

In this issue, The Japan Society Review focuses on four non-fiction publications which explore from different perspectives a series of key events and persons in Japanese history, politics and art. Japan Society Chairman Sir David Warren reviews *Ghosts of the Tsunami* written by British journalist Richard Lloyd Parry. As the Asia Editor of *The Times*, Lloyd Parry covered the news of the triple disaster which occurred in the north-east of Japan on March 11, 2011. In order 'to try and get beyond the professional detachment of the reporter and understand the enormity of what had happened', he also continued visiting the area after these tragic events disappeared from the front page. *Ghosts of the Tsunami* is the result of these visits. With remarkable observational skill and great sensitivity, Parry records the personal testimonies of some of the survivors and, in particular, some of the parents of the 74 children who died at Okawa Primary School in Kamaya.

The second book reviewed in this issue is *Two Pilgrims Meet: In search of Reconciliation between China and Japan*. The two authors Minoru Kasai and Basil Scott, one Japanese and the other British, embark on a spiritual journey to Shanghai, where they spent their childhood during the years of the Japanese occupation and the Asia Pacific War.

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According to reviewer Reverend Ikuko Williams, the book offers an opportunity to reflect on 'the complex facets of reconciliation between countries with a history of enmity in the past' and provides genuine encouragement to build 'trust-based relationships between neighbouring countries on a person-to-person level'.

This October issue of the Review also includes two biographical publications which deal with historical figures who had an important role in shaping Japan's relationship and image in the West. *ANJIN-The Life & Times of Samurai William Adams, 1564-1620*, written by Hiromi T. Rogers and reviewed by Nicolas Maclean, presents a detailed and complex account of the first Englishman ever to travel to Japan. The second biography, *Hokusai Beyond The Great Wave* edited by Timothy Clark, consists of a combination of colour illustrations and scholarly essays that explore the late career of the celebrated Japanese painter, whose work was the focal point of the recent exhibition at the British Museum.

As ever, the Japan Society is extremely grateful to all of its reviewers for giving their time and expertise.

Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández

Editor

Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández

Reviewers

Sir Hugh Cortazzi, Nicolas Maclean, Sir David Warren and Revd Ikuko Williams.

(Chōshi in Sōshū province, from the series *A Thousand Pictures of the Sea* (Chie no umi), Colour woodblock print, about 1833, Chiba City Museum of Art - Image courtesy of The British Museum)

Ghosts of the Tsunami

by Richard Lloyd Parry

Jonathan Cape (2017)

ISBN-13: 978-1911214175

Review by Sir David Warren



At 2.46 pm on Friday, 11 March, 2011, a massive earthquake occurred off north-east Japan, about 70 kilometres east of the city of Sendai in the Tohoku region. It was the biggest earthquake ever known to have struck Japan, and the fourth most powerful in recorded history. The earth was knocked six and a half inches off its axis. Over 18,000 people died in the tsunami that followed an hour later, which at its peak saw waves 120 feet high. Half a million people became homeless. The resulting meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor was the world's worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl. It was the most costly natural disaster ever, causing more than \$210 billion worth of damage.

Richard Lloyd Parry, Asia Editor of *The Times*, was one of a number of western journalists who hurried to the disaster zone that weekend, and who spent weeks thereafter in the Tohoku region, reporting from the towns destroyed by the tsunami and the abandoned exclusion zone around the nuclear plant. But unlike many who in due course moved on to other assignments, he returned many times to the area, to try and get beyond the professional detachment of the reporter and understand the enormity of what had happened. In particular, he returned to a small coastal community, 70 kilometres north-east of Sendai, called Kamaya, which had suffered, even by the standards of this massive disaster, an exceptional tragedy. *Ghosts of the Tsunami* is an account of this tragedy, told through the personal testimony of the survivors; and also a meditation on its wider meaning.

Lloyd Parry's book focuses on what happened that afternoon at Okawa Primary School in Kamaya. We are introduced to some of the parents of the children at the school: Shito Sayomi, mother of eleven year-old Chisato, scared of earthquakes and a bit sulky as she leaves for school that morning; Konno Hitomi, who worked in a doctor's surgery the other side of the mountain from Kamaya, mother of Daisuke, captain of the sixth-year class and a sensitive boy who didn't want to go to school that morning either; Sato Kazutaka, the father of Yuki, Daisuke's best friend, with whom he liked to fish in the nearby Kitakami River; and many others. With observational skill and great sensitivity,

Lloyd Parry draws a portrait of a small rural community about to be obliterated by a catastrophe.

