

## The Virgin of the Thumb

It was 300 years ago on the 10th of October 1708, when a strange man who tied a topknot on his head and wore a pair of swords on his waist, like a samurai, arrived on the shore of the Isle of Yaku located to the south of Kyūshū. He was immediately recognised as a foreigner by local inhabitants and sent to Nagasaki, the only place where, under the national isolation policy, permission to come to trade was exclusively given to the Dutch and the Chinese. Although no interpreters understood his language which turned out to be Latin, the Local Magistrate ascertained, with the assistance of a Dutchman in the Deshima Factory who could speak it, that the man who smuggled himself was Giovanni Battista Sidotti, a forty-one year-old Italian born in Palermo, who came a long way from Rome with a strong wish to propagate Christianity once again in Japan, knowing that the religion had been forbidden there for almost 100 years by the Tokugawa Shogunate Government. Among his belongings were a glass-covered frame with an image of Santa Maria in it, a bronze figurine of Jesus who bore a cross and a thorn crown, tied to the drawstring of a sack, a bronze cross inlaid with glass on its corners, tied to the drawstring of another sack, a number of ritual items, such as round gold plates with reliefs of Saints on their faces, a footed silver cup, a rosary, a bottle of chrism, robes and vestments, etc. as well as books and documents and many other things. Sidotti had also various coins, among which were Japanese Ichibu Golds which he had obtained along with the swords in Luzon.

After having been detained at Nagasaki for almost one year, Sidotti was sent to Yedo (the present-day Tokyo) for further questioning, for which Hakuseki Arai (1657-1725), a prominent scholar and advisor to the Shogun, was in charge. The interrogation was held four times in November-December 1709 with an interpreter who had urgently learnt Latin but the questioning went on as if it were a conversation on an equal footing, viz., in the first three sessions, as Arai who was impressed by Sidotti's broad and profound knowledge was eager to learn about the geography and the situation of the world as well as Sidotti's background. (Later, Arai wrote a book, *Seiyo Kibun* (An Oral Account on the West)). Sidotti himself was awed by Arai's intellect, assuming that Arai must be a genius that might appear on the earth once in 500 years. The discourse in the last session was almost like a theological debate, as the author of *Kishin-ron* (A Theory of the Devil and Divinity), Arai had deep thought on religion that was enough for him to argue the tenet with the Catholic clergyman. Among three possible decisions, i.e., repatriation, probation and execution, written in Arai's report, the government chose the second one and arranged with Sidotti to live quietly in a Kirishitan House which used to be a facility to seclude Kirishitans (Christians) who did not abandon their religion, giving Sidotti a handsome stipend and an old servant couple. One year later, in spite of such a generous treatment he received, he was found to have given baptism to the couple and was put in the cellar of the house until he died in 1714.

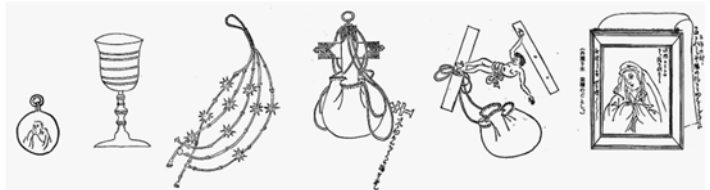
The picture which Sidotti carried, named *The Virgin of the Thumb*, is said to have been prepared by Agnese, a daughter of the famous Florentine artist, Carlo Dolci, after *Mater Dolorosa* (Sorrowful Mother), painted by her father with her mother, Teresa, as the model in ca.1655. Both the Sidotti's belongings, including the framed picture, and the Carlo Dolci's original piece, held in Tokyo National Museum and The National Museum of Western Art, respectively, were not on public exhibition, to my disappointment. At the site of the Kirishitan House, 1-24-8 Kohinata, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, on the roadside were a stone pillar and a board, both provided by the metropolitan government, and another humble stone monument, though apparently erected in modern times, the inscription on which was utterly unreadable due to weathering. Around there was nothing else which stirred my imagination.

Amen



A portrait of Hakuseki Arai in his formal attire (held in the Arai Family) in Y. M. Iyazaki Ed., *Fifteen Tokugawa Shoguns, Shin-jinbutsu-ourai-Sha* 2000 (portion)

References: (1) Hakuseki Arai, *Seiyo Kibun / Nagasaki Chushin Rooma Jinji* (An Oral Account on the West / Nagasaki Report on the Roman Affairs) in: A. Matsumura et al., *Arai Hakuseki*, Iwanami-Shoten 1975, (2) Shuhei Fujisawa, *Shijin (Urban dust)*, Kodansha 1989, (3) Kouhei Hata, *Oyayubi-no-Maria (The Virgin of the Thumb)*, Chikuma-Shobo 1990, etc.



