

6. W.A. Finnin and W. Moraes – Residents of Tokushima, Promoters of Tokushima

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Introduction

Since the late 19th century when Japan ended its long period of isolation from the world and began to allow foreigners to travel throughout the country, numerous Westerners came to the island of Shikoku. Some of them visited or stayed in Tokushima prefecture on the eastern part of the island and recorded their observations and experiences in diaries, articles, or books. Two such individuals – one from Portugal and one from Australia - decided to make Tokushima city their home for over a decade, married a Japanese woman from Tokushima, wrote extensively while living in the city, and were buried in a local cemetery when they died. One was Wenceslaus de Moraes (1854-1929), who first came to Japan to work at the Consulate General of Portugal in Kobe in 1899. Fourteen years later he retired from his position and moved to Tokushima, the hometown of his first Japanese wife. After his second wife passed away, Moraes led a reclusive, solitary life and wrote letters and books in Portuguese about what he saw and experienced in Tokushima. A pamphlet entitled, “Tokushima, the city that Moraes loved so dearly” produced by Tokushima city in 1957 describes Moraes` life:

Having been charmed and attracted so much by the land and nature of Japan and

enchanted by the daily life of the local city of Tokushima, Moraes abandoned his honorable profession and came to Tokushima.... Moraes plunged into the popular life of the city; he published more than 16 literary works in which he described the culture, manners and customs of Japan, and succeeded in introducing a true picture of Japan to the European peoples.

At the unveiling ceremony of a monument in Tokushima in honour of Moraes, Mr. Virgilio Armando Martins, the Portuguese Charge d`Affairs and Foreign Minister, noted that “Moraes is receiving recompense for his affection for Japan. His memory will not be forgotten in this land so far away from his homeland.”¹ And while the memory of Moraes has been carried on in Tokushima since his death in 1929, the life, activities and contributions of another Westerner, who lived and died in Tokushima, has been forgotten.

William Alexander Finnin (1900-1958), an Australian, first came to Tokushima for a short period after World War II as part of the occupation forces. After retiring from the armed forces, he came back to live in the city from July 1949 to August 1958. Some have called Finnin the “2nd Moraes” not only because of his numerous literary works about Tokushima and Japan, but because he married a woman from Tokushima, loved the city of Tokushima and was buried there. However, other than one book published in Japanese in 2000 about William Finnin and a few local television programs about him in

Japanese, as well as a small exhibition held at the Tokushima Prefecture Literature and Calligraphy Museum in 2005, Finnin`s life and what intrigued him the most about Tokushima has never been described in English. It is the author`s hope that Finnin, like Moraes, can receive recompense for his affection to not just Japan, but also to Tokushima, and be better remembered.

Finnin`s Life and Death

William was born on April 24, 1900 in Geelong, Australia to William and Maria Finnin. William was the oldest of five children, but one sibling passed away before the age of one. After graduating from Gordon Technical College in 1920, he became a teacher at an agricultural school. In 1922, he entered Melbourne University and according to a Mainichi newspaper article from Aug 30, 1958, “Finnin studied chemistry, horticulture, agriculture and philology after graduating from the literary department of the Melbourne University. He became a teacher, magazine writer and newspaperman.”² In 1932, while continuing his work in the literary field he did further research in forestry. In 1940 he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces and served in the Middle East and Greece. (see: right photo) In 1943, he



was based in Queensland, but was transferred to Kure city, Hiroshima prefecture, Japan

between December 1946 and January 1949. He spent some in Tokushima prefecture in 1947 and 1948 and returned to Tokushima in July 1949 after retiring from the military.

For the next nine years while living at a few places in Tokushima city he wrote articles for the English edition of The Mainichi newspaper, taught English at various high schools and universities in Tokushima city, and ran an export-import business, which included importing seeds of slash pine from Australia to assist in replenishing trees lost during the war on Mt. Bizan, a 277-meter mountain in the middle of the city.

