

# **When Did Japan Become “Japanese?”**

**Randy Loubier, Pastor  
Chestnut Hill Chapel  
New Boston, NH, USA**

**Me: “Are you a Christian?”**

**Citizen of Japan: “No. I’m  
Japanese.”**

**Being “Japanese” is a unique  
class of social being**

**Foods**

**Clothing**

**Social Interaction**

**Business Dealings**

**“Religion”**

Japanese social values are widely  
known as *uniquely* Japanese

# Japanese Social Values

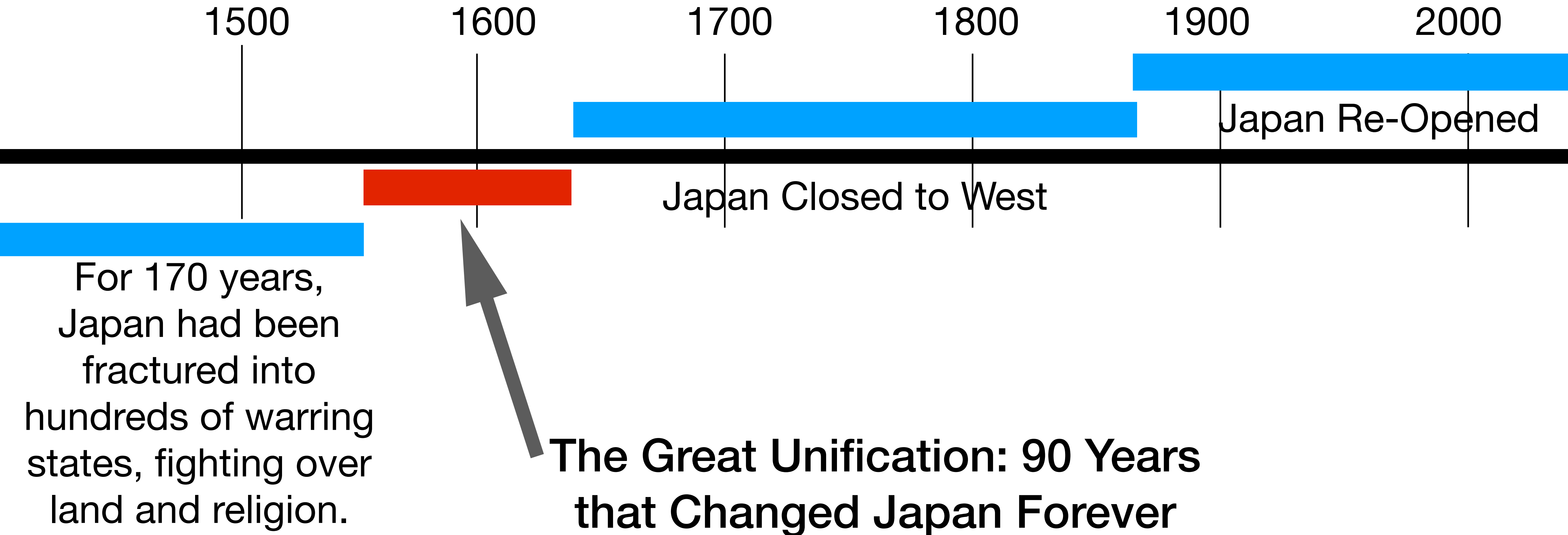
- Wa (harmony amongst people)
- Kei (respect for each other, regardless of status)
- Sei (purity)
- Jaku (tranquility)
- Humility
- Appreciation for the Simple Things
- The Group Comes Before the Individual
- Knowing Your Place *and* Thriving in Your Place
- Giri (repaying kindness)
- Strive for Continuous Improvement Over a Lifetime
- Seeing Beauty in the Used and Broken Things
- Strive to Live Honorably

**Today, Buddhism is credited as  
the source of these admirable  
Japanese cultural values.**

**But is this accurate?**

# Let's Look at History

# History of Japan





**Every Japanese child knows  
the key man in the great  
unification period**

**Oda Nobunaga—the greatest samurai in  
the history of Japan**

**Many Japanese could also name  
the key man who started the  
Japanese tea ceremony**

**Sen no Rikyu—Designer of the Japanese tea  
ceremony and founder of Chanoyu, the unique  
Japanese culture of Wa, Kei, Sei, Jaku, and humility.**

**BUT NOT MANY KNOW THIS**

**Oda and Rikyu lived in the same era.**

**AND they lived in the same region.**

**AND Oda Nobunaga hired Sen no Rikyu to help him  
unify Japan.**

**AND This was at the same time that Christianity was  
strongly taking hold in Japan.**

# DURING Unification Period

Ruling Authority

Oda Nobunaga Became “The Great Unifier of Japan”

Tea Culture

The Tea Ceremony Was Birthed

Religion

Catholicism was Welcomed, Rapidly Expanded

**First, let's look at Japan  
BEFORE Oda Nobunaga**

**WHY did the country need  
unification?**

# BEFORE

## Unification Period

### Ruling Authority

Hundreds of feudal lords  
Constantly at war over power and wealth  
Peasants always under threat of life and livelihood

### Tea Culture

A tea culture existed, but it was “Chinese”  
For nobility only, with elaborate expensive utensils  
The purpose was to use tea as a display of power

### Religion

Buddhist priests had their own armies to fight other priests. Frequently at war for power and wealth. Monasteries were not safe havens of peace

# BEFORE

## Unification Period

### Ruling Authority

Hundreds of feudal lords  
Constantly at war over power and resources  
Peasants always under threat of life and livelihood

### Tea Culture

Tea culture had a smaller presence  
For nobility only. Elaborate expensive utensils  
The culture was to use tea as a display of power

### Religion

Buddhist priests had their own armies to fight other priests. Frequently at war for power and wealth. Monasteries were not safe havens of peace

# Is This Surprising?





# Buddhism in 1500's

Imagine the cost of a Buddhist temple covered with gold leaf. This took considerable power and wealth.



To protect their priests from neighboring Buddhist sects, monasteries installed clever security devices, “Nightingale floors,” to alert them to Ninja attacks. Highly effective, the nails beneath the floor squeaked against each other when walked upon



# DURING Unification Period

**Ruling Authority**

Oda Nobunaga Became “The Great Unifier of Japan”

