

Kirishitan Stories by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

Introduction and Translation

by Yoshiko and Andrew DYKSTRA*

Introduction

Born in Tokyo in the Dragon Hour on a Dragon Day in the Dragon Month of a Dragon Year (January 1892), Akutagawa was named Ryūnosuke, Dragon Helper, by his father. It is generally thought that he inherited his neurotic disposition from his sick mother, Fuku, whom he calls a “madwoman” in one of his biographical stories. His mother was already schizophrenic when Akutagawa was born. She passed away in 1902. Akutagawa was educated at Tokyo University, taught briefly, and joined the literary staff of a newspaper. He left more than two hundred written pieces including short stories, poems, and essays before he took his life at the age of thirty-five in 1927.¹

Akutagawa has been introduced to the West through translations and motion pictures. English language translations of such masterpieces as *Rashō-mon* 羅生門 and *Kappa* 河童 have provided western readers with an insight into Akutagawa's theme of the pursuit of contentment through self-detachment. His polished style succeeded in eliminating all that was not vital to the structure and atmosphere of the story. The stories translated here treat the theme of Christianity in Japanese history, namely the Kirishitan (deriving from the Catholic mission during the later part of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century) and their persecution. These pieces reflect the author's distinguished style. They may be less known to English readers, but they deserve to be made known to a broader readership. Particularly students of religious studies and comparative religion may find these stories interesting for they reflect the author's critical views regarding the acceptance of

* Yoshiko Dykstra is professor of Kansai Gaidai University, Hirakata, Osaka, and Andrew H. Dykstra is provost emeritus of Kansai Gaidai Hawaii College, Honolulu.

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The information in square brackets is provided by the translators.

1. For studies and English translations of Akutagawa's works, see Bownas (1970), Britton (1987), Kinya (1976), Kojima (1952), Ogawa (1991), Shiojiri (1969), and Takahashi (1993).

Western values in old Japan.²

The translations of these stories are published according to historical order as follows:

- A Miracle (*Ogata Ryōsai oboegaki* 尾形了齋覚え書き, 1916; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 1: 228-235)
- Lucifer (*Rushiberu* るしへる, 1918; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 2: 232-240)
- The Life of a Holy Fool (*Juria no Kichisuke* じゅりあの吉助, 1919; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 3: 175-179)
- Black Robed Maria (*Kokui seibo* 黒衣聖母, 1920; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 3: 331-339)
- Smiles of the Gods (*Kamigami no bisbō* 神神の微笑, 1921; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 4: 373-391)
- Returning a Favor (*Hōon-ki* 報恩記, 1922; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 4: 401-427)
- Ogin (おぎん, 1922; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 5: 76-86)
- The Diary of Maid Ito (*Ito-jo oboegaki* 糸女覚え書き, 1923; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 5: 267-280)
- Oshino (おしの, 1924; *Akutagawa zenshū*, Vol. 5: 157-167)

Western readers who wonder why the Japanese have never been completely affected by the foreign, Christian religion may find an answer in *Smiles of the Gods* which introduces the traditional myth of the Sun Goddess to describe the Japanese mental framework since ancient times. In *Ogin* and *Oshino*, old Japanese values collide with the newly imported Christianity. *The Life of a Holy Fool* and *A Miracle* reflect Akutagawa's sympathetic views toward Japanese Christians. *The Diary of Maid Ito* shows his cynicism in its depiction of a historical figure, the beautiful and devoted Christian Lady Hosokawa Gracia, as a comical heroine from her maid's viewpoint. In *Lucifer*, the author presents his personal thoughts regarding Christian ideas. A good example of the assimilation or syncretism of Buddhism and Christianity is found in *Black Robed Maria* in which the image of Virgin Mary appears in the form of Kannon, the merciful bodhisattva of Buddhism. When Christianity was forbidden in Japan in the beginning of the 17th century, many Christians secretly cherished the image of Kannon, called Maria-Kannon, keeping a child in her arms as the Virgin Mary held the young Jesus in her arms.

2. Akutagawa wrote also short stories treating contemporary Christianity, such as *Seibō no hito* 西方の人 (A Western Man) and *Nankyō no Kirisuto* 南京の基督 (Christ of Nanking). For a study of his Christian (including Kirishitan) stories, see Ishiwari (1999). Sekiguchi (1999: 233-252) mentions that *Seibō no hito* (dated July 10, 1927) reveals Akutagawa's concern about his life in relation to that of Jesus Christ and also predicts his tragic death. See also Spae (1968: 255-258).

As it is well known, Endo Shusaku in his novel *Silence* (*Chinmoku* 沈黙, 1966) and other works treats the conflict between Christianity and Japan's religious culture. Already several decades earlier, Akutagawa in his stories exposed the process of adopting, adapting, and modifying foreign ethics and religion by Japanese to suit their taste and life style. It may be recalled that Buddhism underwent the same process when introduced to Japan many centuries earlier. On the other hand, Akutagawa constantly questions the values of society in these stories. He dramatizes the complexities of human psychology with a Zen taste for paradox. In the samurai story *Loyalty* (*Chūgi* 忠義), which is based upon historical facts, Akutagawa reflects about the sense of obligation and honor in the old samurai class. In contrast to *Loyalty*, *Returning a Favor* has Christian merchants as the protagonists with the theme of returning a favor, another traditional value. This value was based upon the concepts of obligation and reward which were highly appreciated in the feudal samurai society. Ironically in this story, the samurai value is more fervently observed by the merchants, who at that time were considered to belong to the lowest strata of society.

Akutagawa was the first modern writer who recognized and appreciated the literary quality of the *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (今昔物語集物), the largest Japanese Buddhist tale collection of the 12th century.³ Many of his works, including the well-known *Rashō-mon* 羅生門, *Hana* 鼻 (Nose), *Heichū* 平中, *Yabu no naka* 藪の中 (In the Grove), and *Kesa to Moritō* 袈裟と盛遠 (Kesa and Moritō), are based upon and adopted from the *Konjaku* tales. In *The Life of a Holy Fool*, the protagonist who died for his faith in Mary and Jesus Christ had a fragrant white lily blooming out of his mouth. This reminds of the *Konjaku* tale which narrates how a wicked man, Gendayū, with firm faith in Amida Buddha expired on the top of a tree. When his body was taken down, people saw a fragrant lotus lily blooming out of his mouth.

Although we may detect Swiftian touches in his works, Akutagawa mentions in one essay that he admires Ambrose Bierce most among Western writers. The stories published here reveal Akutagawa's aversion of stupidity, greed, and hypocrisy, as well as a tendency to nonconformism as if to emulate Ambrose Bierce, the master satirist of the late 19th century.

Lastly, in comparison to the satirical and cynical attitudes displayed in his Kirishitan stories, it is interesting to notice how easily and smoothly Akutagawa accepts traditional Buddhist ideas in *The Spider's Thread* (*Kumo no ito* 蜘蛛の糸). (Cf. Britton 1987) He may be considered a new type of intellectual in Japan of that time, rejecting the wholesale importation of foreign ethics, as well as distrusting the old *bushidō* for its lack of adaptability. However, Akutagawa still values and appreciates the Buddhist concept of self-detachment, a universal value which is beautifully symbolized in the pristine pearly lotus flowers non-challantly blooming in the pond of Paradise.

3. For the complete translation of the *Konjaku monogatari-shū*, see Dykstra 1986-2005.

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A Miracle

(1916)

This is my report concerning Christians causing confusion among villagers by practicing their heretical religion.

On the seventh day of the third month of this year, Shino, the peasant Yosaku's widow, brought her sick nine-year-old daughter named Sato and asked me to examine her. Shino was the third daughter of the peasant Sōbei and had been married to Yosaku for ten years. After her husband's death, she made her living by weaving and doing various odd jobs.

Meanwhile, Shino became interested in Christian teachings, and frequently visited Father Rodriguez of the next village. A rumor spread that Shino was the Father's mistress. Although her father and siblings warned her, Shino insisted no Buddha was better than her God, also called Deus. She continued worshipping this God, praying morning and evening to a small cross. She even neglected to visit her husband's grave. Her relatives disowned her, and the villagers discussed her banishment.

Considering this, I refused her request, and Shino left in tears. The following day, the eighth, she returned and begged me again, "I will never forget your favor, so please look at my daughter, please." She would not accept my refusal and prostrated herself on my porch. Weeping, she said, "I understand that the doctor's job is to help people and cure them. I don't understand why you do not look at my sick daughter." So I explained, "What you say is correct. But I have a reason to refuse you. I hear you are critical of us for worshipping our traditional gods and buddhas, and regard us as heretics possessed by devils. You should ask your God to help your daughter. You should first renounce your worship of your God if you want me to examine your daughter, otherwise I fear punishment from our gods and buddhas." She listened, and silently left.

On the ninth, it rained heavily from dawn, and the village was deserted. About the Hour of the Rabbit [6:00 a.m.], Shino returned like a drenched rat without an umbrella, and begged my favor again. I insisted, "You must choose either your daughter or your God. You have to give up one of them."

Gathering her palms, Shino placed her forehead three times on the floor before me and begged me like a mad woman, "What you said is reasonable, but if I renounce my God, I believe my soul will be lost forever. So please pity me and help me this one time." Although a heretic, her love for her daughter was no different than that of other parents. I felt sympathy for her, but also had to uphold my position in the village. Only if she changed her religion would I be able to examine her daughter.

After listening to my repeated excuses, Shino silently stared at me for a while and shed tears as she put her hands on the floor and mumbled something faintly.

Because of the heavy rain and thunder outside, I could not hear her. I had to ask her to repeat it a few times, and Shino said she would renounce her religion. I insisted on proof so she silently took her cross from her bosom, placed it on a stepping stone, and stepped on it three times. She did not appear confused, and her tears were now dried. She simply gazed upon the cross for several moments.

Satisfied at Shino's renouncement of her religion, my servant carried medicine, and we hurried to Shino's house in the torrential rain. Her daughter, Sato, was lying in a small room. She had a high fever and was not well, but smiled as she kept repeating, "*Halleluiab*," and raised her hands and crossed them in the air. Sitting by her daughter's head, Shino tearfully explained that saying the word "*Halleluiab*" in her religion was like reciting the name of a Buddha.

As soon as I examined Sato, I realized she was suffering from typhus and would probably die that day. When I told this to Shino, she became like a mad woman, saying, "The only reason I left my religion was to save my daughter. What use was that if I lose her now? Please understand my situation, and save my daughter, by all means." She bowed constantly and begged me and my servant to save her daughter. However, there was nothing we could do to save her. We gave Shino herb medicines for her daughter and were about to leave, since the rain had stopped. Suddenly, Shino grabbed our sleeves and would not let us go. She tried to say something, but could not speak, and her color changed. We took care of her until she felt better. She sobbed and wept again, saying how stupid she was to lose both her daughter and her God. Her daughter was not improving, and we finally started to return home.

At the Hour of the Sheep [2:00 p.m.] that same day, I went to see the mother of Tsukagoshi Yazaemon, the landlord of the villagers. Yazaemon told me that Shino became insane after her daughter died. According to him, her daughter passed away within an hour after I examined her, and from the Hour of the Snake [10:30 a.m.], Shino had held her daughter tightly to her bosom, and constantly recited something like sutras in the barbarian language. This also was witnessed by other villagers, including Murakata Kaemon, Tōgo, and Jihei.

On the following day, the tenth, it rained in the morning and thundered at the Hour of the Dragon [after 9:00 a.m.]. I mounted a horse sent by Mr. Yanase Kinjūrō, a village samurai, and rode out to see him.

Approaching Shino's home, I had to stop frequently, as so many villagers were gathering ahead of me, calling out, "Fathers," and "Christians!" Still mounting, I looked inside Shino's house through the open door, and saw a red-haired man with three Japanese men all dressed in black saying the word, "*Halleluiab*," in unison as they held incense burners and crosses in their hands. The red-haired man was supporting the almost-fainting Shino. She, with her disheveled hair, was crouching and holding her daughter firmly to her bosom. Amazingly, her daughter held Shino's neck with her little hands as she in turn called out her mother's name and "*Halleluiab*" in her childish voice. At my distance, I could not see well, but the daughter with her red cheeks appeared to be fine, as she stretched her hands now and then trying to catch the smoke from the incense burners.

I asked the villagers about the apparent revival of the daughter. They explained that the red-haired Father Rodriguez and his assistants had come to Shino's house from the next village, listened to her confessions, offered prayers, burnt incense, and sprinkled holy water on her and her daughter. Gradually, Shino calmed down, and her daughter revived.

