

This is my transcription of an unpublished manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, that the Hungarian-British archaeologist Aurel Stein wrote about his brief stay in Japan prior to embarking on his fourth and final expedition to northwestern China in 1930. It begins with his arrival in Yokohama after having taken a train across Canada from Boston to Vancouver, British Columbia, and then onward on a ship across the Pacific. It is written in a fairly polished literary style, one which suggests that he intended to publish this account later as the prelude of a general narrative about his expedition to China. It differs substantially in style from the daily diary entries he also kept about this trip, which are terse and incomplete. The subsequent obstruction and failure of his 1930–31 expedition in China apparently discouraged Stein from ever publishing anything about it, thus leaving this interesting account of his time in Japan unpublished as well. It contains revealing insights into which parts of Japanese culture and reform he found appealing or admirable, his interactions with Japanese scholars, visits to temples, museums, and universities, and comparisons with China, India (where Stein worked in the British Raj), and Europe. The reference in the opening line to a “Personal Narrative” sets the tone: a “personal narrative” is what he always wrote for each of this first three archaeological expeditions to China—where adventure and hardship were to be expected in great quantities—but Japan (so he says) is “far too ‘civilized’ and complex a world” for that style of narrative.

Off Nagasaki: April 21, 1930. [he is writing this “off Nagasaki” at the end of his Japan stopover, which actually began in Yokohama]

This cannot be a P.[ersonal] N.[arrative], Japan is far too “civilized” and complex a world for that, but only a brief account how I spent the delightful ten days of my “stopover” in this glorious land. It was a most enjoyable time for me, extremely instructive too in a quasi-professional sense, but far too busy from beginning to end for detailed daily notes.

On April 10th the ‘Empress of Asia’ brought me by daybreak to Yokohama. So there was time enough to issue from that huge bustling place which in less than seven years has issued phoenix-like from the ashes left behind by the terrible earthquake, for a long days’ excursion along the shore westwards. From the ‘New Grand Hotel’, a splendid caravanserai of the most modern style, a neat motor bus conducted by a Japanese girl in breeches, carried me some 18 miles out to Kamakura, once a capital and still renowned for its temples. All along the road winding between beautiful pine-clad hills and well-filled green valleys, the cherry-trees were still covered with blossoms white and pink. It was the spring holiday season, and little parties of ‘pilgrims’, bent on the seasonal outing, were passed again & again.

It was the right preparation for what Kamakura was to offer. A constant succession of little groups as well as of compact parties was moving up the broad avenue which leads from the railway station between rows of cherry-trees up to the Shinto shrine of Hachiman. Viewed from above it looked like a rippling stream of gaily decked humanity. Luckily most of the womenfolk still wear their becoming Japanese costume, and the variety of their harmoniously blended colours was here as elsewhere, too, a treat for the eye.

Shinto shrines in their archaic simplicity of wooden architecture, with their carefully close—and practically empty ‘holy places’, have little to offer the eye beyond brilliantly coloured wooden galleries and the like. So I made my way up the hill, covered with luxuriant vegetation, to the oldest of the Buddhist temples of Kamakura, the Kenjoji. I had no one to guide

me and the plentiful signboards, all in Japanese characters as throughout the country, could not help. English is taught in all the middle schools but even among the men who are in European dress complete and look well-educated, it is hard to come across a person, who can readily understand and reply in English. Linguistic ability is, in fact, but poorly developed in this wonderfully capable race.

All the same by consulting a picturesque sketch map drawn as a bird's eye view in true Japanese perspective, I made my way to the temple or group of sanctuaries I sought. Of the monastic establishment to which they belong there was little in evidence, only a monk sitting discreetly by the fine wooden gateway to sell picture cards and another by the door of the main hall where visitors drop their modest coins as offerings in a chest that looks far too big for modern piety. But what order and cleanliness within and all around the buildings! I was not surprised to find that among them the oldest dating from the 8th century A.D. showed pure Chinese architectural features. Just like the climate so the conservative mind of the people has been favourable to old structures in Japan, and apart from big conflagrations on occasions they have been well preserved. In this respect, too, as in many others the similarity of these islands to England is striking, the best illustration I know of what insular position and a temperate climate due to the sea mean for the cultural past of nations.

