worldly thoughts.

I had been an office worker for a long time. As expected, I came to realize how different timelines were. Things progress on a time scale of five or ten minutes in a company. People spend no more than an hour or so on discussions in important meetings before working on the next assignments. At Jingu, however, people start to make preparations two or three days before they begin to work on an assignment. At first, I wondered what sort of world I had stepped into (laughs). The drum sounds two hours before a ritual starts. I remained seated on the floor quietly until Sanshin, the process of moving ahead to a deity, began. It took me a while until I could live with the gap.

The ceremonies conducted in Jingu are tough. Approximately half of the ceremonies are conducted at night. For example, in *Kannamesai*, a ceremony to give thanks for harvests by dedicating newly cropped rice, we offer *Yoi-no-mike*, which are meals for deities in the evening, at ten o'clock at night, and *Akatsuki-no-mike*, which are meals for deities in the morning, at two o'clock in the morning. We offer various types of food each time, express gratitude for the rich harvests, and recite *norito* (Shinto-liturgy), wishing for peace for the country and the people. After dawn breaks, we receive an imperial envoy at noon and carry out a *hohei* ritual. A grand ceremony such as this one continues for at least two days.

Furthermore, we sit on gravel in the garden and conduct a ceremony known as *Teijyou-zarei* style, which has been conducted at Jingu since long ago. It is only when we are carrying offerings that we enter the buildings. Whether under the blazing sun in summer or on a cold day in winter, we remain seated upright for about an hour on a thin *fusetsu* (a straw mat-like rug), and conduct the iterative action of standing and sitting, the most respectful type of saluting called *Hachidohai*.

These ceremonies are not known to the world. Even so, I think that the repetition of these rituals, which have continued in a natural manner since long ago, creates a refreshing and cleansing atmosphere at Jingu that people feel.

## Attitude toward ceremonies that I learned from my mother-in-law

When I assumed the position of Chief Priest, my predecessor Kitashirakawa Michihisa (who is currently the President of the Association of Shinto Shrines) advised me that I should keep considering services for ceremonies above all things. In other words, I did not take up the position to work on every detail of the duties. There are a lot of priests in Jingu who are strict about etiquette and manners (laughs).

As I said before, Jingu ceremonies are a heavy burden physically. I was offered this position because Mr. Kitashirakawa, who was more than 70 years old at the time, was suffering from bad feet and lower back pain. At first, I refused the offer. However, there was no candidate who was of an appropriate age and related to Jingu in any way, which was why I accepted the offer in the end.

I have a lot in common with Mr. Kitashirakawa. First of all, he was my senior by eight years at Gakushuin School. When we were children, we were both members of a Boy Scout troop. I was a low-ranking member, and Mr. Kitashirakawa was the leader.

Another important reason for my assuming the position of Chief Priest was that my relatives, as well as Mr. Kitashirakawa's, had administered ceremonies at Jingu as Head Priests.

A Head Priest conducts five grand ceremonies on behalf of the Emperor: *Kinen-sai* (February), *Tsukinami-sai* (June and December), *Kanname-sai* (October) and *Niiname-sai* (November).

Mr. Kitashirakawa's grandmother is Kitashirakawa Fusako, a daughter of Emperor Meiji, who served as the first female Head Priest after the war for twenty-five years. When the rebuilding of divine building was carried out in 1973, my mother-in-law (Takatsukasa Kazuko) took up the position of acting Head Priest because Ms. Fusako had told her that she was too old to take responsibility for the grand ceremonies. My mother-in-law became Head Priest officially and served for fifteen years.

While she was serving as Head Priest, I did not accompany her when she visited Ise, so I did not learn anything about Jingu from her directly. Even so, what was etched on my mind was the fact that she had continued to have a firm sense of mission to serve while she could care for herself physically until just before she died of cancer at the young age of 59. Her determination was so strong that Emperor Showa, her father, was worried. I think I learned a lot from my mother-in-law's attitude.

