



## Laurence Oliphant *Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's mission to China and Japan in the years 1857, '58, '59* Edinburgh, 1859

The author Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888) was born in South Africa, and thereafter due to his father's work he lived in both the United Kingdom and Ceylon. He subsequently traveled to various countries in Europe, Nepal and Russia and authored works based on those travels. From 1857, at the end of the Edo Period in Japan, he accompanied the diplomat James Bruce, 8th Earl of Elgin, who had been appointed as an envoy to conclude the "Treaty of Tientsin with China" and "The Anglo Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce", together with whom he visited both China and Japan. It is the record from that mission that became the basis for this book.

China was at the time under the rule of the United Kingdom, but there was a vigorous anti-foreigner movement underway, which resulted in frequent attacks targeting British people. Oliphant was impressed at the high level of Japanese culture, including the beauty of its scenery and the prosperity of its cities, which he contrasted with the unrest and poverty in China. In the book he writes about such characteristics in detail. Although his stay in Japan was a short one of just two weeks, this book is a valuable account of diplomatic activity in the late Edo Period, as it provides not only a depiction of Japanese society at the time, but also details the negotiations that took place with the Tokugawa Shogunate government.

The book was originally published in two volumes recording the mission, the first volume covering China and the second volume Japan. The second volume was translated into Japanese and published as *Erugin-kyo Ken-nichi Shisetsu-roku* (Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's mission to Japan).

The library holds the first edition (1859) of the first volume only. The second edition (1860) and the U.S. edition of 1860, which had the two volumes bound together as one book, are also in the library's collection.