From olden times, reports about people reviving after death have not been rare. Usually, they revived after liquor poisoning or possession by evil spirits in rivers and mountains, but not from a fever like that of typhus. So the effect of the Christian teachings was quite evident. No wonder the thunder rolled in the spring morning when the father and the brothers appeared in this village, as if to show that heaven was angry at the foreign cult.

Shino and her daughter moved to the next village, accompanied by Father Rodriguez. Also, Landlord Tsukagoshi reported to the authorities that Shino's house was burnt down at the direction of Priest Nikkan of the Jigenji Temple. I have stated what I saw and experienced. If there is anything I missed, I will supply it later in writing. Here, I respectfully present my report.

On the twenty-sixth day of the third month
in the Year of the Monkey,

Ogata Ryōsai,
Doctor of the village,
Uwa District, Iyo Province

Lucifer

(1918)

The Lord of Heaven first created this world, then the Thirty-Six Gods, of whom Lucifer was the first. Lucifer regarded himself to be as wise as the Heavenly Lord, and was cast into Hell due to the anger of the Lord. While suffering in Hell, Lucifer's soul became the Devil, and has been wandering in this world, hindering people from practicing good.

From the third section of the third book of the *Gaijiryaku*

I

Some people are familiar with the book, the *Hadaiusu* [*Deus Destroyed*], which criticizes Christian teachings.¹ This book was written in the sixth year of Genna [1620] by a *zen* monk of Kaga, Fucan Fabian. Fabian had lived as a Christian in the Southern Barbarian Temple in Kyoto, but later renounced Christianity, and finally became a Buddhist monk. Judging from his writings, he must have been a genius, also familiar with Confucian teachings.

The circulated version of the *Hadaiusu*, based on the text in the Kachosan Library, was published in the first year of Meiji [1868] with an introduction by Priest Ugai Tetsujo. Compared with other versions, my old text is quite different, especially its third section, which explains the origin of the Devil. The sharp-tongued Fabian, who met the Devil himself, gives a longer description. The section was probably deliberately omitted in other versions, due to its fanciful exaggerations.

Here I would like to introduce the third section of my text as an examination of the Devil of Japan who appeared before Fabian. Dr. Shinmura's writings are recommended for detailed studies on Fabian.

II

God, a colorless and shapeless entity, appears in everything and everywhere in heaven and on earth. Especially to show his power, he created paradise above the heavens to give pleasure to good people. He created innumerable heavenly beings, including angels. He also made heavenly precepts which forbade anyone being

1. For an English translation of this work, see George Elison, *Deus Destroyed. The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*. Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 257-291. (Ed.)

above others. Those who maintained the precepts and worshipped God would be rewarded and blessed with everlasting pleasure. On the contrary, those who broke the precepts would be thrown into Hell, where they undergo everlasting suffering.

As soon as God created his angels, one called Lucifer became boastful and said to the other angels, "I am as good as God, so you should worship me as God." One-third of the angels agreed with Lucifer, but the rest did not. God was angry and expelled Lucifer and his followers to Hell. Due to his arrogance, Lucifer became a devil known as *tengu*, a long-nosed goblin.

Fabian argues: "You, God, limit yourself by preaching your ideas. Your idea of ubiquity is based upon a superficial knowledge of the Buddhist concept of ubiquity. It sounds similar, but is not true at all. You also call yourself omnipotent as if understanding all the phenomena of the past, present, and future. If you were truly omnipotent, you should have perceived Lucifer's fault before you created him. Deliberately creating someone who would commit sins is merciless and is like creating devils to interfere with people practicing the Correct Way. What is the use of creating useless devils to harm the good? So, do not say that there are no devils in this world, because you have already created angels, some of whom have become devils. You are ignorant and merciless, and your idea of omnipotence is false. It is enough for the discussion on devils."

"You also regard devils as most vicious and evil. But such a view is likewise doubtful. Once, at the Southern Barbarian Temple, I myself met Lucifer, who negated your view and greatly lamented the many people who were ignorant of devils among themselves. Do not say that Fabian is talking nonsense and has been fooled by Heavenly Demons. Calling yourself the Heavenly Lord but lacking the knowledge of the Correct Law [of the Buddha] you, God, are the most ignorant."

From my viewpoint, none among the many Christian priests and brothers who pray by respectfully calling on the name of Virgin Mary, are more controversial than Lucifer. Here, I will introduce my experience of meeting Lucifer as an example of something called *apocrypha* in the Southern Barbarian language.

One autumn evening, when I was strolling through the flowering groves in the compound of the Southern Barbarian Temple, I saw a noble Christian lady in tears. She confided in me, saying, "Lately, something strange has happened to me. For days and nights, someone whispers in my ears, saying, 'Why are you so faithful to your crude husband when you may find other men more tender and affectionate?' When I hear the voice, I become excited and unable to control my desire for love. However, I don't mean to make love with anyone in particular, but I have been suffering vainly as I lament for my youth and beauty."

At her confession, I seriously warned her by explaining the precepts to her. "The voice is that of a devil with power to seduce people into committing the seven deadly sins; arrogance, anger, jealousy, desire, lust, avarice, and idleness. Any one of them is enough for anyone to fall into Hell. Unlike God, who is the source of great mercy, the Devil is the cause of evil. So anyone who believes in the teachings of the Lord of Heaven should avoid the Devil. Concentrate on your prayers and rely on God's

virtues to escape the fires of Hell.” I also told her of the frightening appearances of devils depicted in Southern Barbarian paintings. Finally, the trembling lady said, “So it was the invisible Devil with the wings of a bat, hooves of a mountain goat, and scales of a snake that came, and whispered lustful words to my ears.”

Reflecting on what I had said to the lady, I resumed my walk through the strange fragrant flowering plants from foreign lands. When I looked ahead, I saw the shadow of someone ten paces ahead of me. As soon as I noticed him, he came to me like a swift wind, and asked me if I knew him. I examined his face, which was as dark as a black man of the south with regular features. He wore a golden necklace and a long priestly robe, but I could not recognize him. So I answered, “No.” Then the man laughed scornfully, saying, “I am Lucifer!” Much surprised, I asked him, “How can you be Lucifer? You look like a man. What happened to your wings, hooves, and snake scales?” Lucifer answered, “Devils are no different from people. It’s been the fault of artists to paint us as evil and unsightly. We devils originally were made like you, with no wings, hooves, or scales.”

I retorted, “You say that you are no different from us in appearance. But you must have the seven sins in your heart, lurking like a scorpion.” Again, Lucifer replied with a scornful smile, “The seven sins are also lurking like a scorpion in the hearts of you people. That, you should know for yourself.” I rebuked him scolding harshly, “You, Devil, get away! My mirror reflects only God’s virtues, but not even a shadow of your evil!”

Raising his laughing voice, Lucifer replied, “You fool, Fabian! Your abusing me shows nothing but your arrogance, which is the first of the seven sins. Now you see for yourself that a devil is no different from a man. If we devils are the most evil demons as you say, we can divide the world in two and rule with you and your God. If there is light, there is always darkness. Isn’t it possible for both of us to rule the world, you and your God in daytime, we devils at night? Although evil by nature, we devils are not ignorant of goodness. Our right eyes look at the eternal darkness of the Inferno while our left eyes always aspire to the beauty of the light of Paradise. In that sense, we are not completely evil. Didn’t you know that I, Lucifer, whispered the lustful words to the noble lady, but could not attain my purpose, as I was weak-minded? I only wander near her at dusk and admire the beautiful sight of her ivory-like wrist from which the coral beads hang. If I were as evil as you think, the lady would have indulged in lustful illicit love and sentenced herself to Hell, instead of having tearfully confessed before you.”

Overwhelmed by his eloquent tongue, I stared at his face which was as shiny as black sandalwood. Suddenly, he grasped my shoulders and sadly whispered to me, “Do you know that we devils are always trying to degrade people and at the same time trying not to? Don’t you know we are doomed? I failed to seduce the lady even though I tried. I appreciated her noble nature and didn’t want to spoil her. The more I tried not to violate her pureness, the more I cherished the noble and pure. Just as you are avoiding the seven fearful sins, we are always aspiring for the seven heavenly virtues. Is it your God or a spirit above him who has been trying to tempt us to the good?”

Still whispering, Lucifer, while looking at the dusky sky, faded to a mist and finally disappeared into the pale flowering groves. I quickly ran to the brother standing ahead of me, calling him Lucifer. The brother was utterly ignorant of what I had experienced. He did not believe me and scolded me for several days since I first talked against the Teachings. However, how could I doubt Lucifer, whom I had seen and heard with my own eyes and ears? Devils are good by nature and can never be the cause of all evil.

You, God, don't even know what devils are. How can you know the heart and mind of the real creator of Heaven and Earth? Keep all your delusions to yourself!

The Life of a Holy Fool

(1919)

I

Julian Kichisuke was born in Uragami Village, Sonogi District in Hizen Province. When young, he lost his parents and worked as one of the servants of Otona Saburōji. Being slow and unintelligent, he was constantly abused by the other servants, who made him work on lowly jobs and treated him like a cow or a horse.

When Kichisuke was eighteen or nineteen years old, he fell in love with Saburōji's daughter, Kane, who completely ignored the lowly servant's affection. Besides, having learned about his love for their master's daughter, all his colleagues constantly made fun of him. Unable to bear the pain of his unobtainable love, he finally left the house where he had lived for a long time and disappeared. No one knew his whereabouts for the next three years.

One day, looking like a beggar, Kichisuke returned to the village and resumed his work for Saburōji. Ignoring the insults of his colleagues, he worked diligently. He was especially faithful to Kane, who was now happily married to someone else. Twelve years passed without any trouble. Meanwhile, his colleagues, noticing something strange about him, began to watch him closely. They found that he prayed every morning and evening, always crossing himself as he did so. The colleagues reported this to their master. Fearing the outcome of retaining a Christian underling, Saburōji immediately took Kichisuke to the government office of the village.

Surrounded by officers, Kichisuke calmly entered Nagasaki Prison. People said that the face of the fool, Kichisuke, was filled with an air of dignity, as if illuminated by Heavenly Radiance.

II

Before the magistrate of Nagasaki, Julian Kichisuke openly confessed that he was a Christian. The following conversation was held between the magistrate and Julian.

Magistrate: "What is the god of your teachings?"

Julian: "The Honorable Young Prince of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, and the Honorable Virgin Mary of a neighboring country."

Magistrate: "How are they dressed?"

Julian: "In my dream, Jesus Christ appears as a beautiful young man, dressed in a purple kimono with long sleeves, while Virgin Mary is in a robe embroidered with gold and silver threads."

Magistrate: "Why have they become gods in your teachings?"

Julian: "Because Jesus Christ and Virgin Mary fell in love, and have become our gods to save us from the same sufferings."

Magistrate: "From where and whom have you learned and received such teachings?"

Julian: "As I wandered through many places, I saw a strange red-haired man at a beach who told me about the teachings."

Magistrate: "What kind of ceremonies were performed when you accepted the teachings?"

Julian: "After receiving some water, I was given a name, Julian."

Magistrate: "And what happened to the red-haired man?"

Julian: "He very strangely stepped on the high waves and disappeared."

Magistrate: "If you speak false words at this moment, you will not be forgiven."

Julian: "Why should I lie to you, sir? Everything I said is true."

The magistrate thought Julian's words strange because what Julian had said was nothing like the testimony of other Christians whom he had interrogated. However, no matter how much he was re-examined, Julian obstinately insisted on his statements.

III

Finally, Julian was sentenced to be crucified on a stake, according to the Great Law of our country. On the appointed day, after being dragged around the town, Julian was cruelly crucified at the execution ground. While on the cross, which was erected high above the bamboo fences, Julian looked up to heaven, repeated his prayers in a high voice, and fearlessly received the piercing spears. As he prayed, a cloud formation appeared above his head, and a torrential rain with rolling thunder deluged the execution ground. When the sky cleared, people found Julian had expired on the cross. However, the spectators outside the fences heard Julian's praying voice still lingering in the air. His prayer was very simple, "Honorable Young Prince of Bethlehem, where are you now? My praise and homage to you!"

When his corpse was lowered from the cross, the lowly caretakers were surprised at the delicate fragrance released from his body and the fresh white lily mysteriously blooming from his mouth.

This is Julian Kichisuke's life story which appears in the official records and is included in the *Collection of Renowned Tales of Nagasaki*. Among all the martyrs' tales in Japan, this one, the life of a holy fool, is my favorite story.

