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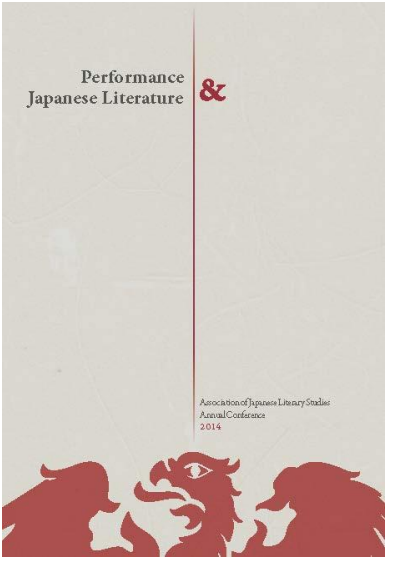

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And The Angel Spake unto Harunobu: A Japanese Christian miracle story of 1591

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The early-modern, Portuguese-sponsored Jesuit mission to Japan left behind a body of Christian literature in Japanese whose alphabetic texts have been a treasure trove for linguists, its existence a point of pride for Christian sectarians, and its content rich material for historians. However, linguists have been content to describe static forms, religious commentators have addressed only such data as they find inspiring, and historical treatments rush by design to the content, so that most of this material has yet to be read closely as literature.[1] As literature it is one of many unrecognized offspring of the kōwaka, the lost ballad genre of medieval Japan. The kōwaka rivaled the noh theatre for patronage in the sixteenth century but failed to survive the seventeenth-century transition to early modernity. However, as I argue in my forthcoming dissertation, this event of generic death is best understood as a multidirectional process of dispersal consisting of shifts in medium, theme, performer, or patronage.[2] As Elizabeth Oyler has demonstrated, the kōwaka was a cloth first woven from strands of early-medieval ballad traditions, and I will likewise show how its unraveling provided material for new weaves in turn: a nostalgic genre of lavish picture books which, despite their turn from performativity to materiality, launched anti-shogunal screeds from a newly–de-capitalized Kyoto; a puppet theatre designed to circumvent restrictions on the performing body while appealing to the concerns of a newly-ascendant urban commoner class; and, finally, a dialectic of Christian and anti-Christian literature which took the old ballad stories as a starting point for debate about the proper basis of authority and obedience in society.

Here I introduce "A Brief Account of a Cross which Miraculously Appeared in Japan" from the 1591 Barreto miscellany in the Vatican Library.[3]

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[1] Tadao Doi, "Das Sprachstudium der Gesellschaft Jesu in Japan im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," *Monumenta Nipponica* 2/2 (Toyko, 7/1939) might exemplify the linguistic turn, Hubert Cieslik, S.J., "Shūkyō shisō shi kara mita Bareto shahon," *Kirishitan kenkyū* 7 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1962) the theological, and George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) the historical. William J. Farge, S.J., *The Japanese Translations of the Jesuit Mission Press, 1590-1614: De imitatione Christi and Guía de pecadores* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002) lays important groundwork for this study, but it limits its attention to the "successful adaptation" (7) of "theologically sophisticated" (13) works.

[2] "Samurai, Jesuits, Puppets, and Bards: The end(s) of the kōwaka ballad," (Princeton University Ph.D. diss., 2015).

[3] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Reg. lat*. 459, ff. 78–82v, transliterated into Japanese scripts in "Nihon nite kisekiteki ni shutsugen shitaru kurusu no monogatari ryaku," ed. Doi Tadao, in *Kirishitan kenkyū* 7 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1962), 3-6.

This text bears an imprimatur by the viceprovincial Gaspar Coelho, S.J. (1530?–1590), and I argue that it was composed in response to Hideyoshi's 1587 expulsion edict, which was largely precipitated by Coelho's words and actions. It is well known that he then began feverish preparations to make a stand against Hideyoshi using Portuguese arms, preparations cut short only by Coelho's sudden death early in 1590, but the "Account of a Cross" reveals the existence of a literary element in his insurgent strategy. This text skillfully uses a kōwaka-derived narrative mode to describe an apparition first recognized by peasants in the domain of the Christian daimyō Arima Harunobu. Harunobu shows a marked lack of cooperation in this recognition, but the narrative attempts to neutralize this by appending a legitimating dream narrative of thinly-disguised retroactivity. Coelho's postscript rehearses the miraculous artifact's physical features in a scientific mode, then draws conclusions about its meaning whose effect is to invert the domestic social order and to subjugate all its players, high and low, to an international order of which the Jesuits stand at the head.

