

Tomoko KITAGAWA

The Conversion of Hideyoshi's Daughter Gō

Despite the drastic curtailment of missionary activity in Japan that resulted from Toyotomi Hideyoshi's ban on Christianity in 1587, letters of the Jesuit missionaries reveal that the ban did not prevent the conversion of one lady, Gō, a woman of the Maeda house and Hideyoshi's own adopted daughter. This study explores the circumstances of Gō's exposure to Christianity in Osaka both before and after the enforcement of the anti-Christian decree. It also traces her life story in Bizen and Kyoto, where she was converted to Christianity by a woman catechist. Gō's story is important not only for her association with Hideyoshi, but also as a case study for the religious communities and practices that formed among upper-class women in late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century Japan.

KEYWORDS: Christianity — conversion — Toyotomi Hideyoshi — Kyōgoku Maria — Christian century — Sengoku period

Tomoko Kitagawa is a PhD candidate at Princeton University.

TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI 豊臣秀吉 (1536/7–1598)¹ and Kitanomandokoro 北政所 (1549–1624)² adopted a daughter, Gō 豪 (1574–1634), and raised her as their biological child in Osaka castle. Hideyoshi himself referred to Gō as his “beloved child” (*hizō no ko* 秘蔵の子),³ and she kept in contact with her parents even after she left home for marriage. Among the other adopted children of Hideyoshi, Gō’s life story contains one event of significant historical importance: in her early thirties, Gō converted to Christianity. The fact that a daughter of Hideyoshi, the man who issued the first anti-Christian policy in Japan, became a Christian is remarkable, and in this essay, I examine when and how Gō became interested in the newly arrived religion that was banned by her father.

The historical sources that directly recorded Gō’s life story are not abundant. However, Jesuit missionaries wrote about her conversion, and the descriptions of her relatives and acquaintances are rich and detailed enough to trace the path of Gō’s life. To begin with, we have glimpses of her early experiences in Osaka both before and after the enforcement of the anti-Christian decree. When the Jesuits arrived in Osaka in 1583, Christianity became something of a “vogue” in the castle with the presence of Christian lady attendants and catechists, including Kyōgoku Maria 京極マリア (d. 1618). In response to the anti-Christian edict, Jesuit missionaries consulted Gō’s mother, who tried to persuade Hideyoshi to reverse his decision. Then, in the following year, Gō married Ukita Hideie 宇喜多秀家 (1572–1655) of Bizen 備前, and left the Toyotomi house. Her husband and mother-in-law in Bizen were supporters of Christianity, and the area began to have many Christian converts thanks to the understanding and support of Gō’s new family. Finally, while she stayed at her mother Kitanomandokoro’s residence in Kyoto after the battle of Sekigahara 関ヶ原, she converted to Christianity under the influence of a woman catechist, and was given the Christian name, Maria. Being a Christian, she eventually moved to her biological family’s house

1. Two possible years for Hideyoshi’s birth; either 1536 or 1537 (the sixth day of the second month of 1537). For detailed discussion, see ELISON (1981, 330–31).

2. This is the first wife of Hideyoshi, One おね or Toyotomi Yoshiko 豊臣吉子, who had a court rank *Ju-ichii* 従一位 (the lower-first court rank). She was given *Ju-sanmi* 従三位 (the lower-third court rank) in 1585, and was called Kitanomandokoro from that time on. Later she became a widowed nun, and was given the new name *Kōdai-in* 高台院 by Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616) in 1603. In this article, she is referred to as Kitanomandokoro.

3. The phrase *Taikō hizō no ko* is in the letter from Taikō (Hideyoshi) to One (Kitanomandokoro) in 1594 (KUWATA 1943, 245–46).

in Kaga 加賀 where the Kanazawa church 金沢教会 was flourishing as one of the most vibrant Christian churches in Japan (MATOS 1996, 96).

As a national policy, Hideyoshi's anti-Christian edict of 1587 has received adequate scholarly attention among historians.⁴ In order to take this discussion one step further, the lives of the women who associated with Christians or engaged in missionary activities should be examined since it was not only Christian daimyo or male Christians who were affected by the anti-Christian policy. Both Jesuit missionaries' records and their letters sent to Europe, there were many Christian and non-Christian women involved in the issue.⁵

In particular, the Jesuits' connection with women in Hideyoshi's castle, communication with Gō's mother, Kitanomandokoro, and acknowledgement of the woman catechist for Gō's conversion widen the scope of studies of the sixteenth-century Jesuits and the lives of women. The existence of women catechists and the importance of their presence have been recognized,⁶ and the Jesuits' treatment and view of "women" has likewise been studied.⁷ Further, the fact that the Jesuits were able to utilize a well-formed women's social and communication network shows that there were women's social groups firmly established in Osaka and Kyoto, thanks to the group residences of the daimyos' wives. Living closely together, many of these women were able to access new cultures and religions, including Christianity, and formed tight connections among themselves to discuss related issues. Therefore, this study examines Gō's experiences surrounding her conversion to Christianity, through stories about herself and her female relatives; by doing so, it aims to shed light on a heretofore neglected aspect of women's lives in Japan from 1580 to the early 1600s.

