

Ryunoshuke Akutagawa's Kirishitan Series Novels

The period of Taisho through early Showa (1910s - 1940s) was a golden age of Japanese literature when a number of prominent writers, Takeo Arishima, Jun-ichiro Tanizaki, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Atsushi Nakajima, Osamu Dazai, et al., made efforts to enhance the notion of novel from mere reading matter to the level of art. They were the élite who read literature at highest educational institutions, well versed in European, Asian and Japanese literature. They struggled to establish their own style and many of them died young in their thirties or forties killed by intemperance or suicide, unlike today when the so-called pop writers produce million sellers, whatever their literary value. In my personal view, the last writer who followed that tradition was Yukio Mishima who dramatically terminated his life by *hara-kiri* in 1970. Sir Kazuo Ishiguro, the 2017 Nobel Prize Awardee, who was brought up and educated in UK, cannot be counted among Japanese writers, although he was born in Japan from Japanese parents.

Ryunoshuke Akutagawa (芥川龍之介, 1892-1927) is one of my favourite writers who authored about 400 fine works, which included about one dozen long and short stories categorised into the Kirishitan Series (*Kirishitan* meant Christianity which was introduced into Japan in the mid-16th century and prospered until prohibited in 1620s or the cotemporary Christians. Cf. my Xmas card 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010). One of them was the *Death of a disciple* (奉教人の死, 1918), the abstract of which is as follows.

“A long time ago, in an ecclesia (church) named Santa Lucia in Nagasaki, lived a boy called Lorenzo (ろおれんぞ) who was accommodated when he lay prostrate at the entrance on one Christmas evening. He said his home was Paraiso and his father was Deus. He was so faithful that everybody marvelled. In particular *Irmão* (Brother) Simeon loved him like his little brother. One day a rumour that Lorenzo had a relation with a daughter of an umbrella-maker reached the church but he heartily denied. When the daughter became pregnant and said it was by the seed of Lorenzo, Lorenzo was expelled from the church by the *Padre* (Father) without sufficient investigation. He lived a hard life in a remote beggars' house but prayed day and night towards the church. About one year later when people had almost forgotten him, a conflagration that destroyed the half of the city occurred and the umbrella-maker's house was enveloped by flames. The father and daughter had a narrow escape but left the baby inside. At that moment when Simeon and everybody were desperate, Lorenzo appeared and jumped into the blazing house. After a while he emerged, his hair and skin burnt, threw the baby safe to the arms of the umbrella-maker's daughter and fell. She confessed to the *Padre* that she had conceived, and given birth to the baby, with a next-door's son, in order to revenge on Lorenzo who did not respond to her affection. ‘*This is a Martyr!*’ cried people. Lorenzo's reddish burnt body was laid at the gate of the church. From his broken upper garment, a pair of round breasts popped out. ‘*Ah! Lorenzo was a female!*’ After the funeral held by the *Padre*, Lorenzo died dreaming of the glorious paradise.”

In the epilogue, the author said that the tale was found in an old copy of *Legenda Aurea*, published by Nagasaki Jesuit Society in 1596, which he owned, and narrated the story in old Nagasaki dialect, but it was not true. The source book as well as the story was fictitious, fabricated by him¹. Apparently he was inspired by the legend of Santa Marina² to create the story.

Another Akutagawa's novel from *Legenda Aurea* was the *Legend of St. Christophorus* (きりしとほろ上人伝, 1919). In this case the plot followed the original legend, such as told by De Voragine³, albeit modified to end in such a way that Christophorus disappeared from the scene after crossing the river with Jesus on his shoulder. The story was embellished to and fro with the writer's fertile imagination and immense knowledge of Christianity, viz. different versions of St. Christophorus legend. Although he was not christened, at the side of his deathbed was a Bible.

Amen!

¹ E.g., Charles De Wolf (transl.), *Mandarins: Stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa*, Archipelago 2011;

² *Santa Marina Virgo (Santa Marina Virgin)*, http://antiquesanastasia.com/religion/references/other_saints/marina/general_info.html;

³ Jacobus de Voragine, George V. O'Neill (edit), *The Golden Legend; Lives of the Saints*, CUP, London 1914

