



The Needle-Watcher: The Will Adams Story

British Samurai

Richard Blaker

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This fascinating novel reconstructs the story of Will Adams, a native of Gillingham, in Kent, England, and his voyage to Japan in the seventeenth century.

Adams' knowledge of seafaring vessels at the time causes him to be taken into the favor of the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu and, in time, to become recognized as the founder of the Japanese navy. Adams was one of the most picturesque and daring of Britain's maritime traders, and this depiction of him as the first Englishman to settle in what was then a hostile country is written not only with distinction but also with an imaginative grasp that takes it right out of the class of the ordinary historical novel. It is an epic tale of strange adventures, and it creates an atmosphere of rare and haunting quality. In its understanding of the Japanese mind it is hardly less than remarkable.

Will Adams died in Japan in the spring of 1620 and is buried at Yokosuka. Every year a ceremony is still held to commemorate the anniversary of his death. There is also a memorial to him at Ito, in Shizuoka Prefecture, as well as one at his birthplace in England.

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