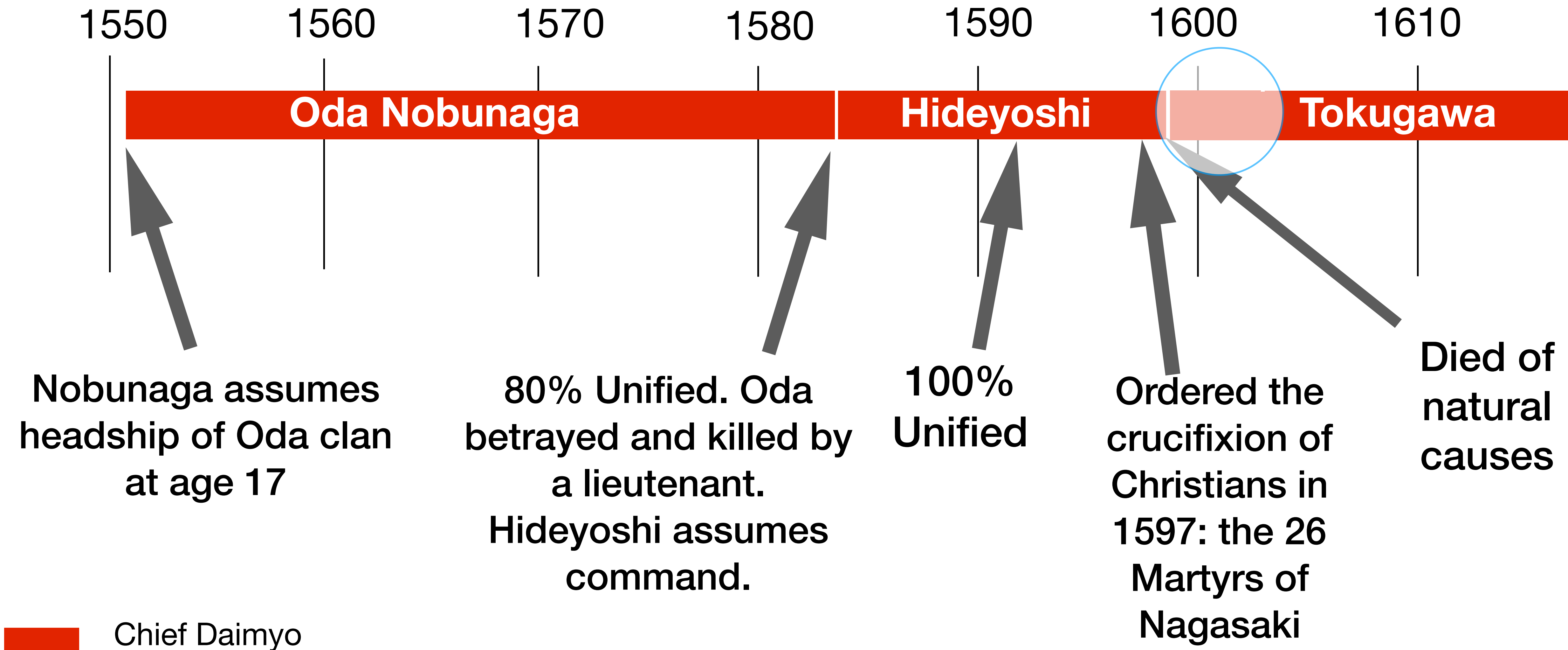
**Tea Culture**

The Tea Ceremony Was Birthed

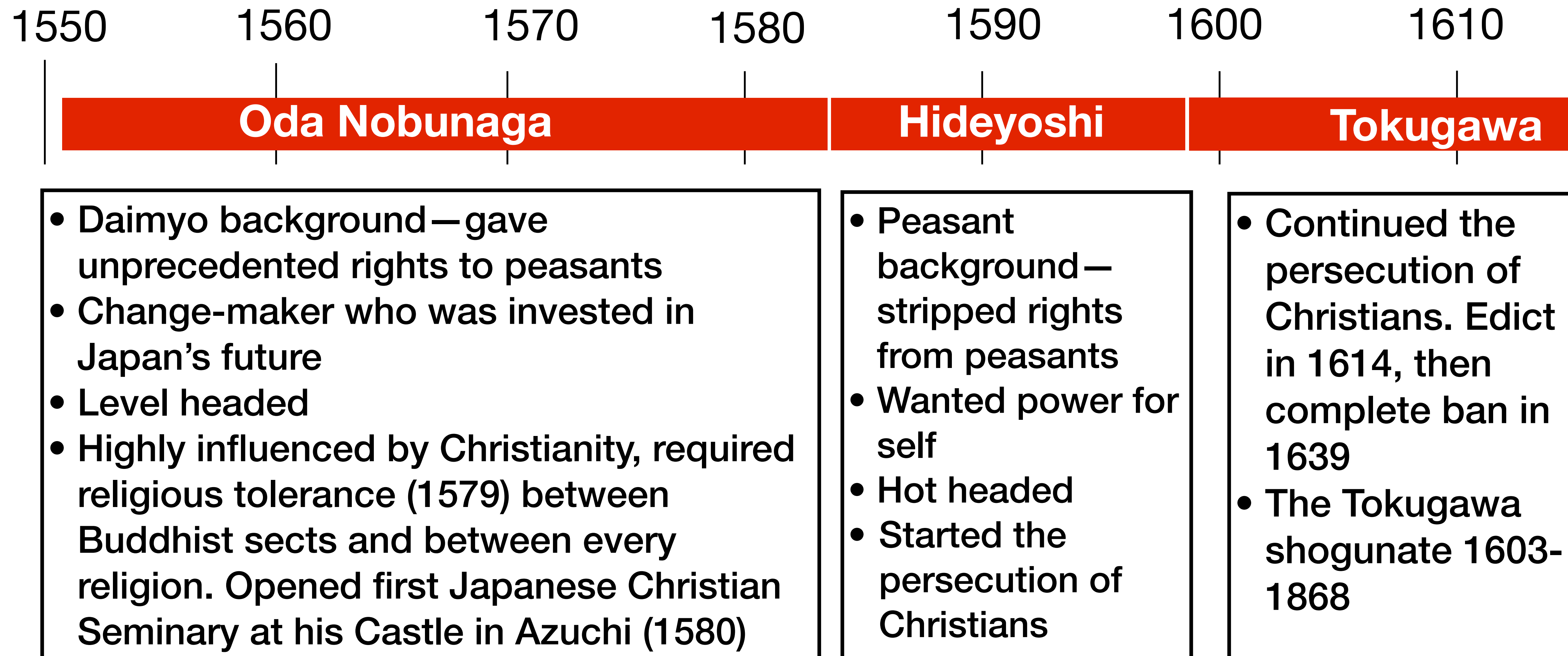
**Religion**

Catholicism was Welcomed, Rapidly Expanded

# When Japan Became “Japanese” The Great Unification Period



# When Japan Became “Japanese” The Great Unification Period



Chief Daimyo

# DURING Unification Period

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# When Japan Became “Japanese” The Great Unification Period

1550      1560      1570      1580      1590      1600      1610

**Oda Nobunaga**

**Hideyoshi**

**Tokugawa**

**Rikyu**

**Rikyu**

**Oribe**

Rikyu studied under many tea experts in his home town of Sakai. Sakai was a hotbed of Christianity. Rikyu may never have been a Christian but his wife and family members were. His new tea ceremony seems to incorporate what he witnessed and valued from the Catholics.

Nobunaga employed Rikyu to help him unify Japan.

Rikyu attracted 7 Daimyo disciples, 6 of whom were highly influenced by Christianity. Together they held tea ceremonies with other Daimyos

1591, Rikyu forced to commit seppuku by Hideyoshi

Oribe, like Rikyu had been heavily influenced by Christianity. After Hideyoshi turned against Christians, Oribe had to carefully navigate his anti-Christian boss. He designed the Oribe Hidden Christian Lantern.

1615, Oribe forced to commit seppuku by Tokugawa



Chief Daimyo

Chief Tea Daimyo

Catholicism Welcome and Thriving

# DURING Unification Period

Ruling Authority

Oda Nobunaga Became “The Great Unifier of Japan”