4. English translations of Hideyoshi's anti-Christian edict can be found in BERRY (1982, 91–92), and ELISON (1973, 115–16). Elison discusses this decree as "not rigorously or universally enforced" (ELISONAS 2005, 146), and he says that it was Hideyoshi who "had chosen not to enforce his edict" (ELISON 1981, 79). But Elison also points out the fact that "Hideyoshi made Christianity a national problem [in 1587]" (ELISONAS 1991, 363). In addition, Berry states that "[t]here is no reason to conclude that by 1587 he detected a philosophical threat in Christianity and so determined to destroy the gospel... Nor is there evidence that Hideyoshi feared native believers and intended to persecute them" (BERRY 1982, 92). And, compared with the national religious policies of Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534–1582) and Tokugawa Ieyasu, Nosco analyzes that "Hideyoshi remained flexible and was prepared to change his religious policy whenever necessary to meet those circumstances that would suit his political or military ends" (Nosco 1996, 138).

5. The sources used in this study are *Nihonshi* (History of Japan) written by Luis Fróis, and "The Jesuits' report on Japan" written by different missionaries who stayed in Japan. As Jesuit documents were written for the European audience, they may contain some exaggeration. ELISONAS finds that they were "self-deceptive in its optimistic estimate of Christianity's prospects" (2000, 105). There is no evidence to suggest that the Jesuits ever fabricated a recorded conversion, and the information was detailed and generally accurate. For more comments on the Jesuits' sources and *Nihonshi*, see MATSUDA (1992, 115–37).

6. Ward lists the names of women catechists in her article (WARD 2006, 641–42).

7. Ward suggests that "Jesuits appreciated the women catechists' contribution," though they could not receive the sacraments, pastoral nurture, or instruction from priests (WARD 2006, 650).



FIGURE 1. Map of Bizen and Kaga areas.

Entering the Toyotomi House

Gō was the fourth daughter of Maeda Toshiie 前田利家 (1538–1599) and his wife Matsu 松 (1547–1617). Toshiie was one of Hideyoshi's loyal retainers and occupied an important political position in the Toyotomi regime,⁸ and Matsu was closely associated with Kitanomandokoro since their husbands had once both been young vassals of Oda Nobunaga. The exact year when Gō was adopted is not known, but she became the first of two adopted children who resided in Osaka castle.⁹ The other adopted child living with her was a boy, Kingo 金吾, who was much younger than Gō, and was a nephew of Kitanomandokoro.¹⁰ Kingo later succeeded the Kobayakawa house and gained the new name, Kobayakawa Hideaki 小早川秀秋 (1582–1602).¹¹ After Kingo's adoption, Gō's biological sister, Maa 麻阿 (1572–1605), also came to Osaka castle.¹² Maa was the third daughter of Toshiie and Matsu, and after moving into the castle, she was raised alongside Gō and Kingo.¹³ Kitanomandokoro looked after them, and Hideyoshi

8. Maeda Toshiie formed an alliance against Hideyoshi with Shibata Katsue 柴田勝家 (1522–1583) at the battle of Shizugatake 賤ヶ岳, but he reversed his position and joined Hideyoshi's side after the battle. This is evident from Hideyoshi's own words left in a letter sent to Kobayakawa Takakage 小早川隆景 (1533–1597) on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of 1583 (KUWATA 1943, 79–82). He later became one of five *tairō* 大老 (deputies) of the Toyotomi regime.

9. The earliest evidence of Gō's presence in Osaka castle can be found in Hideyoshi's letter of 1586 (KUWATA 1943, 131).

10. He is the fifth son of Kitanomandokoro's biological brother, Kinoshita Iesada 木下家定 (1543–1608).

11. He is known for his defection to the Toyotomi house at the battle of Sekigahara.

12. Maa's name first appears as Ohime お姫 in Hideyoshi's letter of 1586 (KUWATA 1943, 134–35).

13. Maa, who was engaged to a vassal of Shibata Katsue, was taken to Osaka after her fiancé died in the battle of Shizugatake in 1583.

repeatedly showed his concern for them in letters when he was on campaigns away from Osaka, often asking his wife for recent news of their children.¹⁴