Behind the big hall of the monastery there stretches quite a succession of picturesque little shrines up a narrow glen. Its terraces have been laid out of old into miniature landscape gardens such as Japanese love to this day. So it was a satisfaction to learn from the little tourist guide that this picturesque glen is reputed to be [the] site of one of the oldest examples of the gardener's traditional art. Groups of booths met at intervals by the side of the paved path and tempting the pilgrims with drinks, viands and objects for pious offerings, in no way detracted from the attraction of this cheery sacred site in being. How often had I tried to reconstruct such a picture among the ruins of other such sites far away in India and the Central-Asian passage land of Buddhism!

It was getting rather warm as I descended from the hill to the town which like a seaside place of the West now seems to live mainly on its visitors. So I was quite ready to be taken in a Riksha to the Dai-butsu, the huge bronze Buddha statue of the 14th century, which forms the chief attraction for them. The wooden temple which once enclosed the seated colossus, has been destroyed by fire long ago, and the unobstructed view only adds to the grandeur of the finely modelled image. But only standing close below it does one fully appreciate the pensive expression of the face with the eyes of the Enlightened One cast down in kindly commiseration. The great wooden image of the thousand-armed Kwannon, too, I visited and felt pleased that this representation of my patron saint's favourite Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara, in its female epiphany, was drawing a crowd of worshippers quite as great as the 'Big Buddha'. Kwannon or Kuan-yin of the Chinese is the 'goddess of mercy'. So the presence of a begging woman with a child, (the only beggar I saw at the whole site) sitting at the foot of the stairs which lead up the rocky slope to the shrine, seemed quite appropriate.

Then I gained the excellently appointed Kaishin Hotel by the seaside, a favourite summer resort but now delightfully quiet, for needful refreshment. But soon I set out by the electric tram line which girdles this lovely coast, for the far-famed Enoshima island. A narrow wooden bridge close on half a mile long, connects it with the shore and for nearly as great a distance the road before reaching it passes between shops and tea places. Plenty of bottles with liquor of sorts were to be seen on front counters, etc. But among the thousands of pilgrims I passed that day I only met one man who in jovial hilarity showed that the spirit of the god had seized him.

Enoshima is a truly beautiful little island, with fir and cedar-clad rocks falling down precipitously into the deep green waters of the sea. Even the booth-lined narrow stairway, which leads up to the shrines on the top of the island, with its bustling crowd, could not spoil my enjoyment of the lovely views opening at every turn towards the cliffs below and across to the bold promontories dividing the little bays. It seemed like a Chinese painter's idealized rendering of a much beloved "piratic coast" by the Atlantic.

It was with such delightful impressions, almost too full for one day, that I returned late in the afternoon by electric tram and electric railway, to Yokohama. The huge central station proved miles away from the quarter where I had to seek the Canadian Pacific Office for the transfer of my ticket to Shanghai. But though it was hard to ask my way, I at last found it and all needful advice, too, about ships and trains. My long day in the open and on firm land had made me glad for the first night's rest on Japanese soil.

There was need for this rest as the two days which followed were busy indeed. In the morning I took the electric 'tram' (in reality a train which goes faster than the railway) to Tokyo. The journey of some 18 miles led through an almost unbroken succession of suburbs and industrial settlements which joins the great harbour town with the capital. Since Japanese houses outside the business quarters with their budding skyscrapers of ferro-concrete construction are generally built of wood and rarely more than one or two storeys high, both Yokohama and Tokyo, with its population of over two millions, spread out inordinately.

