

THE CROSS IN JAPANESE HERALDRY.

Communicated

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ONE of the most striking objects for the attention and admiration of rustic wayfarers along the highways of Tokaido, as well as to the frivolous sightseers in the streets of Yedo, in the old feudal days, was the heraldic bearings of the Lord of Satsuma—a golden ring encircling a golden cross. As they looked on the thousands of palanquins and innumerable baskets and boxes loaded with the paraphernalia and the impedimenta of the army of knights and retainers which formed the brilliant train of that mighty lord, they little suspected that the glittering heraldic crests that enhanced the brilliancy of the cavalcade, the so-called “Satsuma’s Bridle-bit,” were mementos of the Christian influences by which that feudal clan was once swayed. The crest passed by the name of a “Bridle-bit,” which it resembles, simply to avoid giving umbrage to the Tokugawa family, which had pledged itself to the uprooting of Christianity from the hearts of the people.



A writer in a recent number of the *Nippon* makes a study of this class of heraldry used by the noble families in Japan, which retain the marks of Christian influence in the varied forms of a cross. Lord Shimadzu’s bearings, thinks the writer in the *Nippon*, were as early as 1650 or thereabout a simple (Japanese) figure for ten, within a concentric circle, whilst a branch of the family used merely a cross. We would not at all be surprised to find that Satsuma, where Christianity was first introduced by Spanish traders, had kept this relic of Christian days in its heraldry ; for the pioneer

Catholic fathers in Japan are said to have given their knightly converts new heraldic bearings. By some authority, even the so-called "Inverted sword" on the summit of mount Kirishima is believed to have been planted by some Christian zealot of the realms. Nor are we surprised, says the writer, that the Yamaguchi family, descendants of the Ouchi of Suwo Province, who had adopted later the name of the place, should be all using some form of a cross. It was there that St. Francis Xavier found the most successful field for his work.

In contrast to these two, we are somewhat surprised to find crosses under slight disguises used among the Samurai of the Hatamoto class, or the families that formed the Body Guard of the Shoguns. Such was the case with the Hatamoto family of Tada, which traces its genealogy to the Genji of Settsu Province, who were all at an early date converted to Christianity. In fact the Settsu Genji all employed a cross very extensively among their many branches. Other knights of fame such as Ukon Takayama, Murashige Araki, Kiyohide Nakagawa, Shuri Miyoshi, Danjo Matsunaga and others of the provinces of Kawachi and Settsu are known to have been among the most fervent followers of Christ in the earliest periods. Of these families, that of Nose had its descendants among the Hatamoto Samurai who used a cross with notched ends, or in the form of an English saltier with its ends indented. Others of the same family had the voided cross filled in black and upon it charged a smaller white cross somewhat in the style of the English cross *cleché* with the notched ends. That these three are all of Christian origin is proved by the fact that the Nose family formerly used one called "Twelve-Eyed Tie"



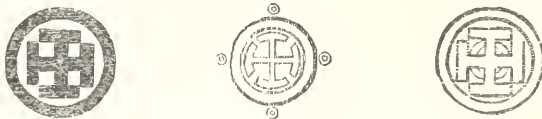
enclosed in a doubled circle as shown by the accompanying figure. This was changed to the cross form about 1560. Then it was called by the evasive name of "Notched Bamboo Cross." Other Samurai of the Hatamoto families, such as Okamura, Matsuno, Sudzuki and others, bore the same crest. One of them, by name Hiraoka, descended also from the Settsu Genji, began to use the bearing of a voided cross in a concentric circle. The same bearings were used by the Yagai and the Tazawa families, both of the Hatamoto. This is the same form as used by the Shimadzu family. Another Hata-

moto family used a Latin cross, with the horizontal piece nearer the upper extremity, and separated by a very narrow space from the inclosing ring. This family as far back as the Ashikaga days used a peculiar crest, as in the figure. Still another family—Nonoyama



—used, as late as 1750, a notched cross in a ring, but later on the cross lost its notches, and became voided, and the ring was also voided so as to become a concentric circle; later still the lines bounding the voided cross were connected at the centre.

