Harold Stnnet Williams and Nagasaki
— From the viewpoint of philosophical anthropology —

KIMURA Hiroshi *

Summary
From the viewpoint of philosophical anthropology, this paper will consider the true character of Harold Stnnet Williams. In his book, The Story of HOLME RINGER and CO., LTD. IN WESTERN JAPAN 1868-1968, H.S. Williams indicates that he felt a great interest in Nagasaki. Williams rates Frederick Ringer’s work highly. As a historian, Williams attached importance to a search for historical facts. At the same time, however, Williams emphasized the importance of ‘soul’ in his writings. This paper will explore the potentially contradictory standpoints, one, being faithful to facts and, the other, paying respect to the soul. In my opinion, these different qualities form the attractive personality of H.S. Williams who remained an outsider in Japan for over 60 years.

Keywords : philosophical anthropology, true character, facts and soul

1. Introduction
Harold Stnnet Williams (1898-1987) was deeply interested in Nagasaki. In fact, he studied its culture and history as part of his research on the former foreign settlements of Japan, visited the city on several occasions, and communicated with local residents. However, he never assimilated himself with Nagasaki; on the contrary, he was conscious of the fact that such assimilation would be impossible. In this regard we recognize a characteristic attitude of Harold S. Williams, who lived in Japan for over 60 years, contributed to goodwill between Australia and Japan, and widely published the results of his studies on Japan, all the while maintaining a respectful distance between himself and this country.

Nagasaki aroused Williams’ intellectual interest. At the same time, this interest was based on a clear consciousness of the difference between his native culture and that of Japan. This point is interesting from the viewpoint of philosophical anthropology, because philosophical anthropology is not only a science of consciousness-of-the-self but also investigates the social and historical essence of human beings and therefore exists in mutual relationships with differences intact.

It is indeed meaningful that Williams, as a historian, not only attached importance to a search for historical facts but also emphasized the importance of soul. Although perhaps not incompatible, being faithful to facts and paying respect to the soul are essentially different.

* Professor, the Department of Human Environment
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Williams' great appeal lies in the fact that both of these qualities are apparent in him.

In this paper, I will consider the true character of H.S. Williams and his attitude toward Nagasaki from the viewpoint of philosophical anthropology.

2. H.S. Williams and Holme Ringer & Co.
Holme Ringer & Co. was one of the most important and enduring companies in the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement. It was founded in 1868 by Frederick Ringer and Edward Z. Holme to take over part of the business conducted by Glover & Co., which had been established in Nagasaki in 1862 by Scotsman Thomas Blake Glover (1838-1911).

On the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Holme Ringer & Co. in 1868, Harold S. Williams – who by that time was already an acknowledged authority on the history of the former foreign settlements in Japan – was requested to write a book on the history of the company. The result was an 86-page volume entitled The Story of Holme Ringer & Co., Ltd. in Western Japan 1868-1968. ¹

H.S. Williams’ treatment of Holme Ringer & Co. focuses on intercultural exchange. To be sure, Holme Ringer & Co. engaged in a wide range of business pursuits including trade, insurance and shipping agencies, hotel management and newspaper publication, but these activities certainly went far beyond the realm of financial transactions. It should be noted that the company consistently promoted interchange between the Japanese and foreign communities.

I would like to introduce a document which stimulates our interest. Dated 16 October 1967, this is a letter addressed to H.S. Williams by Michael Ringer, the grandson of Frederick Ringer. During the process of his detailed fieldwork and research for the book on the company history, Williams had managed to contact Ringer and to ask for relevant information. The letter contains the following passage:

My brother and I were born in Nagasaki and came home to school in 1922. I left Malvern College in 1932 and joined the firm that year. My brother (Vanya Ringer) joined a year later. During our period with the firm the most significant [event] was the appointment of Senior Japanese staff in place of the English staff.²