Tea Culture

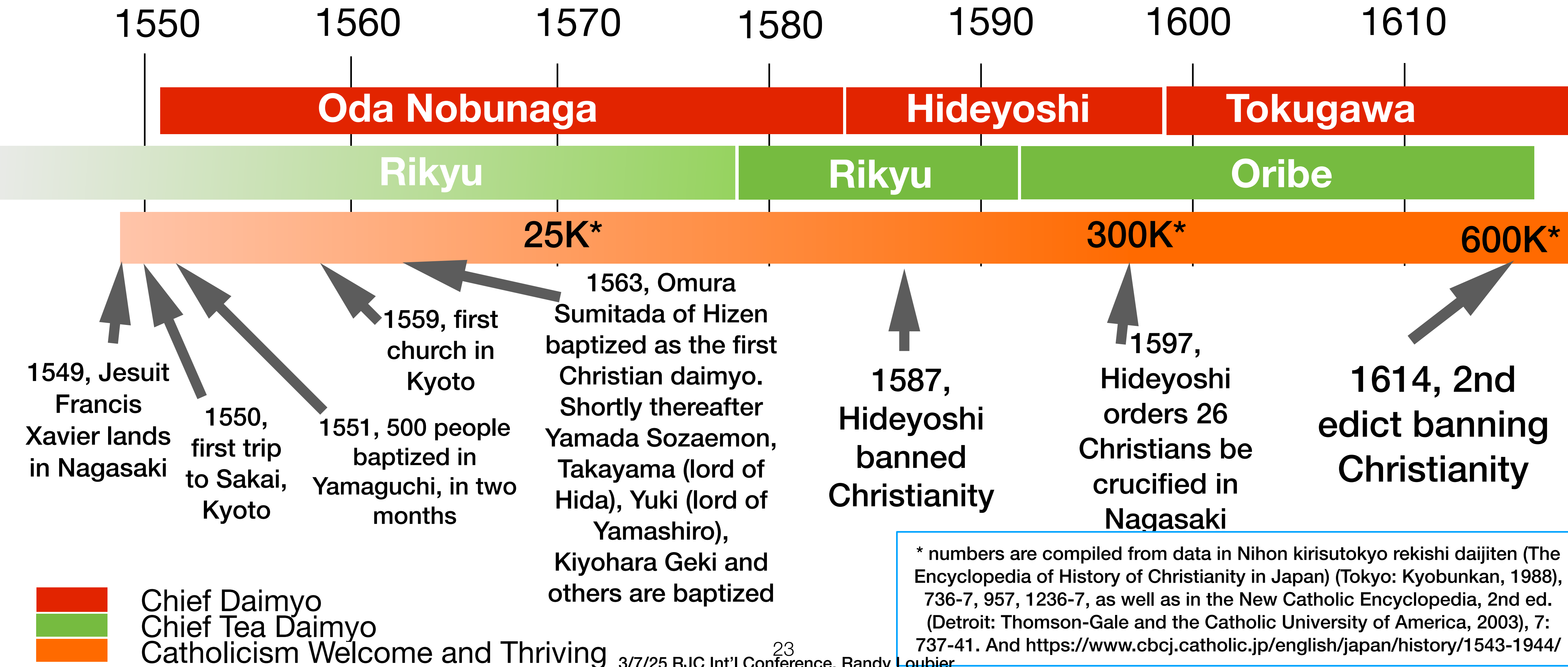
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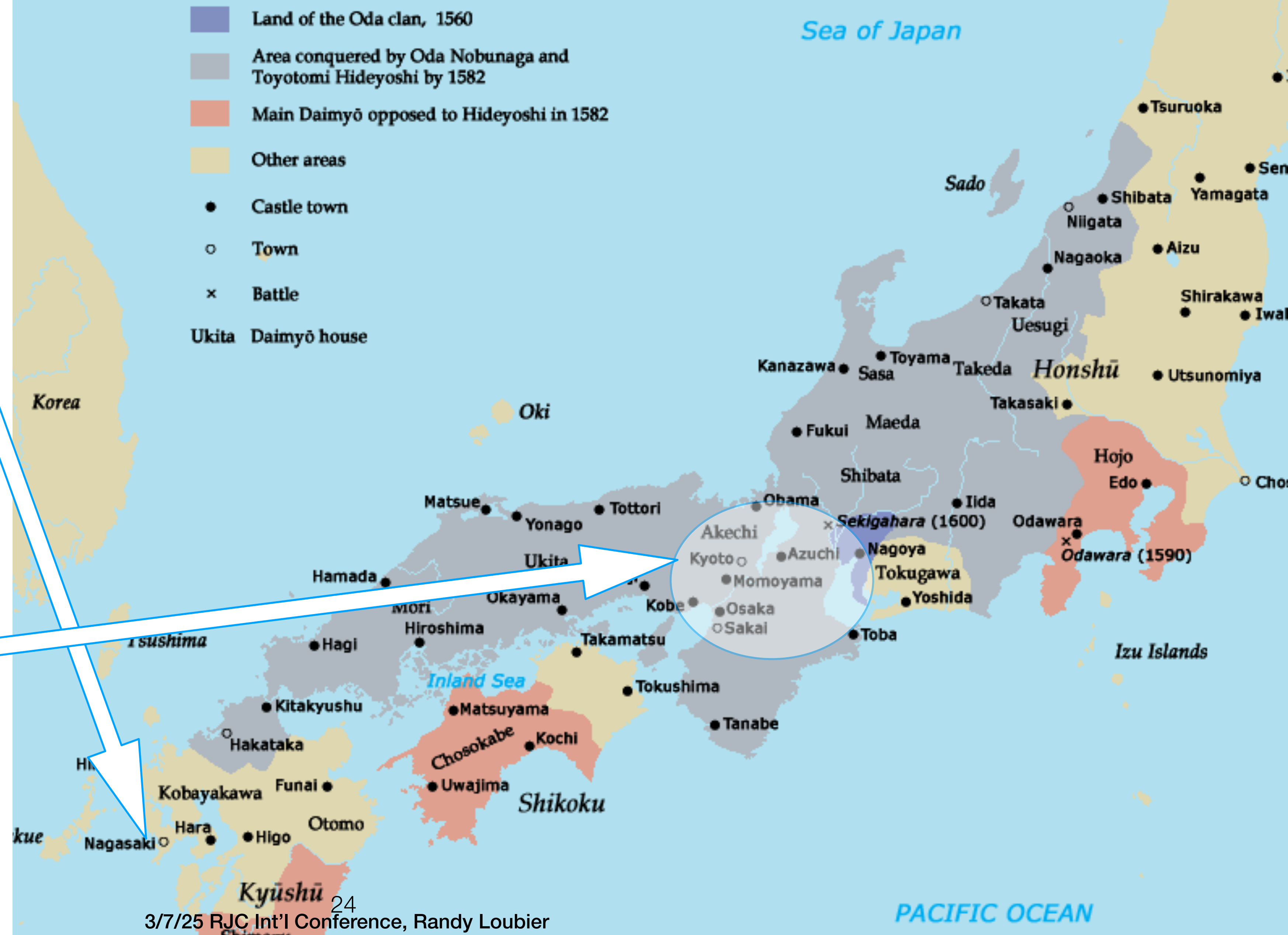
Catholicism was Welcomed, Rapidly Expanded