The object in which the "Account of a Cross" is inscribed is a collection of Gospel readings, Marian stories, devotional meditations, and saints' lives, copied by Manoel Barreto, S.J. (1564?–1620), and dated 1591. Because multiple sections of the miscellany are extant in printed editions as early as that same year, it is widely supposed that it was the first draft of a series of performance notes for masses, sermons, and debates by missionaries across Japan which was in fact printed on the newly-imported mission press and widely distributed.[4] The "Account of a Cross" is its opening piece.

The text begins by setting the stage on Christmas Day, 1589, using both the Gregorian and Japanese calendars:

> [1] One thousand five hundred and eighty-nine years since the advent of JESUS, on the eighteenth of Shimotsuki in the seventeenth year of Tenshō in Japan, it was the day of the nativity of IESUS.[5]

Having established this auspicious frame of reference, however, we are apparently compelled by the facts of the matter to jump back one day. Whether this or any other textual anomaly indicates non-native authorship may be an impossible question to answer definitively, but it is one which we must keep in mind throughout our engagement with these texts because it is quite possible to discern missionary social patterns beneath their surface: one voice speaks in smoother or rougher Japanese, another jumps in to correct or guarantee the meaning of the first, etc.

[4] Joseph Schütte, S.J., "Christliche Japanische Literatur, Bilder und Druckblätter in einem Unbekannten Vatikanischen Codex aus dem Jahre 1591," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 9 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1940), 228.

[5] All translations are mine.

> [1] The previous day, at a place called Obama in the County of Takaku in the lands of the Chief Court Architect Lord Don Protaçio Arima Harunobu, a rare wonder did come to pass. In that place there was an old man, and his name was Lean; he had a twenty-year-old son named Miguel. The family were outcastes and had no servants, and so Miguel went out to do the servants' work himself, and inside the walls of their house was a dog castor tree weathered by the elements.

As provincial gentry like Harunobu would themselves have done, the narrating voice here shows great pride in court titles which, it goes without saying, had little practical value. This story is also extant in Spanish, in Luís Fróis' Annual Letter of December 1590, and the presence of the European baptismal names for the peasants in this Japanese version would strengthen the hypothesis that it is a translation of the Spanish or of a Portuguese original by Fróis, who never bothered to learn the peasants' Japanese names.[6] The original term *finin*, which I have interpreted as 非人 "outcaste," may represent the Latin authors' intention to call Miguel and Lean "poor," as Doi suggests by transliterating with 貧人 [*hinnin*], but the orthography here would have to mean the former, and of course this is precisely how any Japanese authors would have conceptualized these protagonists. Either way, we see Lean and Miguel from far above: the fact that they do not have servants to do their housework is presented as a surprising inconvenience. Arima Harunobu, the lord in whose lands this story takes place, was a famous patron of the Jesuits, although he only agreed to be baptized in 1580, after the Portuguese trading carrack provided decisive assistance in his battle against his rivals the Ryūzōji: shipments of food and weapons. In the wake of his baptism, Harunobu agreed to the destruction of shrines and temples and the forced conversion of his subjects to Christianity, though he remained an ambivalent patron. Accordingly, the way in which this text attributes agency to both lord and subjects cannot be taken at face value.

In describing the tree in which the cross appears, the text shows a studied sophistication, using terms clearly drawn from the medieval ballad tradition, though perhaps not in ways that would have been considered easily comprehensible or correct.

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[6] Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap.Sin. 50, 103v–106, printed in Italian as *Copia di due lettere annue scritte dal Giapone del 1589 et 1590* (Rome: Luigi Zannatti, 1593), 61–68; ed. trans. Matsuda Kiichi, *16/7 seiki Iezusu kai Nihon hōkoku shū* (Tokyo: Dōhōsha, 1987), 1:1:155–59, whence the story finds its way into Alfonso de Liguori, *Vittorie dei martiri* (Venice: Remondini, 1777), 2:6–8; trans. Eugene Grimm, *Victories of the Martyrs* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1888), 316–18. The story reappears with certain updates in personnel details in Fróis' unpublished *História de Japam*, ed. Joseph Wicki (Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional Portugal, 1976), 5:201–7; trans. Matsuda Kiichi, *Kan'yaku Furoisu Nihonshi* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 1978), 11:375–86. The differences between these versions will be the subject of a future article.