The tsunami engulfed the village shortly after half past three – three quarters of an hour after the earthquake struck. It came not from the sea to the east of Kamaya, but from the river on whose southern bank the village stood. The school had 108 children: of the 78 who were there at the moment of the tsunami, 74 died, together with ten of the eleven teachers. Shito Chisato, Konno Daisuke (and his two teenage sisters), Sato Yuki – all died that afternoon, together with others whose parents and family members we encounter in *Ghosts of the Tsunami*. 197 of the 393 people who lived in Kamaya also perished: every house in the village was destroyed.

The tragedy of Okawa Primary School is at the heart of Lloyd Parry's book. The story he tells is not just of a brutal act of nature, but of a community seeking explanations, and pressing for those in authority to be held to account. Although one child died during an evacuation in a town further north along the coast, every other school in the region got their children to safety. Why was Okawa the terrible exception? As the parents enquired about what had happened that afternoon, the realisation grew that the school's emergency response had been marked by indecision and uncertainty; and that it had been compounded by a vaguely-worded evacuation plan from which the teachers were unwilling to deviate. This culminated in the fatal decision to take the children not up the hill behind the school to safer ground, but to the designated gathering point on a nearby traffic island, straight into the path of the swelling tsunami. And to the negligence of the teachers – most of whom had themselves lost their lives – was added the intransigent refusal of the education authorities to acknowledge responsibility, or even to find the words with which to assuage the anger and grief of the bereaved parents.

Lloyd Parry tells this profoundly distressing story with unsparing compassion – not just for those who lost their children, but also those who, however culpable, were themselves traumatised by what happened that day. He follows the parents' campaign for justice, culminating in the Sendai District Court's judgement in their favour in October 2016. This found no fault in the school's initial response to the earthquake, but accepted that the teachers' actions, when it was clear that a tsunami was imminent, were inadequate. The parents were awarded substantial damages (appeals against the verdict by the defendants and against the level of damages by the plaintiffs are outstanding). But his book is more than a record of a uniquely terrible

event. It is a study of grief; an exploration of how we find the imagination to understand such events; and a portrait of modern Japan.

To talk of “grief” in such circumstances is almost banal. Lloyd Parry takes us into the lives of the families affected, and records their reactions to bereavement – numbness, denial, obsessive searching, and anger. These passages are unbearably moving. But grief also divides communities. ‘Did you lose your children or did your children survive?’ is an immediate question. ‘Even among the bereaved there were gradations of grief, a spectrum of blackness indiscernible to those on the outside’, Lloyd Parry writes: a parent who lost all her children but recovered their bodies soon after the waters receded is in a dreadful way better than a parent still searching for her daughter five years later. One mother who deals with her loss by taking part in reconstruction work finds herself at first friends with, then almost hating, another who sublimates her grief in the campaign to hold the local Department of Education to account. For many, ‘the power of their grief, which gave it form, channelling it like the banks of a river, was rage’.

Outside observers of Japan tend to admire, sometimes uncritically, Japanese “stoicism” and “resilience”. Lloyd Parry has little patience with this sentimental attachment to the principle of *gaman* (endurance): he sees this as an excuse for ‘timidity, complacency and indecision... the cult of quietism that has choked this country for so long’. One bereaved mother is told by her father-in-law, a traditional, uncommunicative man, after a first visit to the devastated school site, that it is impossible that her son could have survived: ‘It is hopeless. You need to give up’. ‘He may have felt very sad, but he contained his feelings’, she reflected later. ‘Nonetheless, if he found me in a state of sadness, he should have refrained from saying words that would hurt me. But he did not refrain’.

There is practical assistance for the families, but little access to counselling or help with post-traumatic stress disorder. Those who do speak out about the failures at the school are ostracised. Lloyd Parry draws a strong lesson from the tragedy – that what Japan needs today is not ‘serenity and self-restraint’, but people like the parents who fought for justice – ‘angry, scathing, determined people, unafraid to step out of the ranks and fight, even if all that the contest amounted to was the losing struggle with death’. (His book does not deal with the parallel disaster at the Fukushima nuclear reactor, south of Sendai, which has generated popular hostility to nuclear power, with

which Japanese politicians are still having difficulty coming to terms.)