# When Japan Became “Japanese” The Great Unification Period



# AZUCHI-MOMOYAMA PERIOD 安土桃山時代の日本



Christianity landed in  
Nagasaki

Spread rapidly  
through Kyushu

Then up to the  
populous area  
around Kyoto

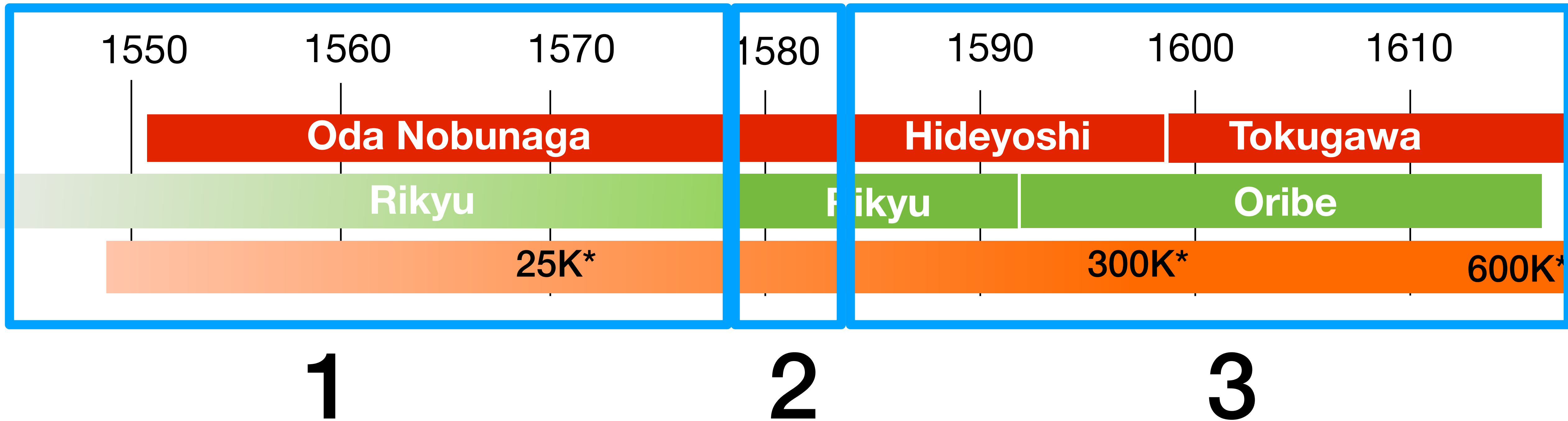


# Map of Early Jesuit Missions to Japan



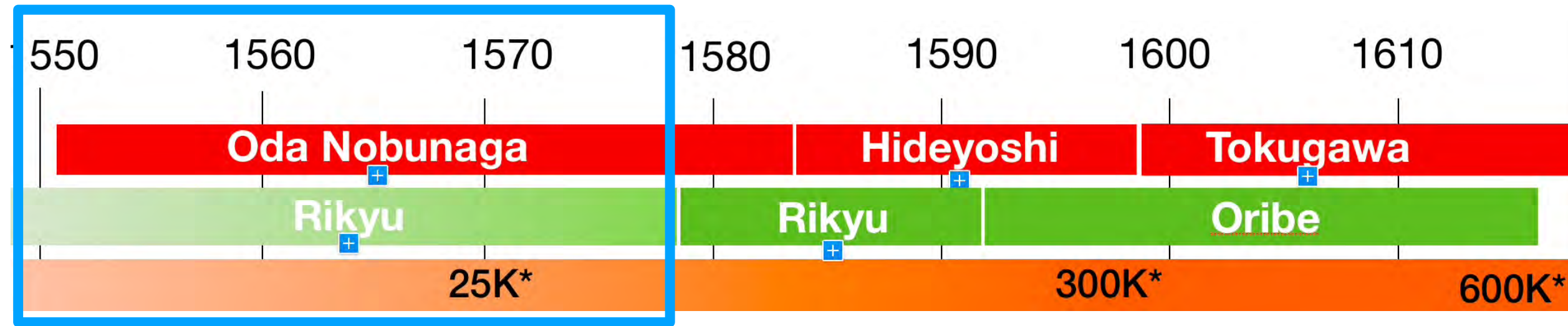


# When Japan Became “Japanese” The Great Unification Period



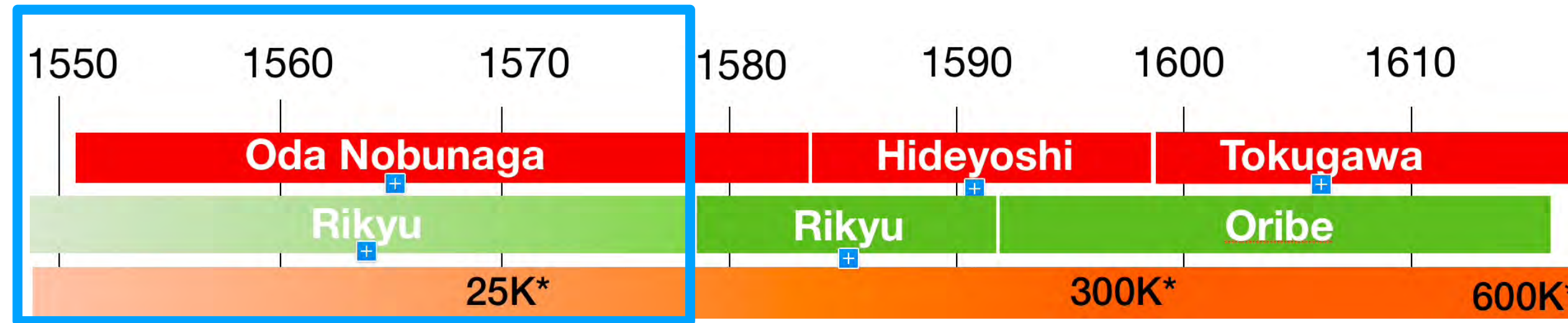
Chief Daimyo  
Chief Tea Daimyo

Catholicism Welcome and Thriving



## What Did Rikyu See at the Catholic Mass? and use in his new tea ceremony

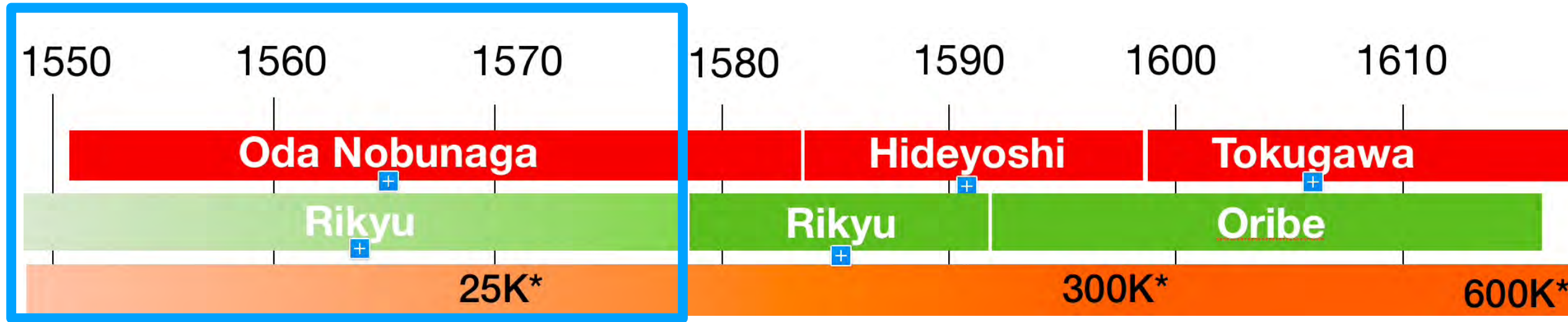
- It's quiet and peaceful
- It's ritualistic—specific repeated motions of the hands in manipulating the implements to prepare the Eucharist
- Tranquility is the objective of the repetitive/predictable motions of the ceremony
- There is a small amount to eat and a small amount to drink from a common cup
- One host prepares, the guests observe, and then consume when invited



## What Else Did Rikyu See at the Catholic Mass? and use in his new tea ceremony

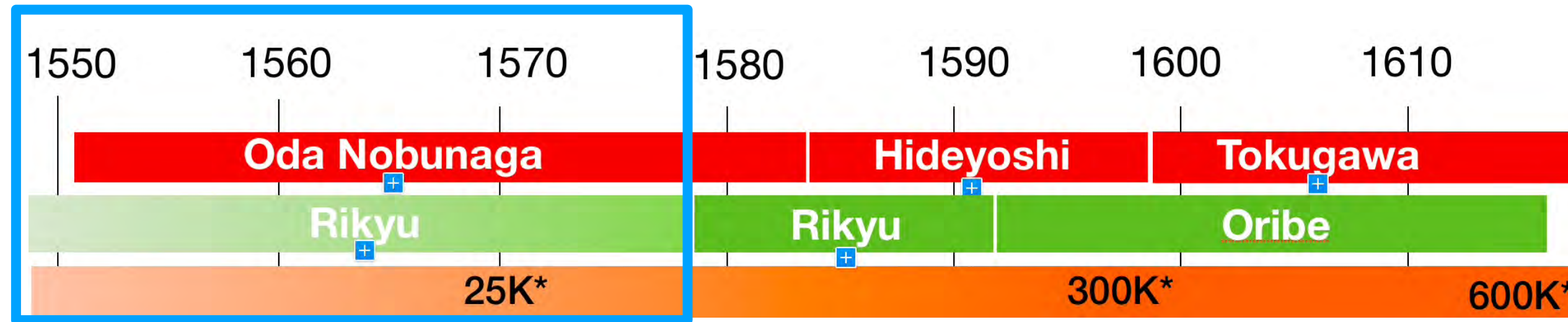
- There are no dignitaries in the audience.
- There is one host, and one body.
- All in the body are equal to each other.
- The body is together as one:
  - In harmony
  - In respect for the unique gifts each has for the betterment of the body
  - In humility