> [1] Its roots were coiled like a woven reed mat; it was a full fathom around and two rods tall. One branch was withered, and the other was alive. Since it was the season of winter on the zodiac's dark pole, the time of snow like undyed silk, its leaves were fallen, and its branches looked lonesome: [1v] indeed, it was nothing but a withered tree.

The passage begins with real skill: the phrase *Neua xeqiquenni uadacamarite* [根は席捲に蟠りて] compares the roots of the tree to the swiftly coiling weave of a reed mat. Interestingly, Barreto also transcribes a marginal gloss which interprets the compound *xeqiquen* in its own way—adding to *quen* the gloss *ayda*.[7] This would suggest the graphs 石間 "rock space," with the phrase meaning perhaps, "coiling around the rocks of the rock garden," and indeed Doi Tadao's transcription adopts this reading, but because the word "rock space" appears nowhere else, I think it much more likely that we have a later gloss, perhaps written in by a European or a less-educated Japanese, which is actually misinterpreting the relatively straightforward reed-mat metaphor.

Next, a four-character Sino-Japanese compound derived from the kōwaka ballad tradition is taken out for a spin. The term *gentō sosetsu* 玄冬素雪 enters the language via a *rōei* by Minamoto no Shitagō and is taken up in Heike and other related literature down through the kōwaka ballads, but like many such compounds it is always accompanied by certain simple, vernacular phrases which assist in oral comprehension, in the same way that *Macbeth*'s bloodstains "would the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red."

> *Wakan rōei* (ca. 1018) 玄冬素雪の寒朝に 松君子の徳を彰す〈源順〉 SZS 228.
> *Heike* (13c.) "Initiate's" 玄冬素雪のさむき夜は、妻を重ねてあたたかにす SZS 2:519.
> *Soga* (14c.) 玄冬素雪の寒き夜は、衾を去つてこれを与へ SZS 354.
> *Gikeiki* (15c.) 朝にはけうらんの霧を払ひて、玄冬素雪の冬の夜も SZS 248.
> *Kumano no honji* (15c.) 玄冬素雪の冬の夜の寒きにも、何れの人か衾を重ね参らせん STK 376.
> Kōwaka *Atsumori* (16c.) 玄冬素雪の冬の暮にも成ぬれば KBK 4:227, 7:340.
> Kōwaka *Wada sakamori* (16c.) 玄冬素雪の冬の夜は、衾の重ねて、育めり STK 478.
> *Vocabulario* (1603-4) Qentô. *Força, ou coração do Inuerno.* ¶ Qentô soxetno samusa. *Frio intenso do Inuerno, & de neue.* S.[8]

7 Which Barreto mistranscribes as *ayba*.

8 SZS = *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*; STK = *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku taikei*; KBK =

In this case, the calendrical and silk-making references of the Chinese phrase are invariably supplemented by some reference to a cold night. Only in the late-medieval kōwaka, however, is the reference to "cold" dropped and replaced by a redundant reference to the season, "winter." The "Account of a Cross" takes this development one step further by failing to provide any vernacular gloss at all, leaving only the *jisetsu* [時節] "season" and in all likelihood rendering the clause incomprehensible to all but the most educated hearers or readers. Whether we find it felicitous or not, it is not surprising that a Jesuit narrative should make a pivot like this around the axis of the kōwaka tradition: the great number of distinctively kōwaka-inspired locutions found throughout the surviving texts should convince us that João Rodrigues is only recording a long-canonized understanding when he writes the following in his *Shorter Grammar* of 1620:

> [4v] Japanese-language books from which one could profitably read, divided into classes beginning with the easiest, would be as follows. The first and lowest class would be the *May* [ballads] and *Sŏxi* [chapbooks], because their style is easy and closer to everyday usage.[9]