These children resided in the main enceinte (*honmaru* 本丸) of Osaka castle.¹⁵ The main enceinte had several big rooms, and Gō lived in the interior palace (*okugoten* 奥御殿) with Hideyoshi, Kitanomandokoro, and other lady attendants. Among many of her parents' attendants, there were five or six Christian women living and serving her mother in the castle (FRÓIS 1977, 128). For example, Kyakujin 客人¹⁶ was one of Kitanomandokoro's senior attendants,¹⁷ and her Christian name was Magdalena; her daughter was also a Christian named Catalina.¹⁸ Joanna was another important attendant who served Kitanomandokoro and married an aristocrat (FRÓIS 1977, 210). Moreover, according to a Jesuit missionary Luis Fróis (1532–1597), all of Kitanomandokoro's ladies-in-waiting had Christian names, even though one was a Buddhist. Clearly, the Christian names were readily accepted, and Fróis describes how “eventually everyone in the castle called each other by Christian names.”¹⁹ Even allowing for hyperbole, it is clear that soon after the Jesuits arrived in Osaka and started to found a Church, the new religion quickly became familiar among the women in the castle. Living with women serving her parents, Gō saw these ladies every day, observed the rituals performed by individuals like Magdalena, Catalina, and Joanna,²⁰ and occasionally would even have seen them go to Osaka Church.²¹

Woman Catechist, and Christian Relatives

In addition to her mother's Christian attendants, there were also several more important women who lived with Gō in the castle. Most significantly, one of the first women catechists, Kyōgoku Maria, had moved into the castle with her daughter Tatsuko 龍子, who became a concubine of Hideyoshi as early as 1582. Maria was already a widow at that time, and was “confined with her daughter in the women's quarters of Hideyoshi's castle in Osaka” (WARD 2006, 649). Kyōgoku Maria was baptized in 1581, later acquired the title “padres' apostle,”

14. The letters that mention Gō's name were written on the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month of 1586 (KUWATA 1943, 131), fourth day of the seventh month of 1586 (KUWATA 1943, 134–35), second day of the twelfth month of 1587 (KUWATA 1943, 155–56), and on the fourteenth day of the fifth month of 1590 (KUWATA 1943, 180–81).

15. The construction of Osaka castle started in 1583, and the basic structure and residence in the enceinte was completed in 1585 (MIYAMOTO 1997, 224)

16. Kyakujin was a wife of Xinsa Gayo, who was a close vassal of Hideyoshi. Xinsa's Japanese name is unknown.

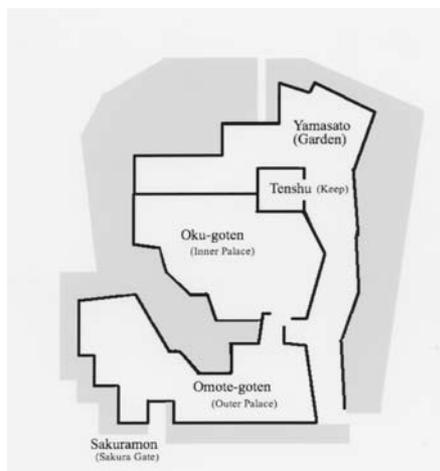
17. Other top attendants were Kōzōsu 孝藏主 (d. 1626), Chaa ちゃあ, and Higashi ひがし.

18. Fróis recorded her job as “keeping gold and silver in storage for Hideyoshi” (FRÓIS 1977, 129, 370). Thus, her Japanese name was Yome よめ, a gold keeper in the castle.

19. Hideyoshi also called the ladies by Christian names (FRÓIS 1977, 129).

20. Magdalena said rosary three times a day (FRÓIS 1977, 128).

21. Hideyoshi allowed the ladies at Osaka Castle to visit Osaka Church (FRÓIS 1977, 213).

FIGURE 2: Hideyoshi's Osaka Castle²²

and engaged in preaching, persuading, and mass converting (WARD 2006, 642). Males were prohibited to enter the interior palace that was reserved for women, so the Jesuits appreciated the existence of female catechists. And at Kyōgoku Maria's request, the Jesuit rector provided her with Christian literature such as a *Catechism*,²³ a *Guide for Confession*, a *Book of Meditations*, and *The Imitation of Christ*.²⁴ Among her four daughters, the only one not to be baptized was the concubine, Tatsuko. There are no records that Tatsuko was associated with Christianity until 1601–1602. But much later, when she fell ill, her mother Kyōgoku Maria introduced her to Christianity, and she showed a strong interest (GUERREIRO 1988b, 149).

In the same inner quarter, two other concubines of Hideyoshi lived with Gō. Chacha 茶々 (1567–1516) was the daughter of Asai Nagamasa 浅井長政 (1545–1573), and Tatsuko was her cousin, since Tatsuko's mother, Kyōgoku Maria, was Nagamasa's older sister. Yet, another concubine, Tora とら, was the biological sister of Gamō Ujisato 蒲生氏郷 (1556–1595), a Christian daimyo. From this quick glance at Hideyoshi's concubines' genealogy, it is clear that though they

22. For more information about Hideyoshi's Osaka castle and its design, see TOBA (1971, 165).

23. This book was published as *Dochirina Kirishitan* ドチリナ キリシタン in 1590. But there were two different editions before this book, *Kirishitan kokoroesho* 吉利支丹心得書 and *Nihon no kateki-zumo* 日本のカテキズモ, which was edited by Alexandro Valignano (1539–1606) in 1586.