My intention had been to spend only that day in the great city and to go by the evening to the old-world town of Nikko. But when I had driven to the Maison franco-japonaise, the French School for Japan first organized by my old friend Sylvain Levi, in order to meet his Sinologist successor, M. Demieville, I soon had to abandon that plan. That interview on arrival of the steamer, had quickly spread the news of my presence among the archaeologists, etc., of Tokyo, and what with telephone enquiries about scholars & collections I wished to see, scarcely an hour or so had passed before learned visitors dropped in and a programme enough to fill two days was drawn up for me. Professor Ino Dan, the Far Eastern archaeologist, and the Rev. Yabuki, who had been the first Japanese scholar to come to the British Museum for work on the Buddhist MSS. I had brought away from the Thousand Buddhas, took charge of me. Together with them and M. Demieville I visited the most picturesque of the temples erected in the memory of the successive Shoguns, of the great Tokugawa family. They had ruled Japan for over two centuries in the name and in the place of its Emperors. Overladen with gilded ornaments, reflecting the Baroque of Japanese art, these large mausoleums were wonderfully impressive. The metallic green of the bronze roofs singularly harmonized with the sombre beauty of the large evergreen trees planted around them. Among them glowed the deep red of camelias in full bloom. Though the great family which raised these memorials has fallen from power with the restoration of the Emperor Meiji, the structures and the votive deposits are well looked after by the monks, and these themselves evidently do not lack adequate sustenance, as shown by the jovial fat figure of the prior who guided us. Yabuki is an honoured representative of the Buddhist Jodo sect which claims the site. So we were duly laden with pictures of the shrines and 'literature' as befits a place of popular pilgrimage. All kinds of photographic reproduction work are wonderfully developed in Japan and the cost far lower than that of equally good work in the West.

The drive in the Shiba Park which adjoins was delightful in the cool of the evening. From there I could view the massive standing walls enclosing the great area which holds the imperial palaces, once tenanted by the Shoguns. Nothing can be seen of them but the roofs of Chinese style here and there and the well-guarded gateways of the circumvallation which the big

earthquake had failed to bring down. Strange seemed the contrast between this 'forbidden city' ensconced among the fine old trees and the skyscrapers facing it at a distance from the side of the modern business quarter.

Fortunately a portion of the old city had escaped [the] earthquake and the conflagration which followed it. Though broad roads had been driven through it since, there was still a good deal of quaint old time dwellings to be seen there as we drove to the large villa, built with ostentatious lavishness by Baron Okura, one of Tokyo's millionaires, to hold his collection of Chinese and other antiquities. If its contents do not, perhaps, come up quite to the expense their acquisition and housing must have involved yet the spirit animating this representative of the modern industrialist aristocracy holds out promise. It was less easy to appreciate the antiquarian taste which has led the owner to preserve the burnt out shell of the former residence as a memorial of the great catastrophe of 1923, for its architectural features, copied from some poor Europe model, might well have deserved destruction.

It was a very different display of beautiful Chinese antiques which I was able to visit next morning in the town residence of Marquis Hosokawa. The owner, the head of an ancient noble family, was away at the time. But informed by telegram of my visit he had cordially thrown open his collection of choice treasures for inspection. There were beautiful objects of early Chinese art in bronze, gold ornament, lacquer, etc., to be admired there, besides many interesting terracotta figures of Han and Tang times. Even the knowledge that all these fine antiques had been acquired through dealers in Peking, Paris, etc. and therefore represented the result of that destructive plundering of tombs which now threatens to efface all reliable evidence of the history of China's great arts, could not lessen my enjoyment. Marquis Hosokawa is doing his best as President of the Archaeological Society of Japan to promote scientific excavation wherever [the] Japanese regime renders it possible. I rejoiced at the care with which he had formed his fine library and felt glad that the great collection of my old Sinologue friend, Professor Henri Cordier, had found there a fit home. Still greater was my satisfaction when later I met Mr. Hosokawa at Kyoto and found in this typical representative of the old feudal aristocracy of Japan a young man of charming manners and culture, full of keen scholarly interest and well acquainted with my Central-Asian labours.

I spent an equally interesting and instructive time at the residence of Prince Oyama who even before he retired from the army as Colonel had devoted years of close study to the prehistoric remains of Japan and to those of the West also. It was a rare treat to be taken by this fine elderly warrior, a son of Marshall Oyama who gained fame as one of the great leaders in the Russo-Japanese war, over his excellently arranged museum of stone implements, neolithic pottery, etc. and the laboratory attached to it. He had become interested in these researches while at Berlin attached to the German Army and is now President of the Prehistoric Society of Japan and a large contributor to its publications. How I wished India could produce an equally devoted and influential patron for corresponding researches! But then not distance alone but long periods of different mental development divide Japan from India, whether ancient or modern.