Lloyd Parry’s book is a distinguished work of reportage, in the tradition, as some critics have pointed out, of John Hersey’s classic *Hiroshima*. But without ever tipping over into pretension, it is also a highly-wrought and carefully-organised work. It contains a poetic description of the tsunami: ‘Something is moving across the landscape as if it is alive, a brown-snouted animal hungrily bounding over the earth... It seems to steam and smoke as it moves; its body looks less like water or mud than a kind of solid vapour’.

There is an extraordinary eye-witness account of a local government official, Konno Teruo, actually caught up in the tsunami. The building in which he was working was swept away by the wave, and he was propelled into the open air. He grabbed a piece of timber as he was sucked into a whirlpool, from which he was miraculously released; he seized a wooden wall panel which gave firmer support, only to find himself being carried back out along the river to the open sea as the tsunami began to recede; then, with the next pulse of the tsunami, he was pulled back inland, over an embankment, losing consciousness and eventually coming to, jammed against a roof intact on its wooden frame, to which he transferred himself and which in turn drifted in the freezing cold towards a house on higher ground, where he eventually came to rest, wedged against the front door. A retired teacher, Mrs Suzuki, whom he knew, took him in and rescued him from hypothermia. He remembered only her ‘golden hand’, as she rubbed life back into him: ‘It was also the hand of a Buddha. It was curved, soft, warm... I couldn’t open my eyes. But I saw the soft, round Buddha with golden hands’.

The book becomes more mysterious and moving as it explores the way in which the grim reality of the disaster merges into a spiritual re-imagining of it as a way, for some, of reaching understanding and acceptance. There were few men, Lloyd Parry writes, whom he respected more than the Reverend Kaneta, chief priest at a Zen temple in the town of Kurihara, who exorcized the spirits of people who had drowned in the tsunami. Kaneta travelled around the coastal region with other priests, setting up a mobile centre called “Café de Monku” (a triple pun: *monku* means complaint as well as sounding like monk, and Kaneta is a jazz fan too – the bebop jazz master Thelonious Monk, with his dissonant, loose harmonies, becomes the soundtrack to these centres of therapy and

counselling, where the bereaved can come for a cup of tea and a friendly chat).

The survivors talk, 'haltingly, apologetically, then with increasing fluency', about their experiences, their suffering, their fears for the future, and also their encounters with the supernatural – sightings of the lost, hauntings at work and in public places, supernatural possession by the spirits of loved ones – even animals – who have died. 'The dead had no time to prepare themselves. The people left behind had no time to say goodbye', says Kaneta. 'The dead are attached to the living, and those who have lost them are attached to the dead. It's inevitable that there are ghosts'. The Japanese cult of ancestor worship and the prevalence of ghosts in the rich culture of Tohoku folklore form a powerful basis for this phenomenon.

But the task of exorcising ghosts takes a heavy toll. At the end of the book, Kaneta tells Lloyd Parry of his final exorcism – a nurse from Sendai called Takahashi Rumiko, a woman in suicidal despair, from whom he exorcises over several weeks twenty-five spirits. The effort is traumatising for the priest – particularly when Takahashi is possessed by the spirits of dead children. His wife helps him by taking Takahashi's hand as the spirit of a dead girl struggles through the cold water towards the light. The priest is weeping

with pity for the dead soul: his wife feels only 'a huge energy dissipating', as in childbirth – a 'sense of power discharging at the end of pain, as the newborn child finally enters the world'.

This book records appalling horrors. But in facing them squarely and describing the ways people cope with grief – through anger, a search for justice, attempting to rebuild a community, as well as attachment to the world of the spirit – Lloyd Parry helps us begin to imagine and understand the unimaginable and incomprehensible. The author interposes himself discreetly and sensitively throughout. The book begins with his seeing the face of his son for the first time, on the ultrasound at a Tokyo clinic, on the morning of 11 March – a parental moment that intensifies the dreadfulness of the events he goes on to describe. It closes with the image of the child apparently released from suffering as the priest expels the spirit from the woman in torment. It is not a resolution, but there is at least the possibility of release. How else, as he writes, 'to balance affirmation of life with acceptance of its inevitable end'? 'We don't work simply by saying to people, "Accept"', says Kaneta. 'We stay with them, and walk with them until they find the answer on their own'. This is a brave, powerful and honest book. It deserves to become a classic. §