## What Else Did Rikyu See at the Catholic Mass? and use in his new tea ceremony

- The use of a folded rectangular cloth
- The cloth is used to clean the cup and other implements
- There is a pitcher of water to use for cleaning and a container for disposal of extra liquid
- The implements are handled carefully and respected by both host and guests
- There is a high emphasis on purity throughout the mass



**What Else Did Rikyu See  
at the Catholic Mass?**  
and use in his new tea ceremony

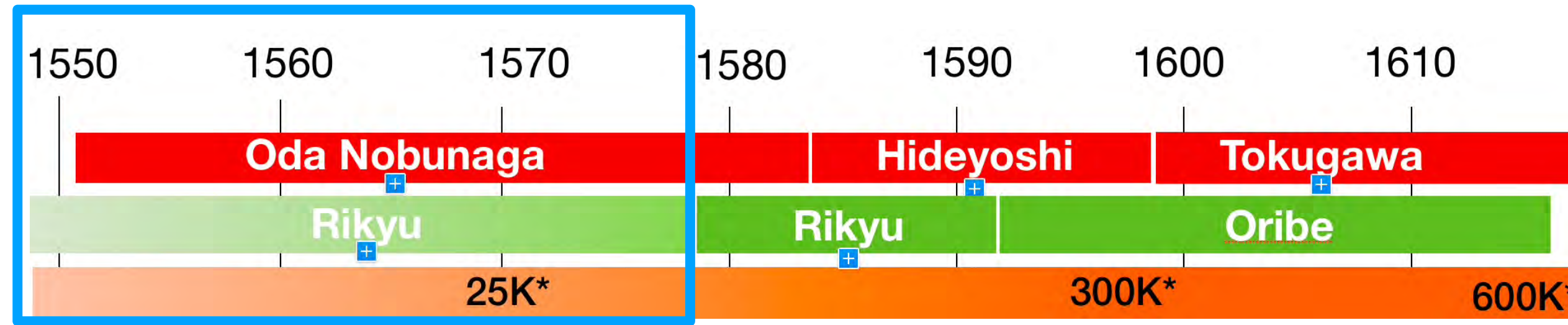
The most important thing Rikyu saw was that the purpose of the mass is deeper than all those details. The purpose of the gathering is to transform the heart and mind.

**Rikyu got it. And would later write...**

*Though invisible  
There's a thing that should be swept  
With our busy broom.  
'Tis the dirt that ever clings  
To the impure human heart.*

*Though you wipe your hands  
And brush off the dust and dirt  
From the tea vessels.  
What's the use of all this fuss  
If the heart is still impure?*

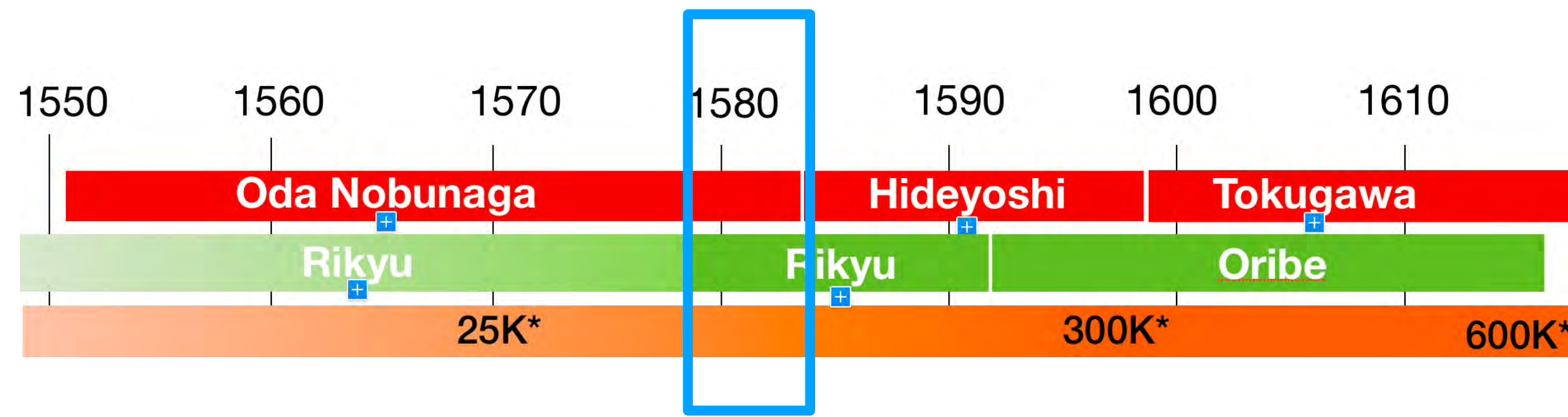




# What Did Oda See?

- Oda needed a diplomatic way to convince Daimyos to value unity more than self. He could take every Daimyo by force but it was better to convince them. Moreover, even if everyone came by force, he needed a tool by which he could keep them together.
- His country was rapidly converting to Christianity with a new set of values. Daimyos included.
- Rikyu had a new tea ceremony that taught and modeled the exact same values that Oda needed to bring leaders to humility, harmony, and respect, where the wellbeing of the group comes before the individual and *everyone* plays an important part



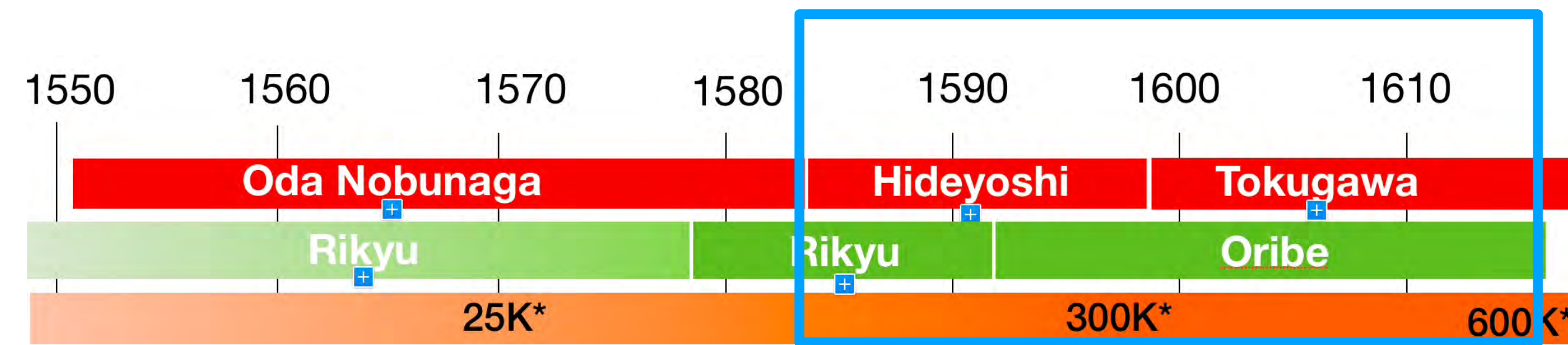


# What Did Oda and Rikyu Do?

- Oda hired Rikyu as Japan's chief tea sage
- Rikyu built tea rooms and invited a few Daimyo's at a time
- They had to lay down their swords and armor on the porch—to be equal
- They had to humble themselves by bowing through a short door
- Inside it was like a Catholic mass in that it was reserved, kind, respectful, harmonious, every guest equal, with ritual movement and decor that inspired tranquility