¹ Harold S. Williams, The Story of Holme Ringer & Co., Ltd. in Western Japan 1868-1968. Tokyo : Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1968. Although issued by the publisher of several of Williams’ previous works, this book was a limited commemorative edition financed by the company and distributed free of charge. It is also clear that Williams declined remuneration for the work. For detailed information, see letters in MS 6681, Series 1, Folder 108, all of which are included in The Papers of Harold S. Williams, preserved today at the National Library of Australia. The author and his colleague Brian F. Burke-Gaffney conducted research on this collection in February and March 2007.
² Cf. MS 6681, Series 1, Folder 108, in The Papers of Harold S. Williams, National Library of Australia.
If, as shown here, the most significant event at the time was the appointment of senior Japanese staff, does it mean that before then the firm treated the Japanese staff coldly? This is certainly not the case. As Williams has pointed out, it was a tradition of Holme Ringer & Co. to respect the cultural identity of Japanese staff and to allow them to give full play to their abilities. This point is confirmed by the fact that, in the early 1890s when the foreign settlements were still intact, Frederick Ringer placed total trust in his friend Wuriu Hajime and opened Wuriu Shokwai (Wuriu & Co.) in Shimonoseki for the development of business in western Japan. Moreover, when extraterritoriality was repealed and the foreign settlements abolished in 1899, the company played an important role in the establishment of the Nagasaki International Club (Naigai Club) 'with a view to promoting goodwill and understanding between the Japanese and foreign residents'. Before that time, foreign residents associated with each other in the Nagasaki Club, an institution that imitated its counterparts throughout the British Empire and generally excluded 'natives'. By contrast, the Nagasaki International Club was designed specifically to enhance friendship between Japanese and foreigners, both residents and visitors.

As shown by the above, Holme Ringer & Co. itself was not only a prominent business establishment but also a stronghold of international and intercultural exchange.

It is true that, today, the celebrity of Thomas Glover surpasses that of Frederick Ringer. However, H.S. Williams applauds Frederick Ringer's achievements, going as far as to say 'in total it can fairly be said that his contributions to the establishment of commerce and industries in Kyushu were greater than those of any other foreigner, greater even than those of Thomas B. Glover.'

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States anchored in Uraga Bay and Russian Admiral Evfimii Putiatin sailed into Nagasaki Harbor, each demanding the opening of Japan to trade and diplomatic relations. Overwhelmed by foreign pressure, the Tokugawa Shogunate signed full-fledged commercial treaties with the United States, Russia, Britain, France and the Netherlands in 1858. The following year, Japan ended its more than two-century-long period of national isolation and opened its doors to foreign countries. Yokohama, Hakodate and Nagasaki were officially opened to foreign trade on 1 July 1859. As H.S. Williams points out, however, 'the opening was a very different affair' in Nagasaki and as compared to the other two cities because Nagasaki had been a thriving centre of international trade for centuries. Until that time, Japan had adhered to a strict policy of national isolation and severed all official contacts with the outside world, aside from the Dejima Dutch Factory and the Chinese Quarter in Nagasaki. It is for this reason that Nagasaki flourished as a venue for intercultural exchange and developed into a city with a unique cosmopolitan culture.

During the 1860s, when Japan threw off the mantle of the old and embraced the new, Thomas Glover contributed to the groundwork by importing, as H.S. Williams points out, 'anything and

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3 Harold S. Williams, _op.cit._ 48.
4 _Ibid._ 53.
5 _Ibid._ 42.
everything which the Japanese wanted in their determination to transform their feudal country into a modern nation.\textsuperscript{7}

Unfortunately, however, the changing times disadvantaged Glover & Co. The success of the company in helping to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate unexpectedly took Glover & Co. by the throat. ‘The daimyo (territorial nobles) were required to give up their lands, their revenue, and their titles, and accept an altered position within the administrative structure of the country. Many became governors of prefectures on a salary basis.’\textsuperscript{8} Many of the former feudal clans had unpaid debts to Glover & Co., and these, along with other factors such as the fluctuation in the value of Japanese currency and the reluctance of backers such as Jardine Matheson & Co. to provide further financial support, caused the demise of the company which had figured so importantly in Japan’s historic changes.