I shall not describe what I saw of the remarkable finds in beautiful lacquerwork, etc., which had rewarded Japanese systematic exploration of early Korean tombs and which their discoverers showed me at the University buildings now almost completely restored from their wreckage. At the dinner of the Imperial Academy of Sciences held after its monthly meeting I spent pleasant hours, seated as an honoured guest by the side of its President and having, alas, to reply to an eloquent address. Japanese as a whole seem distinctly poor linguists but this was delivered with ease and unusual correctness. It was a very pleasant occasion to meet a number of

distinguished scholars in the Orientalist and archaeological line with whose names I had been familiar for years just as they were with all my books from 'Ancient Khotan' onwards.

But quite as much I enjoyed my brief visit that evening to the charming little Japanese house of old type in which the Demieilles have established their genial temporary home. There I could inspect freely all the neat little arrangements by which the Japanese manage to create for themselves adequate comfort in a minimum of space. There was, too, the miniature garden with its rocks and tiny stream, and in front of it an open view over a sea of similar neatly arranged homesteads built on ground sloping down. How the D.[emieilles] will miss the peaceful seclusion of their charming Japanese home when they return to a flat in Paris.

Of modern Tokyo, too, I had interesting glimpses. But I can only note the remarkable cleanliness of the roads, the perfect regulation of the traffic and the apparently total absence of beggars. What an educated Japanese must feel when he sees Indian towns or Chinese ones—or littered thoroughfares of certain great cities in the West I do not much care to imagine.

On April 13th a ten hours' railway journey carried me westwards along the length of the main island to Kyoto and so on to Nara. It was a constant feast for the eyes whether the line lies through the beautifully green hills encircling Mt. Fuji or leans by the coast with its many bays and wide estuaries. The famous great peak kept its head and upper slopes hidden by clouds, as mostly at this season; but there was quite enough to enjoy while viewing the constant change from exquisitely shaped hills to rich well-tilled little valleys or plains. The Japanese railways are run with remarkable order and punctuality, and the behaviour of the crowds—it was a Sunday of the holiday season—impressed me at the stations. All was managed in so businesslike a way, without roughness or hustling. A race which seems ever eager for gaiety and yet knows self-discipline. I had good opportunities to study it all while continuing the journey to Nara in a crowded carriage of the electric tramway which knows only one class,—and having no language in which to talk in.

At the Nara Hotel, a delightfully situated and comfortable place kept by the Government Railway, I was welcomed by Sir Charles Eliot, that distinguished scholar-diplomat. Since I first met him in 1910 at Lumley Castle, he had been in succession Chancellor of Hong Kong University and then for seven years British Ambassador at Tokyo. Since then he had published his great work on Hinduism and Buddhism. Now he uses his leisure in retirement to work on the history of Japanese Buddhism and has found a congenial sort of 'Marg' [Stein's summer mountain retreat in Kashmir] for this at Nara. Needless to say how much his company at meals and on short rambles among the old temples of Nara added of pleasure and interesting information to my four days' stay there.

Nara, now a modest district town, living chiefly on its pilgrim traffic, was the capital of the period known by its name (7th-8th century A.D.) which witnessed the introduction into Japan of Chinese culture & art and with it of Buddhism. Of the temples and monasteries which were then founded mainly on the outskirts of the once vast city, quite a number have survived, though often restored, and what they faithfully preserved of Japan's oldest sculptures and other works of art, deposited as votive offerings, has made Nara a kind of Florence of the Near East. Since the restoration of the imperial rule the most precious of these art treasures have been removed from the precarious guardianship of the monasteries and gathered into the Imperial Nara Museum, a truly wonderful collection. I cannot attempt to describe even the most striking of the hundreds of statues in bronze, clay, wood or lacquer which are now safely housed there or still kept, duly registered as "national treasures", in their original shrines. Many are examples of the greatest height the art of the T'ang period in China had attained, and were either copied from works since

destroyed there, or else were actually executed by Chinese artists brought to Japan. To me it was a most happy feeling to be restored as it were to sights with which I had grown familiar during those weeks of 1914 spent at the Thousand Buddhas [caves in northwestern China that Stein visited in 1907]. Fortunately the many fine Buddhist paintings I had then brought away had since helped to keep fresh those impressions.

