



KUMAKURA Isao



# Japanese Tea Culture

The Heart and Form of Chanoyu



Translated by Martha J. McClintock



Portrait of Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591) by Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539–1610), commissioned by Tanaka Sōkei (b. 1536) after Rikyū's death and inscribed by the Zen monk Shun'oku Sōen (1529–1611). The image is said to depict Rikyū's serene appearance late in his life.



Taian is the tea room which Rikyū is said to have built in the Yamazaki district of Kyoto in 1582. This photo shows the view through the open crawl-through entrance (*nijiriguchi*), with the display alcove (*tokonoma*) visible at the back. Above the crawl-through entrance is a window fitted with vertical bamboo laths and sliding paper paneling (*shōji*). Typically, the paper paneling would not be open during a tea gathering. (Courtesy of Benrido, Inc.)



The Taian interior is a two-mat space (1.8 meters square), with the sunken hearth (*ro*) cut into one corner. The walls are of rough-finish clay plastering (*arakabe*), characterized by the visibility of the straw fibers mixed into the clay for reinforcement. The three sides and ceiling of the display alcove—even the corner pillars and ceiling framework—are similarly coated, giving the impression of the inside of an earthen cavern. The ceiling of the seating space is divided into two sections. Above the tea preparation area occupied by the host is a board-and-batten ceiling. Above the area for guests, part of the ceiling is left with the pitch and underside of the roof intentionally exposed to view. Each element of the room reveals Rikyū's innovative design; one might say it is an expression of the *wabi* concept in an architectural space. (Courtesy of Benrido, Inc.)



The crawl-through entrance and garden approach (*roji*) of the Fushin'an tea room in the Omotesenke estate. The *koshikake* bench (not pictured) where guests rest during the intermission in a tea gathering is positioned slightly before this section of the garden approach. Each stepping stone is carefully selected and positioned to create a path that leads naturally to the crawl-through entrance.



A stone water basin (*chōzubachi*) is positioned in the garden approach for purification of both mind and body before a tea gathering. It is intentionally set low to the ground; guests must crouch down (*tsukubau* in Japanese) to use it. Therefore, this type of stone water basin is referred to as a *tsukubai*.





There are two types of tea room: *koma*, literally a “small room” of four and a half mats or less, and *hiroma*, or a “spacious room” larger than four and a half mats. The *koma* developed notably from Rikyū’s period onward. In contrast with this confined room, where there is a feeling of seclusion for the few people within, the *hiroma* is an expansive room where one can relax. The Zangetsutei tea room (*left*) in the Omotesenke estate, Kyoto, is said to be a replica of Rikyū’s *hiroma*. This room is fitted with a raised two-mat space to serve as the seat for a high-ranking person, such as the powerful military leader Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598). Indeed, according to legend, Hideyoshi once leaned against the corner pillar of the room to gaze at the lingering moon at dawn, hence the name Zangetsutei (“lingering moon pavilion”). This large room has a total of twelve mats, consisting of two tatami of normal height placed in front of the raised two-mat space, together with an eight-mat area where the tea-preparation stand (*daisu*) and equipment are placed.





In chanoyu, water for tea is heated using either a sunken hearth (*ro*), as in the picture above, or a brazier (*furo*). The sunken hearth is used from November through April, and the brazier used between May and October.

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**Martha J. McClintock**

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## Translator's Note

In 1977, the year the first Japanese edition of this book was published, I began a year of study at Urasenke Konnichian in Kyoto as a first-year student in the Midorikai, the foreign-student branch of Urasenke's teacher-training program. Blessed with supremely talented and kind teachers and *senpai*, I experienced an intense immersion in everything chanoyu. In retrospect, it has remained one of the most decisive years of my life.

I agreed to translate this book because since that time I have strongly believed that Kumakura Isao is the best tea historian of our generation. While in the intervening decades my own studies have far diverged from the tea path, I hope that through this translation I can help bring his thoughts and approach to a non-Japanese reading audience.

As I read and translated this book, not only was I reimmersed in those long-ago all-day and all-night discussions about the *wabi-cha* way of being, I reconfirmed the importance of Kumakura's approach to thinking about tea.

This book, which I have translated from the 2021 Japanese edition and which has been edited and adapted by a supervisory team with the in-depth involvement of Kumakura himself, is best seen, to my mind, as two things. One, it is a historical document which records Kumakura's understanding and iconoclastic approach at a critical, nascent period of his tea scholarship. Two, it is a call to all those who are fascinated by tea, *wabi* culture, and Japanese ways of being to consider stepping back from the rigid, centuries-old tea-school approach to chanoyu that dominates the study and practice of tea today, and gain insight into the formative years of *wabi* culture development and all of its interrelated contexts. It is an invitation to sit back with your beverage of choice and engage with Kumakura through

the printed word in a discussion of the *wabi-cha* way of being. May your discussions through these pages be as enlightening and life-enhancing as mine were all those decades ago with my beloved late *senpai* Len Nuvoloni in his tea house in Ginkakujimae-chō, Kyoto. I dedicate my translation to Len Nuvoloni, who lives on in my heart and mind every day.

