



## El samurái de Sevilla

*John J. Healey*

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Año 1614, en el puerto de Sanlúcar de Barrameda atraca un barco con unos exóticos pasajeros: una delegación de veintidós samuráis que comenzaban en el puerto español su visita a Europa. Habían tardado casi un año en hacer el largo viaje desde el lejano y hermético Japón, y nada les había preparado para el tremendo choque cultural que les aguardaba.

El protagonista de esta novela ¿en la que John J. Healey mezcla de forma magistral la realidad de aquel viaje con la ficción? es el samurái Shiro, quien logra trabar amistad con el duque de Medina Sidonia y llega a ganarse el apoyo del rey Felipe III y del duque de Lerma. Shiro, sabio y mesurado en cuestiones diplomáticas, sin embargo no logrará evitar enamorarse de una joven sevillana malcasada con un aristócrata de poco fiar. Esta apasionada relación le obligará a combatir no pocos peligros y los obstáculos impuestos por los prejuicios y las normas de la sociedad sevillana del siglo XVII.

## El samurái de Sevilla Details

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# From Reader Review El samurái de Sevilla for online ebook

## MAP says

I received a digital ARC from NetGalley in return for an honest review.

The book follows a delegation of 17th century Samurai to King Phillip III's Spain and their attempts to find some common ground between two very different cultures.

This was a fascinating premise for a novel; unfortunately I struggled with the execution. Immediately I noticed how little dialogue there was, specifically in the first half, and I think this contributed to me having a harder time following and remembering specific characters, because we don't really get to know their personalities. I spent much of the time trying re-orient - Which widow is this? Which duke is she having an affair with? And who is related to this duke? Wait, is this a NEW duke? - except for the main three characters: Julian, Guada, and Shiro, everyone else kind of blended together.

Then about 2/3 of the way through, the villain got very mustache twirly and in my opinion the book had a hard time recovering its grounding after that.

If you are interested in learning about a very specific and not much remarked upon time in Spanish as well as Japanese history, this book might be a good fit for you. I certainly seem to be in the minority regarding its ability to hold my interest.

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## Karen says

I received this ARC from netgalley.com in exchange for a review.

The writing is ok, but the topic was all over the place. There was nothing (and no one) to grasp on to.

Ugh. I couldn't get into this book and gave up at 20%. DNF. No rating.

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## Fran says

In 1614, Date Masamune, Japanese feudal baron and great Lord of the Shogun authorized a diplomatic mission to visit Spain and the Vatican. Hasekura Tsunenaga, a retainer of Date Masamune was chosen to head the mission estimated to take approximately two years. The meeting of two distinct cultures would be put to the test.

Date Masamune had raised his illegitimate nephew Shiro in Sendai Castle. Shiro was exposed to a multicultural education. He became a samurai at 13 years old and followed the Way of the Warrior. He was apprenticed to seaman and navigator, William Adams, who taught the youngster astronomy, geometry, and the English language. Father Sotelo, a Franciscan monk, taught Shiro Spanish, Latin and Greek. To Hasekura Tsunenaga's dismay, Date Masamune insisted that Shiro accompany the delegation and act as his eyes and ears.

The ship called the Date Maru set sail with 21 samurai including 10 from the Shogun, 12 from the Lord and 120 merchants, sailors and seamen. Father Sotelo's goal was to distinguish himself by preaching in new territories, gaining new converts and eventually become an Archbishop. Lord Masamune's goal was to establish treaties of trade with the barbarians.

En route to New Spain, Shiro forged a friendship with Diego, a Spanish seaman. An altercation between Diego and a samurai had lasting repercussions for both Shiro and Diego.

Two different cultures with men who called each other barbarians. The Japanese thought their hosts were unpredictable. They had fearsome muskets, revolting eating habits, were adverse to cleanliness and were religiously intrusive. The Spaniards although entranced by the bolts of silk the Japanese brought to trade, questioned the use of chopsticks, constant bathing and the odd austere physical and spiritual regimens. The samurai warriors agreed to be baptized as an act of fealty and diplomacy. Across the cultural divide, Shiro made inroads with his worldly knowledge and calm demeanor. He was trusted by Philip III, the King of Spain and favored by the Duke of Medina-Sidonia much to Hasekura's unhappiness. The Duke's daughter, Guada and Shiro connected despite their differences. Would the tenderness between them evolve into something lasting? Will trade routes between east and west be established? Upon Father Sotelo's return to Sendai, Japan, will he have the necessary backing to start a Christian church?