Two Pilgrims Meet: In search of Reconciliation between China and Japan

by Minoru Kasai and Basil Scott

New Generation Publishing (2016)
ISBN-13: 978-1787190573

Review by Revd Ikuko Williams



Two Pilgrims Meet: In search of Reconciliation between China and Japan is a fascinating book, and I would heartily recommend it to anyone, but especially to those interested in reflecting on the complex facets of reconciliation between countries with a history of enmity in the past. The two authors Minoru Kasai and Basil Scott who became friends out of rather unusual circumstances, share their personal stories and reflections on this very important topic and readers are invited to join in their journeys of pilgrimage in search of truth and reconciliation; many words of wisdom appear through their 'conversation'. The nature of the book illustrates how we all visit and revisit our past repeatedly, to make sense of it and to find the

best way forward for the greater common good. It helps us to realise that the nature of the reconciliation process is never a straightforward or short one, and that it takes a great deal of engaging in humble and honest reflection on the past and the present as well as holding onto a hopeful vision for what the authors call the 'blessed reality' given by God, whilst aspiring to regard humanity as a 'healing family'.

The authors, one Japanese and the other British, met at an Indian university, as each was engaged on his own, very personal philosophical quest. During the course of their meeting in Varanasi, India, they discover that their childhood years had been spent in the same city of Shanghai during the War, though they never met there, as, ironically, they were the children on 'opposite' sides. While Basil was confined for several years in a Japanese internment camp, Minoru was living, only a few miles away on the other side of the river, as part of the large Japanese presence in the city. It is heart-warming to learn how the two men found a kindred spirit in India while remaining aware of this dramatic backdrop. 40 years later, they had a chance

to meet again, at which point they embarked on a spiritual joint journey of pilgrimage for reconciliation.

In 2006, the two men made a joint return visit to Shanghai, where they travelled together to both sides of the river within the city, putting themselves where each other had been all those decades earlier. The physical act of going to the other's side symbolised their mental and spiritual movement to place themselves in the other's shoes and to see things from the other's perspective. As they note with great poignancy, 'Reconciliation is not only meeting in the middle of a bridge, but going together to both sides to see the other's point of view'.

Their story tells us eloquently how reconciliation requires a willingness to go to see 'the other's point of view', and how it calls for spiritual humility and openness. Basil recalls his thoughts as he visited Japan prior to re-visiting Shanghai in 2006: 'God was trying to enlarge my thinking... (and) ... my heart to love people I had not thought of embracing. ... the action I needed to take was to make a space for the other, to listen to a people I did not know and to take an interest in their concerns' (p.95).

Their conversation also points to the importance of awakening to the 'blessed reality' given by the love of God which frees us from bitterness and hatred. They speak of their deep gratitude for the gift of unexpected given-ness which is found in reconciliation. And their spiritual perspective on reconciliation is then applied to

their discussion about a better future for the relationship between Japan and China, the country of their childhood homes. What comes out beautifully through their shared journey is the hope which they had come to know through their experiences, reflections and their quiet faith in the transforming love of God.

I happen to be a Japanese national who has been living in Britain for the last 29 years, and the issue of reconciliation, in particular with the former Far East POWs, has been a serious concern of mine. Hence, my natural interest in this publication. I am also a graduate of International Christian University in Tokyo, where I knew of Professor Minoru Kasai, though not personally. I am very grateful to have a chance to get to know his amazing life journey, so humbly told in this book.

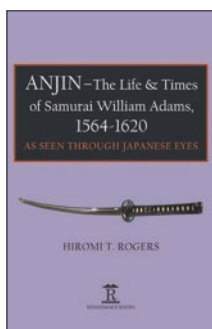
This book was an inspirational and interesting read for me personally, and I would like to thank the authors for bringing their insightful 'conversation' to publication. I do hope that this will be published in Japanese translation for a wider audience, as the authors' advocacy of reconciliation is surely needed more than ever. This book offers us all genuine encouragement to commit seriously to the building of trust-based relationships between neighbouring countries on a person-to-person level, and shows how this is needed just as much as government-level initiatives. §