24. Women were not allowed to study or receive training like men, who could become *dōjuku* 同宿 or *kanbō* 看防. However, as in Maria's case, women were allowed to read Christian literature and learn to preach outside the Church. As for the specific document that Maria requested, see WARD (2006, 656 footnote 37). Also, for detailed description of Kyōgoku Maria's activities, see PASIO (1988, 42).

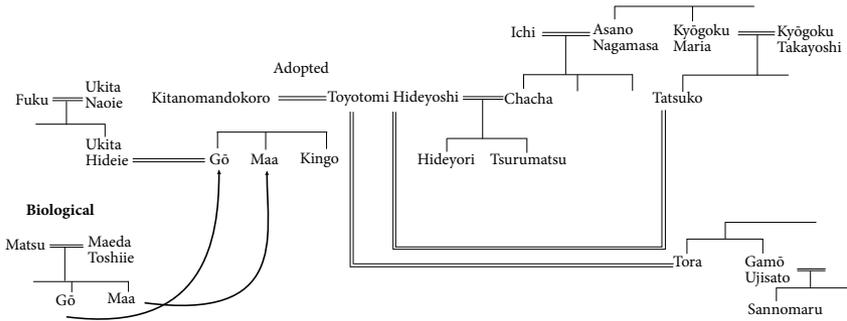


FIGURE 3: Genealogy Chart of Women around Hideyoshi

were not themselves Christian, each one had an immediate or close Christian relative, like Kyōgoku Maria and Gamō Ujisato.

Jesuits' visits to Hideyoshi and contacts with Kitanomandokoro

Having a women's quarter, Osaka castle was crowded, and rapidly prospered soon after its inauguration. Jesuit priests were invited to the castle along with other Christian visitors like Ōtomo Sōrin 大友宗麟 (1530–1587). The first visit of Jesuit priests to Osaka Castle took place in 1586.²⁵ Gō's father, Hideyoshi, saw the priests in person at the castle, but her mother, Kitanomandokoro, missed this chance to see them and only heard about these foreign visitors later on. Luis Fróis recorded what he heard from some Christian women at the castle after he left:

On that night, Kitanomandokoro told Hideyoshi, "I have been very worried about how you treated the *bateren* [padres] today. They are foreigners, and how you treat them could demean their religion and honor. Besides, they have sent me messages asking me that they want to be treated well when they see you. So, I have been wishing in my heart that they will be treated well." ...

Both her kindness at that time, and her favor after that occasion are the gifts from our Lord because she had been an enemy of Christian teachings, was opposed to Christian propagation, and had been cold and unkind. Indeed, she had clearly stated so on every occasion. (FRÓIS 1977, 213)

In the conversation with Hideyoshi, she states that she had received messages from the Jesuits before Hideyoshi had invited them to Osaka castle. How were

25. It is possible that Gō and/or Maa were in the castle at this visit. Fróis witnessed, "two or three girls at the age of thirteen or fourteen walking in front of Hideyoshi" (FRÓIS 1977, 208). Also, Ōtomo Sōrin recorded that he saw two or three girls at the age of twelve or thirteen walking before Hideyoshi (FRÓIS 1977, 217 footnote 21).

information about the Christians' activities and messages from the Jesuits passed to Kitanomandokoro? The Christian ladies inside the castle were the conduits, and the last few lines in the above passage indicate that she had communicated with the Jesuit priests more than once. To see how the Jesuits communicated with Kitanomandokoro, let us examine how Kitanomandokoro received another message when Christians were discussing strategies to obtain permission from Hideyoshi to propagate Christianity. In the words of Luis Fróis:

[In order to obtain permission] many strategies have been considered, but finally we consulted Christian ladies in Osaka Castle and the best tactic seemed to be to win Kitanomandokoro to our side. With regard to this plan, the Christian ladies thought that it would be extremely difficult to find an opportunity to tell Kitanomandokoro [about us], to persuade her to be on the side of Christians, and to obtain [Hideyoshi's] permission via Kitanomandokoro, though the ladies eagerly wanted to get his permission for the Jesuits. This was because the wife of the *Kanpaku* is a pagan, and a devout adherent of Buddha and kami. The request to permit propagation of Christianity would go against her faith. (FRÓIS 1977, 220)

On the first attempt to obtain permission to propagate Christianity, the Jesuits thus tried to persuade Kitanomandokoro to adopt their cause. Both the Jesuits and the maids believed that Kitanomandokoro was the only one who could influence Hideyoshi on this matter, and her influence was both conspicuous and well known.

Indeed, this strategy proved to be a fruitful one for the Jesuits. Although they thought Kitanomandokoro would not cooperate with their plan, she showed interest and support for the Jesuits, and eventually proposed a plan for them to draft a permission document to be issued by Hideyoshi permitting their evangelistic efforts (FRÓIS 1977, 221). Having learned of the Jesuits' wishes from Christian women in the castle, she sent a messenger to the church in Osaka asking them to prepare a draft permission letter. After getting this draft permission letter, she successfully negotiated the contents with Hideyoshi and persuaded him to send two permission letters to Gaspar Coelho (d. 1590).²⁶ The following is the permission letter issued in 1586.