On August 28, 1958 Finnin spoke on an English radio program in Osaka about the historically long and popular Awa Odori dance festival, but on the return trip by ferry to Tokushima he fell ill and passed away at home the next morning. The news of his sudden death was announced in the Mainichi newspaper on August 30.

Aug 29 - William A. Finnin, 58, former Australian newspaperman and a regular contributor to the English Mainichi, died of a heart attack Friday at 6am at his residence... The Australian writer wrote short stories, a variety of features, did the crossword puzzle for the English Mainichi Sunday Edition... Finnin, who has greatly contributed to the promotion of international relations between Japan and Australia.

Even a few newspapers in the United States published brief notices about his passing. As

examples, the Gadsden Times from Alabama and the Williamson Daily News from West Virginia on August 29 wrote, “Tokushima, Japan (UPI) William A. Finnin, 60, former Australian newspaper known for aphorisms, died Thursday after a heart attack.” In his will Finnin stated that he wanted to be buried at a temple called Chikurinin (竹林院) in Tokushima city because he adored the gardens there and often walked there from his house about a kilometer and a half away.

A scrapbook entitled “Moraes and Finnin”, stored in the Tokushima Prefectural Library, contains articles from various newspapers published in Japan about both men. Those about Finnin are from late September 1960 and describe the unveiling of a tombstone at Chikurinin temple in Tokushima as part of a memorial service three years after his passing. Statements differ to each article, but it seems that approximately thirty to seventy people including the prefectural governor of Tokushima, a representative for the mayor of Tokushima city, the Dean of Engineering and President of Tokushima University attended the service on September 24th, which was led by a Western and Japanese priest from the Tokushima Emmanuel Church.

Finnin as a teacher

While living in Tokushima city, Finnin taught at such schools as Tokushima University, Johoku high school, Matsushige junior high school, Komatsushima junior

high school, Tokushima school of foreign languages and a cram school (*juku*) on the weekends³, but information about him working at such places or comments from former work colleagues or students is scarce. One notation is documented by Tamura Hiroshi, who took Finnin`s English class at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (学芸学部)of Tokushima University in 1952. Tamura did not really have an interest in English, so he did not pay attention to what Finnin was saying, but he did find Finnin`s Australian accent to be interesting.⁴

Another comment by a former student is written in a one-page article entitled “Mr. W.A. Finnin” in the “Hyperion Journal” published at Tokushima University. In the 7th issue from 1958, the student writes that his first impression of Mr. Finnin was that he was like a type of chubby company president, but that he was approachable and could greet Finnin like a friend. The student also mentions not being able to understand Finnin`s Australian accent but added that his class was very interesting especially when they learned poems. As well, Finnin`s gestures were quite intriguing.⁵

A Japanese co-worker at Tokushima University also mentions Finnin`s unique accent, which seemed liked the Cockney accent in London, and which the Australians called a drawl. More than this, the co-worker was surprised that Finnin would always bring a square bottle of whisky to work and would sometimes drink from it. His

supervisor would look coldly at this, but Finnin would not get drunk and it would not affect his class, so the co-worker looked away as if he did not know what Finnin was doing.⁶

Finnin as a writer

Finnin wrote extensively for The Mainichi newspaper, which was based in Osaka. Over nine years he wrote at least 360 articles and created at least 395 crossword puzzles and 300 smaller puzzles called Kwik-Kross for the newspaper. During that period Finnin is said to have used five aliases: Hal W. Hilary, Aiko Tanaka, Jill Wyndam, Hannah B. Oka, and W. Alexander, the later which he used the most.⁷ It is amazing how Finnin was able to obtain and translate such detailed information about obscure stories and legends about Tokushima, Shikoku and Japan without knowing Japanese, but it seems that he received help from influential people in Tokushima who spoke English.

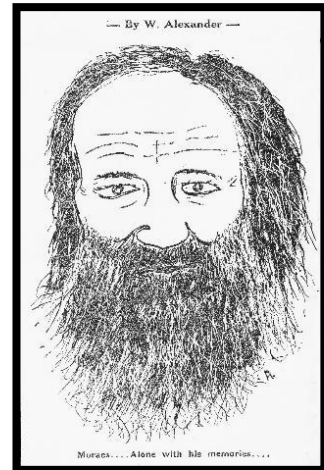
Here are three topics related to Tokushima that Finnin wrote or spoke about the most.

