

The Meiji Era Experiences of Henry Adams and John La Farge

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INTRODUCTION

In 1886, in the middle of an unusually hot summer and at the beginning of a cholera epidemic, Henry Adams arrived in Japan with John La Farge. He left at the beginning of October. His impression of Japan differed greatly from that of La Farge, although they stayed at the same hotels, ate the same food, and observed the same sights.

I would like to examine their dissimilar understandings of Japan, namely I will point out their differing comments, then search for the reasons why their opinions varied in such ways.

SECTION I: Two Distinguished Travelers

Henry Adams was born in 1838; the fourth child of a most distinguished family from Boston, and died in 1918 in Washington D. C. He was a 48 year old gentleman when he arrived in Japan.

Henry Adams is known as the author of *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907) and *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904). In these masterpieces, he develops his skepticism and cynicism through his accounts of his self-termed failures and forcefully expresses his longing for the unity of the 13th century as the ideal of human perfection. We are accustomed to his self-portrait as an aloof exile from a materialistic 20th century civilization, but this portrait and these famous works were produced when he was in his sixties.

Before writing these masterpieces, he wandered for over ten years around the world. In reality, in middle age he was more anxious about his political or utilitarian life. Therefore, in my opinion, there was a turning point in his eighty long year life.

When was his turning point? It was somewhere between the years 1885 and 1886 I believe, as on the 6th of December, 1885, Mrs.

Henry Adams killed herself by swallowing poisonous crystals. The subsequent shock was so serious that this in turn eventually killed Adams. Adams needed to try to heal his pain, and he decided to depart for Japan the next year, 1886. This trip was the first of his world-wide travels following the loss of his beloved wife and was probably the key point that changed his life's direction.

The grief caused by this loss was his major and first motivation for embarking on the journey to Japan, but there were some others also. First, popular longings for the East dominated and fired New Englanders' imaginations. Oriental thought and oriental art fascinated them. Besides this trend, Adams had useful connections which proved most helpful, such as the Japanese minister in Washington who provided him with introductory letters and Sturgis Bigelow, cousin to Mrs. Adams, who had been happily living in Tokyo from 1882 collecting Japanese curios. Bigelow willingly promised Adams to be his guide. Adams could also take his best companion to the ends of the world: John La Farge was free and pleased to receive the invitation.

Thus, finally Adams gave shape to his plan go to Japan. Was he pleased to be in Japan? Was he looking forward to meeting Japanese people and touching their culture? In other words, was he ready to understand or appreciate a totally different culture? We would have to answer these questions negatively. His letter of April 25, 1886 to Gaskell gives us a key to his feelings.

"At last this winter has passed, and I am

obliged to look about me. With its usual exasperating coolness, the world has gone, carrying me with it ... As the summer comes on, I groan at the need of departing; but as there is no choice, I have decided to pass it in Japan. I leave here about June 1., to return in October; and shall amuse myself by two long sea-voyages, which I abhor; and by two months among the Japanese whom I do not in the least pine to see. I can't go to Europe. It is full of ghosts. Probably, by the time I get back here in the autumn I shall have so far recovered the tone of mind as to feel once more some practical concern in the world's affairs.¹⁷

Here in this letter we may note his two attitudes regarding Japan. First, his choice was made by elimination: he felt that he needed to depart for anywhere except Europe, where he had honeymooned for one year. Secondly, he expected the trip as a vehicle for the recovery of his mental stability in as much to have some practical distractions from his past daily and social affairs. The hope that the journey would help him to reconstruct his life while abetting the past membership of the super-elite in his own culture, probably prevented, on the other hand, his appreciating a new culture. In brief, Adams was not open to the Japanese culture and people due to the unfavorable condition of his being in mourning and predetermined attitudes.