Black Robed Mary

(1920)

Suffering in this valley of tears, I pray for your mercy. Benefit us with your blessings. Most gentle, most sympathetic, and most sweet Virgin Mary, ...

From a Japanese translation of the *Credo*

“How about this?” Tashiro placed an image of Maria-Kannon on the table. During the period when Christianity was forbidden in Japan, some Christians worshipped white porcelain images of the merciful Bodhisattva Kannon as the Virgin Mary. The one on the table, however, was quite different from those seen in the display cabinets of museums and collectors. It was a one-foot-tall image carved of black ebony, except for its white ivory face with a touch of red coral on the lips.¹ The necklace, styled like a rosary with a cross, was most exquisitely inlaid with gold and blue shells.

Arms folded, I was silently gazing at the beautiful face of the black-robed Mary. After a while, I began to feel there was something strange in the expression of the ivory face. No, “something strange” does not capture the feeling. It was as if the face had a kind of scornful smile with a touch of vice.

“So, what do you think of this?” Again Tashiro asked with the proud smile common to all collectors, as he looked alternately at me and the image. “This is really a rare one. Don’t you think the face conveys something ominous? You don’t think it’s perfect? As a matter of a fact, a strange legend is attached to this Maria-Kannon.”

“A strange legend?” I shifted my eyes from the image to Tashiro, who picked it up for a moment with a serious look, then put it down on the table, saying, “Yes. Instead of changing bad luck to good fortune, this one changed good luck to bad.”

“You must be joking!”

“It is true. Such a thing really happened to a former owner of this image.” Saying this, Tashiro sat down on a chair with a sad expression in his eyes as he gestured to me to sit across the table.

“Really?” Unconsciously, I raised my voice as I sat down.

Tashiro was an intelligent law student, my senior by a few years at our university. When such a well-educated man who usually would dismiss anything supernatural talks now about a legend, that legend must be worthy of attention. “So, is it a true story?” I asked. Tashiro replied as he lighted his pipe, “Well, it’s up to you whether

1. For a picture of a dark wooden Maria Kannon statue, see the frontispiece of *Japanese Religions*, Vol. 19 (1994). (Ed.)

you believe it or not. In any case, I have heard that this image of Maria-Kannon is related to a strange story. If you are not bored, I will tell you the story.”

“This image once belonged to the Inami, a wealthy family in Niigata Prefecture, before it came to me. It was worshipped as a protective deity of the family rather than as a collector’s item. The last head of the family, who happened to be one of my classmates in law school, was a business man. I had helped him a few times in the past. In return, he offered me this image which had been handed down in his family for generations. I heard the strange legend from Inami himself, who of course did not believe it, but he told me he had heard it from his mother when he was young.

One autumn, when his mother, Oei, was ten or eleven years old – it was about the time when Commodore Perry’s Black Ships appeared at the port of Uruga [1853] — her younger brother, Mosaku, who was eight years old, had a bad case of measles. Having lost their parents in an epidemic a few years earlier, the sister and brother had been raised by their grandmother, who was over seventy years old. The grandmother was most distressed with the boy’s condition, which did not improve at all, despite the best efforts of the doctor. Within a week, the boy’s condition had become so critical that it seemed he might not live for a few days.

One late night, when Oei was asleep, her grandmother suddenly came to her room, woke her up and dressed her. Still half asleep, Oei was taken by her grandmother to the hallway. They walked to a dark earthen storehouse in the garden. In the storehouse was a small shrine made of white wood. The old woman opened the shrine door with a key. In the shrine reflected in the dim candle light, Oei saw the black image of Maria-Kannon standing behind heavy brocade hangings. Overwhelmed by the awesome atmosphere in the dark earthen room where not even the chirping of a cricket was heard, the terribly frightened Oei began to sob while clutching a sleeve of her grandmother. Completely ignoring her, the old woman sat before the image, crossed her forehead, and began to pray intently in words unfathomable to Oei.

About ten minutes later, the old woman picked Oei up, soothed her, and had her sit beside her, then began to make a vow to the black image in a language Oei understood. “Our Holy Virgin Mary, please listen to me. This girl and her younger brother, Mosaku, are the only ones on whom I rely in this life. My granddaughter, Oei, is still too young to take a husband to look after my family. If something happens to my grandson, my family, the Inami, will have no male heir to succeed. Please protect the life of Mosaku so that no misfortune will fall on him. If my faith is not strong enough for such a wish, then at least make him live until my life ends. As I am old, it won’t be so long before I give up my soul to the Heavenly Lord. Meanwhile, if nothing drastic happens, Oei may become old enough to marry. So please render us your mercy so that the sword of the Angel of Death will not touch my grandson before my eyes are closed forever.” Thus, the old woman with her short hair earnestly prayed while lowering her head.

As her grandmother finished the last words of her prayer, Oei timidly looked at the black image which, she felt, was smiling slightly. Raising a small cry, Oei again

clutched the sleeve of her grandmother who now appeared quite satisfied and stroked Oei's back, "Let's go now. I am sure Holy Maria has listened to this old woman's prayer," said the grandmother repeatedly to Oei.

On the following day, as if the vow of the old woman had been fulfilled, the boy's condition improved and his fever went down as he woke from his coma. Seeing this, the grandmother burst out in indescribable rejoicing. Oei never forgot her tearful face filled with joy.

In the meantime, while her grandson was sleeping calmly, the old woman, exhausted from anxiety and the nursing of the boy, lay down in the adjacent room and closed her eyes to rest.

Oei was playing with marbles beside her grandmother, who had soon fallen asleep out of exhaustion. She looked so tired and was motionless, as if dead. About an hour later, an old maid who was looking after the boy quietly opened the sliding door and asked, "Miss Oei, will you wake your grandmother for a moment now?" She sounded confused. Oei went up to her grandmother and shook her shoulders a few times, calling to her, "Wake up, grandma, wake up." But the old woman did not move. Concerned, the maid quickly entered the room, looked at the grandmother, and raised a tearful voice calling out, "Oh, Madam Inami, Madam Inami!" But the old woman remained still, with slight purple shadows beneath her closed eyes.

Soon Oei heard another maid hastily open the door and say as she looked at the old woman, "Madam, it's about your grandson, Madam," calling in a trembling voice. Oei could tell something bad had happened to her little brother by the way the maid said "your grandson." But her grandmother's eyes were still closed, while the two maids were tearfully crying by her pillow. Oei's young brother took his last breath about ten minutes later. So, Maria-Kannon fulfilled the prayer of the grandmother by preventing the grandson from dying as long as she lived."

When he finished his story, Tashiro raised his melancholy eyes, stared at me, and asked, "So, what do you think? Do you think this is a true story?" I hesitated for a moment, and replied, "Well, but, I wonder" Tashiro remained silent for a while, began to relight his smokeless pipe and said. "I think it is a true story. But the question still remains as to whether such a thing happened because of the image of the Virgin Maria of Inami family. By the way, have you read the inscription on the stand of this Maria-Kannon? Look at this. It reads, "*DESINE FATA DEUM LECTI SPERARE PRECANDO* [Do not expect your prayer will change what God has already ordained] ..." Unconsciously, I cast an ominous glance at the Maria-Kannon who was fate itself. The Holy Mother clad in the black ebony robe displayed in everlasting coldness a scornful smile with a touch of vice on her beautiful ivory face.

Smiles of the Gods

(1921)

One spring evening, Father Organtino, in a long priestly robe, was strolling in the garden of the Southern Barbarian Church. Various exotic plants from foreign lands, such as roses, olives, and cinnamon, intermingled with the native pine and cedar trees in the garden. The sweet aroma of roses delicately wafting among the trees created a mysterious atmosphere in the twilight.

The melancholic Organtino lost himself in reminiscence as he meandered along the reddish sandy path. All his memories of the great St. Peter's in Rome, the port of Lisbon, the sounds of the *rabeca* lute, the taste of plums, and the song, *The Mirror of My Lord, My Soul*, brought nostalgia to the heart of the red-haired priest. To dispel melancholic thoughts, the priest began to recite God's name. However, his sadness only increased.

"Still, the scenery of this country is beautiful ..." reflected Organtino and continued, "Yes, the scenery of this country is beautiful, so is the climate. The natives are — black faces may be better than these small yellow ones. Yet the natives here are mostly friendly. Besides, Christian believers are increasing, and now amount to ten thousand. Moreover, a church like this has been built for us in the capital. In that sense, living here should not be so bad."

"But, I often become very depressed, wishing to leave this country and return to my native land, Lisbon. Is this only because of nostalgia for my native land? Not only Lisbon, other places like China, Siam, and India would be fine, as long as I can leave this country. So nostalgia is not the only cause of my depression. I only wish to escape from this land as quickly as possible, but ... still the scenery of this country is beautiful."

Organtino gave a deep sigh. Suddenly, he caught a glimpse of pale petals of cherry blossom scattered on the moss in the shadows of the trees. Cherry blossoms! The surprised Organtino strained his eyes in the twilight, and saw a single cherry tree blooming with willow-like branches among several palm trees.

"Oh, my God, please protect me!" Unconsciously, Organtino was about to cross himself to ward off evil spirits. To him, the cherry tree appeared most strange and weird. Weird, or rather the sight of the blossoms reminded him of something strange about this land. But upon recognizing it as an ordinary cherry tree, he felt embarrassed, smiled to himself, and turned to make his way back on the path.

Thirty minutes later, Organtino found himself praying to his God in the church. A lamp hanging from the arched ceiling dimly illuminated a fresco painted on the surrounding wall. The painting depicted St. Michael fighting against Satan in hell over the body of Moses. The brave archangel and the wild devil appeared rather elegant in the soft light. Or was it because of the sweet aroma from the fresh roses and other flowers offered before the altar?

Still reflecting, Organtino lowered his head below the altar. He continued his prayer, "Oh, merciful God, since I left the port of Lisbon, I have given you my life. So no matter how much I suffer, I have never given up illuminating your cross. This is not only due to my own efforts, but thanks to your blessings."

"However, while in this land of Japan, I have begun to realize the difficulties of my mission. Some mysterious power is lurking in the houses, towns, forests, and mountains of this land. And this invisible power has been interfering with my job in this country. Otherwise, why should I feel so depressed for no reason? I still don't understand what this power is. It is like an under-current which is spreading everywhere in this land. Without breaking through this power, oh, my God, it will be impossible to send these heretical Japanese to Paradise. Because of this, I have been suffering these days. Please help and bless your servant with courage and patience."

At that moment, Organtino thought he heard the cry of a rooster. Ignoring it, he continued his prayer. "In order to pursue my mission, I must fight against this mysterious power which is hidden in the rivers and mountains of this land. Once, you sank an Egyptian army to the bottom of the Red Sea. The spiritual power of this country is not inferior to that of the Egyptian army. So please, just as with the prophet of ancient times, in my fight against the spirits of this land ..."

The words of his prayer disappeared as again he heard the loud rooster. Wondering, Organtino looked around and saw a white rooster with a long hanging tail standing on the altar behind him. The rooster was crowing as if announcing daybreak. Jumping up and waving his hands, the priest tried to chase it away.

After a few steps he halted, shouting out, "Oh, my God." The dim chapel was now filled with numerous cocks and roosters. Some were flying and others were running around on the floor. As far as his eyes could see, it was like a sea of crowns and crests.

"My God, please help me!" Crying, the priest tried to cross himself, but strangely his arms were numbed as if bound by a tremendous power. Soon, red lights from a burning torch began to flow in the dim chapel. The panting priest saw vague shadows of figures floating in the red light. Finally, the figures became clear.

A strange group of primitive men and women with beaded necklaces were all talking and laughing. The clearer the figures became, the louder the roosters sounded. Simultaneously, the painting of St. Michael disappeared, as if swallowed in the night mist. A scene of Japanese bacchanalia appeared like a mirage before the flabbergasted Father Organtino.

He watched the Japanese men and women dressed in ancient clothes sitting in a circle and drinking *sake*. In the middle of the circle was a large woman, unusual for this land, dancing crazily on a big, upside down barrel. Behind the barrel was a huge man who looked like a small mountain. He was hoisting an uprooted *sakaki* tree whose branches were decorated with various dangling beads and mirrors. Around these people were hundreds of cocks, rubbing their crests and long tails, making constant clamor. And beyond them was — the priest could not believe his eyes — a soaring rock door to a stone chamber.

The woman on the barrel continued dancing. The vines covering her hair were

swirling, while the beads hanging on her forehead echoed like falling hailstones. The bamboo branches in her hands were constantly criss-crossing in tempo with the music. And her exposed breasts! The glowing breasts reflecting the torchlight represented lust itself. Fervently, reciting God's name, the priest tried in vain to shift his eyes. He was unable to move freely, his body bound by a mysterious power.