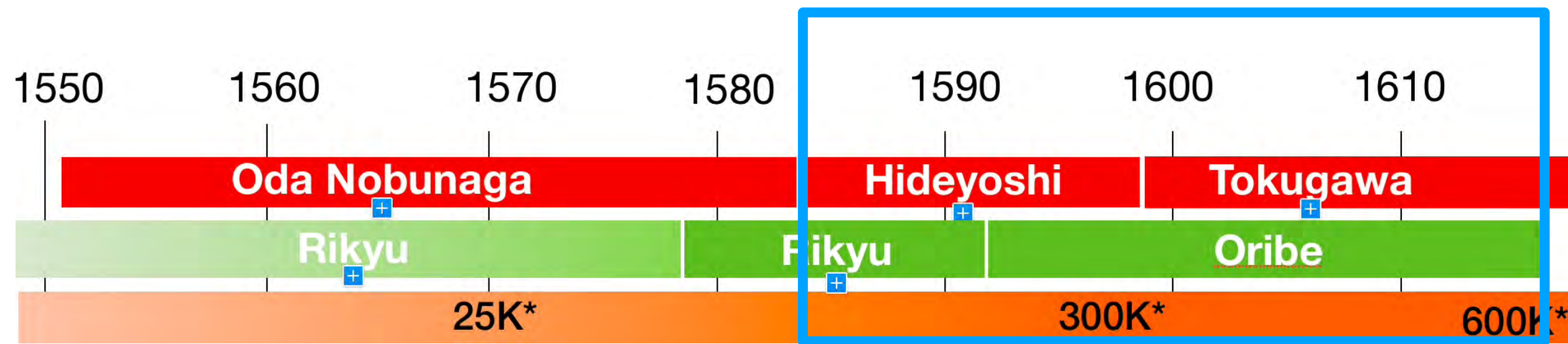




# Rikyu and Oribe Carried Forward

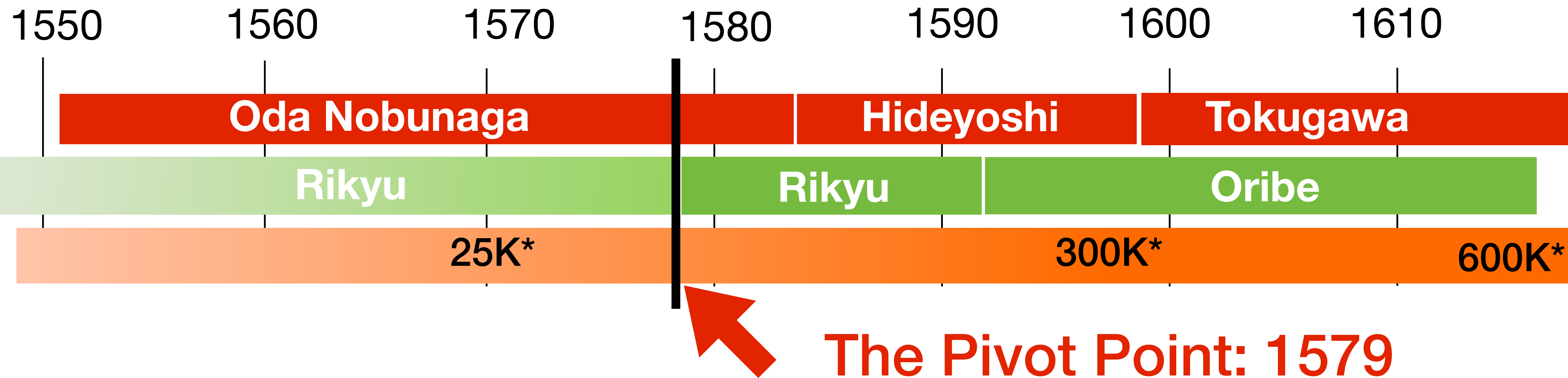
- After Oda died, Rikyu continued his role under Hideyoshi who realized the genius of the new tea culture—it was quickly building a new national identity based on new values of unification
- Rikyu gathered seven Daimyo's who became core disciples.
  1. Maeda Toshinaga. Wife was Oda's daughter. Raised children to be **Christian**. Son, Wakita Naokata, hidden **Christian** Samurai had Oribe lantern.
  2. Gamō Ujisato. Known **Christian**. Baptised name Leon.
  3. Hosokawa Tadaoki. Wife was a famous **Christian**—Hosokawa Gracia.
  4. Furuta Oribe. Designer of Hidden **Christian** lantern.
  5. Dom Justo Takayama Ukon. Known **Christian**. Baptized at age 12.
  6. Makimura Toshisada. Became **Christian** by recommendation of Takayama.
  7. Shimayama Munetsuna.

# Rikyu and Oribe Carried Forward



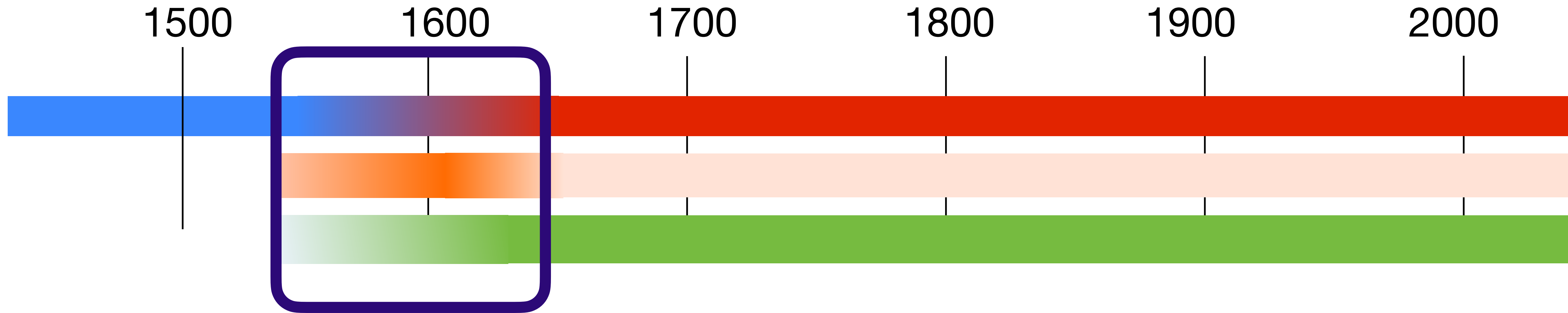
- Hideyoshi banned Christianity just 5 years after Oda's death, reversing Oda's policies.
- Rikyu and Oribe were careful in disclosing any allegiance, keeping the tea ceremony uniquely “Japanese.”
- During this time, Christianity was growing rapidly, despite increasing persecution.
- Oribe secretly published the design of his Hidden Christian Lantern
- Overall, the new “Japanese” culture had 36 years of nurturing by Oda, Rikyu, Oribe and a strong presence of key daimyo's. It was enough to unify the country under new social values that have survived to this day.

# When Did Japan Become “Japanese?”



- Azuchi Castle completed as center of Oda ruling and culture.
- Rikyū hired as chief tea sage of Japan
- First Japanese Christian Seminary opened at Azuchi
- Oda held Buddhist debate between two sects at Azuchi. Ended with Oda decree to require religious tolerance amongst all Buddhist sects