In the process of bankruptcy, Glover relied heavily on Frederick Ringer, whom he had hired in 1865 to supervise the company’s tea trade. However, the collapse of Glover & Co. and establishment of Holme Ringer & Co. actually contrasted sharply. The direct reason for the bankruptcy of Glover & Co was failure to keep pace with Japan’s tumultuous changes around the time of the Meiji Restoration, while, from the beginning, Holme Ringer & Co. paid close attention to international trade and the changing market in Japan. In 1868, when Holme Ringer & Co. came into being, ‘the value of imports to Nagasaki far exceeded that of exports from that port.’\textsuperscript{9} With the opening of Kobe and Osaka, however, imports to Nagasaki decreased rapidly. Ringer responded quickly and effectively to these new trends, emphasizing exports over imports and launching a dazzling array of new business ventures that contributed greatly to the economic welfare of Nagasaki and assured the prosperity of the company, which continues to exist today in the city of Kita Kyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture.

Thus, H.S. Williams lauded Frederick Ringer for the active role he played as an intermediate between Japanese and foreigners. He probably also saw himself reflected in the story of the Ringers, a family that stayed and prospered in Japan while at the same time strictly maintaining their ‘foreign-ness’.

3. Philosophical Anthropology as a Science of ‘Consciousness-of-the-self’
The term ‘philosophical anthropology’ was espoused by Miki Kiyoshi (1897-1945). Miki was born in the village of Ogami (present day Tatsuno city to the west of Kobe) in Hyogo Prefecture. Miki studied European philosophy under Nishida Kitaro, who is renowned for his philosophy of place and philosophy of absolute nothing. Influenced by Nishida’s philosophy, Miki presented his own system, that is, philosophical anthropology and a theory of imagination which were unfortunately interrupted by his sudden death while incarcerated as a political prisoner.

To put it simply, Miki’s philosophical anthropology is a science of ‘consciousness-of-the-self’ that unifies object and method. In other words, philosophical anthropology is a system, not of the

\textsuperscript{7} Harold S. Williams, The Story of Holme Ringer & Co., Ltd. in Western Japan 1868-1968, 17.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid. 20.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. 22.
study of human beings as an object of research, but of self-study and self-understanding. In this regard, consciousness-of-the-self means not only the consciousness of existence of the self but also 'consciousness of the ground of existence of the self'. As Miki points out, however, 'consciousness of the ground is void because the ground of being is void in relation to the existence of being'.

Thus consciousness-of-the-self takes shape historically, meaning that it is based not on theory but on action. The self is encountered in action. So it is the consciousness of an active person. Action is absolutely realistic; it is daily human life itself. Everyday life is the world in which a person lives, works and experiences. Accordingly, everyday life is the expression of humanity. A person expresses the self and in this expression understands his/her essence. Expression is self-creation. In self-creation the self is confirmed. Therefore, consciousness-of-the-self comes not only from the past but also from the future. Herein lies the deep meaning of historical consciousness.

At the same time, consciousness-of-the-self is 'social consciousness'. A person encounters the self in social relations. 'Although a person comes from society, he is independent from it and able to change it. He or she changes society through personal action, and the society changed in this way continually produces new people'. At the same time, however, a disconnection exists between people and society. That is, a person is a member of society and yet often feels like an outsider.

How can this contradiction be solved? According to Miki, it cannot be solved by forcibly reconciling conflicting things. On the contrary, it can be solved only by recognizing conflicting things as such. Miki explains this in his theory of imagination, which holds that imagination by analogy combines disparate things while retaining or rather utilizing the difference between them. Analogy seeks unity among different things, not by abstracting them, but by recognizing them. So in unity based on analogy 'the difference among disparate things comes to the forefront, and variety becomes unity by maintaining, not scrapping, the quality of difference'.

Miki plotted his model of philosophical anthropology in the 1930s, but I think that it is still applicable to modern-day intercultural exchange and understanding.

4. Williams' Attitude toward Nagasaki

H.S. Williams' work as a historian was characterized by 'finding out facts'. This feature naturally applies to his attitude toward Nagasaki as well. He remained faithful to facts gleaned from the

15 Keiko Tamura, Harold S Williams and his Japan, in Michael Ackland and Pam Oliver (Eds.), *Unexpected Encounters: Neglected histories behind the Australia - Japan relationship*. Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 2007, 44.
various sources, primary and secondary, that he unearthed in the course of his research. It is from 
this position that he grasps Nagasaki. His opinion about the relationship between the Glover 
House and the opera Madame Butterfly is of particular interest, because this opinion is also based 
on facts and reveals a conflict that is demonstrative of Williams’s relationship with Japan.