Suddenly, silence prevailed. The woman on the barrel finally stopped dancing as she came out of her trance, and the clamorous roosters became silent while stretching their necks.

Breaking the silence, a beautiful female voice solemnly spoke, "Hasn't the world been dark as long as I have been hiding here? But I hear my gods outside laughing and amusing themselves." As soon as the voice stopped, the woman on the barrel, looking at everyone around her, replied to the voice in a most discreet manner, "That is because a new god superior to you has just appeared, and we have been celebrating the occasion."

Thinking, "Maybe, the new god means our God," the hopeful Father Organtino now became encouraged and interested in this strange illusion. Silence continued for a while. Suddenly, the roosters crowed aloud in unison announce daybreak. Then in the night mist the tightly closed rock door slowly slid open. An indescribably bright light flooded out through the narrow crack in the door.

Organtino almost cried out but was tongue-tied. He wanted to run away, but his legs did not move. He felt dizzy by the great radiance. In the flood of light, he heard only joyful voices soaring up to the sky.

"Oh, Ōhirume, Ōhirume, the Great Sun Goddess!"

"No new god, we have no new god!"

"All who oppose you will be defeated."

"Look at that, darkness is gone!"

"All you see is yours, your mountains, your forests, your towns, your houses, and your sea!"

"There is no new god. All of us are your servants!"

"Ōhirume, Ōhirume, Ōhirume!"

In the midst of the clamorous calling, the panting priest, covered with cold perspiration, lost consciousness while trying to cry out.

Towards midnight, Father Organtino finally regained consciousness. He felt he was still hearing the echoing voices of those people, the primitive gods of this land. After a while, he looked around and saw there was no one in the chapel. Only the lamp hanging from the ceiling faintly illuminated the wall painting.

Groaning and staggering, he finally left the altar, wondering about the meaning of the hallucination he had seen but couldn't understand. But he was sure that it was not caused by his God. "Fighting against the spirits of this land is, . . ." talking to himself, he began to walk, "So fighting against the spirits of this land seems more difficult than I expected. Whether winning or losing, ..."

At that moment, he heard someone whispering, "You will lose!" Feeling strange, Father Organtino looked in the direction of the voice, but saw nothing except the roses and other flowers blooming in the dim light.

The following evening Father Organtino again was walking in the garden of the Southern Barbarian Church. This time his blue eyes looked happy. A few samurai had joined his congregation that day.

The palm and cinnamon trees were standing quiet in the darkening garden. Only the sounds of the wings of the doves broke the silence. They were returning to the church's eaves. The aroma of the roses and the moisture of the sand reminded the priest of the peaceful evening in ancient times when winged angels, impressed by the beauty of human women, descended to earth to look for wives.

"So, before the glorious light of the cross, the defiled Japanese spirits could not win. "But what about the vision I saw last night? It must have been nothing but an illusion, like the ones which St. Bonaventura used to have because of the Devil. Today, a few new members joined us, which proves that what I saw last night was nothing but imagination. Soon temples for our Lord will be built everywhere in this land." Thinking thus, Father Organtino continued his walk along the red sandy path.

Suddenly, he felt someone lightly tap his shoulder. Organtino turned back but saw only the evening glow softly reflected on the young leaves of trees. "Oh God, please protect me," mumbled Organtino, as he slowly turned his head and saw a vague figure slowly approaching him. It was an old man wearing the same necklace that the primitive people in his hallucination had worn.

"Who are you?" asked the startled Organtino.

"I? It's not important who I am. I am one of the spirits of this land," replied the old man with a smile. He continued, "Let's walk together. I have come here to talk with you." Organtino crossed himself, but the old man showed no sign of fear and said, "I am not your devil. Look at my beads and sword. How can they look so pure and beautiful, if they have been burnt by the fires of hell? Now stop reciting your useless incantations!"

With his arms crossed, Organtino reluctantly started to walk along with the old man. The old man began quietly, "So you have come to this land to propagate your Lord's teachings, right?" The old man continued, "It may not be a bad idea, but in the end, I am afraid, your God will lose in this country."

"Since our God is omnipotent, our God will ...," retorted Organtino, and began to speak the polite language which he usually used before his congregation. "No, there is no one who overcomes our God," insisted Organtino.

"But in reality there is. Now listen to me carefully. Your God is not the only one who has come to this land from far away. Many thinkers such as Confucius and Mencius also came. Since the time when this country was young, the Chinese brought various things, including silk and jade."

"They brought something more important, exquisite Chinese writings. But because of that, has China conquered this country? For example, look at the Chinese characters we imported. Instead of conquering us, they were conquered by us. A native poet of this land, Hitomaro, composed a poem about Altair and Vega based upon a Chinese tradition, but his poem conveys a love romance between a cowherd and a weaving maiden. What the ancient people of this land heard in the poem was the gentle murmur of a stream in the Milky Way, in place of the roaring sounds of the great Yangtse River and Yellow River.

“Now I must tell you more about the writing, rather than the poem. Although Hitomaro used Chinese characters in his poems, he used them only for their meaning, not for their sounds. For example, although our ancient people imported a Chinese character with the sound *shū* [meaning a boat], they have tenaciously retained their native sound *fune* [boat] for the same character. Otherwise, our language would have been changed into Chinese. Thanks to the power of our native gods, the hearts of the poets have been well protected.”

“Chinese thinkers also brought calligraphy, and I have visited the famous calligraphers of this land including Kūkai, Dōfū, Sari and Kōsei who imitated the Chinese writing style. However, gradually, they began to develop their own style, the Japanese *kana* graphics.”

“We have won not only with characters and writing, but also the way of thinking. The harsh thought of Lao-tze [of Taoism] was softened like a sea breeze as it landed in this country. Ask the natives about the ships loaded with the writings of Mencius. They believe that such ships were sunk because Mencius’ writings angered the native gods. They believe that their gentle gods have never played evil tricks on their people. Don’t you agree that such a belief reveals the power of the gods of this land?”

The stupefied Organtino simply gazed upon the old man. Ignorant of the history of this country, Organtino did not understand even half of what the eloquent old man said, who continued, “After the Chinese thinkers came Sidharta, an Indian prince.” The old man plucked a rose off from the stem and happily smelled the fragrance. The rose, even after being broken off, still remained on the stem as it was. The flower in his hand appeared to be the same in color and shape as the fresh one on the stem, but misty like smoke.

“The fate of the Buddha, Sidharta, was no different from that of other thinkers from foreign lands. You may be bored by my talk. But be careful about things in this land, especially the teachings of *bonji suijaku* which taught the natives that the Great Sun Buddha [of India] was the same as their traditional Great Sun Goddess, Ōhirume. Is this the victory of Ōhirume or the Great Sun Buddha? Suppose that many natives of this land are familiar with the imported Great Sun Buddha. However, isn’t it possible that the image of the Great Sun Buddha, which appears in their dreams, may be that of their native deity, Ōhirume?”

“I have walked under the Sara Tree with the great priests of this land, Shinran and Nichiren. I am sure that the image that they worshipped was not the one of dark-skinned foreign buddhas, but the gentle and noble image of their ancient Prince Shōtoku. My examples may bore you. What I mean is that no one from outside wins in this country, not even your God.”

“You may say so, but a few samurai joined our congregation today,” interrupted Organtino.

“Surely, numbers of them may be converted to your teachings, just as the majority of the natives have already been affected by the Buddhist teachings. But that is not the issue here. What I am talking about is their power, the ability of transforming and adapting [what has been imported]. It is not the power of destruction.” Saying this, the old man threw away the flower, which vanished in the dusk as soon as it left his hand.

“Indeed, the power of transforming. However, that is not necessarily unique to this land. In other lands ... the various gods of Greece and the demons of other lands . . .” said Organtino.

“Oh, you mean the dead Pan. Well, he may revive some day. But we are still alive in this land.” Organtino curiously gave a side look at the old man, and asked, “Do you know something about Pan?”

“I just read about him in books brought from Western countries by sons of the Christian *daimyo*. Now, going back to the power of transformation, certainly this land is not the only one which has it. You should be so much more careful. We are old gods, as old as the Greek ones who saw the dawn of this world.”

“But our God will win,” repeated Organtino insistently. Ignoring him, the old man slowly continued, “Several days ago, I went to see a Greek sailor who landed on the beach of a western province of this land. He was not a god, just a human. Sitting on a rock with him in a moonlit night, I heard him telling all kinds of stories, including one about a one-eyed god, a goddess who changed humans into pigs, and a mermaid with a beautiful voice. Do you know the name of the sailor? As soon as he met me, he changed to a native of this land. He is now called Yuriwaka [Ulysses]. So, you have to be cautious. You can not say your God will necessarily win. Your Catholic teachings will not necessarily win, no matter how much they spread in this country.” The old man’s voice became smaller and thinner as he continued. “Even your God may change into a native god of this land, just as those from China and India have changed. We are in the trees, in the shallow streams, in the breeze over these roses, and in the evening glow reflected on the temple wall. We are anywhere and anytime. So be careful.” As his voice stopped, the old man disappeared in the twilight like a shadow. Simultaneously, Organtino heard the bell tolling the melody of Ave Maria from the belfry.

Father Organtino, no, not necessarily he, but a red-haired man with a high-bridged nose dressed in a long robe melted into a standing screen as he left the imaginary roses, and cinnamon trees in the twilight garden of the Southern Barbarian Church; a three-hundred-year-old screen which depicts the scene of the arrival of a Southern Barbarian ship.

Goodbye, Father Organtino. Now you are walking with your colleagues on a Japanese beach while watching a large Southern Barbarian ship in the mist with a mast painted in gold dust. No one knows whether your God wins or Ōhirume wins.

Meanwhile, you are silently watching us from the beach of the past. In this painted screen, you may be strolling with a ship’s captain followed by a dog and a black boy holding an open umbrella. Finally, black ships will appear on the horizon, and their cannon will demolish your old dreams. Until then, farewell Organtino, priest of the Southern Barbarian Church!

Returning a Favor

(1922)

The Story of Jinnai

Commonly I am called Macao Jinnai. As you know, I am Jinnai, the famous thief. But relax. I haven't come here to steal from you tonight. I hear you are one of the most virtuous *padres* in Japan. I know that seeing a thief like me is not pleasant for you. But I don't steal all the time and have come here tonight to ask your favor to save the soul of a certain man. No, he is not my blood relation. His name? Well, he is a Japanese man, but is called by the Christian name, Paul. I want you to offer a prayer, a mass, to deliver his soul. So please bear with me and listen to my story.

About two years ago in a biting winter wind, I was wandering about the capital [Kyoto] disguised as a Buddhist monk. It was not my first time to walk around the city. For several days I had been out looking for places to rob. The town was already asleep after midnight. I walked down a street under the starlit sky to the sound of a blasting wind. As I turned a corner, I saw the large mansion of Hōjōya Yasōemon, a most successful businessman who owned a few ships for his trading business with Siam and Luzon. I was not particularly looking for his house that night, but happened to come upon it. Besides, the windy night was ideal for my business. Immediately, I hid my straw hat and a staff by the wall behind the water pails for emergency fire control, and jumped over the wall into the inner garden.

You might have heard a rumor that I use the arts of the *ninja*, but I am neither a *ninja* nor a devil. However, I learned something about levitation from a doctor on a Portuguese ship when I was in Macao. If you learn such practices, you can easily loosen large bars and bolts. We Japanese learned these techniques from the West, you see, as well as the concept of the cross with Jesus and the use of guns.

In no time I was inside the mansion and stealthily walked through the dark hallway until I saw a faint light from a tearoom at the end of the hall. Amazingly, after midnight someone was conversing in the tearoom. Wondering if the host, Yasōemon, was entertaining his guest with tea, I went close to a paper sliding door and strained my ears. Besides the host's low voice, I heard a woman sobbing. It was quite extraordinary that a woman would be weeping after midnight in the tearoom of a large mansion. Holding my breath, I managed to look into the room through a crack in the door.

In the dim light, an old man was sitting before the alcove which had an ancient hanging scroll depicting winter chrysanthemums in a vase. The old man, dressed in a coat with small floral designs, appeared to be listening to the bubbling water in the kettle. Beside him, an old woman with a neat hairdo was wiping away tears from time to time.