## Difficulties I experienced in preparing the *Shikinen Sengu*

I visited the Imperial Palace nine years ago when I was assigned to the position of Chief Priest. The Emperor was so kind as to encourage me by saying, "You will be dealing with many difficult issues in preparation for the *Shikinen Sengu*. Please take care of yourself and fulfill your duties."

As is reflected in what the Emperor said, the *Shikinen Sengu* is carried out on the largest scale of all the duties of Ise. People may have some knowledge about *Sengu* because it was covered in detail by the press. Please let me explain it briefly, though.

The *Shikinen Sengu* is a ceremony carried out to transfer the deity when the divine buildings are reconstructed every twenty years. The buildings are reconstructed alternately on the two adjacent sites located to the east and west. In addition to the buildings, *Onshozokushinpo*, the belongings of the deity, are entirely renewed as well.

The ceremony, which was decided by Emperor Tenmu (who reigned from 673 till 686), was conducted for the first time by Empress Jito. Although it was suspended for about 120 years during the Sengoku period of more recent times, it has been passed down through the generations for 1,300 years.

The recent Sengu was the third ceremony carried out by the private sector after the war. Before the war, it was conducted by the government, and therefore the cost was entirely borne by the public sector. The Sengu that took place in 1953 for the first time after the war was undertaken on a semi-governmental basis, because it had already been prepared before the war. From this perspective, the most recent one was the third one held.

The scheme of supporting the Sengu nationwide had been established, as the ceremony was undertaken by the private sector. That said, my initial concern was how to secure the cost for the Sengu. Two years after my assignment, the Lehman Brothers collapse occurred and the Japanese economy was seriously affected. From the viewpoint of someone who had been a company employee, it was a critical situation. I was nervous. I expected that the fund-raising activity might slow down. What is worse, the country suffered a natural disaster — the Great East Japan Earthquake.

In fact, however, owing to the massive support of many people in Japan on a corporate, organizational and individual basis, we were able to reach the targeted amount one year ahead of schedule and eventually collect a fund amounting to more than 55 billion yen, sufficient for the cost of the Sengu. I cannot begin to express my gratitude.

Turning to what was happening inside, we were suffering from a lack of human resources. That said, we succeeded in recruiting a sufficient number of excellent people as jinja-carpenters or master craftsmen for sacred treasures, allaying concerns about their availability. With regard to our public communication service, which had been expected to change in response to the diversifying media, we succeeded in ensuring that the necessary information was covered by a lot of media by sharing this information properly in a more open fashion. The difficulty we face in terms of communication is that it is not always appropriate to disclose information in a straightforward manner. Even so, I hope that people will pay more attention to and have a greater interest in Sengu through a variety of channels, from TV to the Internet.

Consequently, the number of visitors to Jingu also reached a record 14,200,000 (the total for Naiku and Geku) in 2013, when the Sengu was carried out, and continued to achieve upwards of 10,000,000 in terms of the total in 2014. I was extremely relieved by the results.

### **Sense of nervousness in the Sengyo-no-gi ritual**

It goes without saying that the most important role of the Chief Priest is to administer the Sengu as planned in the capacity of a Shinto priest.

We began to make preparations for the Sengu after we received *Gochokyo*, the approval to conduct the Sengu, from the Emperor in April 2004. There are 33 rituals that are carried out in association with the Sengu, starting with the *Yamaguchi-sai* ceremony held in 2005, the following year. The most important one is the Sengyo-no-gi ritual, which is carried out to transfer the object of worship to the new building. As the Chief Priest, I remember that this was ultimately the most impressive moment.

The other rituals associated with the Sengu and the other rituals conducted ordinarily have a lot in

common in terms of how they are conducted. That said, it was, in reality, the first experience for us to transfer the object of worship from the old building to the new building. The reason was that there was no *Shurai*, or rehearsal. We did not hold any practice such as marching on the same path. It is a ritual performed without rehearsals, and that alone makes us nervous. Besides, there is no written material prepared advising what matters we should be careful about. We have no idea what will happen until after we have started the transfer.

The distance to the new building is no more than approximately 300 meters, but I felt as if it was much further than that.