Rodrigues here reflects a widespread classicism: "drinking the language from its pure wellspring," one will be able to express anything appropriately because one is in touch with its essence. The work which the European missionaries and their converts put into developing an authentic native voice for their message is evident throughout the extant literature, and their failures are at least as interesting as their successes.[10]

Meanwhile, Miguel finds a cross inside his firewood, appearing on both halves of the split log, which he shows to his father Lean. However, these two, as *ximpotino montey* [新発意の門弟] "newly-converted disciples"—remember the forced conversions—are soon eclipsed in their role as discoverers of the cross by two *satono rojin* "village elders" who find them admiring the object and show it to the local priest as he makes his rounds. From there, it passes up the chain of command to Harunobu himself, but the lord of the province is manifestly not as interested in the object as his subordinates are said to be.

> [2] The various *Padre* and *Irmão* throughout Arima Temple lined up elbow to elbow and stood on tiptoe and adored it, and they sent messengers to inform the sovereign, Lord Harunobu, of this thing. The ruler Harunobu for his part

Kōwaka bukyoku kenkyū, ed. Agō Toranoshin (10 vols., Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1979–2004); *Nippo jisho / Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam*, ed. Doi Tadao (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1960).

[9] João Rodrigues, *Arte breve da lingoa Iapoa / Nihon shō bunten*, ed. trans. Hino Hiroshi (Tokyo: Shin Jinbutsu Ōrai Sha, 1993), ff. 13v–14.

[10] See also Patrick Schwemmer, "My Child *Deus*: Grammar versus theology in a Japanese Christian devotional of 1591" in *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1.3.(Leiden: Brill, 4/2014).

> played along halfheartedly, and the next day, on *Circuncição* Day, after the worship of that father and son, when he humbly saw this his aspect was suddenly altered, and he received it with reverence: so they say.

The text does not seem able to omit the detail that Harunobu *nauoçarini reojo atte* [なをざりに了承あって] "played along halfheartedly," then it hastens to add that he soon changed his mind and "received it with reverence"—but suddenly it equivocates again with *sono iuare ari* "so they say." What are we to believe that Harunobu believed?

The text makes a hairpin turn as it races to answer this question.

> [2] When IESUS is pleased to work His wonders, He is accustomed to do just as He pleases, looking not on the goodness or evil of any one person, and so, two months before He was to manifest these things, at one time He caused Harunobu to see a miraculous dream.

Whether Harunobu ever read or heard this story is not known, and no other copy of it survives in Japanese, but it is doubtful he would have relished having his *jenaqu* "goodness or evil" called into question. The legitimating dream narrative begins:

> [2] So then, early one morning Harunobu came to worship, and while attending *missa* he had an awakening of faith, and as he stood up to leave he explained that he had something to tell the Padre, and when he therefore came out to meet him and hear him out, he said, "Last night I received a mysterious spirit dream. One who [2v] seemed to have the marks of an *Anjo* remonstrated with me, saying, 'Why are you unbelieving? First, you come to worship grudgingly; second, you come to *confissão* only with great reluctance; third, you take lightly the holy commands of your mentors. You must reform your mind from now on. I will surely show you the sign of IESUS.'

The language of belief here is alternately nativizing and catachrestic. During mass, Harunobu *xinjinuo uocoxite* [信心を起こして] "has an awakening of faith" in the mode of any *mahāyana* Buddhist aspirant. The angel, by contrast, calls him *xinfugiu* [信不及] "unbelieving," an otherwise unattested expression. Because there are no quotation marks, it is impossible to tell if the sentence that follows is to be understood as a narrative aside or as Harunobu's own comment on his dream, but either way the authenticating intent is clear.

> [2v] That cannot have been the work of men. 'Honor this!' he said, and turned to leave, and I woke up," and when he went home he let the matter drop, dismissing what he'd heard as God's common, everyday discipline, but before much time had passed, when they showed him this prodigy he was presented with the whole business anew, and by and by he came to believe in this auspicious sign.

Here, Harunobu is a willing if imperfect subject of the Christian order, expecting miraculous *quãgui* [勘気] "discipline" from God on a regular basis. In this frame of mind, he need only remember the dream to recognize the cross in the firewood as the promised sign. However, Harunobu's sudden remembrance of the dream coincides too closely with the narrating voice's sudden introduction of it to feel like a miracle story of any religious tradition. One more revision, and the dream sequence would surely have been moved to the beginning of the tale: as it stands, there is an abrupt transition from grudging admission of Harunobu's unbelief to triumphalist narration of the foreordained growth of his faith from weak but willing to superabundant. One wonders whether or how Harunobu would have recognized himself in this disjointed narrative, if he ever read it.

