

Lecture 01

Archaeological Excavation of the Palmyra Ruins, a Caravan City on the Silk Road

Date : Monday, April 23, 2012, 16:30~18:30
Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall
Lecturer : Dr. Kiyohide Saito (Deputy Director of Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture, and Director of the Museum, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture)

We invited Dr. Kiyohide Saito, Deputy Director, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture, and held a lecture titled “Archaeological Excavation of the Palmyra Ruins, a Caravan City on the Silk Road”. Palmyra was a caravan city located in central Syria and has been designated a World Heritage site. Dr. Saito has conducted archeological excavation of the Palmyra ruins, especially tombs, for more than two decades and comprehensively studied changes in the funeral system of Palmyra and its social background. In the tripartite lecture, he explained outline of Palmyra and his over twenty years’ research.

He started with the outline of Palmyra, e.g., various temples including the temple of Bel, city composition, ex. memorial arch, colonnade road, theater, shopping street, and public bath, activities of the excavation and research teams from various countries, and the three types of tombs in Palmyra.

Then, he explained more specifically the excavation of tombs, such as the interior decoration of the tombs, excavated articles including accessories, analysis of excavated human bones, and cases of conservation and restoration of tombs, using many photos and moving images.

In the question and answer session, wide-ranging topics were taken up, such as the meaning of a tomb’s direction, grave robbing, the lives of residents and the climatic features, and the lecture ended with a great success.



The lecture given by Dr. Kiyohide Saito, Deputy Director of Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture, and Director of the Museum, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Nara Prefecture

Lecture 02

International Contributions for Preservation of the Bamiyan World Heritage Site

Date : Thursday, May 31, 2012, 16:20~18:00

Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Mr. Kazuya Yamauchi (Head of Regional Environment Section, Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation, National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo)

Mr. Yamauchi, National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo, gave a lecture titled “International Contributions for Preservation of the Bamiyan World Heritage Site”.

Bamiyan is located at the west end of the great Hindu Kush mountain range which extends from southwest to northeast separating Afghanistan in two parts. A Chinese monk Xuan Zang visited Bamiyan in the 7th century AD and recorded its prosperity of the time including West- and East-Giant Golden Buddha statues.

In March 2001, the two Giant Buddha statues were destroyed by the Taliban militia regime and a huge number of murals were lost or looted in the chaos. Hence, the Bamiyan site was hastily declared a World Heritage site as “Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley” and added to UNESCO’s List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003. And safeguarding projects for the site are currently being conducted by several institutions of the world including that of Japan, Germany, Italy etc. under the coordination of UNESCO. In Japan, National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo, is taking the lead in the projects including preservation of mural paintings, archaeological survey to determine the scope of the ruins to be preserved etc.

In the lecture, Mr. Yamauchi illustrated the Bamiyan site from various angles such as its history and current conditions, international projects to preserve mural paintings, archaeological surveys conducted by Japanese team, and concept of development and preservation of cultural heritage in Afghanistan. He also introduced the types of houses in the caves and the lifestyle in Bamiyan, a knowledge which can be gained only through field survey, and the cave’s style and structure derived from Buddhist elements as well as relationships between the site and the Islamic culture.



The lecture given by Mr. Yamauchi



Cultural Landscape in Bamiyan Valley© National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo

Lecture 03

Decoding of the Ceiling Styles in the Bamiyan Cave Temples: Fusion of Timbered Construction and Masonry Construction

Date : Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 19:00~21:00

Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Mr. Shigeru Kubodera (Director of Historical Research Institute for Architectural Decoration Technology)

We held a lecture titled “Decoding of Ceiling Styles in Bamiyan Cave Temples: Fusion of Timbered Construction and Masonry Construction” inviting Mr. Kubodera, Director of in Architectural decorate technical history laboratory as the lecturer. He took a lot of photos he has taken during his field survey in 2005-2006.

He began with the purpose and the situation of the field survey saying “We need to record the Bamiyan cave temples. Because they will be lost in future, even if we do the best to keep them. We took photos of the four walls, the ceiling and the floor of all the caves which we were able to access.”

We understood that the ceilings of cave temples have their own characteristic expression techniques area by area. The ones in Lonmen have stone mason, the ones in Dunhuang painting and plaster, the ones in Kezier plaster, and the ones in Bamiyan plaster and clay figure. Especially the stones in Bamiyan caves were of coarse grain and easy to collapse, and so, they needed plasterer’s finish work after chiseling. Having explained the outline, basic architectural knowledge and ceiling styles in Bamiyan, he referred to the ceiling styles in the caves, dome, squinch and cross vault. Furthermore, he lectured on ceilings and decorations in Buddhist buildings in reference to that of ancient China.

At the end of lecture we had an active question-and-answer session, for example, whether or not they had a dimension system, extent of ceiling style’s propagation area, whether an original wooden ceiling still remains. We came to be interested in the Bamiyan cave ceilings.

We appreciate Mr. Kubodera for his impressive lecture on Bamiyan. It was valuable opportunity for us.