But how different was the setting for these sculptures! Most of them have been preserved practically intact by local piety and care whereas at the Caves of Tun-huang neglect or iconoclast zeal had wrought often sad damage or worse. On the other hand there is little left at Nara that could compare with the wealth of fine paintings which the lucky chance of that walled up chapel had saved for us on those distant marches of China.

It was curious to observe that Japanese art and pious imagery had scarcely added anything to the Buddhist Pantheon as transmitted to China through Central Asia, during all the centuries that followed its first introduction across the Yellow Sea. Will it be the same also with the art of the West from which Japan seems now so eager to draw inspiration?

I made, of course, my pilgrimage to the temples of Horyuji, situated some eight miles away by road in quiet country scenery. They are famous for the noble statues of Buddhist divinities still enshrined and even more for the frescoes on the walls of the main temple. They are the oldest pictorial remains of Japan, dating from the beginning of the 7th century A.D. and in spite of the damage wrought by age most impressive by the beauty of their composition and design. Here, too, the resemblance in details to our paradise paintings from Tun-huang is so striking that execution by Chinese artists strongly suggests itself. It is the same with the sculptured groups representing Buddha's Nirvana and other Life scenes which fill stucco grottoes of the lowest storey in the magnificent wooden Stupa or Pagoda near that temple.

At the temple group too of Yakushiji and Toshidoji [?] passed on the way to Horyuji I spent another delightful morning enjoying their works of art and their charmingly laid out surroundings. Visitors owing to the greater distance are less numerous here than at Nara, and luckily the huge "cruiser" parties do not invade them. Yet the neatness with which the gardens, gravelled paths and all structures are kept seemed if anything even greater.

At Nara the great well-wooded 'Deer Park', some 1200 acres in extent, sloping up the height of Mt. Kasuga, provides a lovely setting for a large cluster of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, attracting at all times crowds of pilgrims. Great avenues lined by old evergreen trees and literally thousands of memorial stone lanterns lead up to the more important among them. Here, too, there were Buddhist images in bronze and wood or clay to be seen. But the chief attraction to me were the groups of holidaymakers, the women all in harmoniously coloured dresses, winding their way from temple to temple. A little bow—or the raising of the Europe headgear in the case of the men—suffices for a mark of devotion, often accompanied by the dropping of petty copper coins in the big box by the main door and a discreet clapping of hands to attract the god's attention. On the way from temple to temple there are plenty of small shops and tea places to tempt visitors of more worldly bent. The hundreds of deer who roam free over the whole park, come in also for a good time, being so often treated to bits of cakes, etc. that it seemed almost strange to see them still ready to graze.

The great archaeological interest of Nara centres in the Shosoin, that wonderful store house of the Todai-ji temples in which the widowed Empress Komyo about 742 A.D. deposited all the valued personal possessions of her husband, the great Emperor Shomu. There in a massive kind of blockhouse raised on wooden pillars all these varied treasures of art objects, silk fabrics, furniture, etc. have been religiously preserved, in spite of wars and frequent conflagrations

around. This unique storehouse is now jealously guarded, and even when opened for airing and checking of inventories for some days each November it is accessible only for a chosen few. I am glad Prof. Sayce and last year my friends Binyon and Hobson from the British Museum had been so favoured by fortune as they deserved. Even for my entering the walled garden around a special permit had to be obtained from the [after five?] local prefect. With some antiquarian awe I walked round the wooden structure, three-roomed & high, imposing in all its archaic simplicity, and rejoiced at the extreme care which now watches over it and its precious contents. It was a comfort to know that the publication of an adequate catalogue of the latter is now in progress. My visit to the Shosoin was paid while rain was falling, and I wondered at the special dispensation which had protected such delicate relics as figured silks, carpets, etc., from the effects of moisture in spite of a fairly humid climate.