ANJIN-The Life & Times of Samurai William Adams, 1564-1620

by Hiromi T. Rogers

Renaissance Books (2017)
ISBN-13: 978-1898823223

Review by Nicolas Maclean
(Honorary Chairman of the Miura Anjinkai and Joint Chairman of Japan400)



In late August 1619 William Adams, now aged 55, returns to Hirado after a successful trading voyage to Indochina and finds that the British and Dutch are at war. News reaches him that English and Welsh sailors are being beaten and shackled as prisoners on board the Dutch ship 'The Angell', anchored in the middle of Hirado Bay. Richard Cocks, Head of the English Trading House, feels powerless to attempt a rescue, but though frail, with hollow eyes and cheeks, and hair and beard turned grey after a severe tropical disease, that night Adams boards 'The Angell' and with bluff and his

fluency in Dutch saves William Gourden and Michael Payne. The next night with extraordinary courage and chutzpah, he goes back and rescues the last captive, Hugh Williams.

It is unlikely that more than a handful of scholars will have known this story, reported only partially in Richard Cocks's Diary (1615-22), and it is an example of the many fascinating nuggets of information about the English pilot of the Dutch ship 'De Liefde', who made landfall in Usuki Bay in April 1600 and went on to achieve fame and fortune as Adviser to Tokugawa Ieyasu with an estate as a *hatamoto* or senior Samurai. The fans of the book, film and television series *Shogun* enjoyed the excitement of Anjin's story, focussed only on his first seven months in Japan, though the 2013 play *Anjin* took the story further. However, in *ANJIN-The Life & Times of Samurai William Adams, 1564-1620* Hiromi T. Rogers reveals a far more detailed and complex picture of Adams as a man and of the turbulent times he lived in. As well as the crucial interface between Adams and the Japanese, the book

provides many insights into both cooperation and competition, and even conflict between the British, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch.

This book is for the general public in Britain and Japan, as well as for experts. It is highly readable and can be strongly recommended. There are, however, a few caveats. The author's special angle on Adams is that she is a Japanese PhD married to a former British diplomat, and is therefore very sensitive to cross-cultural issues. She also states in the Foreword that she has been able to gain access to the private archives of Daimyo and other important families, as well as studying official sources in both countries. However, the author states from the outset that she is attempting to combine fact and fiction, mainly alerting the reader to 'informed imagining' when she switches the narrative to the present tense.

Nevertheless, it is sometimes frustrating not to find all sources clearly referenced, though many are, and inconsistencies in the spelling of names in various parts of the book are unhelpful. So are the inadequacies of the index, which often leaves out altogether people who are referred to in the main text. This militates against ease of cross-referencing for those who are attempting to research more deeply into this fascinating period of history. A few examples should suffice: Gisbert de Coning appears in the index once, compared to three times in the text, similarly for Toyotomi Hideyori, Melchior van Santvoort twice in the index rather than 19 times in the text, and Jan Joosten van Lodensteyn, after whom the Yaesu entrance to Tokyo Station is named, only three times in the index rather than 27 times in the text. Moreover, it can be confusing that the order of Japanese given and surnames can vary between Western and Japanese order, even in the same paragraph.

In addition, the author sometimes omits significant points, such as on page 80 where she leaves out the fact that the great warlord Oda Nobunaga, (whom she unusually refers to as Lord Oda), encouraged the spread of Christianity as a counterbalance to the excessive power of groups of militant, armed Buddhists. Sometimes she makes unsubstantiated statements, such as on page 147 when she fails to provide a source for the important quote after Adams has met Dutch emissaries: 'he promised to do so, as "a friend of the Netherlands and to regard it as his fatherland."' Elsewhere she writes about the conflict between Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits, without also examining rivalries between Dominicans and Franciscans, or mentioning the Iberian Union between 1580 and 1640 and the

impact a united Spanish and Portuguese crown might have had on policies and people.

One of the interesting illustrations in the book is of the statue of Erasmus, which is thought to have stood on the poop deck of 'De Liefde'- rather than fixed to the stern, as the author claims. She writes that this important art historical object is to be found in the Ryuko-In temple in Tochigi Prefecture, but it has also been displayed among the late medieval Buddhist carvings of the Tokyo National Museum in Ueno Park, Tokyo. She goes a bit adrift on Erasmus himself, whom she describes as 'the Dutch scholar who established some principles of Protestantism, a hundred years before Adams was born'. In fact, though born 98 years before Adams, Erasmus naturally only came into his prime as a thinker quite a while later.