Copy of Permission Letter from *Kanpaku-dono*

With regard to the *bateren* in Japan, I permit them to reside wherever they want to, and I waive some duties such as requiring them to allow soldiers to stay in their church, and those that are mandatory for Buddhist temples. Do not be violent to or disturb the *bateren* when they propagate their teachings.

(FRÓIS 1977, 222)

26. One was for domestic use, and the other was sent back to Europe.

The Jesuits contacted Kitanomandokoro via her maids, and Kitanomandokoro planned to get a permission letter from Hideyoshi independently. Hideyoshi did not know she had been communicating with the Jesuits, and the draft was made secretly. Although Hideyoshi initially did not oppose the Jesuits, it was still difficult for the Jesuits to obtain his permission and waivers. In the end, their plan was successful not through direct contact with Hideyoshi or other Christian daimyo, but through an indirect line of communication with Hideyoshi's wife, Kitanomandokoro.

After this series of efforts, Kitanomandokoro sent two lady messengers to Coelho, who had stayed in Hirado 平戸, and giving him a message and a gift of fruit. The message was, “*bateren* are foreigners, and I am content to be able to make their wishes come true. From now on, if they ask me, I will try my best to make their wish come true” (FRÓIS 1977, 223).

Thus, while Gō lived in the castle, specifically from the initial arrival of the Jesuits in 1583 to the publication of the permission letter in 1586, her mother had constant and frequent contact with the Jesuits. Her father had little knowledge of these goings-on, and the negotiations and preparation of the Jesuits' plans took place behind his back by way of his wife's attendants. Before the enforcement of the anti-Christian decree, the women in the castle, especially Kitanomandokoro, could enjoy exchanging gifts with missionaries,²⁷ and the new religion was brought to the castle as a novel culture that they wished to enjoy more.

Anti-Christian Decree

In 1587, Gō was only thirteen years old, but witnessed a big change in her world. Christians in the castle were no longer able to continue their religious activities due to the ban on Christianity; after her father issued the ban on Christianity, anything related to Christianity became “taboo” in the castle. Although Gō's father, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, had shown much understanding and tolerance toward Christians,²⁸ in 1587, he issued a ban on Christianity while he was stationed in Kyushu. Gō was in Osaka at that time with her mother, and Kitanomandokoro received letters and gifts from missionaries hoping Hideyoshi would revoke the ban on Christianity.

The Vice Provincial head priest (Gaspar Coelho) sent an express messenger from Hirado to the first wife of the “tyrant” [as Fróis now referred to him].²⁹ He prepared a letter to Kitanomandokoro and some clothes made from Chinese

27. She sent two garments to Gaspar Coelho, one red and the other with golden stitches on the edges, and she sent her attendant, Magdalena, to the Church in Osaka (FRÓIS 1977, 257).

28. Hideyoshi treated missionaries with the most sincere hospitality (FRÓIS 1977, 210). As we have seen, Hideyoshi signed the permission letter that Kitanomandokoro secretly prepared and he himself said that he would be a Christian if he could be allowed to have more than one wife.

29. Fróis changed his perception, and started to call Hideyoshi a tyrant after the prohibition of Christianity and the expulsion of *bateren* from Japan.

silk which she long wanted to have, and gave them to the messenger. The messenger arrived at Osaka five days before Hideyoshi [who was en route back from Hakata and the Kyushu campaign]. She is a pagan, and has not met any of us. She is, however, warm by nature, and has great compassion. Thus, she wrote back to the vice regional head, and said that she appreciated the gifts from him, and that she has sympathy for what happened to us. Also, she suggested not sending a letter to Hideyoshi in order to make things change quickly. She thinks that the letter will not help to get something out of him, and she told us that she herself would find a chance to talk to him when he comes back.

Once the reply [from Kitanomandokoro] arrived at Hirado, the priest did not wait even for a minute, but sent another letter to her. He tried to explain how our enemy tried to insult us in front of the *Kanpaku*, and wrote the perfect rationale to defend this incident. Then, he asked [Kitanomandokoro] to tell this story to the *Kanpaku*.... However, everyone knew that [Hideyoshi] would execute anyone who talked about *bateren*. Thus, no one was willing to pass this letter to the wife or nephew of the *Kanpaku*. In the end, this letter was not sent, and the messenger came back [to Hirado] with the letters.