“So, even wealthy people have troubles,” I thought as a smile came to my face. My smile did not mean I had any particular personal grudge or hatred for this old couple, but having been forty years in my business, I began to feel rather pleased at the unhappy situation of usually carefree people. At that time, too, I enjoyed the sorrow of the couple, as if watching a scene in the kabuki theater. But I am sure I am not the only one who would feel like that. Sad stories are usually more popular in current novels.

After a while, Yasōemon sighed and said, “As long as we are in these dire straits, we have no choice. I will tell our situation to the people in the shop tomorrow.” Suddenly, a strong gust shook the room, and made the old woman’s reply inaudible. Joining his palms, the old man nodded and looked up at the ceiling. His thick eyebrows, sharp cheekbones, and large eyes began to awaken old memories in me. I thought I had seen that face once before. The old man began to pray, “Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, please give us your blessing ...” Closing his eyes, the old man continued to murmur his prayer, and the old woman seemed to follow his words. I continued staring at the old man’s face until another gust blew and refreshed my memory. Yes, I had seen him, Yasōemon, twenty years before.

I was in Macao twenty years ago. A Japanese boatman saved my life but we parted without exchanging names. Yes, the old man in the tearoom was none other than that boatman. Yes, his broad shoulders and sturdy hands and arms still reminded me of the smell of the reef and the white sandalwood in Macao.

After finishing his prayer, the old man said to his wife, “Let us leave everything in Our Lord’s hands. Now the water is boiling. Will you fix some tea for me?”

“Yes, but what I regret is ...”

“Now, now. You complain again. The fact that our ship, the *Hōjōmaru*, sank with her silver coins ...”

“No, I don’t mean that. I mean if our son, Yasaburō, were here, at least, he could ...”

While listening to their conversation, I smiled again. This time, too, I felt no pleasure at the misfortune of the old couple. Rather the idea that finally I might return the old man’s favor made me very happy. No one but me could feel such happiness, the pleasure that even a thief, the great thief, Macao Jinnai, who has caused nothing but trouble, could return a favor to someone. I feel sorry for good people who practice no evil but only perform good deeds. They would never feel this kind of happiness. They would never understand happiness of this nature.

“No, he is a bad lot. It’s better not to have him around,” said Yasōemon as he glanced at the light stand. He continued, “But if we had the money which he spent, we might be able to handle this emergency. For that matter, cutting him off was ...” Suddenly, the shocked old man spotted me. Without words, I opened the door and faced him in my Buddhist robe with a western-style head covering.

“Who are you?” Yasōemon started to rise.

“Please don’t be surprised. I am Macao Jinnai. Please sit down. I am the thief, Jinnai, and have come here for another reason.” Taking off my head covering, I sat before the old man. You know what I did after that. I promised to bring him six thousand *kan* of coins in three days.

Well *Padre*, I hear someone coming. Now I have to excuse myself. I may return in a few days. How do I get out of this place? Don't worry. I can easily leave through the high windows or from the large fireplace. Please take care of the soul of Paul to whom I am deeply indebted, and do not repeat anything about my story.

The Story of Yasōemon

Padre, please listen to my confession. As you know, there is an infamous thief called Macao Jinnai. We hear that he was the one who stole the great sword of the Regent and attacked a governor of Luzon in a distant country. Now, you must have heard that finally he was caught and his head displayed on the Modoribashi Bridge of First Avenue. Since I am greatly obliged to him, I feel a sadness that I cannot describe. Please listen to my detailed story and render your mercy to this poor sinner, Yasōemon.

About two winters ago, my family, the Hōjōya, was about to declare bankruptcy on account of the loss of our ship, the *Hōjōmaru* in a storm. We merchants have many business contacts but few real friends who will help us. So our business was on the verge of sinking just like our ship. Then one windy night which I will never forget, my old wife and I were talking late in our tearoom when suddenly Jinnai the thief appeared in a priestly robe with a western-style head covering.

I was both shocked and angry. But after having heard his story, I learned that I once saved his life in Macao. Indeed, about twenty years ago in Macao, I did help a young Japanese man elude his pursuers. By mistake he had killed a Chinese while drinking. Later in Japan, the young man became the notorious thief, Macao Jinnai. As I believed his words, I asked him what he was going to do. Jinnai said that he would like to repay the favor he had received from me twenty years before by saving our family from the crisis, and asked how much money I would need.

Unconsciously, I smiled at the idea that a thief was going to help me. If a thief had that amount of money, he would not have come to rob our family. When I told him the amount I would need to avoid bankruptcy, he nodded, and agreed to provide the money in three days. The six thousand *kan* of coins was such a great amount of money that I did not believe he could keep his promise. In any case, after agreeing, he tasted the tea which my wife had prepared and left in the cold wind.

The following day, the money did not arrive, nor on the second day. On the third day, it was snowing. Nothing had happened, even by evening. As I mentioned before, I had not quite believed the thief's words but still was anxiously waiting, straining my ears even at the sound of the falling snow.

Finally in the Hour of the Mouse [1:00 a.m.], I heard the noise of grappling and struggling outside the tearoom. What flashed in my mind was that Jinnai might have been caught by a pursuer. I immediately opened the sliding door to the garden and held out the hand lamp. At the base of the great Ming bamboos, I saw two grappling figures. Under the lamplight, one suddenly pushed the other away, then rushed into the shade of the trees by the wall. Soon I heard someone climbing the wall. The ensuing silence meant that he must surely have gone. Now the other man,

instead of pursuing the runner, brushed the snow from his shoulders, and quietly came to me, saying, "I am Jinnai." Flabbergasted, I stared at him. Again he was dressed in the priestly robe with the western-style head covering.

"Sorry for the noise. I hope the commotion did not wake up your people." And Jinnai came into the room with a bitter smile and continued, "When I came in, I saw someone crawling under the flooring. So I caught him and tried to look at his face, but he was gone." As I was thinking about pursuit, I asked Jinnai if it was an officer. Jinnai insisted it was a thief, not an officer. So one thief was trying to catch another thief, most extraordinary, don't you think? I also had a bitter smile. Now, until I saw the money, I could not relax. But before I asked him, just as if he had read my mind, Jinnai loosened his sash, and took out a package which contained the coins, saying, "Please be at ease. I have brought you six thousand *kan*. Most of the sum was ready yesterday, but I brought two hundred more tonight. So please take this package. The rest is hidden under the flooring of the room where that thief attempted to steal it."

I was listening to him as if dreaming. Just imagine, a thief prepared the money for me. I knew it was not proper conduct. And I did not care if it was good or bad when I was unsure about the possibility of getting the money. Now when it had become a reality, I could not very well refuse the money, because without it all my family members would be thrown into the street. I hope you will understand my feelings in such a predicament, and show me your mercy, *Padre*. Without knowing it, I was tearfully and wordlessly bowing before Jinnai.

For two years since then, I have had no word of Jinnai. Thanks to him, my family escaped their predicament and has had a peaceful life. I have been sincerely praying to the Honorable Mother Maria for the safety of Jinnai, but I heard that Jinnai was finally caught, and that his head was exposed on the bridge. I was shocked and shed tears. However, I told myself that he deserved this outcome for all his past sins. Yet I wanted to pray for his soul, and went to the bridge to see his head.

At the bridge, nothing was unusual on this sort of occasion. Many spectators and a low-ranking officer were standing by a white wooden board which listed the details of the crimes. As soon as I looked at the bloody head with its pale face placed on top of three bamboo poles, I was paralyzed by shock. It was not the head of Jinnai. The thick eyebrows, the sharp cheekbones, and the scar between his eyebrows in no way resembled Jinnai's features. Suddenly, I felt dizzy as though all the people, the sunlight, and the head on the pole had vanished for a second. It was my head, my head of twenty years before when I saved Jinnai in Macao. "Yasaburō. Oh, my son!" I was shouting mentally as my tongue stuck to my palate, and my body trembled like a sick man caught in an epidemic.

Yasaburō! I was simply gazing at my son's head as at an illusion. The head was slightly tilted upward, and his narrow eyes appeared to look down on me. Why was he up there? What had happened? Was he mistaken for Jinnai? But with a stringent examination, such a mistake could not have happened. Or was Macao Jinnai my son, Yasaburō? No, he couldn't be. No one in Japan but Jinnai could have collected six thousand *kan* in three days. Then I recalled the snowy night of two years before

when someone was fighting with Jinnai in my garden. Who was that man? Was it my son? It could have been my son Yasaburō. Is it my illusion? But if it was my son ... As I gazed upon the head as if in a dream, I saw a slight smile appear on the purplish swollen lips of my son. Unconsciously, a faint smile came onto my face, and gradually hot tears began to fall down my eyes.

Silently smiling, my son began to speak, “Father, please forgive me. Forgive my being unfaithful. Two years ago, I sneaked into your house because I wanted your pardon. I looked too shabby to appear in the shop during the daytime. So I waited for nightfall and was going to knock at your door. Seeing the light reflected on your paper sliding door, I began to approach stealthily. Suddenly I was caught by someone from behind. Father, you know what happened after that. As soon as I saw your figure, I pushed the man away, and ran out of the mansion. Learning that the man dressed in a priestly robe was not after me, I soon quietly returned and heard everything from outside the paper doors.”

“Father, Jinnai rescued our family, the Hōjōya, and he is our true lifesaver. I decided to help him even at the cost of my life if ever something happened to him. I also thought that, having been cut off by you, I was in the most suitable situation to return the favor to him. For the past two years, I have been looking for the opportunity. And finally, the chance came. So, please forgive your unfaithful son. Although being on an evil path, at least I repaid the family obligation which will be the only consolation for my soul.”

On my way home, I praised my son’s accomplishment while crying and smiling at the same time. Maybe you don’t know, *Padre*, but both my son and I have put our faith in your teachings, and he has received the name Paul. However, my son was most unfortunate, no, not only my son, but I, too. If I had not been saved by Jinnai, I would not have had this kind of grief. No matter how reasonable I sound, I now suffer terribly. Would it have been better to ignore our bankruptcy, or to keep my son alive? Please save me from this suffering. If this continues, I may even begin to hate Jinnai, our great lifesaver!”

The Story of Paul Yasaburō

Oh, Honorable Mother Maria! I am about to be beheaded as dawn breaks. As soon as my head falls on the ground, my soul will fly to you like a small bird. No, with my past sins, I may fall into the flaming depths of the fearful inferno instead of worshipping the glories of heaven. However, I am content. In the past twenty-some years, nothing has given me more pleasure.

Although I am Hōjōya Yasaburō, my displayed head will be referred to as that of Macao Jinnai. So I will be that Jinnai. Could there be more pleasure than that? Macao Jinnai, isn’t it a fabulous name? Every time I call out that name, I feel that even this dark jail is filled with heavenly roses and lilies.

I will never forget a certain snowy night two years ago. Wanting some money for gambling, I went into my father’s mansion. As I saw faint light reflected from

the paper sliding door to my father's tearoom, I stealthily walked to the door when suddenly someone grabbed my collar. I tried to shake him off, but he grappled with me. I couldn't tell who he was, but his strength was formidable. After struggling for a few seconds, suddenly the sliding door opened, and my father appeared with a light in his hand. Desperately struggling to shake off my opponent, I finally managed to dash to the wall and escaped from the mansion.

After running a half-block, I hid myself under the dark eaves of a house and watched the street which appeared white in the wind blown snow. No one was around. Had he given up chasing me? Who was he? He was dressed as a monk. But judging by his strength, he could not be a common monk. He must have been trained in the military arts. But wasn't it strange that a monk was lurking in the garden of a mansion late at night? After a while, I returned to the mansion out of curiosity.

About two hours later, I saw the strange monk going down Ogawa Street. Fortunately, the snow had stopped. He was the notorious thief Macao Jinnai, who could change himself into a samurai, a monk, a merchant, a linked-verse poet, or whatever he wished. I stealthily followed him. I had never been happier than at that time. Macao Jinnai, how much had I emulated him even though in my dreams. It was he who had stolen the great sword of the Regent. Those extraordinary evil deeds including stealing the watch of a Portuguese captain, breaking into five storehouses in one night, and cutting down eight samurai warriors were all his exploits. That Jinnai with his straw hat was now walking ahead of me on the road in the dim snowy light. Wasn't I lucky to be able to see him? But I wanted to be more fortunate.

When Jinnai came near the backyard of the Jōgon Temple, I caught up with him. Even in daytime, hardly any passersby were visible in the vicinity, which had no houses, only the long earthen temple wall. Even upon sighting me, Jinnai quietly halted, showing no surprise at all. A staff in his hand, he remained silent as if waiting for me to speak. Intimidated, I knelt down with my hands on the ground. Flushed with excitement, I became tongue-tied and hardly spoke, as I looked up at his face. Finally I opened my mouth, and said, "Please excuse me. I am Yasaburō, the son of Hōjōya Sōemon. I have followed you because I have something to ask you."