"The Samurai of Seville" by John J. Healey is a richly detailed historical fiction read about attempts to create new trade routes and convert non-believers to Christianity. The learning experienced by each culture cannot be denied. An excellent novel of cultural assimilation.

Thank you Skyhorse Publishing, Arcade Publishing and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "The Samurai of Seville".

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## **Milos Mojsilovic says**

I was given an ARC copy of this book from NetGalley

In the year 1614, a Japanese delegation led by Hasekura Tsunenaga visited Spain. Instead of returning to Japan in 1617, six samurai remained. And this is the story of that journey.

This story presents a piece of history that most people have never heard of or generally aren't familiar with. And that includes me. But reading this story was a journey I won't soon forget.

At the beginning of the book we are introduced to Shiro. A fictional character that the author uses as the focal point of the story. Through him and his interactions and relationships we are introduced to differences in two cultures, the Renaissance Spain & warrior culture of Japan.

While the book takes a look at the Japanese delegations arrival to Spain, most of the story is following the 2 years delegation remained in Spain. We get introduced to a variety of characters whose POV gives us an insight into how these two cultures interact, clash, and view each other. We see the influence Catholicism played in bringing the Japanese to Spain but also being what stops any trade developing between the two nations & ultimately being the reason the six Japanese decided to stay behind, fearing religious persecution back home.

While the story starts of slow, the narative is impeccable & the veriet of characters who provide their POV's make the overall story very hard to resist. Instead of being an observer to the story the author actually puts you in the story & that way makes it easier for the reader to follow. You will fall in love with some characters, and despise the others. Getting a first person view at the story will make you feel their pain, lust, resentment, hatred, sense of honor & justice, and ultimately love.

And while the story has a lot of fictional?elements in it, it is based on real events, and the characters you meet, for the most part existed in real life & interacted with the Japanese delegation.

If you are a fan of historic fiction, or just someone who wants to give the genre a try, i recommend you read this book.

#### SYNOPSIS:

A sumptuous novel inspired by one of history's most intriguing forgotten chapters—the arrival of Japanese Samurai on the shores of Europe.

In 1614, forty Samurai warriors and a group of tradesmen from Japan sailed to Spain, where they initiated one of the most intriguing cultural exchanges in history. They were received with pomp and circumstance, first by King Philip III and later by Pope Paul V. They were the first Japanese to visit Europe and they caused a sensation. They remained for two years and then most of the party returned to Japan; however, six of the Samurai stayed behind, settling in a small fishing village close to Sanlúcar de Barrameda, where their descendants live to this day.

Healey imbues this tale of the meeting of East and West with uncommon emotional and intellectual intensity and a rich sense of place. He explores the dueling mentalities of two cultures through a singular romance; the sophisticated, restrained warrior culture of Japan and the baroque sensibilities of Renaissance Spain, dark and obsessed with ethnic cleansing. What one culture lives with absolute normality is experienced as exotic from the outsider's eye. Everyone is seen as strange at first and then—with growing familiarity—is revealed as being more similar than originally perceived, but with the added value of enduring idiosyncrasies.

The story told in this novel is an essential and timeless one about the discoveries and conflicts that arise from the forging of relationships across borders, both geographical and cultural.

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#### **Helen says**

Based on true facts and some conjecture but the writing was oh so flowery and even old fashioned almost like a translation from the Japanese language. Not one of my favourite reads this year and I would so like to know what happened to shiro and his baby daughter when they returned to Japan.

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#### **Dannica Zulestin says**

THIS BOOK.

I must admit I put off reading it for a while even after getting an ARC because I need to be in a particular mood to read historical fiction. Finally got around to it and couldn't even take a break. But let me try to make

my thoughts a bit more coherent than that.

### **Plot**

Shiro, bastard nephew of Lord Date Masamune, is sent with a Japanese ambassador to visit Baroque-era Spain. A place of intolerance towards outsiders, Christianity in crisis, and courtly decadence. And also some really great art (Can I have a VELAZQUEZ?) but that's beside the point. Here, he becomes friends with the Duke of Medina-Sidonia and falls in love with a beautiful girl named Guada (who unfortunately is already married).

Meanwhile everyone is having affairs.

