

Silk Road Culture and Architecture Lecture Series # 10

The Silk Road, a Cultural Corridor - Rome and Asia Minor

Date : May 18 (Saturday), 2019, 13:00~
Venue : The Industry Club of Japan Hall (Tokyo, Japan)
Lecturers : Prof. Masanori AOYAGI (Specially-appointed Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts, Former Commissioner for Cultural Affairs)
Prof. Hidenobu JINNAI (Specially-appointed Professor at Hosei University)
Performer : Mr. Xu Ke (Erhu performer)

For the 10th iteration of the “Silk Road Culture and Architecture” lecture series, erhu performer Xu Ke was invited to perform music from the Silk Road, in addition to lectures given by Masanori Aoyagi, specially-appointed professor at Tokyo University of the Arts and Former Commissioner for Cultural Affairs, and Hidenobu Jinnai, specially-appointed professor at Hosei University.

The title of the lecture given by Masanori Aoyagi was “Ancient Rome and the Silk Road.” Major factors in the prosperity of the silk road may have included the fact that Greek merchants had reached as far as India even before the times of ancient Rome, with Greek spreading as an international language in the same way as Aramaic languages, and the fact that territories spanning the East and West were under the stable control of large states such as the Roman Empire and the Han Dynasty as well as the Parthian and Kushan Dynasties. Mr. Aoyagi spoke in detail about a wide range of subjects, such as the ideology which supported the long prosperity of the vast Roman Empire, the flexible urban structure of the capital city of Rome and its provinces, the substantial social capital of the empire such as transport systems and infrastructure, and the Roman army.

Xu Ke performed erhu pieces for the attendees of this lecture event. The erhu is a traditional Chinese instrument which is played with the bow inserted between the two strings. “Hu” refers to a tribe of people living in the northern and western parts of ancient China. Thus, the erhu is thought to have been introduced to inland China via the Silk Road. Xu Ke gave an impressive performance across a wide range of genres, including works he composed himself as well as arrangements of classical compositions, filling the hall with powerful music.

The title of the lecture given by Hidenobu Jinnai was “Cities and Architecture of the Silk Road: Damascus, Isfahan, and Samarkand.” The capital of Syria, Damascus, is an oasis city, and it is said to be the oldest remaining human settlement where people have lived continuously. Based on precious photographic records from before the Syrian civil war, Mr. Jinnai gave an introduction to various areas in the city that are made up of courtyard architecture, and the courtyard-style residential housing that he has investigated. In addition, he also provided explanations regarding the plaza spaces in the ancient cities of Isfahan in Iran and Samarkand in Uzbekistan, as well as the spatial structures of mosques, souks, and distinctive Arab courtyard-style houses.



Opening address by Professor Okazaki, Head of the Department of Architecture



Lecture by Prof. Masanori AOYAGI



Lecture by Prof. Hidenobu JINNAI