Finally, the postscript that follows the story of the cross' appearance is at least as interesting as the story itself. It is presented as an *imprimatur*, the result of an investigation into the matter by Gaspar Coelho, who in 1581 had been made Viceprovincial of the mission. His credentials are presented as if he is not the head of a mission but a *uonCcucasa* [御司] "prefect" of a global empire. The use of honorifics for Coelho may preclude his having written it himself, but the presence of some serious errors and infelicities of language suggests that he or some other European had much to do with its present shape. In reading this section, then, it is important to bear in mind what was happening in 1589 as a result of Coelho's actions and the response he made in turn.

In 1586 and 1587, Coelho was present at several intimate gatherings between Hideyoshi, the Jesuits, and high-profile converts like Ōtomo Sōrin and Takayama Ukon, at which Hideyoshi made a point of comparing the Christians to the various militant sectarians whom he had just subjugated—always favorably, but always one right to the other. The recent conqueror of Kyūshū boasted that he would soon have Korea and China in his grasp, and when he did, he would surely let the Christians have their share. These things he said, and he listened closely to the Padres' replies. More prudent missionaries and converts like Ukon apparently tried to steer the conversation elsewhere, but Coelho unhesitatingly promised to use his ideological influence to keep the Christian lords of Kyūshū (like Harunobu) firmly under Hideyoshi's thumb and to secure military assistance from Portugal for his continental conquests. On one occasion Coelho even had a Portuguese gunship come on parade and fire

off a salute for Hideyoshi's benefit.[11] Hideyoshi for his part always sent Coelho home with a smile, but he was clearly proceeding on the assumption that if the missionaries could exercise violent force on his behalf they could also use it against him, for suddenly in mid-1587 he issued the 伴天連追放令 *bateren tsuihō rei* "Padre Expulsion Edict" and from then on worked to limit Christian influence in Japan for reasons explained in the edict itself.[12] Coelho's response was to send for Spanish troops from Manila, stockpile weapons and artillery at Nagasaki in preparation for siege warfare, and in early 1589 he sent a priest to Macao to plan a Portuguese-led backup invasion. Then, presumably sometime after Christmas of that year, he commissioned the "Account of a Cross which Miraculously Appeared in Japan" and wrote this analytical postscript composed of fourteen items.

> So when they were made to go before the Governor of Japan and Great Tang, Padre Viceprovīcial Gaspar Coelho, he called in several of the elders of that place, made them swear an oath and asked them all about this sequence of events, and he did promulgate this thing to all the various lands.
> Here are fourteen things, therefore, which we should especially feel concerning this sign of the *crus*.
> 1º The color of this *crus*: that its color is not one bit different from that of the *sancta crus* on which our Lord JESUS hung. [3]
> 2. That, although it has been split with an axe and despite the fact that there is variation in size top and bottom, left and right, the line of the *crus* alone is straight.
> 3ª That this tree, the dog castor, is rough on the outside and covered in thorns.
> 4. That the day on which it appeared was the day of JESUS' nativity. This does not differ from that there are honorable things in difficulty.
> 5. That it coincides with the fortieth year since word of the *crus* began to be spread in Japan. This number is special in *Escriptura* for various reasons.
> Vj. That it was proclaimed two months of in advance.
> Vij. That the way in which, of the two stones, only one tree had grown by the path on which people travel resembles Mt. Caluario. [3v]
> Viij. That at a moment of disaster for the Church, it raised

[11] Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 109 *seq*.
[12] See Jurgis Elisonas, "The Evangelic Furnace: Japan's First Encounter with the West" in *Sources of Japanese Tradition, vol. 2: 1600 to 2000, 2nd edition*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, Arthur E. Tiedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

high the banner of the *crus*, it gave faith to the many.
IX. That, in order that the *jentio* might also celebrate, it appeared at the new year among all the domains of all the lords of myriad eaves of roofs.
X. That it appeared clearly in a tree that was so, so white.
xj. That it was not merely in the shape of a cross but also had the sign hung up on top.
xij. That it were so well-formed, as if it had been drawn with a T square.
xiij. That it was cut by such artless rubes.
xiiij. That it was split, in order that the wondrousness of Deus' Providentia might be visible to both sides.