(FRÓIS 1977, 363)

At the time that this decree was introduced, neither the Jesuits nor the women in the castle were able to change Hideyoshi's policy. Gō might have detected this sudden change among the women in the castle, but before seeing further events, she prepared to travel to Bizen where her marriage had been arranged.³⁰

Gō's Marriage

Gō's fiancé, Ukita Hideie, was the lord of Bizen. Hideie was only one year older than Gō, and at the time he became the head of Ukita house, he was just fifteen years of age. Being too young to rule the domain, Hideie's vassals had the actual power to rule his land. Among them, according to Fróis, two of his important vassals went to the newly established Osaka Church, and saw the Jesuits. Though they were not baptized, the two vassals showed an enormous amount of understanding of Christianity. On their way back to Bizen from Osaka, they saw Hideyoshi's permission letter to propagate Christianity that Kitanomandokoro had previously helped to draft, and they decided to let their fifteen-year-old master make a copy for their own lands in Bizen.³¹ Thus, before Gō went down to Bizen, her fiancé Hideie issued a permission letter for Christians to reside and propagate in Bizen, and one church was established in Okayama.

Hideie's mother, Fuku 福, was also a supporter of missionary activities. Fuku

30. Fróis knew that Gō was going to get married in 1586 (FRÓIS 1977, 241).

31. The letter was to allow Christians to carry out activities freely in Bizen. The copy can be found in FRÓIS (1977, 225).

resided in Bizen and Osaka,³² so Hideyoshi knew her,³³ and she was a friend of Kitanomandokoro. Evidently, Fuku and Kitanomandokoro both supported the Christians in the Lucas incident of 1586 in which an innocent Christian was falsely charged and executed by Hideyoshi. Fuku's support and understanding of Christians is described in a similar manner as Kitanomandokoro's by Fróis, and he stated that the Jesuits appealed to "both" Fuku and Kitanomandokoro to change Hideyoshi's mind in the Lucas incident.³⁴

Gō left the castle for Bizen immediately after the ban on Christianity was issued. She lived there with her new husband, Hideie, and she bore two sons and one daughter. In addition to her own children, there was a boy who grew up with them like an adopted child. This child was baptized in Osaka in 1595 (ORGANTINO 1987b, 28), and like him, Gō suggested that her own two sons be baptized while she was in Bizen, which in fact came to pass.³⁵

Contacts with her Parents

After her marriage, Gō was called "Lady of Bizen" (*Bizen no onkata* 備前の御方 or "Dear Gō of Bizen" (*Bizen no Gomoji* 備前の五もじ),³⁶ and in 1594, she changed her name to "Lady of the South" (*Minami no onkata* 南の御方). Gō remained in touch with her parents after she left for Bizen. Furthermore, Hideyoshi did not forget about Gō, showing his concern in a letter addressed to Kitanomandokoro. Hideyoshi was happy to hear that she had adopted the new name "Lady of the South," and wrote, "if [Gō] had been a male, she should have succeeded me as *Kanpaku*, and it is too bad that she is a female. *Minami no onkata* is good but she needs an even better name. She is Taikō's beloved child, so she should get one rank higher than Ne [Kitanomandokoro]."³⁷

Gō's mother, Kitanomandokoro, had supported the Jesuits in earlier days. In 1595, her stance remained the same, and she showed even more understanding of Christianity. The following events took place when Takayama Ukon's 高山右近 (1552–1615) Christian mother, Maria, visited Kitanomandokoro.

32. Fuku lived in Osaka, Kyoto, and Bizen. In 1594 and 1595, Fuku was in Bizen. Higashi, an attendant of Kitanomandokoro, was sent to Bizen to contact Fuku in 1594. Also, the letter written by Hideyoshi on the twenty-seventh day of the fifth month of 1594 (KUWATA 1943, 263–64), and the letter from Gneccchi-Soldo Organtino (1533–1609) written in 1595 (ORGANTINO 1987b, 29) prove her presence in Bizen.

33. One letter that Hideyoshi sent to her from Nagoya 名護屋 exists as evidence that he knew her, and looked after Hideie responsibly for her: the letter from Taikō (Hideyoshi) to Fuku, twenty-seventh day of the fifth month of 1594 (KUWATA 1943, 263–64). It was sent to Fuku in Osaka, and Hideyoshi let her know that Hachirō 八郎 (Hideie) was doing fine at the battle front in Korea.

34. The Lucas incident is recorded in FRÓIS (1977, 231–53).

35. A few years before 1606–1607, Gō supported her two sons' conversion. (GUERREIRO 1988c, 276).

36. *-moji* もじ is a suffix to make a diminutive form of women's or children's names. The character 五 is the *ateji* 当て字, or simplified phonetic equivalent of Gō 豪.