The Lecture at K-222, Koshien Hall



Mr. Kubodera, Director of Historical Research Institute for Architectural Decoration Technology

Lecture 04

The Ruins of Petra, a World Heritage Site in the Country of Deserts, Jordan: An Ancient City that Trade Created

Date : Friday, November 30, 2012, 16:30~18:30

Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Mr. Koji Oyama (Former JICA Expert)

We invited Mr. Koji Oyama, Former JICA Expert, and held a lecture titled “The ruins of Petra, a World Heritage site in the country of deserts, Jordan: an ancient city that trade created”.

Petra is the ruins located in the mountains area of Wadi Musa in South Jordan, which is designated a World Heritage site. It was a city of Nabataeans, which prospered about 2000 years ago, and rediscovered by a Swiss explorer in 1812. It is also famous as the filming site of the cinema "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade".

He first showed photos of Petra’s geographical environment, memorial arch, water channel, stone slab, reliefs, theater, colonnade road, magnificent rock-cut tombs, temple and so forth, and guided us in a comprehensible way making us feel as if we were actually in Petra.

And then he explained a range of topics such as Petra’s nature and history, Nabataeans’ trade, water management, religion, architectural technology, language and earthenware. Furthermore, he suggested what we, who live in the modern world, can learn from Petra.

In the question and answer session, the topics related to the dwellings and culture of Petra were discussed, and the lecture ended with a great success. We were able to have a glimpse of a greatness of the culture that humankind creates. It was a very valuable opportunity.



The lecture given by Mr. Oyama



Mr. Oyama explaining about the treasury (Al Khazneh), one of the most famous temples in Petra

Lecture 05

History and Prosperity of Turkey, a Diverse Country, as a Bridge between the East and the West

Date : Friday, January 18, 2013, 15:00~17:00

Venue : West Hall, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Dr. Sachihiko Omura (Director, Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology)

We invited Dr. Sachihiko Omura from Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology and held a lecture titled “History and prosperity of Turkey, a diverse country, as a bridge between the East and the West”. This lecture was hosted by the Kansai Productivity Center and the Institute of Turkish Culture Studies at Mukogawa Women’s University. Dr. Omura specializes in Middle and Near Eastern archaeology, and one of Japan’s most famous archaeologists who leads the excavation and research at Kaman-Kalehöyük in central Turkey.

First of all, he explained the significance of Japanese involvement in the excavation and research in the midst of Turkey. Then, he explained tradition of earth mother which had been inherited across Anatolia, characteristics of Artemis at Ephesus, where the Anatolian and the Greek cultures have amalgamated, propagation of Christianity by Saint Paul, the life of Christians at the time, relationships between state and religion, history of the migration and Islamization of Turks, and so forth to teach us the position and importance of Cappadocia and Ayasofya in Turkish history.

In question and answer session, wide-ranging topics were discussed, such as the topic surrounding the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, problems that contemporary Turkey faces, and ethnic distinction of the Turks. We were able to have a glimpse of dynamism and magnificence history in which the cultures and religion of the East and the West clashes with each other. It was a very valuable opportunity indeed.



The venue for the lecture: West Hall



Dr. Sachihiko Omura, Director, Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology

Lecture 06

How Did Ancient Artisans Stand Pillars and a Central Column Upright?

Date : Monday, February 25, 2013, 14:00~17:15

Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturers : Mr. Masao Nishizawa (Director, Nishizawa Construction Company)
Mr. Shigeru Kubodera (Director of Historical Research Institute for Architectural Decoration Technology)

We invited Mr. Masao Nishizawa and Mr. Shinji Kubodera to take part in a two-part lecture series. Mr. Nishizawa explained the method used to stand the central column of a pagoda from the viewpoint of a builder. Mr. Kubodera explained this feat from an academic viewpoint based on archaeological surveys and insights into preservative construction work.

In the first lecture, Mr. Nishizawa described two construction projects aimed at preservation and restoration: the three-storied pagoda of Kongorin-ji Temple and the Taho-to pagoda of Jison-in Temple. The pagoda at Kongorin-ji Temple was built in the Kamakura era. The central column was stood on cross beams of the first-story ceiling. The central column does not stand on the ground. After finishing the second story structure, the bottom of the column was hoisted up with a rope, which was tied to a temporary structure, using pullies. On the other hand, Jison-in Temple, a registered World Heritage site, was built on the starting point of the pilgrimage route to Koyasan. Records show that the pagoda was modified from a three-story pagoda to a Taho-to pagoda during construction work.

In the second lecture, Mr. Kubodera explained the method of standing a column upright based on his archaeological survey. There are holes along the slope in the first section of Namba Palace, which seem helpful for standing the columns up. In the Heijo-kyo To-in Garden, arm structures called *udegi* were discovered, and these appear to have balanced loads and prevented subsidence. At pillar-standing festivals, we can observe the method using a sliding board called *hangi*, here the pillar base is slid into a hole. Furthermore, a hole prepared for the central column has been found in the five-story pagoda of Saisyo-in Temple, where Mr. Kubodera was engaged in his work. This technique was probably instrumental in standing the column upright.

We greatly appreciated the chance to hear these two different viewpoints on this critical architectural issue. It was surely a valuable opportunity for us.



Mr. Masao Nishizawa,
Nishizawa construction company representative director



Mr. Shigeru Kubodera,
Director of the Historical Research Institute for
Architectural Decoration Technology