Between my days at Nara I intercalated a visit to Kyoto, the capital of the empire from the 10th to the last century. It is still a big city, very busy though less affected by modern industrial and other changes. There, too, learned confreres at the Imperial University vied in helpful attentions and by desire of Dr. Shinjo, its President, I was treated while at Kyoto as the University's guest. There was also a special dinner in my honour. The guidance provided allowed me to visit some of the many temples, and two palaces of the Emperor, too, in spite of the shortness of time. At the Choin-in, a large temple & monastery of the Jodo sect, the introduction of my friend Rev. Yabuki assured me a most cordial welcome by its genial well-fed Warden. One of his monks Dr. Wakai, had studied Sanskrit, etc. at Freiburg under Prof. Leumann and talked German better than dear old Prince Oyama.

The Imperial Palace had witnessed the recent coronation. Rebuilt after a fire in the latter half of the 19th century it has retained the old style interior arrangements, impressive in their simplicity—and traditional discomfort. I wondered how the imperial court could keep warm here during the winter months with thin latticed and papered screens on all sides and nowhere a fireplace or stove. There were fine mats on the floor and plenty of good plain woodwork about the walls. But what these show of ornamentation in painting or textiles reflects only too clearly decay in decorative style. The interior of the Nijjo Palace, built apparently in the 17th century and once the local residence of the Shoguns, was far better in artistic respect, though to the Baroque taste of the period.

There was much to see in the excellently arranged Archaeological Institute of the University of the results yielded by systematic exploratory work of Japanese scholars in Korea and Japan. There was much to discuss, too, with Professors Haneda and Hamada who had conducted these labours. Young Mr. Umehara, lecturer at the University, whom they had attached to me, had after studying in the Institute, been enabled to work for three years at museums in London, Oxford, Paris, Berlin, Leningrad, Rome. How I should have envied him in my youth for such a chance! I found him exceedingly well informed and at the same time very modest. It shows the openmindedness of the academic administration that M. had worked his way up through poor health in early youth had not allowed him to attend regular University studies.

A visit to Mount Hiei, close on 3000 ft. in height and overlooking both Kyoto and Lake Biwei, was accomplished for the most part by cable railway. It offered me a chance of taking in distant views over this wonderfully varied but everywhere verdant great island. Then in company of Sir Charles Eliot who had also been away, I regained Nara. On the 19th I had reluctantly to say goodbye to this most attractive and 'comfortable site'. On my way to Kyoto for Kobe where I had to embark on the following morning I paid a visit to the Emperor Meiji's last resting place

near Momoyama, as Sir Charles Eliot had advised me. The big hemispherical stone mound which covers the great reformer's remains can be approached and seen only from a distance; but set against the beautifully wooded hillside it is a very impressive monument. There leads up to the terrace from which faithful subjects may view it, a magnificent staircase, perhaps 200 feet in height. The surrounding great park is kept with religious care and the vegetation, conifers, laurels and flowering trees of all sorts is luxuriant. All this combined leaves behind a picture of grandeur in nature and human ordinance not easily equalled.

My 50 hours' voyage from Kobe to Shanghai, on an excellently run Japanese steamer, was very enjoyable. It took me through the great Inland Sea studded with beautiful islands in day time and next morning allowed me to spend some hours in the picturesque harbour town of Nagasaki. It was the place where Japan first gained contact with people from Europe and where Christianity flourished until the Jesuits were driven out. Recent loss of commercial prosperity has not affected the picturesqueness of town and bay.

On the early afternoon of the 22nd sailing up the Wampoo R.[iver] crowded with steamers and junks the 'Nagasaki Maru' brought me to Shanghai. To my delightful surprise Sir Frederic Whyte awaited me at the wharf and brought me to the rather too luxurious caravanserai where I write. He has arranged to take me up to Nanking for interviews with the Chinese ministers of Foreign Affairs & Education. There too I am to meet Teichman and Sir Miles Lampson of the Legation. What my moves next are to be it is impossible to feel sure of.