The divine place provides sufficient space to allow seven or eight people to enter. The object of worship and the sacred treasures are placed into it. It is a reasonably large space. Even so, I recall that I felt very hot because it was totally enclosed. The ritual takes place in October, but it is still hot then based on the recent climate trend. The Chief Priest and the Assistant to the Chief Priest wear a *myoe* coat and *yudasuki* sash over a *kokuhō*-colored *sokutai* costume, as well as a *yukazura* crown. These items weigh approximately eight kilograms in total. Since they are designed for use in winter, I found them even heavier. In the climate of the ancient times, it would have felt comfortable.

We, while remaining extremely nervous, went down the steps of the divine building in a manner that kept us from falling. Honestly speaking, this was not something I wished to repeat many times. So demanding were the Sengu rituals that I had dark circles under my eyes when the peak was reached. With the ceremony continuing day in and day out, I was extremely concerned about the following day's event, even after the day's event was over; so much so that I sometimes had sleepless nights. As I recall now, I remained nervous the entire time. I imagine that priests have experienced this nervousness every time the Sengu has taken place over the last 1,300 years.

The completion of the Sengyo ritual is followed by the relocation of fourteen other annex sanctuaries, which takes approximately one year. We finished relocating Kazenomiya, the last of these sanctuaries, in March 2015. Almost ten years have passed since we obtained the imperial approval.

Kuroda Sayako, the first daughter of the Emperor, performed her duties as the acting Head Priest in the ritual. We asked the acting Head Priest to undertake prayer services at night in particular, as Ikeda Atsuko (the fourth daughter of Emperor Showa), who is the current Head Priest, is over 80 years of age and the physical burden is becoming significant. As I said earlier, we did not undertake any rehearsals, but her service was outstanding. Her strong sense of mission as an *Omiteshiro* (the supreme priest representing the Emperor) touched me deeply.

A *tanka* poem composed by the Emperor reads, "How refreshing it is to visit a new divine building made of bright, plain wood, built with the support of a great many people!" I imagine that he was expressing his gratitude to the people involved with the recent Sengu. After the Sengu was over, I had the honor of meeting the Emperor and Empress. They told me many times to give their regards to everyone concerned, which I remember vividly. Predictably, they care deeply about Jingu. They looked very pleased that the Sengu has been completed successfully.

## Japanese cypress originating from Ise used again for the first time in 700 years

How should we pass down the traditional culture? There was something that made us very happy while we were taking on the great challenge of fulfilling the Sengu. We were allowed to use Japanese

cypress originating from Ise as a building material for the first time in 700 years. As a matter of course, when the Sengu started, they cut down trees grown in the vicinity of Jingu to construct the sacred buildings. However, with no tree-planting technique available in those days, thick Japanese cypresses with a diameter of 80 centimeters to one meter became difficult to come by in the Kamakura period. Approximately 10,000 logs are considered to be required for the implementation of the Sengu today. A huge amount of wood is needed. The fact that the Sengu was not cancelled shows the *Jingu* method of determination. It expanded operation into the neighboring regions and began making arrangements to procure cypresses. Moreover, Jingu began to use cypresses available in the Kiso area in Nagano prefecture, in the Edo period, which still continues to date. The area, which has been treated with care as the territory of the Owari-Tokugawa family, produces good cypress trees even today.

The Ise Woods were further neglected in the Edo period because the number of visitors to Jingu increased drastically due to the effect of the *Okage mairi* pilgrimage, which became a major trend. As a result, people cut down the trees in the Woods and used them as firewood and charcoal to offer hospitality to the pilgrims. The mountains on both sides of the Isuzu River are surrounded by greenery today, but if you look at a photo taken in the first year of the Meiji period, you will be surprised to see that there were no trees in the mountains. The decaying of the mountains had occurred. Consequently, when it rained, swollen water flowed directly into the rivers, causing inundations and submerging the Ujibashi Bridge. From what we hear, Oharai-machi, a street that is lined with souvenir shops today, was flooded with waist-deep water.