### **Things I Liked**

- The political intrigue is a lot of fun. Here it's more focused on who's having sex with who than the usual struggle for power, but the power element is still present. And while at times I lost track of all the characters' names, the undercurrent of conflict is basically what drives the book.
- I love that although the author shows how the amount of infidelity going on in Baroque-era Spain caused pain for many noblewomen without automatically saying that everyone cheating on anyone is evil. He allows you to come to your own conclusions.
- Shiro is a sympathetic narrator and I loved seeing him explore Spain, getting into problems and coming out of them, preserving his honor.
- Huge variety of characters, each mostly serving his or her own interest. But all of them followed and most of them given a coherent plot line (if you can keep them all straight).
- The fact that not everyone involved in the drama is as upper-class as you'd expect: Rosario is a common woman and still becomes one of the major players of the novel (speaking of which, was that marriage even legal with her low birth?), and the death of an ordinary sailor causes a major conflict in the novel. Lower class people are important too!

### **Things I Did Not Like So Much**

- The number of characters running around makes it hard to explore any one of them thoroughly.
- Sometimes I felt like there was a little too much emphasis on sex, especially in how the women are characterized. Especially with Guada and Rosario, who are given little character outside of their interest in various men.
- The sheer number of affairs and romances going on makes it hard to take any one relationship, even the one between Shiro and Guada, all that seriously.
- At times the narration summarizes events more than I'd like-but that's more of an issue I have with all historical novels than anything else.

### **Overall**

A good book, very engaging. Gave me a very good afternoon. Now I want to know how much of it was factual and how much made up. Would recommend to anyone with an interest in Baroque Spain or political intrigue.

I received an ARC on Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Sarah says**

The sheer idea behind this book is what drew me. I knew of diplomatic and trade missions from Europe to Japan, but Japan to Europe?? Nope. And to find out that these events truly happened, there really was a diplomatic mission from Japan that travel through New Spain in the New World to Spain proper and onto

Rome to meet the Pope just blew my mind. It's little nuggets of obscure history like this that make me love the historical fiction genre so much.

For the most part, the author pulls things off well. He obviously knows his subject matter and locations well; the book shines in these areas. Yet, there are times where the author falls behind in his characters and book pacing.

I'm not sure if the author has physically been to the Iberian Peninsula, Japan, or Central America, but his writings surely read like he has. His depth of knowledge when it comes to cultures from those areas and physical landscapes defies expectations. He conveys these images in his readers' heads in such a way that we experience the setting rather than just reading it. He has a gift for description and cultural understanding that stands out above your standard fictional writer.

The real meat of the story was examination of cultural interactions between two such a divergent societies, through the eyes of a Japanese samurai new to Spanish shores and various Spanish individuals. The author's cultural knowledge, understanding, and respect come through excellently as he tells the story. As Shiro grows on his journey, the reader can't help but be drawn into his story, going from staunch samurai warrior who decried interaction with outsiders to a confidante of Spanish nobles and royalty and a prized member of that society.

Our main lead of Shiro is a great example of a vibrant, intriguing lead. Yet at times, there are too many characters being explored, some having no bearing on the story at all beyond being a famous name to throw in there for extra punch. This is especially evident in the beginning of the story where we have Cervantes introduced as a character for one scene in a bar just to give exposition; then we don't see him again until the very end where he dies. I mean, did we really need him to add anything to the story besides his name??

In the beginning, we also have way too many people introduced in a very short timeframe. I'd say for about the first three or four chapters, I was lost in a deluge of names and places. That's why I had such a hard time starting this work and getting into it. Thankfully, once things got flowing as the Japanese expedition had finally left their shores, I got into the flow enough to tell characters apart and could follow the action. Yet, even throughout the rest of the work, there would be times I'd lose track of people as the story progressed.

There were also some issues with the pacing of our story. Like I mentioned with the characters in the beginning, the novel starts with a bang and rush as we hit the ground running. Exploring the beginning of the Japanese delegation and Spanish shores readying to receive them, the reader is sucked into a maelstrom of movement and political maneuvering. Then we come to a slow section exploring either characters or just slow sequences, like sailing on the ship or exploring Spain. While having different paces in the story is a good thing, and in this particular one they were nicely done as well. It's the transitions from one pace to the other that jarred me, personally.

This work seems to be lesser-known given the small amount of reviews and comments I've noticed across the Internet. For all that, I felt it was an admirable attempt. The sheer idea is enough to give the author props. I enjoyed exploring this obscure corner of the historical record, through the eyes of a character that is both vibrant and well rounded. While there are hiccups along the way, this novel still comes over as enjoyable. Not the best out there, it certainly isn't the worst. I'd still recommend it, even if only for the extremely unique story it holds and how well the author handles the various cultures.

Note: Book received for free via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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## Roger Stone says

Based on a true event in the early 1600's, the story focuses on one out-of-the-ordinary Samurai, Shiro. Characters and plot were well developed but with a slow start. The journey from Japan to Spain was an eastabout, landing them in early California. Then all of a sudden, they arrive in Spain, omitting many, many months and thousands of miles of the sail around South America and across the Atlantic. But once in Spain, the story takes off and becomes quite compelling. Maybe four stars.