芥川龍之介の切支丹小説

大正から昭和前期に掛けての時期(1910-1940年代前半)は日本文學の一黄金時代であって、有島武郎、谷崎潤一郎、芥川龍之介、中島敦、太宰治らの數多の卓出した作家は小説の概念を單なる讀み物から藝術の域にまで高める努力をしました。彼らは最高學府で文學を履修したエリートであって、欧州、シナおよび日本の文學に精通してゐました。今日所謂大衆作家が文學的價値が如何であれミリオンセラーを生産するのとは異つて、彼らは独自のスタイルを確立するために苦悶し、彼らの多くは不養生或ひは自殺によって30-40代の若さで他界しました。私の個人的見方では、斯かる傳統を繼いだ最後の作家は1970年に劇的な切腹によって命を絶つた三島由紀夫でありました。英國で育ち英國で教育を受けた2017年のノーベル賞受賞者、サー・カズオ・イシグロは日本人の父母から日本で生れた人と雖も日本人作家には數へられますまい。

芥川龍之介(1892-1927)は私の好きな作家の一人で約400篇の素晴らしい作品を著作、その中には「切支丹もの」に分類される約12篇の短編と長編がありました(「切支丹」は16世紀半ばに日本に導入され1620年代に禁止されるまで流布した基督教、または同時代の基督教徒を意味、私のクリスマスカード 2004、2005、2008、2009、2010 を参照)。そのうちの一つは「奉教人の死」(1918)と題されたもので、その概要は次の通りです。

「去ぬる頃、長崎の『さんた・るちあ』といふ名の『えけれしあ』(教會)に『ろおれんぞ』といふ美しい少年がゐた。彼は御降誕の祭の夜に教會戸口にうち伏してゐたのを收容されたのであつた。彼は、故郷は『はらいそ』(天國)、父は『でうす』と申し、とても信心深かつたので、誰もが驚嘆した。取分け『しめおん』と云ふ名の『いるまん』(修道士)は、實の弟のように彼を可愛がつてゐた。ある日、『ろおれんぞ』が傘張の娘と兎角の鬮りがあるといふ噂が教會に届いたが、彼は切に否定した。娘が妊娠して『ろおれんぞ』の種によると云ふたとき、『ろおれんぞ』は十分な吟味もなく伴天連によって教會から追放された。彼は街外れの非人小屋で苦難の暮しを送つてゐたが、晝夜教會に向かつて深甚の禱りを捧げた。人々が彼を殆ど忘れた約1年後、市の半分を破壊する大火が發生し、傘張の家も炎に包まれた。父親と娘は辛うじて逃げ失せたが、赤子は家の中に残した儘であつた。『いるまん』ほか皆が途方に暮れた瞬間、『ろおれんぞ』が登場、燃へ盛る家に飛込んだ。暫くして彼は髪と皮膚が焼けた姿で現れて、赤子を傘張の娘の腕に首尾よく投げ、そして倒れた。彼女は伴天連に、彼女の恋慕に應じなかつた『ろおれんぞ』に意趣返しするために隣家の息子と關係を持つて孕み、赤子を産んだと告白した。『此れは、まるちり(殉教)ぢゃ!』と人々は叫んだ。『ろおれんぞ』の赤く焼けた死体は教會の門の脇に置かれた。彼の破れた上着の隙間から、一對の圓い乳房が露顯した。『おう!ろおれんぞは女ぢゃ!』伴天連によって執行はれた葬儀の後、『ろおれんぞ』は榮光の天國を夢見て死した。」

芥川はエピソードで、この話は彼の所有する長崎耶穌會1596年刊「れげんだ・おうれあ」(黄金傳説)の古い一冊にあると述べ、古い長崎方言で物語を記述しましたが、それは僞で、原著も話も架空のもの、彼が想像したものでありました¹。彼が聖マリーナ傳説²に發想を得て物語を創作したことは明白です。

「れげんだ・おうれあ」に由る芥川のもう一つの切支丹小説に「きりしとほろ上人傳」(聖キリストフォロス傳、1919)があります。この場合、話の筋はヤコブス・デ・ヴォラギーネの書³にあるやうな元の傳承に沿つてゐますが、話は、キリストフォロスがイエスを肩に擔つて渡河した時点で逐電して終る風に變更されてゐます。物語は作者の豐饒な想像力並びに基督教に關する作家の膨大な知識、特に聖キリストフォロス傳の異説で以て修飾されてゐました。彼は洗礼を受けてゐませんでした、彼の死の床には聖書が置かれてゐました。

アーマン!

¹ 例へば、Charles De Wolf (transl.), *Mandarins: Stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa*, Archipelago 2011; ² *Sancta Marina Virgo (Santa Marina Virgin)*, http://antiquesanastasia.com/religion/references/other_saints/marina/general_info.html; ³ Jacobus de Voragine, George V. O'Neill (edit), *The Golden Legend; Lives of the Saints*, CUP, London 1914.