Accordingly, university professors and experts got together to formulate the 200-year Jingu Woods Plan in the Taisho period, with the main purpose of taking preventive measures against erosions and floods, while at the same time making sure that wood could be obtained in the Ise Woods for use at Jingu. Tree planting has been carried out periodically since then. The area of the Jingu Woods is 5,500 hectares, equivalent to that of Setagaya Ward in Tokyo. The Woods were mainly developed by staff members of the Forestry Department.

Approximately 100 years after the plan was launched, some thick trees have grown as large as 40 centimeters in diameter. They are not big enough to be used as wood for *torii* gates or sacred buildings. Even so, this was the first time that we used Ise cypresses for the construction of the buildings. They account for approximately 23% of the total construction. As an example, Ise cypresses were used for the outermost fence of the quadruple fences surrounding the divine building.

Although it may take another 100 years, we hope to meet the requirements for building materials for the Sengu by using timber from the Ise Woods. To achieve this, all the staff members from Jingu carry out a tree-planting ceremony in April every year. Wearing rain boots, I also planted trees on a slope that was as steep as a ski slope. I believe that Jingu has planted well over 10,000 trees every year.

There is another example of recovery to the original situations in the recent Sengu: the feather of the Japanese crested ibis.

A breeding center of Japanese crested ibises in Ishikawa Prefecture was generous enough to provide some real feathers from the birds so that we could use them to create the handle of the *Sugari-no-ontachi* Sword, one of the sacred costume treasures. There had been a risk of the tradition being ended. However, with Japanese crested ibises starting to hatch, we were able to keep the tradition from being phased out.

## Based on best efforts

Through these events, I realized that Jingu has kept traditions alive based on the mindset that it can pass these traditions on to the next generation if it exerts the utmost power it has at the time, instead of giving up things it had continued doing until the current era.

There is an expression referred to as the best effort in the field of engineering.

The concept of maximum effort is based on creating the ultimate specifications containing absolute value standards and ruling out whatever is outside. It is the concept of all or nothing; in other words, if a thing cannot be done, it is all over. On the other hand, a best effort is the idea of doing what can be done to the full extent and accepting the result. Without this concept, nothing would be created in the field of engineering. As a matter of fact, this idea has been rooted in generations at Jingu.

What must not be changed is what we cannot see. It is the basic principle and prayer for eternity. It is the universal prayer for the peace of the nation and the people. This has not changed since long ago.

For this reason, we continue updating what is physical to inherit the basic principle. We may not be able to do what we have done so far in the same way. However, as the world changes and technologies are renewed, we will be able to get it back in a future opportunity. I think that this applies equally to scientific and religious matters.

Jingu's underlying concept is that tangible things will ultimately break. Based on the assumption that nothing is unbreakable, throughout its history Jingu has continued to consider what measures it should take. It is said that priests occasionally rehearsed the offering of drawings of divine foods, instead of the sea bream and abalone that were supposed to be dedicated, because of a poor catch. In the Meiji period, one record shows that a minister, given the difficult financial situation of the country due to the Russo-Japanese War, suggested to Emperor Meiji that the building of Jingu be built of concrete on a temporary basis. I hear that Emperor Meiji turned down this suggestion, predictably (laughs). They have continued to make decisions in such a manner in each era throughout Jingu's long history.

When I assumed the position, I had preconceptions that Jingu prioritized the ideal above anything else. However, as I have explained so far, through the experience of the Sengu, I realized that Jingu had also actually been inheriting traditions in a flexible manner.

To rephrase, I would say that Jingu looks at reality more harshly than people believe.

Like it or not, with the Sengu repeated every twenty years, its operation is the same as business from the perspective that a deadline is set. Time may pass slowly here, but we feel the same stress that you feel in a company regarding the quality and delivery time of products. We may not have competitors, but even so, with the timeframe of the Sengu fixed, we need to work on it with ideas that differ from compromises so that we can survive in the current tough conditions.

The Japanese have continued to act based on a flexible way of thinking since long ago, and this deserves our appreciation.

## Becoming more like "O-ise-san"

Approximately 8,000,000 people visit Ise Jingu including Naiku and Geku each year. This is extremely encouraging.