On the other hand, John La Farge was very ready to absorb Japanese culture. Born in 1835 to a French upper class family in New

York, La Farge had already some sense of “foreignness” according to his younger friend Henry James, and was already a cosmopolitan. After having stayed in Europe including Paris and London, he was fascinated by Japanese art and Pre Raphaelism. In the 1860’s, he was also a pioneer in the field of Japanism in America. In 1870 he wrote an essay on Japanese art, which was published as one chapter of Raphael Pumpley’s *Across America and Asia*. In the seventies he started to rise in the field of mural paintings and decorative art. In 1886, La Farge had reached an impasse with his design for the famous Ascension painting in New York City’s Church; he was baffled as how to achieve the mystical effect of levitation for the angels. Adams approached him at precisely the right moment. La Farge thought he might capture the appropriate atmospheric effect from the mountains of Japan.

Tall, impressive with his black beard, a charming conversationalist, an original genius, La Farge was the best companion for Adams, whose mental condition was not stable.

SECTION II: Reactions to Japan

How did Japanese scenery and all other experiences affect these two American gentlemen?

In order to examine their personal impressions of Japan, I refer to the following material. Adams addressed seventeen letters to his friends in America and made notes in an accounting book, called the “Black Notebook” now owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston. (see #1) He also made a “Japan Album” of one hundred and fifty four photos, some of which were taken by himself, and which is also owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society. These



(#1 The “Black Notebook”— Henry Adams always carried this small leather notebook throughout his travels to Japan. Photo taken by Keiko Ido at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston)

materials which I myself consulted in this Society are in good conditions, though over one hundred years have already passed. In his letters and memos in the Black Notebook, we find his personal, candid, and very frank reactions to Japan. John La Farge wrote his impressions of Japan in *An Artist's Letters from Japan* which was published first in *Century Magazine*, published in New York, and then again by them as one volume in 1897. His polished letters from Japan showed approving sensitivity and became elegant essays on Japanese culture and art.

II-1: The Schedule in Japan

Adams and La Farge arrived in Yokohama on the second of July 1886. They stayed in the Grand Hotel in Yokohama from where they visited Tokyo by train. There in Tokyo, they visited some temples and museums, attended Noh-Play theatre, and bought bric-a-brac under the guidance of Ernest Fenollosa and Bigelow. After having stayed in Yokohama for ten days, they went on to Nikko in the mountains in order to escape from the heat and cholera epidemic in Tokyo. Having experienced local life and observed Japanese religions for one month, including animism, they returned to Yokohama at the end of August and then moved to the west part of Japan. In Kyoto and Nara, they passed busy days buying curios and sightseeing. The journey back to Yokohama was harrowing as they had to travel by ship and jinrikisha (rickshaw), and kago (palanquin). Fortunately at a small village near Mount Fuji, they found most beautiful views of Fuji ever

before experienced. On the second of October they left Yokohama for San Francisco.

During their three month stay in Japan, they gained different impressions of Japanese culture. If I dare say, Adams, who was a member of the super elite W.A.S.P. class of the Eastern establishment, and a supremacist of Western culture, could not accept Japan, and was embarrassed by his uncomfortable life in Japan. La Farge, pioneer of Japonism in America, instead tried to appreciate Japanese culture and enjoyed fruitful days while sketching.

II-2: First Impressions Already Differed

Here are some passages from Adams' letter to his friend, John Hay, written one week after his arrival in Yokohama, and some sentences from the first chapter of La Farge's *An Artist's Letters From Japan*. We can easily notice the contrast between our two visitors' reactions to Japan.

We have been here a week. Between the wish that you were here with us, and the conviction that you would probably by this time be broken up if you had come, I am distraught. Amusing it certainly is — beyond an idea — but comfortable or easy it is not by any means — and I can honestly say that one works for what one gets. (Yokohama, 9 July, 1886⁽¹⁾)

We have at last been living at home, are shut up in a ship, as if boxed in with our own civilization, and then suddenly, with no transition, we had landed in another. And under what splendor of light, in

what contrasting atmosphere! It is as if the sky, in its variations, were the great subject of the drama we are looking at, or at least its great chorus. The beauty of the light and of the air is what I should like to describe but it is almost like trying to account for one's own mood — like describing the key in which one plays. (July 7)ⁱⁱⁱ

Adams has already been dismayed after one week's stay. Although he found Japan amusing, it is beyond his ken and his adherence to Western values. He misses his comfortable and accustomed easy Washington life. Encountering the new values of a totally different world, he accepts with difficulty.