Jinnai simply nodded. Being timid by nature, I felt more relaxed and courageous. Still pressing my hands against the snowy ground, I told him that night about my father who had cut me off on account of my association with some rogues, about my plan for robbing my father, and of hearing the secret conversation between my father and Jinnai. Still silent, Jinnai looked coldly down on me. As I finished, I advanced on my knees and intently looked up into his face and told him, "I share the favor you have granted the Hōjō Family. In order to reciprocate your favor, I have decided to become your disciple. Please use me as your retainer. I know how to steal, and how to set fire to houses. I can commit all kinds of wicked deeds better than others."

Jinnai still remained silent. With a pounding heart, I continued to urge him, begging, "So please use me. I will work very hard. I know every place, the capital, Fushimi, Sakai and Osaka. I can walk fifteen miles a day, can lift four rice bags in one hand. I have killed a few men. So please let me work for you. I will do anything for

you. If you order me, I will even steal the white peacock from Fushimi Castle. If you want, I can burn the belfry of the Temple of the Franciscans. I can kidnap the princess of the Minister of the Right, or can take the head of the magistrate ...” Suddenly I was kicked down in the snow as the voice of Jinnai resounded, “You fool!”

Jinnai was about to resume walking. Hastily, I caught the tip of his robe, and begged, “Oh, please, take me with you. I will follow you wherever you go. I will enter water and fire for you. Even a mouse saved a lion king in *Aesop’s Fables*. I will become that mouse for you, I ...”

“You shut up! I, Jinnai, will never be obliged to someone like you.” Jinnai shook me off and kicked me hard as he shouted at me, “You rascal, be a faithful son!” When I was kicked a second time, I suddenly felt a sense of chagrin and finally said to him, “Fine, never be obliged to me!” Jinnai walked away with the straw hat which reflected the moonlight. Since then, for two years, I have not seen him. Yes, even though he had said, “I will never be obliged to someone like you!” I will be killed in his place at daybreak.

Oh, Heavenly Honorable Mother Maria. For the past two years, you don’t know how much I have suffered while I wished to return his favor. Return a favor? No, I mean, satisfy a grudge. But I still don’t know where he is, what he does, or who he is. No one knows. The person I saw that snowy night was a small-framed false monk in his forties. But the one I heard about was a red-faced *ronin* of thirty staying in a brothel in Yanagimachi, or a red-haired man who had upset a small *kabuki* hut, or a thief who stole the treasures of Myōkoku Temple, or a young samurai with bangs. If all these persons were counted as Jinnai, it seems impossible to identify him. Moreover, since last year I have contracted a bad disease which causes me to vomit blood from time to time. However, my grudge against him, like an obsession, has increased day by day as I become thinner and thinner.

Suddenly, one day, an idea flashed into my mind. Oh, Honorable Maria, it must be by your blessing that this idea finally came to me. The thought is that I can fulfill my wish only by throwing away my life. My body which is nothing but skin and bones is already spoilt by consumption. Rejoicing at this inspiration, I spent all night laughing and repeating my monologue.

“Being beheaded in place of Jinnai, substituting for him, as a scapegoat ...” Isn’t that a most wonderful idea? If that happens, all his sins and crimes will vanish. Without fear, he can walk all over and throughout Japan. And in return, overnight, I will become the notorious thief, Macao Jinnai. All the past exploits of Jinnai will become mine — stealing the most precious *kyara* incense from Minister Bizen, becoming a friend of the Tea Master Rikyu, taking the treasure of Fushimi Castle and killing the eight strong Mikawa samurai. (Here I laughed three times.) I will save him as I destroy his name, and I will repay his favor for saving my family simultaneously by satisfying my grudge against him. Nothing is more delightful than this in repaying one’s obligation. So you understand why I spent all night smiling and laughing. Even at this moment in this jail, how can I stop enjoying my fortunate situation?

With that wonderful idea, I broke into the Imperial Palace one evening. I remember something like a faint light shining through the bamboo hangings and

flowers among pine trees in the garden. As soon as I jumped from the roof of the long corridor into the quiet garden, I was caught by a few guards, as I expected. At that moment, one of the bearded samurai guards murmured while binding me, "So, finally we have caught Jinnai, the thief." Yes, exactly, who else but Macao Jinnai would dare to break into the Imperial Palace? At these words, I could not help but smile while pretending to struggle.

Jinnai had said to me, "I will never be obliged to someone like you," but I will be soon executed in his place. What a wonderful way to spite him! My exposed head will be waiting for him. Jinnai will surely give way to voiceless laughter. Then I will laugh in response, asking, "What do you think of Yasaburō's way of returning his obligation?" My silent laughter will continue, "You are not Jinnai any more. Your head is not that of Macao Jinnai, the most notorious and the greatest thief of Japan!" Oh, I am so happy. I have never felt happier than this throughout my life.

However, if my father sees my exposed head, — Oh, father, please forgive me. My life would not have lasted more than three years because of my disease, even if I were not beheaded. Please forgive your unfaithful son. Although born a rascal, at least I was able to return the favor done to our family.

Ogin

(1922)

Was it in the Genna [1615-24] or Kan'ei era [1624-44]? This is a story of the distant past, at a time when the upholders of the teachings of God, when discovered, were crucified and burnt. As the government's persecution became more severe, the blessings of God seemed to have increased among the believers.

From time to time, angels and saints appeared in the shadows and dusky lights of the villages around Nagasaki. At one time, even Saint Juan Bautista was said to have appeared in the windmill hut of Miguel Yahei, a Christian believer of Uragami. At the same time, devils, too, frequented the village believers to interfere with their ascetic religious life, taking various forms like strange black men, imported plants and flowers, and vehicles made of woven bamboo. Even the mice which annoyed Miguel Yahei in the pitch-dark earthen jail, were said to be the devil incarnate. Yahei, together with eleven other Christians, was burnt to death in the autumn of the eighth year of the Genna era [1622]. The following story is from the time of either Genna or Kan'ei.

A young girl, Ogin, lived in the mountain village of Uragami. Ogin's parents had died soon after they moved to the village from Osaka. Of course, being outsiders in the village, Ogin's parents had no knowledge of God's teachings. What they believed in was Buddhism; Zen, the Lotus Sutra, or the Pure Land — the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. According to a French Jesuit, the clever genius Shakyamuni wandered through China while preaching the teachings of a Buddha called Amida. Eventually, he came to Japan and propagated the same doctrines. In his preaching, our soul or *anima*, depending on the seriousness of our sins, will be reborn as birds, cows, and plants. Above all, Shakyamuni had killed his mother at his birth. So his teaching was as great as his sin was. However, as mentioned before, Ogin's mother had no way to know anything about these things. She [and her husband] believed in Shakyamuni's teachings even as they took their last breaths, and they were buried under the shade of a pine tree in a bleak graveyard. Ignorant of their future fate to fall into inferno [hell], they were still vainly dreaming of Amida's paradise.

Fortunately, Ogin was not affected by her parents' ignorance. Kind and merciful Juan Magoshichi, a village peasant and a devout Christian, had already sprinkled the water of baptism on Ogin's forehead and given her the name Maria. She did not believe in the story of Shaka, who said, after his birth, "I am the only one above and below the heaven," while pointing at the heaven and the earth. Instead, she believed in the natural conception of "the most kind, and deeply merciful Virgin Mary."

She also believed in "Jesus who was crucified and buried deep under the great earth in a stone casket and revived three days later." As soon as the Trumpet for

Investigation is blown, “The Honorable Lord with his great power and prestige will descend, and revive his people from their bodies of dust. Depending on their original soul, some will enjoy pleasures in Heaven while others will go to Hell together with the long-nosed *tengu* goblins.” She especially believed in the holy sacrament which said, “Thanks to the Honorable Virtues of the Honorable Words. Although the color and form of the bread and wine are unchangeable, their essence will change into the Honorable Lord’s Flesh and Blood.” Differing from her parents, whose minds were like a wild desert blasted by hot winds, Ogin had a mind like a bountiful wheat field with native wild roses.

After having lost her parents, Ogin was adopted by Juan Magoshichi. His wife, Juana Osumi, was a kind and gentle woman. With this couple, Ogin spent happy days as she cared for the cows in the field and harvested the wheat. Of course during such happy days she did not forget to fast and pray while remaining discreet. She was devoted in her prayers as she gazed at the crescent moon in the shadow of the fig tree by the village well. The prayer of this innocent girl was like this: “Oh, Merciful Honorable Mother, I pay my respects to you. Eve, the child of the wanderer, now calls on your honorable name. Please, with your gentle eyes, look at and view my vale of tears. Amen.”

Then suddenly one night, Christmas Eve, a few government officers led by a devil came into Magoshichi’s house where the fire of entertainment was burning in the great hearth and a cross was hung on the sooty wall for the special occasion. In the cow shed behind the house, the manger was prepared for the birth of Jesus. Nodding to each other, the officers bound the three, Magoshichi, his wife, and Ogin. But the three appeared calm as they resolved to endure any sufferings to save their souls. The Honorable Lord would surely send them his help. Besides, wasn’t being caught on the night of the nativity enough to show them the blessings? All three were thus jointly convinced, even though they remained silent. After having tied them, the officers drove them on foot to the magistrate’s mansion. On the way, the three went into the blowing wind of dark night simply uttering the nativity prayers. “Honorable Young Prince, born in the country of Beren (Bethlehem), where are you? Please accept our respect and praise.”

Seeing that the three were caught, the devil rejoiced by clapping his hands. However, he was quite angry at the resolution they showed. As soon as he was alone, the disgusted devil spat, changed into a huge millstone which turned with the sound *gorogoro*, and disappeared into the darkness. Juan Magoshichi, Juana Osumi, and Maria Ogin were thrown into the earthen jail, tortured, and repeatedly pressed to renounce the Honorable Teachings of their Lord. However, their faith was unshaken, even in the tortures by fire and water. Even though their skin and flesh were torn, they knew the gate to Heaven was only one step beyond the endurance of torture. When they thought of their Master’s blessings for them, even the dark earthen jail appeared as glorious as Heaven. Moreover, noble angels and saints often came to console them. Ogin was especially blessed by such honorable visitations. She once saw Saint Juan Bautista scooping up many grasshoppers in both hands to offer her as food. Another time, the Archangel Gabriel, closing his white wings, offered her water in a beautiful golden bowl.

Now the magistrate knew nothing of the Master's teachings, nor those of Shakyamuni Buddha. He simply could not understand why the three were so obstinate. From time to time, he thought all three were insane. If they were not crazy, they appeared to him to be like great serpents or one-horned beasts who were beyond human morality. Keeping such monsters alive would be against contemporary laws and jeopardize the security of the country. So the magistrate finally decided to keep them in the earthen jail for a month and then burn them at the stake. (Actually, the magistrate, like the general population, did not care if the whole matter was related to the security of the country or not. First, there were proper laws, and secondly there were morals. So there was no need to consider security. Nothing should be allowed to cause any inconvenience).

The three believers in God showed no fear on the way to the execution ground, which was located on the outskirts of the village, adjacent to the graveyard. After the three arrived at the execution ground, their crimes were announced one by one. The three were tied to large stakes erected in the center of the execution ground with Juan Magoshichi in the middle, Juana Osumi to his right, and Maria Ogin to his left. Due to the daily tortures, Osumi appeared much older and the unshaved Magoshichi's cheeks were bloodlessly pale. Ogin, in comparison, looked unchanged. The three, standing on the piled firewood, still remained calm. A great many spectators surrounded the execution ground. And in the sky above, five or six pine trees spread their branches like canopies above the graveyard.

After all the preparations were finished, one of the officers came to the three, and said in a grave tone that they should take some time to decide if they were to give up or not the teachings of the Lord of Heaven. Moreover, if they rejected the teachings, they would be immediately freed. However, the three did not respond, but gazed at the distant sky, even with slight smiles on their lips. Silence prevailed for several minutes among the officers and spectators. Innumerable unblinking eyes were focused upon the faces of the three, but not out of sympathy. The spectators were anxiously waiting the instant when the fire would be ignited. The officers were completely bored by the tedious procedures for the execution and did not feel like speaking.

