

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2015
Asia's Storied Traditions
Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art

**Stories Old and Untold in Edo Period Art:
Implied and Informed Narrative**
Friday November 6, 2015

Timon Screech, SOAS, University of London

This lecture will address what is perhaps the premier narrative in the whole of Japanese literary history, namely the *Tales of Ise* (also known as the *Ise Stories*, the *Ise monogatari*). It was composed over a long period by several hands, before about the year 1000. *Ise* remained in the repertory of court practitioners for centuries, but as the Edo Period dawned, in about 1610 commoners began to gain access to close-guarded court-privileged works, and *Ise*, being short and fairly readable, was to the fore. This was in contrast to the better-known *Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*), which is extremely long and had already become impenetrable to the general reader. (Conventionally, *Genji* is referred to by the singular 'tale', while the more anthologistic *Ise* is pluralised - though Japanese makes no distinction).

It is the purpose of this lecture firstly to outline the key tales (some were more represented than others), and their iconographical traditions, but also to see how they transformed over time. It is of especial interest to see mutations once the court prerogative was broken and *Ise* became a great works for all educated people to learn from.

Suggested readings:

The *Tales of Ise* is available in several translations, but perhaps best is H. Jay Harris, *The Tales of Ise* (Rutland & Tokyo: Tuttle, 1972); the most recent version is by Royall Tyler (with notes by Joshua Mostow), *The Ise Stories* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), though it translates the work into high-school slang.

Also recommended:

Joshua Mostow, *Courtly Visions: The Ise Stories and the Politics of Cultural Appropriation* (Leiden: Brill, 2014)

Timon Screech: *Obtaining Images: Art, Culture and Display in Edo Japan* (London: Reaktion Books/Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), Chapter 7.