37. Letter from Taikō [Hideyoshi] to One [Kitanomandokoro] in 1594 (KUWATA 1943, 245–46).

[Maria] started to talk about the Gospel in front of other ladies and two Christians who were close to Kitanomandokoro. Kitanomandokoro replied [to Maria], saying, “it seems to me that Christianity has great rationale. And it is superior to any other religion, and it is more plausible than many existing Japanese religions.” She continued to make a point that Deus is the only God, and kami and Buddhas are not Deus, but they are all human. Then, she turned to one Christian lady, Joanna, and said, “is that right, Joanna?” Joanna said, “that is correct. Kami is a Japanese creation without any rationale, and humans gave them mystical positions and honor. Thus, kami are not different from human beings.” Kitanomandokoro continued and said, “Every Christian agrees on one truth, and claims that to be true. That makes me believe that [Christianity tells] the truth. Japanese religions never agree, and are never the same.” (FRÓIS 1987, 83–84)

Kitanomandokoro appears to have been observing and listening to many details about Christianity from several Christians. She was familiar with what Christians believed in, and ranked Christianity higher than any other Japanese religions. After this, Gō's biological mother, Matsu, who was present at the time, is reported to have agreed with Kitanomandokoro and praised Christianity.³⁸

Although the women's quarter in the Osaka castle had been expanded in the new town, Kyoto or Miyako 都, the ladies gathered occasionally, and continued to discuss their views on Christianity. The social gathering and women's communication network enabled many Christian women to sustain their religious practice in their circle.³⁹ As well, though some daimyo's wives such as Kitanomandokoro and Matsu were not Christian, the women's social group also made the exchange of information and ideas possible with other daimyos' Christian wives, like Ukon's mother, Maria.

Back in her Mother's Residence in Kyoto

Gō maintained her luxurious lifestyle when she moved to Bizen, as if she were still with Hideyoshi and Kitanomandokoro.⁴⁰ Her husband, Ukita Hideie, signed a permission letter in 1586 for continued support of Christianity, but at that time he was still too young to make an independent decision, and simply signed the official letter that his Christian vassals prepared for him. In 1598, Hideie turned twenty-five years old, and he again showed his support for Christianity.⁴¹ This

38. Matsu was a supporter of Christian activities and shared Kitanomandokoro's view (FRÓIS 1987, 84).

39. A group of Christian woman catechists were called *Miyako no Bikuni* 都の比丘尼 and their religious activities were recorded both in Osaka and Kyoto. See the chart in WARD (2006, 641–42).

40. Her spending habits caused some financial troubles in Ukita house (*Ukita Hideie ki* 宇喜多秀家記, cited in IWASAWA 1966, 335).

41. This is expressed in Francisco Peres's letter to Father Centimano, sent in 1598 (COSTA 2003, 50).

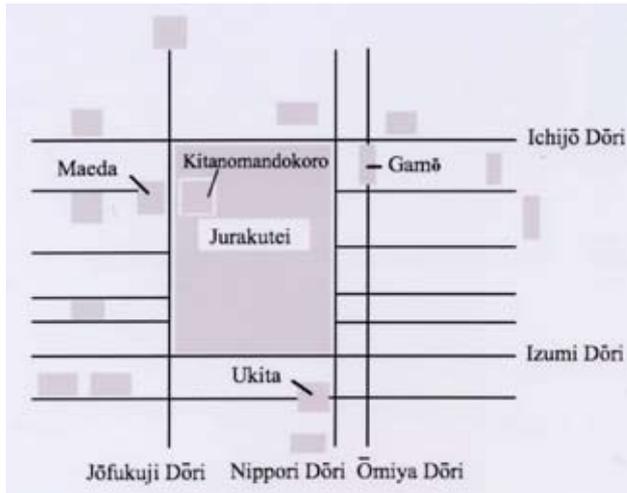


FIGURE 4: Map of *Jurakutei* 聚楽第 and Daimyo's residents.⁴²

was the same year as Gō's father Hideyoshi's death. Due to Hideie's approval and support, Bizen began to have many converts, and as soon as 1599, Hideie's brother-in-law converted to Christianity alongside other vassals.⁴³

However, the calm days for Gō in Bizen did not last long. After the battle of Sekigahara, she was no longer able to be with her husband and sons. Hideie did not support Tokugawa Ieyasu in the battle, and as a result, Ieyasu severely punished him. Indeed, Hideie went into hiding in Satsuma after the battle, but in 1606, he and two of Gō's sons were banished to an island called Hachijōjima 八丈島. The two sons, who were encouraged to convert to Christianity, were both baptized before the exile (GUERREIRO 1988c, 273). Various hardships after the loss of their lord occurred in Bizen, and Christians in Bizen also had trouble maintaining what they had built in the area (GUERREIRO 1988a, 294, 313, 340). But shortly after Hideie's banishment, Bizen was given to Gō's brother, Kingo, who was now called Kobayakawa Hideaki, and the domain was able to enjoy Christianity again thanks to Hideaki's understanding.⁴⁴

Without her husband and sons, Gō went to Kyoto to be with Kitanomandokoro⁴⁵ and reunited with her old acquaintances. Though she likely had many contacts with Christians before this time, Kyōgoku Maria's influence piqued

42. For a detailed map, see ASAO et al. (1999, 169). Also, Maeda and Gamō houses had their offices or residents inside *Jurakutei* according to *Shokoku furushirozu* 諸国古城図 (NAKAI 1990, 168).