La Farge, pleased to visit another civilization, tries to catch it not only with his five senses, that of sight or hearing, but also by introspection.

II-3: Various Experiences

II-3-1: Reactions to a Noh Play

Bigelow took them to a Noh theatre at Shiba, where they took off their shoes, sat on the steps, and observed several short plays. For Adams, Noh plays meant nothing more than “to sit on his heels through all five hours at theatre.” and “it is far from a comfortable life style^{iv}”. He could not keep his composure in order to appreciate Japanese classic plays. For La Farge, “the monotony of impression was too novel to (him) to become wearisome, and (he) sat for several hours through this succession of separate stories, patientⁱⁱⁱ,” and he observed not only the actor's movements, costumes, the Japanese music, but also the

Japanese audience.

II-3-2: Reactions to Temple Architecture

They visited Zojoji temple which is a family temple of the Tokugawas at Shiba in Tokyo, and Toshogu, which is the shrine of the Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu in the midst of the Holy mountains in Nikko. Even though Adams had photos taken and took photos by himself in both sacred places, he was not deeply impressed, because he found them “a trifle baroqueⁱⁱ” or “cheap grotesque”.

He says,

“For sticking a decisive bit of infamous taste into the middle of a seriously planned, and minutely elaborated mass of refined magnificence, I have seen no people—except perhaps our own—to compare with the Japsⁱ.”

If Toshogu temples touched Adams a little, it was by the grand scale of its work that he writes to his friend,

“When you reflect that the old Shoguns spent twelve or fourteen millions of dollars on this remote mountains valley, you can understand that Louis Quatorze and Versailles are not much of a show compared with Nikko^v.”

As for temples in Kyoto or Nara in the west, he did not make a single comment in his letters or in his Black notebook. Besides that, Adams did not agree to visit the temples near Lake Biwa; according to La Farge,

“the idea of other temples to be seen brought out A —'s antagonism to more climbing only to be rewarded by promenades through lanterns and shrines and

confused struggling with dates and divinities^{vi}.”

Adams’ interest for temples was decreasing day by day, and from one visit to another. As for Japanese residential architecture, he regarded it as toylike “without partitions or walls except of paper^{vii}”, where “he can not do well.”

Contrarily La Farge was deeply impressed by both sacred places, and from the first visit to a Japanese temple, his “dreams of making an analysis and memoranda of these architectural treasures of Japanⁱⁱⁱ” were started. La Farge devoted two chapters to Toshogu and one to Japanese architecture. His description of the structure and decoration of Toshogu is very minute, accurate and colorful, as if we were not reading sentences, but looking at colored pictures. The reason why he was so interested in the temples was his passion for decorative arts in religious architecture, which he himself had started working in ten years before; for example his mural painting of the Trinity Church in Boston. The crafts and decorative works did win La Farge’s sympathy, but La Farge did not forget to compare artificial works with everlasting nature. He writes:

“From its (mountain’s) very edge the great slope is covered with tall trees that look down upon this basin filled with gilding and lacquers, with carvings and bronze, with all that is most artificial, delicate, labored, and transitory in the art of man. It is in this contrast, insisted upon with consummate skill, that lies the secret beauty of the art of the men who

did all this. The very lavishness of finish and of detail, the heaped-up exaggerations of refinement and civilization, bring out the more the simplicity and quiet of the nature about them^{viii}.”

