

The Many Deaths of Mr Richardson: revisiting the *Namamugi Jiken* and the *Satsu-Ei sensō*

The murder of British merchant Charles Richardson at Namamugi in 1862, and the Royal Navy's bombardment of Kagoshima in 1863 are among the best remembered events of the *bakumatsu* period. In Japan, they form part of a resilient narrative of national modernisation and the road to the Meiji Ishin. Among historians of Britain and its Empire, however, the story is little known, and its ramifications in Britain are seldom examined. Little is known about Richardson himself either, even in Japan (where he is better known as a casualty, or 'victim', than as a man).

This talk takes advantage of the recent rediscovery of a collection of Richardson's private correspondence to revisit the *Namamugi Jiken* and *Satsu-Ei sensō* with an eye to their British and imperial dimensions. It re-examines these events – so well-known as part of the history of modern Japan – by relocating them within the wider context of British imperial expansion in Asia. In the process, it suggests a host of further questions waiting to be explored: about the conduct of British gunboat diplomacy and the dynamics of mid-Victorian expansion; about the place of Japan in British political imaginaries; about the mechanisms through which the death of an Englishman led to the bombardment of a city; and about how these events came to be successively recalled in Japan, and forgotten in Britain itself.

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