Martha J. McClintock

## Preface to the English Edition

The history of tea in Japan began in the ninth century. Enthralled by Chinese Tang-dynasty (618–907) tea culture, Japanese aristocrats imported tea and fostered its cultivation in Japan. However, as their interest in China waned, the custom of drinking tea also essentially disappeared. At the end of the twelfth century, the Zen monk Yōsai (1141–1215) brought tea production and drinking methods back to Japan from China, this time newly developed Song-dynasty (960–1279) techniques. This is the origin of the powdered steamed green tea (*matcha*) now produced only in Japan. In his book explaining tea-drinking methods and effects, *Kissa yōjōki* (Drinking Tea to Nourish Life), Yōsai also heralded tea as an effective medicine, a panacea, for all illnesses. As a result, tea-drinking culture took root and flourished in Japan.

Through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, land set aside for tea cultivation expanded in Japan, and tea-tasting competitions in which participants attempted to distinguish between various kinds of regional teas became hugely popular. Tea was more than a medicine; it found favor as the drink of choice among aristocrats and powerful military men. They in turn became interested in the utensils used for tea drinking, such as tea bowls and powdered-tea containers. As they refined methods for making delicious tea, a new lifestyle culture was born: *chanoyu* (literally “hot water for tea”), the art of preparing tea.

Yet, whereas the *chanoyu* of the upper classes was a luxurious affair, another style of *chanoyu* was also emerging, one that sought spirituality in the preparation and drinking of tea and held

that true sufficiency was to be found in insufficiency. The Buddhist monk Jūkō (1422–1502) expressed these new ideas in his *Kokoro no fumi* (Letter of the Heart; see appendix 1). This was *wabi-cha*, or *wabi* tea, which drew on the aesthetic concept of *wabi* to elaborate a sparse, spiritual approach to tea.

Takeno Jōō (1502–1555) of the next generation deepened the link between Zen Buddhism and *wabi-cha*. From his position as a merchant and master of linked verse (*renga*) in the town of Sakai, Jōō brought the then-popular aesthetic of linked verse—that is, an aesthetic of elegant simplicity—into chanoyu.

In turn, Jōō greatly influenced Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591), who is credited with the full formulation of what we know today as *wabi-cha*. Rikyū's accomplishments were numerous: first, the elaboration of the tea room and the architectural structure for *wabi-cha*; second, the creation of original utensils for use in *wabi-cha*; third, the formalization of tea-preparation procedures (*temae*) in a tea gathering; fourth, the refinement of the format and content of the tea-gathering meal, known as *kaiseki*; and fifth, the conception of a *wabi-cha* philosophy. Indeed, Rikyū's tea was so innovative that it provoked the anger of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), the preeminent military ruler of the time. Hideyoshi feared Rikyū as a political threat, and ordered him to commit ritual suicide.

The development of *wabi-cha* over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—and the distinctive culture which emerged from it, accommodating everything from food and clothing to dwellings—made for a new Japanese lifestyle culture, but it also drew on the worldview and folk customs of Japanese antiquity. The history of *wabi-cha* spans only a little more than six hundred years, but it is in fact linked to far older periods of Japan's history. This could well be one reason why chanoyu continues to have such a significant influence in Japan today. This book aims to

analyze the origins and purpose of *wabi-cha* from its emergence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from the vantage point of Japanese lifestyle and culture.

The Japanese version of this book presents a chronology of historical materials related to the history of tea. For this English edition, I have prepared a new appendix of historical sources comprising summaries of a selection of texts that will hopefully aid the reader's understanding of the book's contents.

The first Japanese edition of this book was published in 1977. I was then thirty-four years old; it was a time when few scholars studied chanoyu, and almost no research on tea was being conducted outside of Japan. Great advances in scholarship have been made since, including the 1989 publication of *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu* (University of Hawai'i Press), coedited by Paul Varley and myself, and that of the eleven-volume *Chadōgaku taikei* (Compendium of Tea Studies; Tankōsha, 1999–2001), a project overseen by Sen Sōshitsu, fifteenth head of the Urasenke tea lineage. Notable, too, was the founding of the Japanese Society for the Studies of Chanoyu in 1993. An increasing number of fine works on chanoyu have also appeared overseas. I hope you will have a chance to encounter them.

I would like to hereby express my thanks to Martha J. McClintock for her translation of this volume, to Tashiro Mari, John Breen, and Gretchen Mittwer for seeing it through the checking and editorial process, and to Tanimura Reiko for her invaluable help with the reference materials. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to Kondō Seiichi, who not only recommended this book for translation and publication but also supervised the entire undertaking.