And he finally found that “Nothing could recall more completely the lessons of death, the permanence of change, and the transitoriness of man^x.” Therefore we can say La Farge noticed the vanity or transitoriness of man in the midst of everlasting nature, while Adams underlined man’s power of conquest comparing it with that of Louis Quatorze. La Farge continued to observe Japanese architecture; for example, he mentioned Horyuji in Nara as having especially noble and famous mural paintings, admiring “their placid elegance, the refinement of their lines, and their breath of religious peace^{ix},” And as for residential architecture, he valued its simplicity, which symbolizes Japanese life. He says:

“Within, a Japanese house is simplicity itself. (...) There is nothing, apparently, but what is necessary, and refinement in disposing of that. (...) It is possible that when I return I shall feel still more distaste for the barbarous accumulations in our houses, and recall the far more civilized emptiness persisted in by the more esthetic race^x.”

Here, again, we can see the difference between La Farge’s comment and that of Adams who thought little of Japanese residential houses.

II-3-3: Reactions to Bric-a-brac

Japanese art was one of the most impor-

tant interests for both of them. However we also find other dissimilar attitudes toward Japanese culture. In this field their instructor in Japan was Ernest Fenollosa, who let them see his collections at his house. Lafarge was moved by the paintings. He says:

My mind is yet too confused with many impressions to tell you of what we saw that afternoon and evening, and what was said; all the more that the few beautiful paintings we looked at out of the great collection lifted me away from today into an indefinite great past. (...) I could not help the recall of what I had once felt at the first sight of old Italian artⁱⁱⁱ.

He was interested not only in Ukiyoe but also Buddhist religious paintings and Japanese crafts that he bought some of them. At the same time he observed the confused state of Japanese arts and crafts after the Meiji Restoration, and worried about the Westernization or industrialization of these works.

Adams was touched not by the paintings, but unfavorably by Fenollosa's personality. Adams called him "a tyrantⁱⁱ" in his letter, because Fenollosa said that they must not like any work done under the Tokugawa Shoguns. When one of the best curio dealers, Yamanaka, came to them, Adams "took the whole lot, and has sent for moreⁱⁱ." But he found, already in the first week in Japan, that "Japan has been sold outⁱⁱ", and this impatient disappointment continued till the last day when he left Japan with tons of cargo, filled up with curios, namely kakemono, lac-

quer, bronze, books, and kimonos. It is said that because, returning home, Adams presented many kimono pieces to his friends and their wives, kimono became a kind of vogue as a gown for a while among the Washington upper class. If he had made the best use of the help of such experts as La Farge, Fenollosa, Bigelow and Okakura, he might have had the opportunity to collect special curios like Weld or Frier had; however, regrettably, his shopping was of the souvenir genre.

II-4: The Holy Mountains and Reflections on Buddhism

II-4-1: Retreat to Nikko

The summer of 1886 in Tokyo was so hot that Adams and La Farge followed Bigelow's advice to retreat to the holy mountains in Nikko, where they were going to have direct and impressive contact with Japanese religions.

They stayed in a Japanese style house, next to one of the Toshogu temples. Reading La Farge's comments concerning this house, I myself went to Nikko to seek it out. Very luckily, I found it standing in the same place and with the same garden which La Farge painted. The owner of this house is a priest of one of Toshogu temples.(see #2 and #3)

Here Adams recovered a bit by enjoying Mrs. Fenollosa's Western style table where they were pleasantly served three times a day for one month. Both Adams and La Farge walked or rode around into the sacred mountains, where they visited not only famous Toshogu temples but also small shrines, sacred falls, rocks, or trees which symbolize



(#2 Zenchi-In house 禪知院 where Adams and La Farge stayed in August 1886. Photo taken by Keiko Ido in Nikko)

various icons long rooted in the worship of the local people. Besides these visits, Bigelow and Fenollosa acquainted them with Japanese Buddhism, especially “Mikkyo”, esoteric Buddhism, because both of them had become “Tendaisyu” Buddhists. In these ways, Adams and La Farge enlarged their knowledge of Japanese religion in the midst of the holy mountains.

II-4-2: La Farge: Acceptance

According to Cortissoz^{x1}, La Farge’s biographer, La Farge liked the eastern attitude of contemplation, and his own nature was meditative. Besides his sensitive character, La Farge, a visual artist, perceived the sacred nature of Nikko through his sketching, namely through his sight. Therefore he had a sensitivity and an empathy for the

Buddhist outlook on nature.

