

## Report on Kogakkan's University Program at Ise

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Although it is easy to have a different impression initially, Kogakkan University's program at Ise is intense and demands more minute-to-minute mental focus than most people are prepared to offer easily, particularly in a nonnative language. Of course, for the same reasons, the program now counts among the most interesting educational and cultural experiences I have had: in an age where portable telephony and computing have sharply curtailed the average attention span, the series of lectures on all things Ise that form the program's backbone test repeatedly one's abilities to sit still, be attentive, and find memorable, comprehensible patterns in the storm of new terms, grown-up scholarly language, and ideas. But again, the demands these almost daily seminars make are *themselves* part of the cultural experience this unique program offers; and it is doubtful that there is anywhere else on earth where one can learn quite as much, quite as quickly about Ise, Shinto, and adult, scholarly life in the Japanese language.

It is true that these seminars, which are as rich as they are challenging, are the biggest part of life during the three weeks at the program, they are interrupted frequently and pleasurably by any number of out-of-door activities that help students to visualize all that has been said in class, allowing the outings to enrich the lessons and vice versa. For instance, one may hear several professors speak about *kami* in Shinto and how people in Japan may or may not tend to think about all the word seems to mean; but it is infinitely richer to see and hear (and of course to ask) about the idea from the variety of perspectives one acquires after a conversation with a shrine attendant, or having observed the architectural features adapted for the task of enshrinement, or once one had heard about the exact rules for determining which new foods can be made as offerings and which cannot. Only when one has lived a while with the word *kami*, as one does in the Ise program, does the idea lose some of its unfortunate classroom abstractness and acquire greater depth, richness, and reality, all of which bode well for better discussions and better thinking about the culture of Japan, in which all the program's participants, by definition, have a vested interest. And while observing the *kami* discussed and interacted with in various contexts is a central theme in the program, it is also just one element in a vast network of ideas through which the program

provides a nonstop tour, enriching all one's ideas about Japan with a healthy dose of how these ideas have and continue to exist within an actual society.

The final thing that should be said about the Ise program is that it also allows one to form social relationship with professors, fellow students, and professionals who, in one way or another, are as invested in the cultural legacy and life of Ise and Japan as they are in the larger domestic and international contexts in which both of these cultures also exist. When one has completed the program, the participant will have a great roster of contacts, people with whom one can exchange valuable information and perspectives, which offers all involved a number of social, scholarly, and professional possibilities that would be unthinkable otherwise.

This program offers a rare glimpse into an important cultural heritage—and even more to those students who take real advantage of all else it so generously makes available.

伊勢と日本スタディプログラムに対する一番の印象はとにかくそれがとても徹底的であり、忍耐や高い集中力、強い参加意思が非常に求められる。

ゼミナールの頻度、期間やその内容の濃いだけに非常に消耗する。そのおかげで日本語能力の向上はもとより神道のような日本文化の真髓について学ぶことができ、得るところも多い。そればかりではなく、本スタディプログラムでは、授業で学んだ直ぐ後に、実際の現場見学で具体的な形を見ることができるので座学の限界を超えた魅力がある。

最後に皇學館大学の先生方ならびに他の参加者と共に過ごす濃密なプログラムであるため、人生においての非常に貴重な人間関係を構築できる場である。