

Seminar on the Culture and History of the Silk Road #01

The Latest State of Armenian Cultural Heritage—Culture and History of Caucasia

Date : Friday, February 14, 2014, 13:30~17:00

Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Dr. Makoto Arimura (Associate Professor, Kanazawa University, Japan)

MWU held a series of seminar entitled “The Culture and History of the Silk Road” inviting five foremost experts as lecturers. We asked Associate Professor Makoto Arimura of the Kanazawa University, an archaeologist, to speak at the first meeting titled as above.

Dr. Arimura first explained the geological feature of Caucasia before dealing with the course of the history. He then described the diffusion of mankind in the Paleolithic period as has been identified in Caucasia, origin and proliferation of the agricultural and herding society in the Neolithic period, origin of viticulture around the Neolithic period and the Copper age, Kula/Araxes culture in the Bronze age, the rise and fall of the empire of Urartu during the Iron age and the origin of the Armenian nation ensuing from the fall of the empire.

It was quite an informative occasion for us to learn about the Armenian culture of each period. In the Q&A session after the lecture we exchanged active discussions on Armenia and the Silk Road.

(Reported by Kazuhiko Yanagisawa)



Associate Professor Makoto Arimura as giving the lecture



Seminar on the Culture and History of the Silk Road #02

Stupa/ Hindu Goddess/ Lingam—Indian World of Life and Death, Sex and Sacredness

Date : Friday, February 21, 2014, 13:30~17:00

Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Dr. Akira Miyaji (Professor Emeritus at Nagoya University, and Director Emeritus at Ryukoku Museum, Japan)

MWU held a series of seminar titled “The Culture and History of the Silk Road” inviting five foremost experts as lecturers. We invited Dr. Akira Miyaji as the lecturer for the second of five seminars.

We had Dr. Miyaji deliver a lecture on cave shrines and murals of Bamiyan last autumn. This time he described the ambiguity as seen in Indian Buddhism and Hinduism using ample pictures and illustrations. In the first section of the lecture, Buddhism-related topics were introduced such as caitya (sacred tree; sacred column) worship that go back to pre-Buddhist religion, stupa as a symbol of “life” and “death” and reliefs of goddess given on the Torana (gate) and Vedika (balustrade) of stupas.

In the second section, Hindu-related topics were presented such as Lingam worship and Hindu goddess worship and reliefs of goddess given to the temples Khajuraho group of monument. After the lecture we had an active Q & A session about the reason why the reliefs were given to the vedika of the stupa, celestial maiden depicted on earthen plates, miniatures, Hindu temple structures, comparison of pagoda and stupa.

(Reported by Fumie Ooi)



Professor Akira Miyaji as giving the lecture

Seminar on the Culture and History of the Silk Road #03

Archaeological Perspectives on the Achaemenid Persian Empire: From the Survey around the Bolaghi Valley and the Pasargadae Plain, Southern Iran

Date : Monday, March 3, 2014, 13:30~18:00

Place : K-222, the Koshien Hall

Lecturer : Dr. Shin'ichi Nishiyama (Associate Professor, Chubu University, Japan)

MWU held a series of seminar entitled “The Culture and History of the Silk Road” inviting five foremost experts as lecturers. The 3rd lecture was given by Associate Prof. Shin'ichi Nishiyama of Chubu University, who had involved in several archaeological projects in West Asia and Central Asia including Iran. He talked about the formation of the Achaemenid Persian Empire from the viewpoint of archaeological evidence.

The lecture began with explaining the purpose of the lecture, and on to the basic historical information of the ancient Persian Empires, the relationship between the Persian Empires and the Silk Road, the cultural links between the Persian Empires and Japan, the current state of the archaeological study of the Persian Period, and the general history of the Achaemenid Empire.

In the second part of the lecture, he discussed the achievements of his archaeological investigation in the Bolaghi valley and the Pasargadae plain in the Fars province, southwest Iran. This was the region where the heart of the Achaemenid Empire lied. First, the architectures and artefacts of the royal cities of the Empire were explained. Then, the detailed account of the two royal cities in the Fars province, Persepolis and Pasargadae were looked into. He argued that the foundation of the Empire was laid by strategically placing the transport, irrigation, and defense systems around the royal cities, especially around Pasargadae, the first royal city of the Empire. Especially important was the controlling of the human movements, i.e. pastoral nomads, who provide not only goods, but also vital information to control the Empire.

(Reported by Tomoko Uno)



Associate Professor Shin'ichi Nishiyama as giving the lecture



Seminar on the Culture and History of the Silk Road #04

Xuanzang/ Stein/ Otani Expedition

Date : Wednesday, March 5, 2014, 10:30~12:00, 12:30~14:30
Venue : K-222, the Koshien Hall
Lecturer : Dr. Takashi Irisawa (Professor at Ryukoku University, and Director of Ryukoku Museum, Japan)

MWU held a series of seminar titled “The Culture and History of the Silk Road” inviting five foremost experts as lecturers. We invited Professor Takashi Irisawa of Ryukoku University this time, who gave the lecture titled as above.

Professor Irisawa first described several caves following the track of Xuanzang such as Bezeklik caves in suburban Uighur Autonomous Region, China, Kizil caves in Kucha and Bamiyan caves in Afghanistan. In the lecture tales of Nentobutsu-juki (Dipankara) and Shashin-shiko (Bodhisattva offered his body to feed tigress and her cubs) were introduced using images of relevant paintings as well as the Buddhism’s mingling with the local religions, expedition of caves and propagation of Buddhism to the Western Regions, and an epigraph in Bactrian language as an evidence of coexistence of Buddhism and Islamism. In the second half of the lecture, he described activities of archaeologist Stein who revered Xuanzang, and Otani expedition organized by Kozui Otani, latter-day 22nd Abbot of Hongwan-ji, sub sect of Jodo-shinshu, who received lot of stimulations from Stein. The audience was overwhelmed by the magnificent views of the world of Xuanzang, Stein and Kozui Otani.

(Reported by Kazuhiko Yanagisawa)



Professor Takashi Irisawa as giving the lecture

Seminar on the Culture and History of the Silk Road #05

Ruins in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China

Date : Saturday, March 8, 2014, 13:30~17:00
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)

MWU held a series of seminar titled “The Culture and History of the Silk Road” inviting five foremost experts as lecturers. This time, we asked archaeologist Kazuya Yamauchi of National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo, to give a lecture as titled above.

The lecture began with the geographical explanation of three major routes of the Silk Road, i.e. “Northern Route of Tian-shan Mountains”, “Southern Route of Tian-shan Mountains” and “Southern Route in the Western Region” followed by the introduction of the ruins in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Mr. Yamauchi described the various ruins introducing the conditions of restoration and preservation based on his experience. The ruins introduced included Kizil Gaha Beacon Tower, which is said to date back to Qianhan Period (over 2,000 years ago), ruins of Gaochang, which is associated with Xuanzang, the old city of Jiaohe, both located in outskirts of Turpan, Site of Bashbaliq City, Kizil caves, the largest of the caves in the Uyghur region, and Subashi ruins, the largest Buddhist temple in Kuqa. Mr. Yamauchi ended the lecture suggesting the need to see the Silk Road in a comprehensive way not only from the aspect of trade route but also from that of people’s life and natural surroundings.

(Reported by Kazuhiko Yanagisawa)



Mr. Kazuya Yamauchi as giving the lecture