1. Moraes

After coming to Tokushima Finnin learned about Moraes and wrote three articles about him. The first one is from July 18, 1953 and Finnin states, “this month, July ... is the 25th anniversary of the death of Wenceslaus de Moraes, Portuguese diplomat and

colonial administrator, biologist and man of letters, and above all the friend of the Japanese.” He adds that in Tokushima Moraes “lived as one of the people, even poorer than the poorest, his observations were both intimate and accurate.”⁸ On July 1, 1955,

Finnin included a sketch of Moraes (fig. right) and wrote, that “centenary celebrations of the birth of Portuguese writer, Moraes, are slated in Tokushima, Shikoku, for the first three days of July.” Finnin also says that Moraes “adopted Japanese dress and observed the social customs. He embraced Japanese Buddhism.... He eschewed the society of foreigners and left



Tokushima only when urgent affairs called.” At the celebrations the reader is told there “will be speeches by visiting notables, by residents who knew him personally” and there will “be special dancing of the famous Awa-Odori.”⁹ Two years later, on July 1, 1957, Finnin stated that “Today the tomb of this Portuguese exile is swept and garnished.... The front is filled with water, fresh and crystal. The stones are scrubbed clean and polished. There are no weeds”, but he states until now most likely the tombstone has been “a spectacle of neglect” with “no flowers or leaves of laurel in the vases” and “there was no incense.” On this day Moraes is honoured, but who “in his lifetime was not recognized for the great man he was, who was allowed to die alone and uncared for in a gloomy hovel.”¹⁰

2. Awa Odori

Finnin loved this annual dance event held for four days every in late August in Tokushima city. (photo: August 1957)



Each night hundreds of organized dance troupes and tens of thousands of people, locally and from around the country, dance in the streets. In the August 17, 1951 edition of the Tokushima newspaper, Finnin comments on the Awa Odori in an article in Japanese entitled, “Some Thoughts on the Awa Odori.”

Awa Odori is probably one of the finest folk dances in the country. It is to be danced in a group, but when in high spirits each member can incorporate their own movements according to their feeling. This is a unique feature of Awa Odori...It is worth noting that the old dances are still intact and are becoming more and more popular every year...I hope that the Awa Odori can be danced forever with the same hope, the same appreciation, and the same delight.

Then on August 28, 1958 he spoke about this festival at a radio show recorded in Osaka that was to be broadcasted internationally. Finnin said that “The Awa Odori is not just another folk dance. It is part of the social pattern which goes back for four centuries at

least and probably much further...” He also described the female dancers and musicians – “Their faces concealed beneath hats of braided straw. Their hands wave like butterflies, and their feet beat out the rhythm with their wooden *geta*. The band is in the rear – samisen, flute, tiny high-pitched gong, and the two drums.” And he emphasized the need for people to take time and dance – “There is a time when men must work and sweat and bleed. There is a time when women must work and suffer and weep. But once in a little while there is a time when men and women might dance and forget.” And he adds that his dance festival “is a symbol of man’s triumph over events. There is something elemental in its rhythm. “Crazy Dance”, they call it.... You are crazy if you dance, but if you watch and do not dance you are soon more crazy.”

