



SUZANNE PERRIN B.A.Hons., M.A.  
Japanese History & Culture Lectures

## CONTENTS OF LECTURES

### THE CLASSICAL ERA 6th-12thC

The aristocratic court culture of the Nara and Heian eras covers the importation of Chinese culture in the early centuries to its refinement and adaptation during the later Heian period. Chinese writing system, administration, building techniques, Buddhism and Confucian doctrines laid the foundations for Japan's development as an autonomous nation state. The Heian era (9th-12thC) saw the flowering of the Golden Age of arts and letters, where poetry, music, fashion and painting expressed the lifestyle of the aristocratic nobles that has created the legacy of classical style in Japanese art and literature.

### THE MEDIAEVAL ERA 13th-16thC

The fine arts and martial arts of the Samurai era during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods set a precedent for hard work, honesty, austerity and discipline among the emergent warrior class. Zen Buddhism influenced the era and cultivated the ruling Shoguns into the new patrons of art and architecture, building magnificent castles, temples, and shrines. The samurai spirit is shown in dynamic sculpture, beautifully crafted armour and swords, and in the arts of ink painting, poetry, Noh theatre and garden design, still preserved in Japan today.

### THE POPULAR CULTURE OF EDO 17th-19thC

The rise of the merchant class in the cities of Edo and Osaka during the era of Great Peace brought prosperity to the commoner and mass culture to the city dweller, displacing military austerity with boisterous, sophisticated urban culture. Mercantile patronage of the arts catered to the popular taste of Kabuki theatre and woodblock prints, where famous actors, beautiful women, tea houses and brothels were captured in the 'ukiyo-e' style of the floating world of earthly pleasures.

### ARCHITECTURE, GARDENS & TEA CULTURE

The art of Tea Culture was defined in the 16thC by Grand Tea Master Sen no Rikyu, who distilled the essence of tea philosophy into an aesthetic awareness of connoisseurship and the appreciation of simple things as art. The development of tea house style preferred by Rikyu took its form from domestic dwellings and the rustic, reclusive lifestyle of scholars in Chinese Song dynasty painting and poetry. The synthesis of these ideas became the foremost style of teahouse and garden design still favoured by connoisseurs today. The garden environment, tea pavilion and tea wares featuring ceramics, wood and lacquer form an integrated philosophy of harmony between man, nature and the universe.

### SPECIAL FOCUS LECTURES

#### WOODBLOCK PRINTS OF THE EDO PERIOD: Hokusai & Hiroshige

The two greatest and most prolific artists of the 18th-19th centuries, Katsushika Hokusai and Ando Hiroshige, have become as synonymous with Japanese art as Michelangelo has been with the Italian Renaissance, or Monet is with the French Impressionists. Among the literally hundreds of woodblock artists that worked during the two centuries of artistic production, Hokusai was the undisputed innovative genius "mad with drawing" who created the most famous images of Mount Fuji that are now world famous. Hiroshige, who closely followed his mentor, created subtle and atmospheric depictions of landscape and scenery that, together with Hokusai's work, elevated the woodblock print into a collector's item and created a new classical genre.

#### BUDDHISM & THE SILK ROAD

From its inception in northern India in 6th century BC, the development of Buddhism in its Mahayana form traces the civilizing force of culture along the silk trade routes from central Asia through China to the Far Eastern realms of Korea and Japan. Hindu iconography was mixed with early Christian, Taoist and Confucian ideals to produce a signified and exotic Buddhist culture that unified many states across the Asian land mass, and gave the basis for religious expression on a par with Christianity in Europe. Buddhist caves, temple architecture, mural paintings and statuary trace their origins through four distinct cultures over one thousand years from India to Japan. Priceless treasures from the silk route are still housed in the Shosoin repository in Nara, Japan, where they form one of the world's richest collections of Asian culture.

#### THE SCHOLAR'S DESK

Central to Chinese civilization is the importance of writing and painting which date back over 3000 years, with the humble brush as the oldest implement still in continual use. As the Chinese courts developed their bureaucratic regime through a complex system of state examinations, the educated scholar-official became the arbiter of taste and awareness in literary and artistic pursuits, defining the aesthetic ideals of sophisticated culture through the acquisition of fine objects to adorn his desk. Just as important was the attitude, ritual preparation and enjoyment of using the carefully chosen implements and artefacts, made from a variety of materials including jade, ivory, bamboo, hardwoods, bronze, cloisonné, porcelain, pottery and textiles

Lectures may be expanded into study days