Giacomo Puccini’s opera Madame Butterfly is a masterpiece of tragedy set in Nagasaki. 
The opera is based on a short story published by John Luther Long in the literary journal The 
Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine in 1898. Long was a Japanophile who had already written 
a story entitled Miss Cherry Blossom of Tokyo in 1895, but he had never and would never visit 
Japan. One of his sources of information about Japan was his sister Sarah Jane Correll who lived 
in Nagasaki for five years from 1891, and another was Pierre Loti’s best-selling travelogue Madame 
Chrysanthème. Loti stayed in Nagasaki for a month in 1885 and engaged in a relationship with a 
Japanese woman which he ironically dubbed ‘Japanese marriage’. His story, however rebuked for 
its sexism and racism, is based on his personal experience in Nagasaki. Long, on the other hand, 
borrowed heavily from Madame Chrysanthème but rejected Loti’s supercilious and dispassionate 
portrayal of real events.

Thus it is clear that, while Madame Chrysanthème is based on reality, Madame Butterfly is 
a work of fiction. Nevertheless, when the discussion begins to involve the Glover House in 
Nagasaki, the issue suddenly becomes complicated. In 1948, a Nagasaki Museum employee named 
Shimauchi Hachirō was interviewed by a reporter from the Mainichi Shim bun. His comment 
reveals the course of events behind the nicknaming of the Glover House as the ‘Madame Butterfly 
House’:

[Shimauchi Hachirō : ] Nagasaki means Madame Butterfly, and Madame Butterfly means 
Nagasaki. Nagasaki is famous worldwide for the atomic bomb and Madame Butterfly, but 
there is nothing here to remind visitors of Madame Butterfly. Because of this, a group of 
interested persons including myself is working on a project to establish a Madame 
Butterfly monument. And so what about the place to put it? Of course the former 
Glover house in Minamimyamate is the best choice. It fits perfectly with the image of 
Madame Butterfly [waiting on a Nagasaki hillside for her fickle American lover to 
return].

It is obvious that fact and fiction are being intentionally confused, and it was precisely this 
confusion that H.S. Williams criticized:

At first when the Nagasaki City authorities decided to whip up the tourist trade by putting 
on the ‘Madame Butterfly House’ hoax, they described it rather obliquely, or shall we say 
with calculated ambiguity.

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172. For the English translation, see below. Brian F. Burke-Gaffney, Starcrossed: A Biography of 
But now the gloves are off. The Butterfly romance, we are now being told, really happened in the Glover mansion, and both the lady and the house are now being given a prominent place in the tourist attractions along with the memorial to the twenty-six Christian martyrs, and the other truly historic monuments of Nagasaki's past. We say this in sorrow more than in anger, because we always receive the most kindly treatment from all the officials there whose assistance we seek in our researches.

It is sad to know that most of the tourists, both Japanese and foreigners, who visit the delightful villa overlooking the harbour, leave believing they have seen the actual house wherein the Madame Butterfly romance and tragedy occurred, and they will remember it as such, rather than as the home built in the early days by the highly respected British merchant, Thomas B. Glover, who lived there with his wife and children.\(^{17}\)

Williams was adamant: fact is fact and fiction is fiction, and a clear distinction must be drawn between the two. Brian Burke-Gaffney endorses Williams' opinion and explains the situation in Nagasaki as follows: 'It is clear, therefore, that the Nagasaki officials trying to make the Glover House into a tourist mecca were fully aware that they had no leg to stand on historically. They simply pushed ahead with the project because they considered the need to promote economic growth more compelling than responsibility to convey the truth'.\(^{18}\)

5. Williams' True Character

As we have seen, H.S. Williams had a passionate respect for historical facts. However, it should also be noted that he emphasized the importance of soul.

Respecting facts and being faithful to the soul are qualitatively different. The former means emphasizing objectivity, while the latter means trusting in subjectivity. I would like to consider how these two are connected in Williams' personality.