43. Hideie's brother-in-law is Akashi Morishige 明石守重. Details of this event are explained in COSTA 2003, 50.

44. Kobayakawa Hideaki supported Christianity in Bizen as well (GUERREIRO 1988a, 295; CARVALHO 1988, 340).

45. Gō had been under Kitanomandokoro's protection, and that was one reason why she could not become Christian (GUERREIRO 1988c, 273).

Gō's interest in Christianity; Maria introduced Christianity not only to her own children, but also to Gō.⁴⁶ Finally, Gō was the first and only family member of Hideyoshi who became a Christian. As recorded in the Jesuits' report of 1606–1607:

In the previous letter, I reported that one lady donated one hundred crusado for our new Church [in Kanazawa]. She wished to be a Christian, but she had many obstacles and expected to be faced with difficult issues, so her wish never came true. However, she always held on to her dream, and her desire to become a Christian increased. So, finally, ending her hesitation, she decided to be baptized this year. [In arranging for her conversion] we paid careful attention, and cautiously decided to baptize her in strict confidence. This is because she was an adopted daughter of Taikō [Hideyoshi] and she was under the protection of Taikō's first wife Kitanomandokoro-sama, who keenly worships kami and Buddha.... One month after the donation, she wished to hear sermons from one lady who knows about Deus and has learned how to preach. The missionaries employ the ladies for those who cannot visit Churches like this lady [Gō], and for those whom fellow missionaries cannot visit. [Gō] understood what the lady told her, and the lady baptized her and gave her a [Christian] name, Maria.... She found a way for salvation, and she was very pleased. (GUERREIRO 1988c, 272–73)

Having converted to Christianity, she moved to her old house, the Maedas in Kaga. Gō's father, Toshiie, had already passed away in 1599, and the head of the family was her brother, Maeda Toshinaga 前田利長 (1562–1614). At the Maeda house, there were still two more Christian visitors, Takayama Ukon and Naito Joan 内藤如安 (1550–1626). These devout Christians happened to be receiving support from the Maeda house when Gō came back. Ukon was invited by Gō's biological father, and stayed in his domain with regular fiefs from 1588 to 1614. Subsequently, Joan was invited by Ukon to settle in Maeda's land in 1603. Both of them had come to Kanazawa before Gō's return, and made Christianity flourish in Kanazawa.⁴⁷ In this environment, after numerous contacts with Christians, Gō had a life as a Christian until much stronger prosecution was enforced by the Tokugawa bakufu in 1614.

Gō's Experience during the Christian Century

Gō grew up in Osaka at the time when the Christian missionaries arrived in her town. Though Hideyoshi prohibited anything related to Christianity in 1587, a girl like Gō still experienced a time of Christian prosperity in the early 1580s,

46. Kyōgoku Maria first led her son Takatsugu 高次 (1563–1609) to Christianity. Following Takatsugu, Maria influenced his wife and Hideyori's aunt. Hideyori's aunt was Gō (PASTO 1988, 42).

47. More than two hundred people were baptized each year thanks to the contribution of Ukon (EBISAWA 1958, 165).

when many people were exposed to Christian rituals and the lives of Christian converts. They were much influenced by these experiences, and interaction between Christians and non-Christians was an every day occurrence. Osaka castle is a good example of this: There were Christian attendants, women catechists, and concubines with Christian relatives. Gō's mothers, Kitanomandokoro and Matsu, her mother in-law, Fuku, her husband, Ukita Hideie, and her biological father, Maeda Toshiie, were Gō's closest and most significant contacts, and all of these were sympathetic to the creed.

Her mother, as Fróis observed, was known as the single most influential person for Hideyoshi, and she helped missionaries to obtain a permission letter in 1586. Kitanomandokoro was able to establish her own line of contact with the missionaries because of the number of Christian attendants she had at the castle, and she frequently exchanged messages and gifts with the missionaries. As well, Fuku, Gō's mother in-law, supported Christians alongside Kitanomandokoro, and that fact ensured the importance of the ladies' behind-the-scenes political roles.

Moreover, the social circle these women built in Osaka and subsequently moved to Kyoto had a close connection with women's religious activities. Not only were there female catechists, but there were also many occasions when wives of daimyo got together to exchange information on their own initiative. Whether one was Christian or not, the Christian religion was an open topic for these women, and the doctrines were studied and compared to other religions. Consider the circumstance of Gō's conversion in the developed women's quarters in Kyoto, and how the circumstances enabled Gō to be baptized: As a female, she needed a woman catechist, and her mother happened to still be in Kyoto where most of the female catechists in Japan lived.

Gō's life illustrates a more detailed account of Christian women living in Japan in the late sixteenth century. Records of her conversion story and women close to her are testimonies of great understanding and support for Christian missionaries and Christianity by the women around Hideyoshi. Their experiences and connections with Christians reveal to us more evidence that many people accepted Christianity in sixteenth-century Japan, and well into the seventeenth century, and some of these people were to be found in the most remarkable places.

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