Suddenly, they clearly heard unexpected words. "I have decided to give up the Honorable Teachings." It was the voice of Ogin. Immediately, there was a roar among the spectators, which soon subsided when the sad-looking Magoshichi spoke to his daughter in a weak voice while turning his head, "Ogin! Are you fooled by the devil? With a little more patience, you can see the face of your Lord!" Before Magoshichi had finished, Osumi, too, spoke intensely to Ogin, "Ogin, oh, Ogin! You are possessed by the devil. Pray, pray!" Ogin did not reply, but simply gazed at the canopies of the pine trees over the graveyard beyond the spectators.

One of the officers ordered that Ogin's cords be loosened. Seeing this, Juan Magoshichi closed his eyes, as if giving up everything, as he prayed, "Omnipotent Lord, I will leave everything to your plan." The freed Ogin stood for a while as if stupefied. As she cast her glances at Magoshichi and Osumi, she knelt before them and shed tears without a word. Magoshichi still had his eyes closed, and Osumi avoided Ogin by turning her head away.

Finally, Ogin opened her mouth. "Oh, Father and Mother, please forgive me." She continued, "I have given up the Teachings. That was because I realized something while watching the tips of the canopy-like pine trees. My deceased parents buried under these trees were ignorant of the Teachings, and probably have fallen now into the inferno. On the contrary, I might be going to paradise by myself. How can I do that without my real parents? Therefore, I have decided to go to hell to join my deceased parents. So, please, Father and Mother, go to the place of Lord Jesus and Virgin Mary. Now that I have left the Teachings, I will not live anymore ..." Ogin finished word by word and finally sank into sobs.

Now Juana Osumi began to shed tears on the firewood under her feet. Crying or lamenting for useless things like Ogin's situation was certainly not a proper deed for a believer who was about to enter Heaven. With a bitter expression, Magoshichi scolded his wife in a shrieking voice as he turned his head to her, "So you, too, are fooled by the devil. If you wish to abandon the Teachings, do what you want. But I will die alone." Osumi, swallowing her tears, shouted out her words at her husband, "No. I will come with you, but it is not because I want to go to heaven, I simply want to follow you."

For a long while, Magoshichi kept silent. His face appeared pale one moment and animated the next. Simultaneously, perspiration spotted his face. Now Magoshichi was watching his soul in his mind's eye, intensely seeing there the angels and devils who were fighting over him. If Ogin, who was sobbing under his feet, did not raise her face at that instant — she had already lifted her face. Filled with tears, her eyes containing strange lights were staring at him. What was lurking under the sheen of her eyes was not only an innocent girl's heart, but the heart of all humans, "the child of the wandering Eve."

"Father! Let's go to the inferno! With me, Mother and my deceased parents are over there! Let us allow the Devil to take us there!" Finally, Magoshichi was defeated.

This story, for generations, has been regarded as one of the most shameful incidents in the history of the numerous martyrs of this country. When the three defected from their faith, it was said that all the spectators, young and old, men and women, who knew nothing of the Heavenly Lord, hated them. That may have been because they were sorry to miss the execution at the stake. It was also said that the overjoyed Devil turned into a big book and was flying around the execution ground all night long. But I, the writer of this story, wonder if the Devil really had accomplished much.

The Diary of Maid Ito

(1923)

About the suicide of Lady Shurin'in, wife of Lord Hosokawa Tadaoki [who was also known by her Christian name, Gracia].¹

(1) Lord Ishida in Osaka revolted [against Lord Ieyasu in Edo] in the fifth year of Keichō [1600].² On the tenth day of the seventh month of that year, my father, Naya Seizaemon, brought ten canaries to Lady Shurin'in at the Tamatsukuri mansion in Osaka. Our lady was most pleased, as she liked anything from the Southern Barbarian countries, and I felt most proud. These canaries were the only genuine item among her many imitations. At that time, my father told me that he would make a marriage arrangement for me by autumn of the year and that I would eventually be excused from service to my lady. My father's words made me so happy that I felt like ascending to heaven. In my past three years of service, my lady had never been kind or gentle with me, rather she was always boastful of herself as a superior woman. Working for her was not enjoyable, just depressing. On that day, too, she told us the reason Japanese women, including her maids and female servants, were stupid was because they could not read the horizontal barbarian letters, and that she would be married to a daimyo of a barbarian country in her next life.

(2) On the eleventh, a Buddhist nun called Chōken visited our lady. This nun, who comes and goes freely to and from Osaka Castle is presently regarded as very intelligent. But in the past, she was merely the frivolous widow of a Kyoto thread shop owner, and had changed husbands six times after she was widowed. My stomach revolted at the sight of her. However, our lady did not seem to mind her at all, and to our great regret, occasionally spent half a day with her. This was because our lady simply loved to hear compliments. Chōken always gave her superfluous comments on her looks, saying, "Your ladyship is always so beautiful, and I am sure you appear to be in your twenties to any gentlemen." I didn't think that with her long nose and freckles our lady was that beautiful. Besides, at thirty-eight years of age, she would hardly look like as if she were in her twenties, even from a distance and at night.

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1. Gracia or Tama (1564-1600), the daughter of Akechi Mitsuhide and the wife of a Christian lord, Hosokawa Tadaoki (1564-1645), committed suicide before being taken as a hostage of Ishida Mitsunari (1560-1600), the enemy of her husband. Shurin'in is her posthumous Buddhist name. Gracia, a model Christian woman blessed with beauty and talent in the *Nihon Kirishitan shūmon-shi* 日本切支丹宗門史, is described in this story from her maid's view point. For a historical study, see Elisabeth Gössmann, "Gracia Hosokawa Tama (1563-1600)," *Japanese Religions* Vol. 19 (1993): 8-22.
 2. In the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), Ishida Mitsunari fought against Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616), lost and was executed in Kyoto.

(3) The nun's visit on that day concerned a private request from Lord Ishida in Osaka Castle who wanted our lady to move into the castle as a hostage. Our lady told Chōken that she would need some time to consider, and seemed to have hard time making her decision. After the nun left, she sat before the image of the Virgin Mary and fervently offered a prayer called *orassbo* [from Latin *oratio*] every two hours. Our lady's prayer was not in Japanese but in Latin, a Southern Barbarian language, and sounded to us like "... *nosu, nosu*" [Japanese pronunciation and abbreviation of *Pater noster*, the Lord's Prayer], and we had a hard time controlling our laughter every time we heard her mumbling, "... *nosu, ... nosu.*"

(4) On the twelfth day, nothing special happened. Our lady was not in a good mood all day. No one tried to go near her when she was in a bad mood because she complained not only to her maids, but also to the wife of Lord Yoichirō [a son of Lord Tadaoki Hosokawa]. Today, our lady was spending a long time telling Lady Yoichirō to avoid heavy make-up using the example of a peacock in *Aesop's Tales*. We were most sorry for Lady Yoichirō. Lady Yoichirō was the younger sister of the wife of Middle Councilor Ukita, who lived in the adjacent mansion. Lady Yoichirō was not very intelligent, but her looks were the equal of any princess in the masterpieces of fiction.

(5) On the thirteenth, two officers, Ogasawara Shōsai and Kawakita Iwami came to the kitchen of our quarters. A rule of the Hosokawa House was not to permit men, including male children, into the lady's living-quarters in the mansion. So we servants and attendants usually intermediated for the male visitors, including even officers who had served the family for a long time. This was because our Lord and Lady were jealous. Once Master Mori Tahei of the Kuroda Family laughingly commented on our house rule, "What an inconvenience!" But as we were accustomed to it, it did not bother us. Besides, there must have been a reason for it.

(6) Now, Shōsai and Iwami called Shimo, a lady attendant, and told her about a rumor that Lord Ishida in Osaka was going to take hostages from the daimyos who had gone to Edo to side with Lord Ieyasu. They wanted to know how her ladyship would feel if the rumor were true. Later Shimo said to us, "These officers are supposed to be in charge of everything in the absence of our master, Lord Hosokawa, who has gone to Edo. The nun Chōken already told our ladyship about the hostage matter a few days ago. Now they want me to relate the same matter to her. They are not very efficient!" It was true that news and rumors usually reached lower servants like ourselves faster than the higher ranking officers. Besides, Yūsai was an honest old man, and Iwami was a simple-minded wild samurai who was only concerned with military arts. Because they always did everything in their usual slow manner, we said to each other, "Even our officers know that!" instead of saying, "Everyone knows that!"

(7) When Shimo reported the officers' request, her ladyship replied, "Because my Lord Hosokawa and Lord Ishida oppose each other, Lord Ishida will take a hostage from us first, before taking one from the other daimyos. If he demands a hostage, what should we do? Tell the two officers to think of a good solution." As these two officers had already thought about it and failed to find a good solution,

they came to our lady for a better idea. Her reply was most irrelevant, but Shimo, unable to argue with her, simply related her ladyship's words to the officers. After Shimo retired to the kitchen, our lady again began her "... *nosu*, ... *nosu*" business before the image of the Virgin Mary. Hearing this, a new and ignorant maid, Ume, burst into laughter and was severely scolded.

(8) Meanwhile, the two officers were at a loss about the reply from her ladyship, and said to Shimo, "When Lord Ishida demands a hostage from us, we will simply tell him that we have no one to send him because all of our lord's sons, including masters Yoichirō, Yogoro, and Naiki, have gone to the east [Edo]. If Lord Ishida still insists, we will tell him to wait until we receive instructions from Lord Yūsai [Lord Hosokawa's uncle] in Tanabe Castle in Maizuru. We wonder what her ladyship will think of this idea." These two officers had no good ideas whatsoever. They had neither insight, nor resources, not even as much as a single hair! If they were smart, they would have immediately let our lady escape to Lord Yūsai in Tanabe Castle, released us from our duties, then considered their own responsibilities as caretakers of the mansion. But just saying, "We have no one to send as a hostage." sounded most provocative and would only agitate our enemies. Besides, their idea sounded most troublesome to us, the attendants and servants, who had nothing to do with their business.

(9) When Shimo relayed the officers' idea, our lady said nothing, simply muttered, "... *nosu*, ... *nosu*" again. Soon she regained her composure, and replied that she understood the situation. She could not very well express her wish to leave the mansion, as suggested by the officers in charge during her husband's absence. She must have been very frustrated and irritated by her incompetent officers. After that, her mood became worse, and she constantly complained and scolded us. Every time she scolded us, she read to us from *Aesop's Tales*, comparing a frog with so and so, and a wolf with such and such. We were more distressed by this than by being taken as hostages. I was especially miserable at being compared to a snail, a crow, a pig, a young turtle, a palm tree, a dog, a viper, a wild cow, and a sick person. The shameful comparisons and complaints I received will not be forgotten for generations.

(10) On the fourteenth, the nun Chōken came again, and talked about the hostage. Our lady said to her that she would not go to Osaka Castle without her husband's permission. Then Chōken suggested that our ladyship should leave, and move to the adjacent mansion of Middle Councilor Ukita, a relative of her daughter-in-law, and of whom her husband would certainly approve. Even though I detested Chōken as an old badgering woman, her suggestion sounded pretty good. First, it sounded much better for our lady to move into her relative's mansion than to Osaka Castle. Secondly, our lives would be secure.

(11) However, our lady disagreed, saying, "It is true that Ukita is one of our relatives, but he has sided with Lord Ishida. So moving to his mansion is no different than being taken hostage by our enemy." Yet, Chōken patiently tried to persuade her ladyship by using this excuse and that reason, but our lady would not listen to her, and Chōken's good ideas were in vain. This time, too, our lady quoted from the classics of Japan, China, and the Southern Barbarian countries, including

the stories of Confucius, Aesop, Lady Tachibana, and Christ. Her eloquent talk finally silenced the clever Chōken, who appeared to be quite overwhelmed.

(12) At dusk that day, Shimo sadly told me that she had seen a golden cross descending like a dream onto the top of a pine tree in the garden, and she was afraid that it was an ill omen. The short-sighted and cowardly Shimo, who had been scared of everything lately, must have mistaken the evening star for a cross.

(13) On the fifteenth, the nun Chōken again appeared and suggested to our lady the same idea as on the previous day. However, our lady told her that she was firm in her decision, in spite of the nun's repeated suggestions. Finally, the nun became angry and said to our lady before she left, "You must be terribly anxious. Now, you look like you are in your forties!" Our lady also became angry and told us to tell Chōken that she would not see her any more. That day, too, our lady offered her *orassho* prayers every two hours. The negotiations with the enemy seemed to have come to an end, and everyone in the mansion became terribly anxious. Even the maid Ume no longer laughed.

(14) On this day, one of our officers, the young samurai Iwami, argued with Inatomi Iga, an expert rifle man who was very popular among his disciples in many other daimyo families. So our officers were very jealous of Iga, and frequently argued with him.