He writes as follows:

“Everything here exists for a painter’s delight, everything composes or makes pleasant arrangements. (...) and here is the sacred grove, all about me, as if history were made living. The lovely scenery reminds me of what has been associated with it; a civilization which has been born of it, has never separated from nature, has its religion, its art, and its historic associations entangled with all natural manifestations. (...) I can fall into moods of thought, or, if you prefer, of feeling, —in which the edges of all things blend, and man and the outside world pass into each other^{x11}.”

La Farge was inspired by the unity of nature with man, and that of nature with



(#3 The garden with a waterfall in Zenchi-In house. Photo taken by Keiko Ido in Nikko)

religion. And he himself finally reached some stage of Buddhist thoughts; he confessed:

“I can say (...) that when the light of the fire or the sun appears, then I come forth; when the night comes, I lie still, (...) they come and I come, they go, and I go, too. (...) I have become as a blank to be filled. I employ my mind as a mirror; it grasps nothing, it refuses nothing; it receives, but it does not keep. And thus I can triumph over things without injury to myself — I am safe in “Tao” (the Way^{xiii}).”

II-4-3: Adams: Resistance

Meanwhile, Adams had no sympathy for Japanese religion. For example, while walking around the mountains, he could not approve of the forms of worship deeply rooted in the people. He writes to his friend as follows.

“I was a bit aghast when one young woman called my attention to a temple as a remains of phallic worship; but what one can do? Phallic worship is as universal here as that of trees, stones and the sun. I come across shrines of phallic symbols in my walks, as though I were

an ancient Greek^{xiv}.”

Besides these examples of folk worship he observed one day another strange, ancient, pre-Christian activity, namely the people’s custom of public mixed bathing in the small village of “Yumoto” hot springs. He saw:

“In a wooden hut, open to all the winds, and public as the road, men, women and children, naked as the mother that bore them, were sitting, standing, soaking and drying themselves, as their ancestors had done a thousand years ago^{xiv}.”

And he considered this scenery as “the true Japan of my dream^{xiv}”. He did not regard such worship or custom positively. Adams considered them “primitive^{xiv}”, because Japanese, whose roots were *not* of the “Aryan race^{xv}” (Indo-European race), lived still in an “archaic society^{xv}”. Here, in Adams’s use of words of “primitive” and “archaic”, there are negative connotations. Adams used them in contrast to civilized and Christian society, in which he was born and brought up. The public baths and folk worship suggested to him a wholly unusual social psychology, and of course, as an educated Puritan, he was surprised by the boldness of sex. Therefore he dismissed such worship rooted in a “primitive” and “archaic” people.

Another example which explains Adams’ rejection of Japanese religion is his denial of the Japanese belief in the relationships between gods and nature. In his “Black Notebook” owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society, we find some sentences which tell us the pendulum of his thoughts. His pendulum swung back and forth, between

the East and the West, and finally stopped in the West; at the veranda of a small house in Nikko, he read Alfred de Musset’s poem and Dante’s *Paradiso*, thought about Paradise, nature and God, and copied out *three* verses in his “Black Notebook”, which tell us that he chose the West.

First, he copied out the stanza of Musset’s romantic idealization of Beatrix, whose death crushed the poet severely. Reading Musset’s poem, Adams transposed himself into the poet and Beatrix into his lost wife, and he might have made a double image of Paradise and Nirvana, as well as that of his wife and Kannon, the female Goddess of Mercy, but rejected a double Japanese image.

When he meditated on Paradise, he could not but read Dante’s *Paradiso*. He examined especially Canto XIII in which St. Thomas Aquinas illuminates the superiority of God to nature, and he copied in his “Black Notebook”, secondly, the epigram from Canto XIII: “Nature is always imperfect like the artist.” Here we can find a Christian who placed nature and man under God, and we also understand why Adams rejected primitive people’s worship of the sun, trees, and stones. He, who approves of the superiority of God to nature, cannot accept animism. Adams supported heavenly paradise instead of Nirvana, truth instead of nature, and Christianity instead of Buddhism.

