

A Fascinating Book on R.H. Blyth, a Cultural Giant: Thank you, Professor Blyth by Kuniyoshi Ueda

日本文化研究の巨人、R.H. ブライズに関する新著

『ブライズ先生、ありがとう』上田邦義著

LARS VARGO

ラース・ヴァーゴ

要旨： R.H. ブライズは世界のジャポノロジスト（日本研究者）から、俳句・川柳を中心とする日本文化の海外紹介者の中心人物の一人と目されている。そのブライズについて、上田教授の魅力的な新著が出た。ブライズは禅の特異な解説者としても知られ、彼がいなかったらアメリカのビート詩人たちはあれほど有名にはなれなかった。それだけでも十分卓越していたが、彼がそのほか多面的な活動をしていたことが、本書によって明らかになった。欧米では余り知られていない事実、彼が昭和天皇の「人間宣言」の起草者であったこと、現天皇の皇太子時代の家庭教師を二十年間勤めたこと、彼自身は第一次大戦中「良心的徴兵忌避者」として英国の刑務所で労役に服した徹底した平和主義者であったこと、第二次大戦中も帰国せず神戸の収容所に抑留されていたこと。さらにまた、優れた音楽家、一流のユーモリストで、日本人にとっては英語英文学の熱心な教授であったこと、等等。これは、巨人ブライズの評伝として極めて貴重な一書である。

Keywords: R.H. Blyth, Japanologist, haiku, senryu, zen, beat generation, Emperor's declaration as a mortal, Dag Hammarskjold. R.H. ブライズ、日本研究家、俳句、川柳、禅、ビート詩人、昭和天皇「人間宣言」、ダグ・ハマースホルド。

Professor Ueda has written a fascinating book on a person that most Japanologists would consider one of the main characters in the introduction of Japan and Japanese culture to the rest of the world, Reginald Horace Blyth, or simply R.H. Blyth as he has become known through his many books.

R.H. Blyth is perhaps best known as an ardent student and expert of haiku and senryu. He translated most of the outstanding short classical Japanese poems into English and provided the translations with interesting and instructive explanations. He

also introduced zen through very informative books that gained wide popularity. His works can be considered as the starting point of haiku poetry and the fascination for zen Buddhism in the West. Without him writers and poets of the so-called beat generation would not have gained the attention they later did. That feat in itself would be enough to place Blyth among the cultural giants of the world. But through Professor Ueda's book we learn much more about this fascinating man. For instance, he was instrumental in the formulation of the speech that the Japanese Emperor gave after the second world war, when declaring himself a mortal, a human among humans, not a god.

He was not without influence on the present Emperor either. He worked for twenty years a private tutor to then Crown Prince Akihito. And it was an assignment that fits well with the pacifist character of today's Imperial House. Professor Blyth was himself a pacifist, and in fact served time in a British jail as a conscientious objector during the first world war, and during the second world war he was kept in an internment camp in Kobe, Japan as an enemy citizen, for he had married a Japanese woman and had no idea of returning to Britain,

Professor Blyth was also a talented musician and a person with great humour, shown not least through his books about Japanese and English humour. He also introduced English literature and poetry to Japanese readers.

Professor Ueda's book, "Thank you, Professor Blyth", is one of the very few books through which we can learn more about this giant, Professor R.H. Blyth. I really enjoyed reading it. Thank you, Professor Ueda!

There is one small spelling mistake in the Swedish poem by Dag Hammarskjöld. The first word in the last line should read "Deras" (not "Dras").

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Editor's Note: Ambassador Vargo is a Japanologist.

編者注：ラース・ヴァーゴ氏は、駐韓国スウェーデン大使で日本研究家。