The author claims on page 71 that there is no official record of samurai using cannons or muskets until the late seventeenth century, although muskets played a decisive role at the Battle of Nagashino in 1575 and she herself describes the use of cannon at Sekigahara. Perhaps she means "use" in a personal sense rather than use by generals in deploying their forces. Her fascinating and detailed account of the complicated Sekigahara campaign would have been enhanced by a map, though the book does provide several useful maps in its early pages. On page 87 she visualizes Adams having considered presenting a telescope to congratulate Ieyasu on his appointment as Shogun in 1603, whereas the telescope was not invented until 1608.

Surprisingly on page 190 the author does not mention the role played by King James's Chief Minister, Lord Salisbury, in organizing the voyage of the East India Company's 'The Clove', though in 1613 Adams was to provide the crucial input to ensure the success of this first official British Mission to Japan. The author rightly highlights the very bad relationship between Adams and the Mission leader John Saris, but since Saris is a relatively unusual surname, the reader is left wondering if the Mary Hyn Mabel, whom Adams marries on page 6, 'daughter of Master Saris, a wealthy London merchant', is in some way related to John Saris. Later in the book, there is mention of interest in the North-West Passage but not also of the North-East Passage. Once Saris and Adams are engaged on their journey around Japan to conduct the British Mission's official business, there is no mention of stones being thrown at them in Osaka, a striking incident in Saris's logbook, or Adams going inside the great Buddha at Kamakura. Writing about Shogun Hidetada's official gifts for King James, she states on page 209: 'It is

widely believed that one of those suits of armour can still be seen on display in the Tower of London today'. In fact, that suit of armour, originally worn by the loser at Nagashino, is in the Tower with its provenance clearly labelled. The second is in the Royal Armoury's collection in Leeds.

Finally, the next edition of the book would be enhanced by more precision on dates. For instance, on page 266 the author writes about the ending of Japan's *sakoku* or closure period, 'until in fact 1868 when it was another Englishman, Sir Harry Parkes, who helped the American admiral Matthew Perry to open Japan up again to a very different world'. There is no mention of the key date 1853 when Perry arrived in Japan with his flotilla and delivered his ultimatum to the Tokugawa authorities to end the *sakoku* policy. Parkes, of course, deserves credit for later modernization, but the young diplomat Ernest Satow played an earlier and more innovative role, closer to the culturally sensitive model set by Adams.

On the other hand, these blemishes in the book do not diminish its readability, nor its important contribution to achieving a deeper understanding of the crucial period, which preceded just over two centuries of *sakoku*. Persecution of Christians had already begun in Japan during Adams's time there, and the book shows how the intense rivalry between the different Westerners was a factor in leading the Shogun to decide on the closure of Japan to all but the small Dutch and Chinese communities of traders, restricted to closely watched areas of Nagasaki. The colonization of the islands, renamed the Philippines in 1952, was naturally also a factor influencing official Japanese thinking -not mentioned in the book.

The author concludes her book with an interesting Epilogue and Afterword, though it is a pity that she does not mention attempts in the United Kingdom to redress the imbalance of knowledge about Adams in Britain

compared with Japan. For instance, the first sister city links between Britain and Japan date from 1982 and consist appropriately of links between Yokosuka and Ito which both hold annual Anjinsai festivals to celebrate their Adams connections and his birthplace, Gillingham in Kent, where former Mayor Susan Haydock also organizes an annual festival in his honour.

The Japan Society banquet in the magnificent Painted Hall of the former Royal Naval College, Greenwich, arranged by Captain Robert Guy LVO, RN on the 400th anniversary year of Adams's arrival in Japan, is another example of commemoration, and more recently numerous events were organized by Japan400, linking direct descendants of King James I and VI and his Chief Minister Lord Salisbury with the direct descendant of the Matura Daimyo in Hirado with whom Adams cooperated and of Tokugawa Ieyasu and Tokugawa Hidetada. Adams might not have relished the attention also paid by Japan400 to British memorials to the East India Company's Sir Thomas Smythe, John Saris and Richard Cocks, but he would undoubtedly have enjoyed the samurai tea ceremonies led by Matura Akira and his society of loyal helpers in the Banqueting House, Whitehall, under the benevolent gaze of King James from the Rubens ceiling, and in the church of St. Mary Magdalene in Gillingham where Adams was christened. Key backers of Japan400 such as Robin Maynard have since formed the William Adams Club in Tokyo to promote UK-Japanese relations and the memory of Adams, and work is already under way in both countries to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Adams's death on 16th May 1620. Miura Anjin would welcome the coincidence of this important Olympic year for Japan following Britain's Olympics, with only Brazil's in between.