(15) Late that night, the frightened Shimo, who had had a nightmare of being attacked by the enemy, ran along the gallery shouting something incoherent.

(16) About the Hour of the Snake [10:00 a.m.] on the sixteenth, the two officers in charge again appeared and said to Shimo, "Finally, the official request for our lady has arrived from Lord Ishida, and if we refuse the request, he will take her by force. This is most preposterous indeed. If he uses force, we will try to stop him at the cost of our lives. So tell your ladyship to prepare [for death]." At that time, as old Shōsai had a toothache, the quick tempered young Iwami spoke, and almost killed Shimo in anger. This was the story told by Shimo.

(17) After hearing the detailed report from Shimo, our lady consulted with her daughter-in-law, Lady Yoichirō. Later we learned that our lady had recommended suicide to Lady Yoichirō. We felt very sorry for Lady Yoichirō. The entire matter was due to the incompetence of our officers in charge and to the pride of her ladyship, leading to this tragic end. Now that Lady Yoichirō had been told to commit suicide with her ladyship, we also might be told to follow them. We were most disturbed. So, when all of us were called to gather in our lady's room, we were very anxious.

(18) As we all sat before her, our lady calmly said, "The time for me to go to Paradise is near, and I am most pleased." However, her pale complexion and a slight tremor in her voice belied her composure. The lady continued, "My only concern is your future. Ignorant of the Christian teachings, you will all fall into the hell called *inferno* where you will be tortured by devils. So I recommend that you change your mind and rely on the help of our Lord Jesus. Otherwise, I will tell you to follow and come with me as I leave this mundane world. I will ask the Archangel to intercede with Jesus Christ, and we will all go to Paradise." Overwhelmed by her

words, we unanimously agreed on the spot to rely on Christ. This immensely pleased our lady, who now said we would not need to follow her, as she was relieved by our correct decision.

(19) Afterwards, our lady wrote two letters; one to her husband, the other to her son, Master Yoichirō, which she handed to Shimo to deliver later. Then, she wrote another letter to Gregorius, a priest in Kyoto, and handed it to me. Her letter was several lines long, written in a barbarian language, and took her almost two hours to finish. When I took the letter to the priest in Kyoto, a Japanese brother came out, and solemnly told me that our lady would not go into Paradise because committing suicide was prohibited in Christianity. However, a special service called “mass” would prevent her from falling into hell because of its merits, and that she would need a piece of silver to pay for such a mass.

(20) The enemy attackers came about the Hour of the Wild Boar [10:00 p.m.]. Iwami defended the front of the mansion, Inatomi Iga the rear gates, and the old man, Shōsai, the inner living-quarters. At the news of the attackers, our lady sent Ume for Lady Yoichirō, but Ume found the lady’s room empty. We assumed that Lady Yoichirō had already left the mansion and were very happy for her. But her ladyship was upset, being very angry and critical of Lady Yoichirō. She said that Lady Yoichirō’s behavior was utterly unforgivable for bringing this final shame to our lady, the daughter of the honorable Lord Akechi Mitsuhide, who had fought against Regent Hideyoshi at the Battle of Yamasaki, and someone who was going to be admitted to Paradise. Finally, she concluded by saying that Lady Yoichirō was the daughter of a mere daimyo with no illustrious merits. The way our lady abused her sounded low and immodest.

(21) After a while, Shōsai, dressed in blue armor with a long *naginata* spear, appeared in the adjacent room to assist in our lady’s suicide [to behead her]. He appeared neither brave nor gallant with his cheek swollen by his terrible toothache. He said that coming into her ladyship’s chamber would be too impolite, so he would use his long spear to assist her without crossing the threshold of her chamber. Shimo and I were supposed to witness the whole event.

By that time, most of the people in the mansion had disappeared, leaving us alone in our lady’s living-quarters. When her ladyship saw Shōsai, she thanked him for his help. This old Shōsai was the first man our lady had seen on that day. Shōsai knelt and put his hands on the threshold as he told our lady that the time had come, but he did not sound clear due to his swollen cheek, and our distressed lady had to tell him to speak louder.

(22) At that instant, a young samurai dressed in light green armor and carrying a long sword dashed in and reported that Iga had defected, that the enemies were charging into the mansion through the rear gates, and that everything should be carried out immediately. Our lady was holding her hair tightly upward in her hands, and raised it high [to expose her neck]. To show she was ready, she looked up. At the sight of the young samurai in the adjacent room, she blushed to the tips of her ears. At that instant, I felt my lady had never looked so beautiful in her whole life.

(23) By the time we left the gateway, the mansion already was on fire. In the light from the fire, many people were gathering outside the gateway. Yet they were only spectators. The enemy had already left with Iga before our lady committed suicide.

Here, I have faithfully recorded the details of the suicide of Lady Shurin'in.

Oshino

(1924)

It was in the building of the Nanban-ji [Southern Barbarian Temple in Kyoto]. Usually at this time, the sun shone through the stained glass windows, but it was during the cloudy rainy season and today was just as dark as at dusk. Only dim light was reflected on the gothic-style wooden pillars which protected the high altar. An oil lamp in the inner part of the hall illuminated an image of a saint. There were no visitors.

In this dim hall, a red-haired Father, perhaps forty-five or -six years of age, was praying alone with his head lowered. He had a narrow forehead, high cheekbones, and a thick beard. His long priestly robe trailed on the floor. A rosary of faint blue beads was loosely wound around his wrist. The hall was quiet, and the Father remained motionless for a long time.

A Japanese woman silently entered the hall. She appeared to be a samurai's wife, dressed in an old robe with a crest and a dark *obi*. Though she looked slightly older, she must have been in her thirties. With dark rings under her eyes, she was strangely pale. Though she might be called beautiful, her perfect features seemed strict and severe.

Gazing curiously at the holy water basin and pews, the woman hesitantly advanced to the inner part of the hall. Surprised at seeing the priest crouching before the altar in the dim light, she stopped. Immediately realizing what he was doing, she remained standing, silently. Inside, the hall was still quiet. The priest was motionless and the woman did not even move her eyebrows. Silence prevailed in the hall for quite a long time.

After a while, the priest finished his prayer and finally rose from the floor. He saw the standing woman, who apparently wished to speak to him. It was not unusual to have in the hall curious visitors who just wanted to look at the image on the cross. But he realized that she was not one of these.

With an artificial smile, he spoke to her in poor Japanese, asking, "Is there anything that I can do for you?" "Yes, I have a small favor to ask." Though she was dressed humbly, her hair was neatly tied up, and she bowed as she replied. The priest returned her bow with smiling eyes as he fingered his blue rosary beads.

The woman continued, "I am called Oshino, and am the widow of Hanbei Ichibangase. My son Shinnojō is now seriously ill ..." She stopped for a moment, then resumed as fluently as if reading. Since spring, her fifteen-year-old son had been ill for no reason. He coughed, had a high fever and no appetite. Oshino had done everything she could. She had taken him to several doctors and bought him many kinds of medicine. Nothing proved effective, and the boy became weaker. Moreover, being poor, she could not have him treated in the way she wanted. She heard that the

medical methods practiced in the Nanban-ji cured even leprosy. So she hoped that the Father could save her son. "What do you think? Would you please come to see him?" While asking, Oshino stared at the priest. Her eyes conveyed neither an appeal for sympathy, nor unbearable anxiety, only obstinate quietude.

"Fine. I will see him," replied the priest, nodding deeply as he stroked his beard. The woman was seeking help for a body, not for a soul. She should not be blamed for that, because the body was the house for the soul. If the house was repaired, the sickness of the master of the house might be cured. The woman might have been sent to him for a divine purpose.

"Can your son come here?"

"That may be difficult."

"Then, take me there."

For a moment, her eyes became radiant with joy, and she said, "Are you sure? I would really appreciate it." The priest was moved by gentle feelings. For a moment, he clearly saw the mother in her face, which had looked as expressionless as a Noh mask. The woman standing before him was no longer a strict samurai widow, nor a Japanese woman, but a mother, "the most gentle, sweet, and merciful Heavenly Queen" who gave her beautiful breasts to Christ in the manger.

Straightening his back, the priest cheerfully spoke to the woman, "Be at ease. I can cure your son's illness. I will take care of him. I will do my best for him. If it is beyond human power ..." The woman softly interrupted, "If you can only come and see my son, it will be enough, no matter what happens in the future. After that, all I can do is to rely on the protection of Bodhisattva Kannon of the Kiyomizu Temple."

Bodhisattva Kannon! The words immediately brought anger to the priest's face. Casting a sharp glance at the ignorant woman, he began to chide her, as he shook his head, saying, "Be careful about Kannon, Shaka [Shakyamuni], Hachiman, and the Tenjin deities, which are nothing but stone and wooden idols. The true God is only one, the Heavenly Lord. Your son's life or death depends on the Lord's will and has nothing to do with these idols. If you care for your son seriously, stop worshipping your idols." The surprised woman simply watched him, unconsciously tucking her chin closely into the collar of her old robe. She was not sure if she understood his words, filled with religious anger.

Almost bearing down upon her, with his sharply protruding bearded face, the priest intently continued his warning. "You must believe in the true God. There are no other gods beside Jesus, who was born in the town of Bethlehem in the country of Jerusalem. If you think there are other gods, they are all devils, the incarnations of the degraded angels. Jesus put himself on the cross to save us. Look at that honorable figure!" Solemnly stretching out his arm, the Father pointed at the image in the stained glass behind him.

In the dark hall, the etched figure of Jesus in passion floated on the window pane which reflected the dim sunlight. Below the cross, the lamenting Mary and the disciples likewise floated. Joining her palms in the Japanese fashion, the woman quietly turned to the stained glass window as she said, "So, that is the rumored Nanban Buddha of the Southern Barbarian Country. As long as my son is saved, I

don't mind serving that Buddha on the cross throughout my life. Please pray to him, so that he will bless my son." The woman's calm voice contained deep emotion. The victorious and proud priest now stretched out his neck and resumed preaching more fluently.

"Jesus was born on the earth to purify our sins and to save our souls. Listen to the hardships in his life!" Filled with religious emotion, he began to walk back and forth as he spoke rapidly about Jesus' life, about the angel who announced the Honorable Conception to the virtuous Virgin Mary, about the Honorable Birth in the manger, about the Wise Doctors who brought fragrant medicines as they followed the star which had told them about the Honorable Birth, about the young children killed by King Herod who was afraid of the Savior's appearance, about Saint John the Baptist, about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, about changing water into wine, about opening the eyes of a blind man, about driving out the seven evil demons who had possessed Mary Magdalene, about reviving the dead Lazarus, about walking on the water, about Jesus entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey, about the sad Last Supper, about his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, and so on.

His voice resounded like that of God in the dark hall, and the woman with shining eyes was silently listening. "Just think how he was, on the cross between the two thieves. Imagine his sufferings and sadness. Only thinking of him makes our flesh tremble. Especially Jesus' last words spoken on the cross, '*Eli, eli, lema sabachthani?*' meaning 'Our Lord, why have you forsaken me?'"

The priest suddenly stopped. The pale woman was staring at him, biting her lower lip. What the priest saw in the glare from her eyes was not sacred emotion anymore, but a cold contempt and a hatred which could penetrate one's bones. The flabbergasted priest simply remained silent as his eyes blinked.

Then the woman, throwing off her innate modesty, spat out her words as if to pierce him, "My husband, Hanbei, was a *ronin* of the Sasaki Clan. He never turned his back to the enemy. Before the attack on the castle of Choko-ji, he lost his horse and armor due to gambling. However, on the day of the battle, he wore a paper coat which had written on its back in large characters *Namu amida butsu* ['Hail to Amida Buddha']. With a leafy bamboo stalk attached to his back as his banner, holding a three-foot-five inch long sword in his right hand and an open red fan in his left, he dashed into the thick of the battle to meet the devilish enemy, the Shibatas of the Oda army, as he loudly sang, 'I'd rather take a head than steal someone's young boy!' Now, how could someone called the Lord of Heaven speak such cowardly words, even on the cross? How degrading! What's the use of putting faith in the teachings of such a coward? And you, who are following this coward, will never see my husband's tablet, nor my son. Shinnojō is the son of Hanbei, known as the head-taker. He would cut his belly rather than take medicine from a coward. If I had known, I never would have come here. It is most regrettable!" Swallowing her tears, the woman quickly turned her back, and hurried out of the hall as if avoiding a poisonous wind, leaving behind the dumbfounded priest.