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## Cudeyo says

Ambientado en el siglo XVII, parte en Japón, pero principalmente en Sevilla, narra la historia de cómo uno samurais llegaron a España, y lo hace a través de Shiro, un joven samurai que ve cómo su vida cambia no sólo por el viaje y el contacto con nuevas culturas, sino por conocer a cierta familia, que le hará plantearse su futuro.

El autor, narra a través de esta historia ficticia de Shiro, en una forma distendida con cierto toque de romanticismo, el dato real de la llegada de un barco japonés a las costas andaluzas.

Es un libro más romántico que histórico, pero que como sin quererlo te muestra la controversia de la lucha entre religiones (la inquisición en España, la expulsión de los católicos en Japón), el ambiente palaciego de Felipe III y el duque de Lerma, con cameos de personajes tan conocidos como Galileo Galilei y Cervantes.

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## Willem says

door dit boek ben ik me gaan verdiepen in de geschiedenis die hier wordt beschreven. erg interessant

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## Michelle Kidwell says

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The Samurai of Seville

A Novel

by John J. Healey

Skyhorse Publishing



Arcade Publishing

Historical Fiction

Pub Date 13 Jun 2017

Archive Date 22 May 2017

I am reviewing a copy of the Samurai of Seville through Skyhorse Publishing and Netgalley:

This book takes us back in time to 1614, where 40 Japanese Samurai Sail to Spain. The majority of the Samurai spend two years there, but six stay behind, settling and growing roots.

Julian finds company with a woman that is not his wife.

Guada is assigned a plain looking girl as her handmaiden.

Shiro is one of the ones chosen to go to Spain.

Guada is Julian's wife. Her son and law and husband share the same mistress.

The sixth Samurai who stay behind settle in Coria Del Rio.

I give the Samurai of Seville five out of five stars!

Happy Reading!

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## **Stefani says**

It's now been a week since I read this and I'm finally ready to come back and write this review. I decided on 3 stars as my final rating.

Whilst the book is trying to be somewhat unique, this was not what caused a tumult of emotions in me. It was how much I related to the main character that sets out on a mission from Japan to Spain. It hits home as I lived in Spain for a year and I was delighted by similar if not the very same things as the samurai protagonist. Mind you, I am no samurai and no good with katanas. He just goes to places and does and eats things and I found the whole thing eerily familiar. The romance bits I was not a fan of, but the travelling from Seville to Madrid via La Mancha (where I once lived) and the descriptions of this journey though short got me very emotional. I loved my time in Spain dearly and have very fond memories of said places. I'm sure certain Spanish traditions and customs must seem quite a bit more foreign to a Japanese person. I'm from Europe after all.

I was an emotional wreck at the end when he departs the beloved land on a boat and says a heartfelt farewell. I left by plane but the parallel still works as I imagine we felt more or less the same. I've been back there since for short visits, the goal is to move back eventually.

This review will probably make no sense to anyone but me. And I'm quite OK with that. I'm gonna cherish my copy of this book as something that brought back fond memories and emotions like few books have done.

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## **The Idle Woman says**

3.5 stars. Until I read this book, I'd never heard of the extraordinary Japanese embassy that arrived at the court of King Philip III of Spain in 1615. Its members had come halfway round the world, encouraged by the need to seek new trading markets and made curious by the stories of Christian missionaries. Led by the ambassador Hasekura Tsunenaga and escorted by a party of samurai, this remarkable entourage arrived in Europe to be feted and gawped at by peasants and nobles alike. Healey's readable novel spins a tale around this encounter between two great empires and, even if the writing isn't always the most gripping, it's well worth seeking out for its fascinating and very unusual subject...

For the full review, please see my blog:  
<https://theidlewoman.net/2017/04/24/t...>

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## **Michelle Mayotte says**

### **excellent book**

I found this book captivating. A Samurai experiences a new culture when he leaves Japan for diplomatic purposes. He shows acceptance, grace, honour and compassion for those he meets. If you are a fan of historical fiction this has it all .

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## **Kristine says**

*The Samurai of Seville by John J. Healey is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in early June.*

Oi, this book is filled with detailed description, details, and so, so many names; both Spanish and Japanese. Its third-person narration is mostly from the perspective of Shiro and his group of samurai, alongside families of the Spanish nobility, and their becoming acclimated with new languages, cultures, swordsmanship, appearance, fine dining, and etiquette.

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