Many reporters came to this area from overseas due to the recent Summit. From what I understand, they were so impressed by this Japanese place that adapts to the surrounding beautiful natural landscape that they broadcast the environments of Ise-Shima, including Jingu, in their own countries.

Visitors from overseas countries currently account for only one percent of all visitors. It appears that the numbers of European and American visitors as well as Asian visitors have increased in the past year, but they are significantly low compared to those for Nara or Kyoto.

From the perspective of the effective provision of information overseas, we are often asked why Ise Jingu does not aim to become a world heritage. However, we do not consider Jingu to be a world heritage. Jingu exists for the present. It may be treated as an intangible cultural heritage or spiritual heritage, but it is fully renewed every twenty years. Regrettably, Jingu does not meet the standards of a world heritage.

Domestically, the number of visitors has increased among the younger generation in the past ten and more years.

As power and spiritual spots become a trend, it appears that more and more people are visiting Jingu in search of peace of mind through healing and comfort. The media covered this phenomenon on a large scale, although Jingu never introduces its facilities using such wording. As a result, change has occurred among the group of pilgrims.

This reminds me of the 61st Sengu that was carried out some twenty years ago. From what I understand, the media were nervous about the separation of government and religion back then. After a TV station covered the Sengu in a news program, it received a complaint from a viewer who said, "Is it appropriate to broadcast a report that may be seen as publicity of a certain shrine's ceremony on the public airwaves?"

That said, looking at the way people visit Jingu, I suspect that the way they regard jinja has changed significantly.

I think that Jingu is going back what it was in the Edo period. This was an era when Jingu was popular as "*O-ise-san*" and millions of pilgrims visited Ise, although the country had a total population of only 30,000,000 in those days.

Jingu has two faces. One is a traditional existence as the Shinto-shrine of the Emperor. Before the war, the role of the Emperor's shrine was prominent. A picture of the Sengu taken in 1929 shows military members standing in a row on the stone steps. From what we understand, during the heyday before the war, all the ministers including the prime minister stood in a line, protected by the military source deployed outside. Some elderly people may still have memories of that scene.

However, during the earlier days after the medieval period, it appears that the atmosphere of Ise was slightly different, particularly during the early modern period. It was still the Shinto-shrine of the Emperor. However, as the administrative authorities changed from an Emperor to aristocrats and from aristocrats to samurai, Jingu existed as a popular Shinto-shrine called "*O-ise-san*," serving as a spiritual hometown for the Japanese, in the respective administrations.

A picture of Naiku drawn in the Edo period remains in Jingu. The picture shows children approaching Mikakiuchi and watching a ceremony. It is a heart-warming picture. I feel that we may be getting back to what we were back then.

## Ise Jingu as we move forward

In my opinion, Jingu is able to remain unchanged because it has continued to change by incorporating the renewal mechanism of the Sengu. This is what makes it eternal.

The Sengu will continue for a thousand years to come, but the manner of conducting it may become so different that people from today will be surprised and wonder if it is acceptable to do such a thing. However, it demonstrates Jingu's knowledge created through the Sengu that has been carried out for 1,300 years to date. Needless to say, this change is protected by the principle portion that exists as a prayer for the comfort of the state and people. Our responsibility is to ensure that this principle will be passed down from parents to children, and from children to grandchildren.

I don't know if the young pilgrims, who are increasing in number, are worshipping with the same feelings as those of people in their grandparents' generation. However, look at their faces. They look really great when they leave Jingu. When I see them, I feel that the future of Ise is secure. I trust that they will transfer what Jingu is to the next generation, and that through this process Jingu will be created in a manner that suits their children.

(Editorial Cooperation: Nanri Kumi)

*Translated from "Shikinen-sengu, Samitto, Dento no keisho... Ise Jingu Daiguji Oini Kataru (The Chief Priest of Ise Jingu talks at length about subjects such as the Shikinen Sengu, the Summit, and the succession of the legacies)," Bungeishunju, August 2016, pp. 147-147. (Courtesy of Bungeishunju Ltd.) [August 2016]*

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## Takatsukasa Naotake

Chief Priest of Ise Jingu

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