# History of Japan



## Is This a Coincidence?



Warring States to Unified Japan

Presence of Christianity

Adoption of New Japanese Values



**Conclusion: It is highly likely  
that the social values of Japan  
are derived from Christianity**

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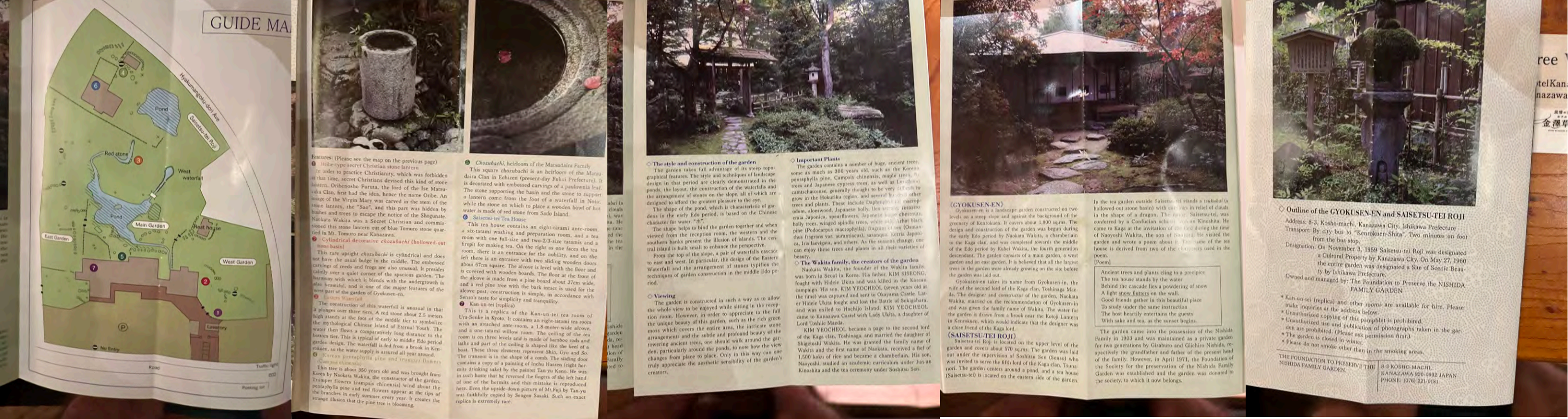
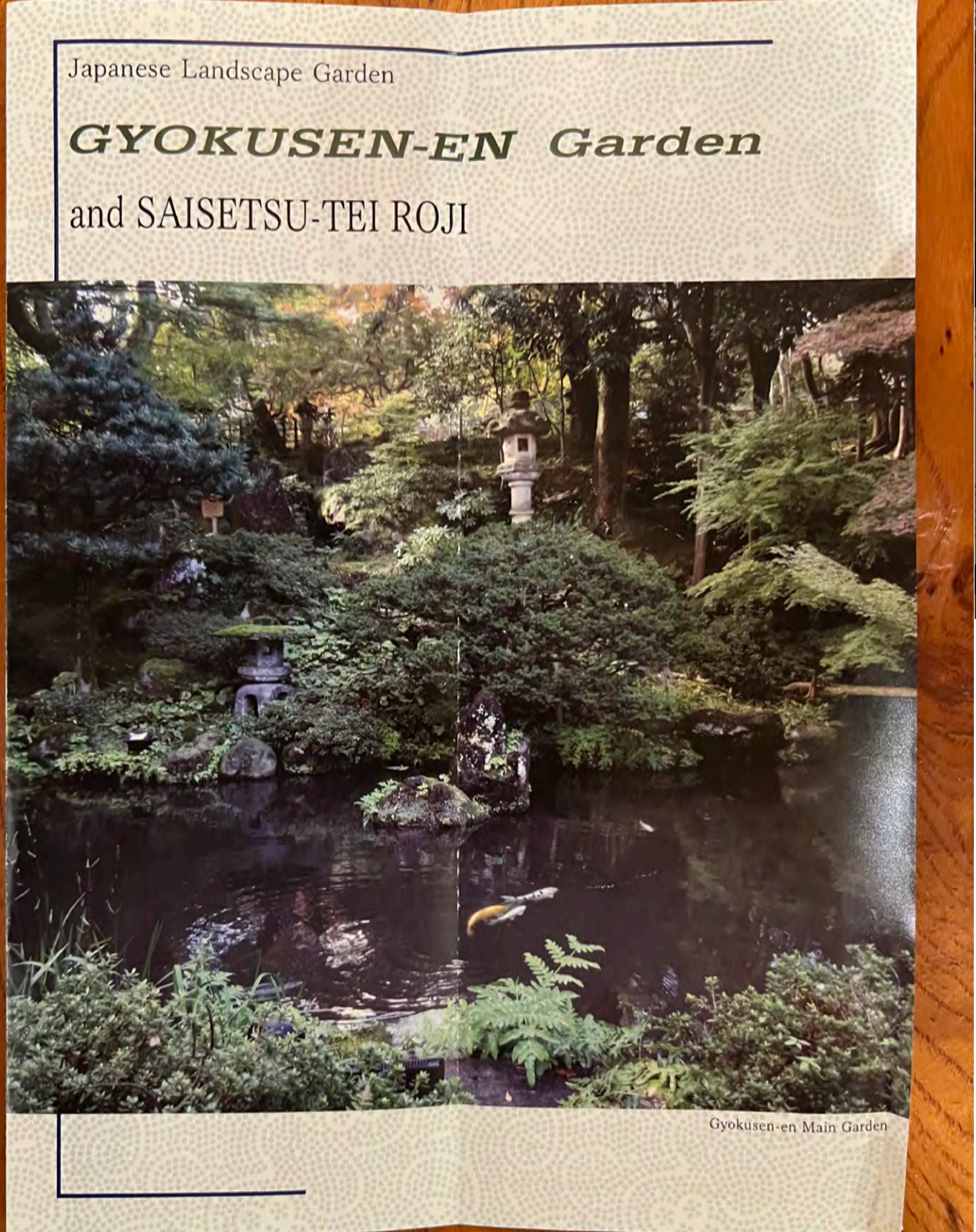
## **Why Isn't This Common Knowledge?**

- 1. It was too dangerous for 290 years. Then, by 1868 Kokutai (国体, Japan is uniquely ordained) was ingrained.**
- 2. It may not be possible to prove with historical records (?)**
- 3. History was reformulated to give politically correct explanations.**

**One example of history  
reformulation.**

**The Lord led Judy and I to find  
something in Kanazawa and Kyoto.**





Samurai  
Naokata Wakita  
(1585-1660)  
Father was Maeda  
Toshinaga, one of  
Rikyu's disciples

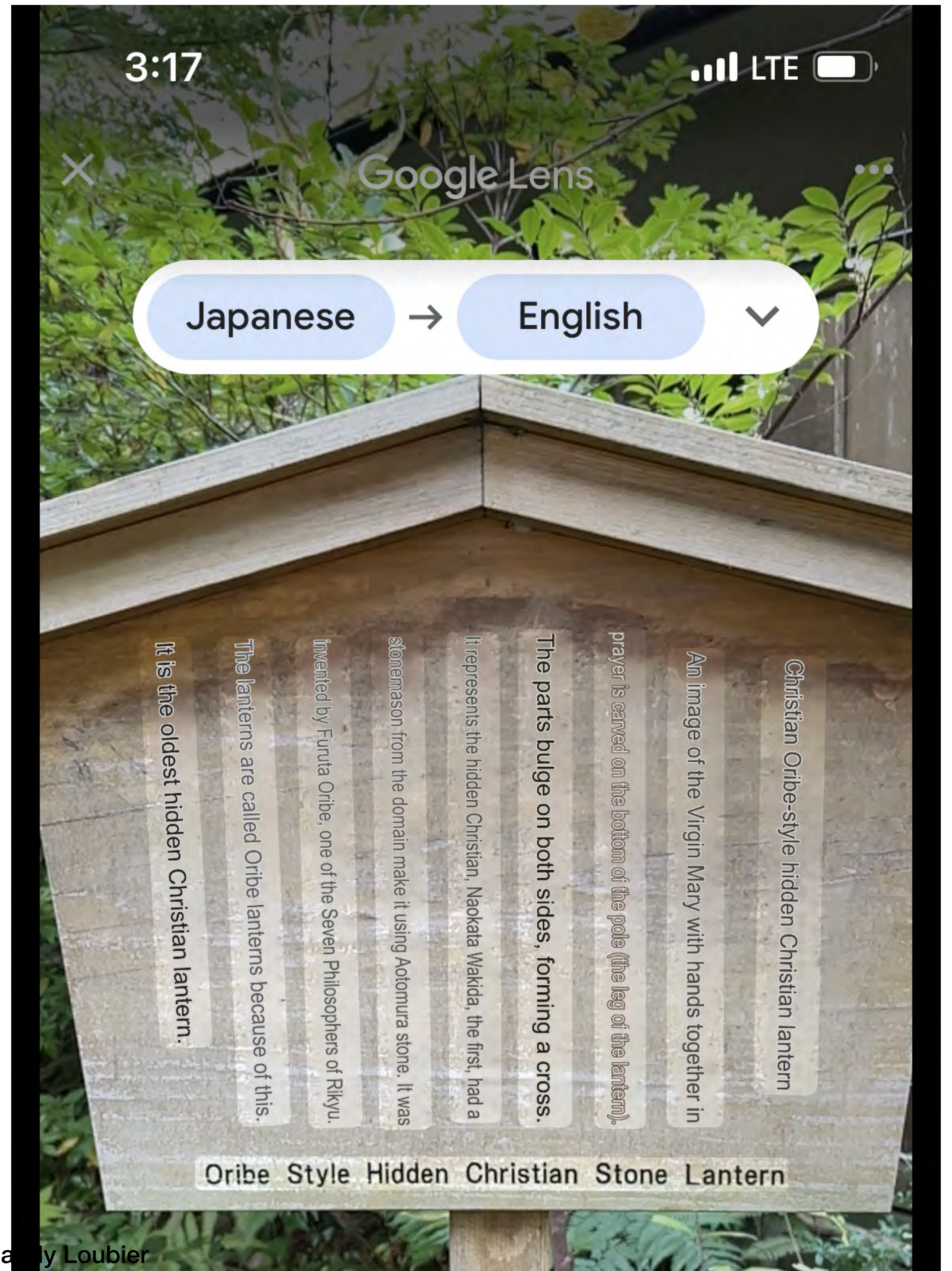
Features: (Please see the map on the previous page)