It was in the midst of Buddhist surroundings that Adams did make this choice; he stayed in the priest’s house next to the Toshogu temples, everyday he saw the Toshogu priests going about their Buddhist practices,

and he encountered everyday folk worshipping on the small mountain paths. Moreover his American circle itself was converted to the teaching of Buddha, with Fenollosa and Bigelow both Buddhists, and La Farge who had sympathy for Buddhist meditation. Therefore Adams was the only person who supported the West. It is natural that he needed to read such a Christian evangelical text as Dante. And in order to encourage himself, he noted, thirdly, another phrase from Canto XVII: “Let there be scratching where the itching is.” This phrase is spoken in reference to the situation that Dante’s ancestor, Cacciaguیدا, charges Dante to speak the truth even if he would be the only person who does that. In other words, Adams decided to be the last fort before the East, where the itching was.

II-4-4: “Tom and Huck”

In these ways, Adams could not approve of Japanese religion and the Japanese concept of nature. In the one month stay in the holy mountains, Adams and La Farge observed Japanese local life from different views. According to Adams’ letter^{xvi}, La Farge affirmed that Adams was Tom Sawyer and La Farge was Huckleberry Finn, and they certainly felt like these models. And I would also agree to this classification. Tom Sawyer Adams stuck to the Western civilized life form, while Huckleberry Finn La Farge showed his real ability as an visual artist in the open mountains. Concerning their impressions of Japan, Tom Adams, an elitist of a highly educated civilization, defended the

West in the midst of the East, while Huck La Farge, a less restricted person, received and opened to this culture more freely and deeply.

II-5: General Impressions of Japan

Through three months of contemplation, for Adams, Japan was “a child’s countryⁱⁱ”, where “nothing is serious, nothing is taken seriously. All is toy. (...) the people have given us infinite varieties of laughter ever since we saw our first fishing-boat^{iv}.” Compared to himself, a grown-up or mature person, Adams considered Japan as a child or immature person. And in his use of the word “child”, no positive meaning like “pure” or “innocent” seemed intended, but only the negative meaning “infantile, immature, primitive”. Adams laughed at such childish, barbarous people. He could neither appreciate nor like Japan, because he could neither understand nor value it.

La Farge, on the other hand, liked Japan and its culture, as he declared in the dedication to Okakura Tensin of *An Artist’s Letters From Japan*. As I have mentioned already, he treasured Japanese light and scenery, he valued Japanese traditional arts and crafts, but besides these he even sometimes considered the Japanese race as more esthetic, and admired their courtesy.

SECTION III: Backgrounds

By focusing briefly on five important issues, one can further investigate the reasons why their impressions of Japan differed so much.

First, it was their positive or passive

expectations and reasons for embarking on the trip to Japan that would create dissimilar impressions. Adams chose to be passive, and he was not ready to receive the new, or totally different civilization. His intentions during the trip were to rebuild his own shattered life crushed by his wife's death. La Farge was eager to see Japanese art and scenery in order to obtain ideas for motifs for his mural paintings at the Ascension Church in New York.

Secondly, the background in which they were born and brought up was very important. Adams, a pillar of WASP society in the United States, had been always in and of the legitimate or orthodox school in America, and he did not need to be melted into the melting pot. His own discipline placed him always in the main or center stream. If Adams had felt some affinity for other countries, his affinity would have been for Europe, as Henry James had. Adams would never have valued Asia, which he thought was primitive or inferior to the West. He never bowed in the East to be understood himself.

Meanwhile La Farge was born into New York French society. He was a foreigner to the Eastern WASP establishment circle in America, and more ready to receive other cultures. In a word, I would say, La Farge was more open to alien cultures.