Akin to the varied classes of crosses, which passed by disguised names, there is a variety which retained the Portuguese appellation of *Crus*. It is generally known that many Portuguese and perhaps Latin terms had to be used untranslated, to supply the want, or avoid misconception, of the Japanese equivalents. The word cross, for instance, when transformed into a Japanese symbol, became the figure ten, which would convey no meaning. Hence by the name of *Crus* it was, that such men as Kawaguchi, a Governor of Nagasaki, and others, wore bearings in a form of a cross-crosslet in a ring. Of course, the families themselves did not know what the word *Crus*, or as they pronounced it “kruss,” meant. One of them Otaka Shintaro, of the Mito clan, had to be reminded by his learned liege, the Old Prince Reikko, that his crest was of Christian origin adopted by his Christian ancestor, and should therefore be replaced by a *Heisoku*, a paper fillet offered at Shinto temples. The descendants of Uchida Masayo were for generations the lords of the Komikawa Castle in Shimofusa, and had the crest of “flower *Crus*,” which was nothing but a cross with various devices



for illumination and embellishment, perhaps so devised in order to escape ready identification. In his report to the Shogun's Government, he called it the flower of a certain rare plant. The famous pioneer Catholic, Nakagawa Kiyohide's descendants became the lords of Oka in Bungo, and, true to their family heritage, wore the bearings of a *Crus*. In the recent publication of the late Marquis

Matsura, named *Koshi-Yawa*, he refers to the Nakagawa crest, called usually "Modified bridle-bit," or *crus*, and infers that it must have been a cross, from the fact that at the time of Kiyohide the Catholic Church in Japan was at the height of its prosperity. The late Marquis also was of opinion that the names were so changed to escape censure.

The further evolution of these modified forms is seen in the form alleged to be the "Charm of the god of Giwon," chiefly the crest of the family of Ikeda of Tottori. The lord of Yanagawa, or the Tachibana family, uses the same charm in a slightly modified form, and its minor branches, or those that were later ranked among the Hatamoto Samurai, simplified their crests into this form. The history of the Tachibana family confirms the suspicion that the Miraculous Charm of the Giwon temple is nothing but the sacred emblem of Christianity. Tachibana Muneshige, the founder of these families, belonged to the branch of the Otomo of Bungo, and held a subordinate fief under that illustrious family. It is a well-known fact that the Otomo and the Ryuzoji and most of the Kyushu Daimyos embraced Christianity, and invited the Spanish and Portuguese missions through their merchants, for the sake of religion as well as trade, in the middle of the sixteenth century. Muneshige was not behind the others in adopting the same policy.



There is one more form left to be mentioned, and that is, strange to say, a simple adaptation of the Buddhistic emblem, for eternal happiness, called *manji* or the "Figure for ten thousand." It is a single cross with four ends at right and left angles. This seems to be one of the earliest forms, perhaps at the period of Takayama Ukon, who was christened Jute, Naito Masatoshi, christened Juan, and Konishi Yukinaga, christened Austin, one of the leaders of the Korean expedition under Taiko Hideyoshi; that is, towards the latter part of the sixteenth century. Naito is said to have worn on his helmet a golden image of the Saviour. Takayama's daughter, who was later banished from the country and went with her father to Manila, married Yokoyama Nagatomo, whose descendant, occupying the important position of a chief retainer in the Mayeda House of Kaga, still used the bearings. Later in the Tokugawa period, many eminent houses all of Christian ancestry wore this

crest,—a fact that conclusively proves the Christian origin of the emblem. One of the most conclusive proofs is furnished by the crest of the Hori family ruling over Muramatsu in Yechigo. Down to about 1684, the books of heraldry recorded the use of a crest resembling a *Cleché*, but later on the family used the *Manji*. A branch of the Tsugaru family of Mutsu, which all use the *Manji*, has a form that is distinctly a modified cross.



All these families, concludes the writer in the *Nippon*, upon whose remarks we have based the present classification, embraced Christianity during the period extending over the eras of Tembun, Keicho and Genna, that is from the early part of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth. But from the last mentioned period onward, the Tokugawa family, enraged against the Christians, steeped the nation in blood. The abandonment of the Christian faith being rigidly enforced by the persecuting government, it was but natural that various means of evasion were resorted to. In addition, we may mention the later adoption of the Buddhistic *Manji* in this form. One other form, suspicious of the same origin, is a kind of Cross-crosslet in a concentric circle covering its identity under the awkward name of “crossed mallets.”