All in all, having set the record straight, *ANJIN* is nevertheless a most entertainingly written book and a rattling good yarn, not to be missed. §

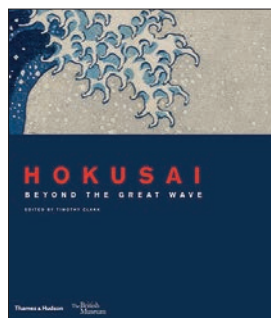
Hokusai Beyond The Great Wave

edited by Timothy Clark

Thames and Hudson and The British Museum (2017)

ISBN-13: 978-0500094068

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi



It is very rare for a book on a single artist to make the bestseller list as this did. Indeed it was the top bestseller in one list that I saw and the book had to be reprinted.

Anyone who managed to visit the Hokusai exhibition at the British Museum this summer must have been impressed by Hokusai's genius as a painter and print artist. They will find in this volume with its wealth of colour illustrations and the scholarly essays that accompany them a valuable reminder of what they saw as well as insights into Hokusai's life and work. For those who failed to get tickets or missed the exhibition this volume, while no substitute for the exhibition itself, will give them a taste of what they

missed. A copy should be in the library of anyone with an interest in Japanese art.

The volume does not pretend to be a catalogue of all Hokusai's works. As he produced around 3000 colour prints, many hundreds of paintings, and numerous sketches in his long life, to list and reproduce them all would require many volumes, but the selection from his late career presented in this volume is an excellent introduction to Hokusai's art and the bibliography points to other works on Hokusai that the student can consult.

Tim Clark, the editor and British Museum curator in his essay 'Late Hokusai backwards' begins: "Hokusai believed that the older he got the better his art became". Thirty-two paintings produced when he was 88 have survived and twelve have been preserved from his ninetieth and final year. As the name which he adopted in later life *Gakyō rōjin* ('picture-mad old man' if literally translated) implies he could not stop drawing and painting. Sadly he did not manage to live to 100 when he hoped to have achieved 'a divine state' in his art.



Self-portrait, aged eighty-three
Drawing in a letter, ink on paper, 1842
National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, RMV3513-1496

Clark reminds us that Hokusai in middle age had performed several tremendous feats of outdoor performance art such as painting gigantic head-and-shoulder images of Daruma. Hokusai had a great sense of the ridiculous and his published collections of humorous sketches (*Hokusai manga*) are a high point in the long tradition of satirical drawing first manifest in the medieval *Chōjū jinbutsu giga* depiction of animals behaving like human beings.

Hokusai was extraordinarily productive during his long life. He wrote stories and poems and illustrated many books. While conscious of his own genius and worth (the famous novelist Kyokutei Bakin noted that Hokusai's fees were 'unusually high') knew that in producing woodblock prints he had to work closely with the various craftsmen involved in the production process.

Hokusai was an innovator. From his early twenties he adopted elements of European perspective adding depth to his depictions of the sea and mountains. He had great imagination and an exceptional eye for the beauties of the natural world. Perhaps above all it was his instinct for colour and composition, which made him such an exceptionally great artist. He seemed to know instinctively how to compose a picture to make maximum impact on the viewer.

These were probably the principal reasons why once Japanese prints began to reach Europe Hokusai became the focus of interest of French painters and to have such an important influence on the French impressionists. Indeed Hokusai in the nineteenth century perhaps because woodblock prints were so easily transportable and plentiful came to be seen in the West as Japan's greatest painter. In traditional Japanese art circles in the late nineteenth he was not accorded the same recognition although he did many hanging scroll paintings of landscapes and beauties in the Japanese classical tradition. His fame abroad was based on woodblock prints, which in snobbish Japanese eyes were seen as rather vulgar.

His genius and his fame as one of the greatest artists in the world are now duly recognized in Japan as in the rest of the world. §

Interested in writing for The Japan Society Review?

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