Why do people pay respect to the soul? Because 'we know and are proud of its [= our country's] virtues and good points'.\(^{19}\) In this regard, soul is a synonym for pride. Furthermore the soul is not individual and arbitrary but rather social and traditional. 'The soul of a country is born in its past'.\(^{20}\) Of course, in every country there are good points and faults. 'We know its weaknesses and bad points, and are doing our utmost to eradicate them', because 'a nation without a soul is lost'.\(^{21}\) This is the logic of recognition, that is, the ability to recognize a partner, with all his/her faults, as his/her being in itself.

Naturally, the 'soul' as seen by an Australian is different from that seen by a Japanese. But the difference is irrelevant here, because Williams is asserting that people should cherish their national soul, regardless of differences of culture.


\(^{18}\) Brian F. Burke-Gaffney, *op.cit.* 182.

\(^{19}\) Harold S. Williams, Gaijin ni iken wo kiku shikan, in *Sandoi Mainichi*, 7 May 1958, 11.


\(^{21}\) *Ibid.*
Nevertheless, in reality, mutual exchange and understanding among different souls inevitably involves tough choices. For example, in his book on Holme Ringer & Co. Williams refers to the Glover House as ‘the so-called Madame Butterfly House’ but avoids any further allusion to the subject, even though, on so many other occasions, he criticized the Nagasaki authorities for their use of this historically groundless appellation. His ‘true colors’, it can be said, would have been to criticize. Why, then, did he abstain from criticism?

A document in the aforementioned folder on Holme Ringer & Co. in the H.S. Williams Collection at the National Library of Australia sheds some light on this question. In one of his meticulous typewritten notes, Williams tells us that he had been forced to make changes to the book and to eschew expression of his real views:

The following sentences which appeared in my original draft of The Story of Holme Ringer & Co., LTD. In Western Japan 1868-1968, were deleted from the final m.s., because it was thought that they might give offence to the Governor of Nagasaki Prefecture and to the Mayor of Nagasaki who had been invited to write Forewords for the book: ‘The Glover House, next door, which was built about 1863-1865, some five years or so earlier than the Ringer House, is the better known of the two among tourists, because of the myth which has been created about it concerning the fictitious Madame Butterfly. Neither Madame Butterfly, nor the fictitious Lieutenant Pinkerton resembled in the least the respectable Thomas Blake Glover or his equally respectable Japanese wife, nor does the fanciful romance resemble the story of their lives’.  

This note indicates that Williams felt unhappy, perhaps even guilty, about acquiescing to the deletion. It is also likely that he resented the fact that his refutation of the connection drawn between the Glover House and the opera Madame Butterfly, a refutation which he felt was based on indisputable ‘facts’, had been consistently ignored in the presentation of the house.

The following comment was penned as a caption to a photograph showing a statue of Miura Tamaki (a Japanese soprano famous for her portrayal of Madame Butterfly) in Nagasaki’s Glover Garden. Also contained in the H.S. Williams Collection, this comment reveals H.S. Williams’ frustration with the situation in Nagasaki:

The bronze statue of Tamaki Miura in the garden of the Glover House at Nagasaki. She is supposed to be pointing down the bay and telling her son ‘Someday he’ll come,’ instead of which she is pointing directly to the public lavatory.

It must be said that intercultural exchange goes far beyond verbal communication and invariably accompanies many kinds of friction and misunderstanding. When H.S. Williams was

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22 Cf. MS 6681, Series 1, Folder 108, in The Papers of Harold S. Williams, National Library of Australia.
23 Ibid.
considering potential recipients for his vast collection, he decided against Japanese libraries because he considered them to be untrustworthy and, in the end, chose the national library in his native Australia.

Placing importance on facts means being able to criticize; respecting the soul means tolerating differences. It is impossible for one to dissolve into the other. In my opinion, these disparate qualities are features of the personality of H. S. Williams, who came to Japan as a young man, who found a position in one of the old companies of the former Kobe foreign settlement, and who, except for short stays abroad as a result of war, made this country his home for over 60 years while never relinquishing or doubting his status as an outsider.
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