Thirdly, their means of absorbing the new culture were different. Adams was a man of the verbal, while La Farge was a man of the visual. When Adams tried to understand other cultures, he approached them through language. When he studied in Berlin,

in Germany, at the age of 23, just after graduating from Harvard, Adams went to gymnasium (high school) for three months to brush up his German. He practiced French also in his first stay in France. After returning home from Japan, he wanted to visit China, and he started to learn Chinese. Before arriving in Japan, he never tried to learn Japanese, and after arriving there he gave up learning it. In Japan, he could not implement his favorite means of understanding. He was intellectually handicapped in a totally alien culture. He could eat or sleep, but he could not learn or collect first hand information. This was a definite disadvantage for Adams.

La Farge was a visual artist, who observed the new culture through his sense of sight. He received new information through his eyes, observed it, examined it, and appreciated it. La Farge was much less handicapped in Japan than Adams. He was able to appreciate his stay in Japan as a visual artist.

Fourthly, it was their dissimilar tastes or ways of thinking that resulted in their different perceptions of Japan. Adams was a man of brightness, an intellectual, who would not feel alleviated if he could not understand completely. Because his means of collecting information was incapacitated, he was totally at a loss, and terribly irritated. In his past, he could observe everything, examine everything, and understand everything, but in Japan, he could do nothing except buy curios or laugh at the Japanese. Besides that, as a Puritan, he was very distressed by religious symbols or the mystic moods of Buddhism,

and he could not admit his prejudice. Therefore it was natural that he could not bound openly into Japan, if he could not understand nor value Japan.

La Farge was a man of sensibility, who was not particular about the need to criticize or judge another culture. He could feel Japan, even if he could not completely and exactly understand Japan. He never felt irritated by the totally different culture. Moreover he was a catholic, who was already accustomed to religious symbols or mysticism and found he could enter into a Buddhist frame of mind more smoothly than Adams.

And lastly, their attitudes toward Japan themselves were different. One approached with a school master attitude, while the other came as a student. Like many Americans in the latter half of the 19th century and 20th century, from Perry who opened Tokugawa Japan, to MacArthur after World War Two, Adams was a western supremacist. He thought that the primitive and barbarous Japanese were inferior to Americans.

However, La Farge was one of the first artists to espouse Japanism in America. Having already examined and studied the Japanese Art of Ukiyoe in the 1860s when he began his career as a painter, he was interested in its usage of color and motifs. And during his stay in Japan, he was capable of learning as an uninhibited student.

These reasons are why Adams and La Farge had different impressions of Japan. However, we can imagine how hard their stay in Japan, just 19 years after the Meiji

Restoration, was for the already 48 and 51 years old upper class Americans accustomed to an agreeable and comfortable life style. It is said that they carried a gun in case of emergency, which tells us that how much care they took, how much anxiety they felt. In any case, they left safely on the 2nd of October from Yokohama for San Francisco.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, or as an epilogue to their trip to Japan, I will relate what then became of them and briefly address what the journey brought to Adams and La Farge afterward.

It is surprising that Adams, after returning to America, then repeated and repeated his wandering into non-Western cultures. In 1888, he made his first visit to Cuba. From August 1890, to September 1891, he traveled with John La Farge to Hawaii, Samoa, Tahiti, Fiji, Australia, Ceylon, and back through France and England to America in the spring of 1892. This time he was away from his house for almost two years. In the spring of 1894, he toured Cuba, and that summer he traveled to Yellowstone and the island Tetons. From December of that year to April 1895, he toured Mexico and the Caribbean Islands. In the summer of 1895 Adams made his first systematic study of the Gothic architecture of Normandy cathedrals and received inspiration in the cathedral of Chartres: he was then 57. After this he mainly traveled again in Europe, especially in France. In 1904 he privately printed *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, and in 1907 he issued the private edition of *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Therefore, considering this chronology, we find that from 1886 to spring of 1895, he wandered through non-Western, non-modern countries and areas, and after receiving inspiration in 1895, he entered into his studies of the medieval world.