Sketches of some Sidotti's belongings in Nagasaki Report on the Roman Affairs.

## 親指のマリア

侍のやうに頭に髻を結び腰に大小を差した奇妙な男が九州南の屋久島の濱邊に到來したのは、三百年前、1708年10月10日のことでした。彼は異國人であると直ぐに地元民に見破られ、鎖國政策の下、商取引目的の來航がオランダ人と支那人に限って許されてみた長崎に送られました。ラテン語と判明した彼の言葉を解する通事はあませんでした。長崎奉行は出島商館に居たオランダ人でその言語の操れる者の助けを借り、密航者がジョバンニ・パチスタ・シドッチといふパレルモ生れの41歳のイタリア人で、基督教が凡そ100年も前から徳川幕府によって禁止されていることを承知のうへで、再び日本でその宗教を布教したいとの強い意思を持って、ローマから遙々やってきたことを聴取りました。彼の所持品には、中に聖マリアの聖像の入った縦1尺、横8寸5分のガラス張の額、巾着袋の紐に結へた十字架を背負ひ荊の冠をつけた青銅製のキリストの人形(ひとがた)、別の中着袋の紐に結へた隅にガラスの象嵌のある十字架のほか、表に聖人の像が彫られた黄金の円盤、脚付きの銀杯、ロザリオ、瓶入りの聖油、禮服法衣等といった儀式用の品々、他に書物や書類など澤山のものがありました。シドッチはまた色々な硬貨をも保有し、中には刀と共に呂宋で入手したといふ一分金もありました。

シドッチは1年近く長崎に留置かれた後、更なる取調べの爲に江戸(現在の東京)へ送致されましたが、吟味役には著名な學者で將軍の補佐役であった新井白石が任ぜられました。尋問は急遽ラテン語を習った通事を同席させ、1709年の11月から12月に掛けて四回行われましたが、白石がシドッチの該博な知識に感心し、彼の背景だけでなく世界の地理や情勢について學ぼうと欲したので、初めの3回の質疑は恰も対等な討論のやうに進行しました。(白石は後年「西洋紀聞」を著しました。)シドッチの方は、白石の知性に畏敬し、彼が世界で500年に1人現れるか否かの人物であると想像しました。最後の尋問に於ける議論は、神学論争さながらでありました。實際、「鬼神論」の著者である白石は、教義に關してカトリックの司祭と議論するに十分な深い思惟を有してゐました。白石が上申書に認めた三つの処置法、本国送還、勾留、處刑のうち、幕府は第二を選び、シドッチに過分の手當を與へ、老夫婦を世話役に付けて、嘗て棄教を肯じない切支丹を收容する施設として使はれた切支丹屋敷に蟄居するやうに按配しました。しかし斯様な厚遇を受けたにも拘らず、1年後にシドッチが老夫婦に洗禮を施したことが判明したので、彼は地下牢に移され、1714年にそこで死亡しました。

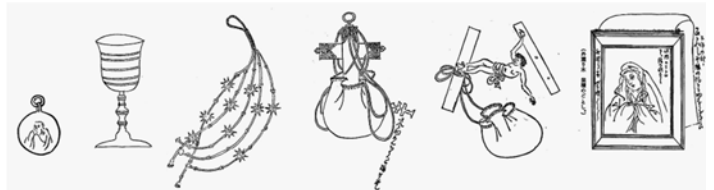
シドッチが持参し、「親指のマリア」と名付けられた繪畫は、有名なフローレンスの畫家、カルロ・ドルチの娘アニェスが、母テレーサをモデルとして父が描いた「悲しみの聖母」に倣って製作したものといはれてゐます。聖母の畫像を含むシドッチの全所持品は東京國立博物館に、カルロ・ドルチの元の作品は國立西洋美術館に所蔵されてゐますが、残念ながら何れも非公開でありました。切支丹屋敷のあった東京都文京区小日向1-24-8には、道路脇に都が設へた石柱と看板がありました。もう一つあった質素な石碑明らかに近世の建立と思はれましたが、刻文は風化してゐて全く讀めませんでした。他に私の想像を掻立てるやうなものゝ邊りには何もありませんでした。

アーメン



正装の新井白石(新井家所蔵)、  
宮崎美友編「徳川十五代將軍」、  
新人物往來社 2000 (部分)

参考文献 (1) 新井白石「西洋紀聞/長崎注進羅馬人事」(松村明他「日本思想大系・新井白石」、岩波書店 1975 に収録)、(2) 藤沢周平「市塵」、講談社 1989、(3) 秦恒平「親指のマリア」筑摩書房 1990、他。



長崎注進羅馬人事にあるシドッチ所持品のスケッチ(抜粋)。