We begin with the cross' physical features: its color is apparently evidence of its authenticity, as is its straightness, apparently in defiance of the grain of the wood. In his interest in precise documentation of empirical evidence, even for a miraculous sign, Coelho is a Renaissance man in spite of himself. The symbolic and calendrical connections of the subsequent items are straightforward enough, but the tortured wording of *core naguini tattoqui coto aruto coto naraçu* [これ難儀に尊きことあると異ならず] "This is does not differ from that there are honorable things in difficulty," leaves little doubt of European authorship, and I have faithfully preserved similar infelicities in my translation throughout. Standard-issue numerology is evident: we have forty years, two stones, two months. Even without knowing what Coelho was planning when this was written, a sense of siege is evident throughout, with the "difficulty," the "moment of disaster for the Church," when "the many" might lose faith, the "split" between the *reobo* [両方] "two sides"—but with the above historical considerations in mind it is especially easy to see how this text was meant to work and why. The claim is repeated that Harunobu was miraculously informed of the coming of this sign and believed in it wholeheartedly: once the story got around it might have been difficult for him to deny it even if he had wanted to. There is one calendrical reference that is more difficult to understand: why should it make the *jentio* ("gentiles") rejoice that the cross appeared at *xoguachi* [正月] "the new year"? Isn't Christmas at the solar new year, not the lunar one observed by the jentio? This piece of calendrical wizardry seems to fall flat. More scientific details are provided in the whiteness of the tree and the type of cross it was: from the fact that the sign (INRI, etc.) was visible on top of the cross, it also becomes clear that the double-barred cross appearing in the Barreto miscellany at the beginning of the composition was meant as a diagrammatic representation of the artifact. The suggestion that the cross might have been drawn with a T-square would seem to hit close to home, but it is with the sociological location of this miracle that Coelho enters his most interesting territory.

By way of suggesting that the apparition could not have been forged, he calls the discoverers *busayqu naru yaro* [不細工なる野郎] "artless rubes." In this way the Vice Provincial elevates their artlessness above the art of authority figures like Harunobu, without paying the peasants themselves any particular respect. The strategy of converting the high with promises of effective ideological control over the low was prominent throughout the history of the mission, but the Coelho of the "Account of a Cross" has just been spectacularly disappointed by that strategy. Accordingly, he is situated rather as the arbiter and representative of the peasants' authentic, unmediated insight, while Harunobu's narrative conversion to a wholehearted believer models the "obedience" to "mentors" one imagines the angel would recommend to all temporal rulers, including Hideyoshi. By reversing and displacing the domestic social binary between high and low, Coelho attempts to install himself at the top of a new binary between spiritual and temporal power, wherein the former contains and controls the latter. It was this mobilization of social egalitarianism in the service of global theocracy that anti-Christian literature of the late seventeenth century would criticize in these terms:

> They sent out men to search throughout the Capital and its outskirts, in wayside chapels in the hills and plains, and even underneath bridges. They gathered in outcasts and beggars and others with diseases and afflictions, had them take a bath and cleanse the body, and gave them clothing, succor, shelter, and care.[13]

By bribing the lower classes with alms instead of living off of alms themselves like Buddhist monks, these foreign ideologues were upsetting the domestic balance between weak and strong, to their own benefit. Contrary to Elisonas' disavowal of the connection between Christianity and the Shimabara rebellion of 1637, a message written on an arrow from that conflict sums up the connection perfectly: "Among all sentient beings there is no such distinction as noble and base."[14] The long-neglected and resource-poor Kyūshū region, which had long resorted for survival to piracy on the high seas, had finally found an ideology around which it could rise up, and rise up it did. Japan's political class perceived the threat that this posed to their authority, however, and so it was that the next hundred years' political thought would be dedicated to working out stable, practical formulae for balancing weak and strong in their own society.

[13] *Account of the Kirishitan Religion*, after 1689, Kyoto University Library, quoted in Elison, *Deus Destroyed*, 215.
[14] *Ibid*., 220.