3. Shikoku pilgrimage

Another topic that Finnin became quite interested in was the Shikoku pilgrimage, a 1,200-kilometer route around the entire island of Shikoku that consists of eighty-eight Buddhist temples and many other smaller religious sites. On a summer day in the early 1950s, Finnin went to Ryōzenji, the first temple, with a Japanese woman, Ikuhara Keiko. She worked as an English schoolteacher, but on that occasion, acted as his interpreter. While at the temple the priest explained what pilgrims wore and took on their journey and about the history of the eighty-eight temples. According to Ikuhara, Finnin could not

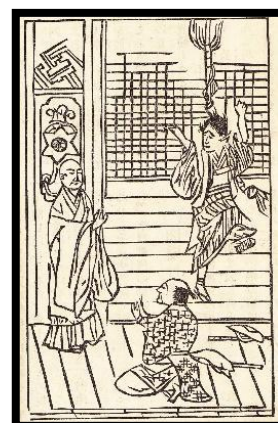
speaking any Japanese, but was very eager to learn about Japanese culture. She adds that at that time she did not know much about the Shikoku pilgrimage so learning things from the priest was interesting, but what she remembered most was the phrase, “Dōgyō Ninin” meaning that Kūkai, the believed founder of the route, is with you while on your journey.¹¹ This visit sparked an interest in Finnin about the Shikoku pilgrimage because he would later write a few articles related to some of the temples in Tokushima as well as about the Buddhist priest, Kūkai/ Kōbō Daishi (774-835). In fact, in an article dated December 21, 1957, Finnin describes Kōbō Daishi as being a divine calligrapher and as “one of the greatest figures, not only of Japan, but of all history...” He adds that “the famous `Shikoku Henro`, the pilgrimage through 88 temples scattered over that mountainous island was instituted by Saint Kōbō” and “that [the] Spirit of Kōbō Daishi accompanies every pilgrim on his journey.” Yet he knew that although many people believe that Kōbō Daishi founded the temples along the route, “historically, this is demonstrably incorrect.”

The first article Finnin wrote about the Shikoku pilgrimage describes a snake at one of the temples. He states that “quite early in your peregrination, if you follow the customary numeration, you will visit the Temple of the Crystal Fountain.”¹² Here he claims there is a three-meter-long serpent called Rakka, which “feeds but three or four times a year” and

“for the most part stays motionless...in a corner of the rock garden which is its home.” It seems that this serpent has been alive since the days of Kōbō Daishi, so it is more than one thousand years old. According to the tale when Kōbō Daishi visited this site the serpent fell from a branch onto him and bit him, but the punishment was not to die, but to live forever.

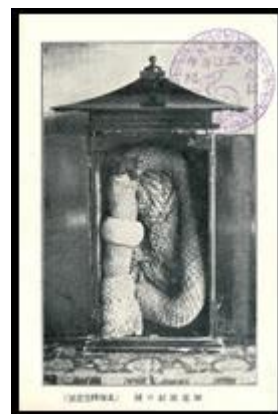
Further along the route south of Tokushima city is Temple 19, Tatsueji and Finnin writes about a scary incident that occurred at this temple. In the early 1800s a woman had been engaged to get married but found a new lover and together they killed the fiancée. They fled from Osaka and “conceived the idea of assuming the white robe and reed hat and joining the Shikoku Henro, that pilgrimage of Eighty-eight temples...” Along the way they received charity from the villagers and eventually reached Tatsueji. The woman made “her devotions with the others” visiting the temple, but the rope “as if endowed with life...twisted into the tresses of her hair ...dragged the screaming

woman upwards by the hair.” (photo right - from 1926) Quickly someone nearby cut the rope and set her free, but “when the woman recovered, she was a changed person” and confessed her crime. After this she worked in the temple kitchen and showed



great devotion and religious sincerity. She became a nun and served the temple until she

died. Finnin mentions in the 1954 article that, “you may see there preserved the bell-rope with the hair inextricably entwined with it” which is “kept in a special place and photographs of it are sold for the edifications of the faithful...” (see: photo- undated temple postcard)



Finnin also writes about the next temple after Tatsueji, that is, Temple 20, Kakurinji, located on a mountain top about an hour`s drive south of Tokushima city. He states that “there is nothing remarkable in the way of relics and treasures. It is just about another of the `88 Temples` of the Shikoku Pilgrimage...a temple fairly ancient with traces of a beautiful garden.” However, “within the compound there is a tree which manifests a miracle, a tree which has been bleeding for a century...” He describes the tale of a woman called Fujie who drove spikes into a tree as a curse toward her husband`s lover, but Fujie promised the Spirit of the Tree that she would remove the spikes when the lover passed away. One day Fujie`s prayers were answered, and when she went to remove the spikes in the tree, she slipped and fell and died on the way. It is said that “the cruel spikes remained in the tree. None would dare remove them” and so since then, “every spring, an exudation red as blood flows from the place where those spikes were driven” in sorrow of the lives lost.