1. Oribe-type secret Christian stone lantern

In order to practice Christianity, which was forbidden at that time, secret Christians devised this kind of stone lantern. Oribenosho Furuta, the lord of the Ise Matsu-zaka Clan, first had the idea, hence the name Oribe. An image of the Virgin Mary was carved in the stem of the stone lantern, the "Sao", and this part was hidden by bushes and trees to escape the notice of the Shogunate.

Naokata Wakita was a Secret Christian and commissioned this stone lantern out of blue Tomuro stone quarried in Mt. Tomuro near Kanazawa.









**At Wakita Garden in Kanazawa:  
“An image of the Virgin Mary with  
hands together in prayer is carved  
on the bottom of the lantern. It is  
the oldest hidden Christian lantern”**



**At Oribe Museum in Kyoto:  
“This figure is often said to be  
a statue of the Virgin Mary, but  
it is actually Jizo Bodhisattva.”**





**At Wakita Garden in Kanazawa:  
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**At Oribe Museum in Kyoto:  
“This figure is often said to be  
a statue of the Virgin Mary, but  
it is actually Jizo Bodhisattva.”**



I am not disparaging the Japanese, including  
Japanese Buddhists

**I am asserting the opposite: I am glad  
they froze these social values in time**

Let's consider God's  
perspective...

# What if God is behind all this?

## What if...

**God instilled his social values into a remote, autonomous culture.**

**Then sealed that culture shut, like a time capsule from 1600 onward.**



# What if God is behind all this?

## What if...

**At just the right time, God turns Japan to Christ and uses them to lead the “Christian” nations back to his values.**

**Conclusion: It is highly likely that the social values of Japan are derived from Christianity**

**What do we do with this information?**

**It isn't for me to say. Every Japanese Christian should hear this and make up their own mind as to what they do with this information.**

**Me: “Are you a Christian?”**

**Citizen of Japan: “No. I’m Japanese.”**

**Me: “I’m glad. Do you know how  
special you are?”**

# Appendix 1:

A few brainstormed ideas of what  
a Japanese Christian *could* say



## A few brainstormed ideas of what a Japanese Christian could say

- Have you ever thought about returning to the roots of our cultural ancestors in the hopes of finding Jaku in your life. I did and I've found Jaku.
- Have you ever wondered where wa came from?
- Have you ever seen a Tea Ceremony and a Catholic mass and noticed the similarities?
- Did you know that Sen no Rikyu, who developed the tea ceremony, wrote his 100 poems of chanoyu on his death bed? And he never mentioned Buddhism or anything related to Buddhism—not once. Does that seem strange?

## A few brainstormed ideas of what a Japanese Christian could say

- Have you ever seen an Oribe Hidden Christian lantern? Do you know how important Oribe was in establishing our ancestor's values?
- Did you know that Oda Nobunaga opened the first Christian seminary at his castle town within a year of finishing his castle? Why do you suppose he did that?
- In the 1500's Japan went from hundreds of warring Daimyo's who put themselves first, to the opposite value of "The group comes first." Who came up with that concept?
- Have you ever noticed how our social values are the most important teachings of Jesus? Wa, kei, sei, jaku, humility, the group comes first, purity, living honorably, repaying kindness through giri, and striving to improve ourselves over a lifetime are exactly the same social values of Jesus.

## A few brainstormed ideas of what a Japanese Christian could say

- Have you ever wondered why we have such unique social values? Wa, kei, sei, jaku, humility, the group comes first, purity, living honorably, repaying kindness through giri, striving to improve ourselves over a lifetime. Nobody else seems to have these social values like we do. Where did they come from?
- Did you know that Japan went from 0% Christian to 5-8% Christian in just 65 years before Christianity was outlawed? In some regions, like Kyushu and Kyoto, the percentage may have been well over 20% in a very short period of time! What did they know that we don't?
- Did you know that the great unifier of Japan, Oda Nobunaga, was highly influenced by Christianity? During his reign, Christianity was welcomed heartily, and many Daimyo's were baptized. He established the first Christian seminary in his castle town.

## A few brainstormed ideas of what a Japanese Christian could say

- Did you know that the originator of Chanoyu and the tea ceremony, Sen no Rikyu, was highly influenced by Christianity? He lived in Sendai where Christianity was thriving—his wife and some family members were Christians.
- Did you know that out of the seven tea Daimyo's who disciplined under Sen no Rikyu, six of them were either baptized Christians or their family were Christians. It is their influence over a critical period of history that changed Japan to be the country it is today.



## A few brainstormed ideas of what a Japanese Christian could say

- You know that Japan considers itself non-religious. Do you know why? The Buddhist sects were at war for 170 years until Oda Nobunaga decreed religious tolerance in 1579. He also welcomed Christianity, started the first Christian seminary and based his entire Japanese unification strategy upon Christian social values. Just five years after he died, Hideyoshi outlawed Christianity, but the new social values remained until today.
- After studying our ancestral history, I've discovered some startling connections. They knew some things that I didn't realize. I'm returning to what influenced them. Our ancestors who revolutionized our culture and established Japan as we know it were either Christian or heavily influenced by Christianity. I'm curious to know what they knew.

## A few brainstormed ideas of what a Japanese Christian could say

**Can we be a Christian and Japanese? “YES, *even more* than any other nationality in the world!”**

**Can we be Japanese and deny our Japanese Christian ancestors? “No, we owe our cultural uniqueness to Christianity.”**

**Indeed the most important Japanese ancestors—those who shaped our Japanese culture—were either Christian or highly influenced by Christianity. They knew something. I want to know what they knew.**



# Appendix 2:

## Japanese Social Values as Taught by Jesus (one example each)

Japanese Value	Taught by Jesus (One Example)
<b>Wa (harmony amongst people)</b>	<b>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Romans 12:18</b>
<b>Kei (respect for each other, regardless of status)</b>	<b>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Rom 12:16</b>
<b>Sei (purity)</b>	<b>Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 1 Tim 4:12</b>
<b>Jaku (tranquility)</b>	<b>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. John 14:27</b>
<b>Striving to Live Honorably</b>	<b>If anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use. 2 Tim 2:20-21</b>
<b>Humility</b>	<b>Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5:5</b>



Japanese Value	Taught by Jesus (One Example)
<b>Appreciation for the Simple Things</b>	<b>I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Phil4:11-13</b>
<b>Group Comes Before Individual</b>	<b>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Phil 2:5-7</b>
<b>Knowing Your Place and Thriving in Place</b>	<b>For the body does not consist of one member but of many...that would not make it any less a part of the body....the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. 1 Cor:12:12-27</b>
<b>Repaying Kindness</b>	<b>Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed. Prov 19:17</b>
<b>Striving for Continuous Improvement Over a Lifetime</b>	<b>Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:12-14</b>