

**Book Review: Thank you, Professor Blyth.
by Kuniyoshi Ueda (2010)**

書評「ブライズ先生、ありがとう」上田邦義著

Amy VAILLANCOURT MATSUOKA

エイミー ヴァレンコート 松岡

Abstract:

本書は、一人の英国人に永遠の師事を誓う著者が、弟子として師の人生と教えを讃えるため、綿密な調査検証と敬愛に満ちた筆致で著した書である。レジナルド ホレス ブライズは、日本占領下の韓国に10年滞在した後日本に移り、その後約20年日本で暮らし日本で没した。彼が、日本の詩、特に俳句、また禅を西欧へ紹介したことは、世界的に良く知られている。これらに加え本書では上田氏の視点により、彼の深遠で透徹した人間哲学が浮き彫りにされることとなる。日本内外の歴史に影響を与えたブライズに直に接した経験によって書かれたこの書の貴重さは比類がないものである。早期の英語版の刊行が待たれる。

Keywords: Reginald Horace BLYTH, Kuniyoshi UEDA, Korea, Japanese poetry, haiku, Zen Buddhism, Basho, *noblesse oblige*

レジナルド ホレス ブライズ、上田邦義、韓国、日本の詩、俳句、禅、芭蕉、ノーブレス・オブリージ

This is a meticulously researched and loving written account of an eternally dedicated student to honor the life and teachings of his British mentor. Reginald Horace Blyth (1898 – 1964) lived in Japanese occupied Korea for ten years, then spent the remainder of his life in Japan. The world over, R. H. Blyth is best known for introducing Japanese poetry, especially haiku, and Zen Buddhism to the West. However, Ueda's perspective gives him a deeper and truly human façade.

The book is structured into four parts. Ueda begins with 'The True Educator' which contains: teachings of Prof. Blyth, Prof. Blyth and the imperial family, and Prof. Blyth's background. Part two is 'Following Prof. Blyth': meeting him, and his English

poem lectures. The third part is titled 'The Japan That Prof. Blyth Loved'. This section includes: world pioneer of haiku, Blyth's point of view on Basho, Prof. Blyth's technique of haiku, haiku's spread into the English world, Prof. Blyth's point of view on Zen, comedy haiku 'senryu' and the Japanese sense of humor. The last part is aptly called 'Prof. Blyth's Last Lecture': when he passed away, and his requiem.

Perhaps Blyth's lessons are best demonstrated in the anecdote that begins the book. Ueda comments that the following situation and Blyth's reaction are typical of his great wit and sense of humor. It is recounted as: When Japan's current Emperor (*heisei tenno*) was Blyth's student, Blyth accidentally dropped a pen during a lesson. Blyth did not immediately retrieve it, but waited for the prince's reaction. Blyth then asked, "Who should pick it up?" The prince replied, "The person closest to the pen should do it." Blyth smiled and asked the Prince whether someone should bring a ruler so the distance between the pencil and the two people could be measured. When the prince did not move Blyth continued this lesson by stating, "The person with a higher status should do it. One always has to be ready to serve people who are of lower status. This is *noblesse oblige*." Always a pacifist, and a student of Zen Buddhism, Blyth was a man of many talents with a deep perspective on the human condition.

Ueda also recalls that Blyth often said, "There is no fixed way to react to a situation. One's reaction will change depending on the parties involved. You have to think for yourself and make decisions. It is no good to make judgments based on common sense or scientific theory. Only human ethics, which respect the will and feeling of human beings, will make a true human relationship." In these turbulent times of the early twenty-first century, I am struck by the timeliness and truth of these words. As first-hand accounts of this historical figure are few and far between, I am anxiously awaiting the English version to be published.

Amy Vaillancourt Matsuoka is an Arts Writer for *THE DAILY YOMIURI* and Assistant Professor at Meikai University.

エイミー・ヴァレンコート・松岡氏は、『英文読売』芸術担当記者で明海大学講師。