Conclusion

Moraes and Finnin are two Westerners who by chance came to Tokushima, made it their home, and wrote prolifically about what they observed and experienced while living in the city during the 1920s and 1950s. One on hand, Moraes, has been remembered in memorial services held annually for decades after his death, has had a museum built to display his photographs, books and other artifacts, and has been honoured by not just by local, but also by dignitaries outside of Japan. Moraes has been talked and researched about for almost a hundred years, and even today people can see his grave in Tokushima. On the other hand, Finnin has unfortunately been almost completely forgotten, his writings and contributions to Tokushima overlooked, and has not been discussed for decades. Even his grave, which was erected in 1960 at Chikurinin temple – a place which Finnin loved so much - was removed in the fall of 2019 leaving no traces of Finnin`s existence. Through this brief presentation of Finnin`s life and a few selected writings related to Tokushima it is apparent that he was not just enchanted by the daily life of the local city of Tokushima, but was also truly fascinated by such topics as Moraes, the impressive Awa Odori dance festival, and the famous Shikoku pilgrimage. Let us make sure that “his memory will not be forgotten in this land so far away from his homeland.”

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- ¹ “Tokushima, the city that Moraes loved so dearly”, City of Tokushima, Japan 1957 (pamphlet – back cover “Imposing Ceremony in memory of Moraes”)
- ² “William A. Finnin Passes Away at 58”, The Mainichi., August 30, 1958.
- ³ Takeuchi, Hiroko (竹内紘子). “W.A Finnin – the man from Australia.” (『オーストラリアから来た男・W.A フィニン人と作品』) Harada Printing (原田印刷出版), 2000. p.75.
- ⁴ Tamura, Hiroshi. (田村泰), “Kinu no you ni utsukushiku – Australia kara kita W.A Finnin no Short Short” (『絹のように美しく・オーストラリアから来た男 W.A. フィニンのショートショート』), Tokushima Publishing, 2009. p.296. Note: Tamura would later become an English teacher in Tokushima and translated many of the “Shorts” that Finnin wrote.
- ⁵ Koizumi, Hirotoishi (小泉博稔), “Mr. W.A. Finnin”, Hyperion 7(1), Tokushima University English and English Literature Society 徳島大学英語英文学会, 1958, pp. 40-41. 1958. pp.40-41.
- ⁶ “Fusha – (Mr.) Finnin”, (風車「フィニン氏」) Tokushima newspaper, Dec 4, 1974.
- ⁷ Takeuchi Hiroko (竹内紘子), “Tokushima ni iki, Tokushima wo ai shita futari no hito – Moraes to Finnin” (徳島に生き、徳島を愛した二人の人-モラエスとフィニン-), Tokushima Prefectural Tokushima Technical High School Research Report.(徳島県立徳島商業高等学校・研究紀要), Vol. 7, March 1981, p.35.
- ⁸ “Quarter Century of Wenceslaus De Moraes- Tokushima Folk Still Mourn Great Man Of Letters; Counter-Part Of L. Hearn Almost Unknown”, The Mainichi. Saturday, July 18, 1953. p.4.
- ⁹ “Tokushima Fetes Moraes `Centenary` - Sidelights On Unsolved Riddle of Romantic Portuguese Exile; Through 7 Loves He Sought Happiness And Died Alone With His Memories.” The Mainichi. Friday, July 1, 1955. p.6.
- ¹⁰ “Moraes- A Man Unknown”, The Mainichi, Monday, July 1, 1957.p.6.
- ¹¹ Email to author from Ikuhara, Keiko. March 18, 2008.
- ¹² Note: It is unclear as to what temple this is in Tokushima prefecture.

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