In Japan, Adams was very irritated, because he could not understand what he saw, or what he touched or what he heard. This initiated in him a great shock. It was the first time in his life, where he could not master, understand, or examine the new culture with any secure sense of linguistic control and therefore with his usual calm self assurance. That is why he ridiculed the Japanese so often, but after returning home, this appalling experience shook and disturbed his former self-satisfied opinions to the extent, that it gave him the opportunity to pursue other trips toward discovering different cultures. Ten years of wandering around the non-modern world opened his eyes to a reexamination and reassessment of his modern Western material civilization, and sent him back to the medieval world where men, to him, lived in harmony.

Therefore Adams' trip to Japan was nothing but a genesis in his education in meeting and examining the existence of new cultures, and it was also a key step towards reconsidering his own culture. Then regarding this journey to Japan, together with the tragic loss of his wife, it was a turning point for Adams, thus his three month education in Japan was not a failure.

And as similarly his wife and his marriage were never mentioned in *The Education*

of Henry Adams, neither was the trip to Japan. His turning point came in Japan at the age of 48, he received his inspiration in the cathedral at the age of 57. He published privately his major works, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* at the age of 63, *The Education of Henry Adams* at the age of 69, and died in 1918 at the age of eighty and was buried beside his wife in Rock Creek Cemetery under the bronze figure executed by Saint-Gaudens.

La Farge, who sketched constantly during his stay in Japan, made several paintings on the theme of Japan, and of course he successfully discovered the motif for the mural paintings at The Ascension Church in New York. He was also encouraged in Japan to continue and develop his decorative art work from his admiration of Japanese decorative works and crafts. The friendship between La Farge and Okakura Tenshin lasted a life time. Okakura was one of Fenollosa's students at the University of Tokyo, supported traditional art in Japan, and became director of the East section at the Museum of Fine Art in Boston. La Farge's *An Artist's Letters from Japan* was dedicated to Okakura, while so was Okakura's *The Book of Tea* to La Farge. When La Farge was sick in his last years, he consoled himself with paints chosen by Okakura. According to La Farge's biographer, La Farge said, "In all these things of misery I have had a great consolation. I have found the Japanese and Chinese paints chosen for me by Okakura some years ago — all, of course, of great purity and of long tradition. Such a 'Kano' blue!^{xvii}" La

Farge first met and admired Hokusai's prints in Paris at the age of 21, wrote his essay on Japanese art in 1870 at the age of 35, came to Japan in 1886 at the age of 51, and died in 1910 at the age of 75.

In these ways, the unusually hot summer of 1886 in Japan gave different impressions to two American gentlemen, who had different backgrounds, but for both of them, the three month stay in Japan was a key to their futures.

Notes

- i Henry Adams (hereafter HA) to Gaskell, 25 April 1886, *The Letters of Henry Adams*, vol. III, ed. by Levenson & Samuels (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), (hereafter *Letters*), p. 8.
- ii HA to John Hay, 9 July 1886, *Letters*, pp. 14-17.
- iii John La Farge, "An Artist's Letters from Japan", *An Artist's Letters from Japan* (Century, 1897) (hereafter *ALJ*), pp. 1-26.
- iv HA to Elizabeth Cameron, 13 August 1886, *Letters*, pp. 29-31.
- v HA to John Hay 24 July 1886, *Letters*, pp. 21-24.
- vi "From Kyoto to Guifu", *ALJ*, p. 256.
- vii HA to Dwight 17 July 1886, *Letters*, p. 18.
- viii "The Shrines of Iyeyasu and Iyemitsu in the Holy Mountain of Nikko", *ALJ*, pp. 52-84.
- ix "Kyoto", *ALJ*, p. 240.
- x "Japanese Architecture", *ALJ*, pp. 120-128.

- xi Royal Cortissoz, *John La Farge, a memoir and a study* (Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 15.
- xii "Sketching", *ALJ*, pp. 159-174.
- xiii "Tao The Way", *ALJ*, pp. 99-118.
- xiv HA to John Hay, 22 August 1886, *Letters*, pp. 31-34.
- xv HA to John Hay, 25 August 1886, *Letters*, p. 34.
- xvi HA to Dewight, 30 July 1886, *Letters*, p. 35.
- xvii Cortissoz, *Ibid.*, p. 103.