Kumakura Isao  
October 2022



Chapter 1

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**THE CREATION OF  
*WABI-CHA***



## Idiosyncratic Culture

### Solitary Chanoyu

The *chajin*, or tea devotee, is a solitary figure.

Of course, tea gatherings (*chakai*) are always a great success, and if a special event is held by a particular tea organization or lineage then attendance can rival that at gatherings held by new religious sects. And yet, in the end, the *chajin*, one versed in the art of chanoyu and a true follower of the way of tea, is solitary. Chanoyu itself occupies a solitary place within Japanese culture.

What I mean by “solitary” relates first to the question of how many people actually talk about chanoyu. For example, it is unlikely that it would feature in a discussion among businessmen about shared pastimes. So is it perhaps a topic discussed by young female office workers? Again, this is unlikely to be the case. Even if there are many people who have taken tea-ceremony lessons or attended a tea gathering once or twice, there are really only few who would claim chanoyu as a pastime of theirs.

Let me make a brief comment about pastimes here. Some may frown on pastimes as being play without purpose. However, this is absolutely not the case. I hardly need to cite *Homo Ludens* (The Person Who Plays), that 1938 book about the importance of play in culture by the famous European historian Johan Huizinga (1872–1945), to make the case that a culture that loses the element of play is a culture that is spent. People play. And indeed, the spirit of play is at the basis of all that enriches human culture. Pastimes are, in a sense, the straightest expression of that spirit of play. Pastimes transcend questions of personal advantage; they make life

worth living. Therefore, a person whose pastime is chanoyu is someone who finds chanoyu to be a reason for living. But there are probably fewer people than we might imagine who truly spend their days with chanoyu as their *raison d'être*.

Those for whom chanoyu is a reason for living will find true companions among others who similarly live in chanoyu. It may well be that the act of exchanging conversation about the joy and wonder of chanoyu can only occur between those who are trying to live in the spirit of chanoyu. Such people are a minority within society as a whole. The pursuit of tea is a solitary endeavor.

### **The Singularity of Japanese Culture**

The culture of Japan itself is solitary. When we think about Japan, we see the mixing of the culture of the broadleaf evergreen forest region and the maritime cultures of the Pacific Rim, with a later layering from China, Korea, and Europe and America, all contributing to what we now call Japanese culture. Few cultures are made from such a complex admixture of so many diverse sources. While one might suppose that this would result in something with a global or universal quality, that is not necessarily the case. Rather, it resulted in an extremely singular culture. There exists some sort of Japan-style mold, and no matter what type of culture flows in from other countries, it is pressed into the mold and emerges as something very compatible with the existing culture. I have a sense that such a mechanism exists within the structure of Japanese culture, allowing it to voraciously consume all kinds of other cultures; once absorbed, they become intensely Japanized and practically impossible to export elsewhere. Historically speaking, no other country has assimilated imported cultures as effectively as Japan. At the same time, very little culture is exported from Japan to other countries in pure form. Even though other countries value

Japanese culture, they find it hard to engage in dialogue. In that sense, too, it is solitary.

Of course, I am fully aware that there is, counter to this theory of the singularity of Japanese culture, the idea that it has a universal quality. Anime and sushi, for example, have certainly taken the world by storm. And yet this is surely the result of globalization's rapid advance, and so there is at work here something other than a true understanding of Japanese culture.

Basically, a culture with a universal character acceptable anywhere in the world enters Japan and undergoes an extremely singular refining process, only to become something hard for the rest of the world to accept. Tea is a typical example of this.

### **Japan and Korea**

The drinking of tea is entirely commonplace. Undoubtedly, in an age when tea was yet unknown, water, flavored hot water, or alcohol were about all there was to drink. Even today, there are any number of cultures unfamiliar with tea. Nonetheless, the fact is that the culture of a very confined geographical region spanning southern China to Southeast Asia, where a beverage was made by processing the leaves of an indigenous tree, has today spread across the globe. Throughout the world, tea is referred to by a word derived from either *chá* or *té*, both words of Chinese origin; they are essentially global words. Despite the universal adoption of this beverage, it is curious that only Japan has created a distinctive culture like chanoyu.

I visited Korea for the first time in 1977. There I traveled around to investigate its tea culture, and what I had in mind as I walked from place to place was the singularity of Japan's chanoyu. Korea in July was horrendously hot. I walked along treeless roads, searching for shade, and I dwelt on the similarities between Japan

and Korea. The Korean farm villages were beautiful. Rice paddies stretched out as far as the eye could see, like the wide blue ocean. There were none of the gaudy, dirty billboards or rest stops that spoil Japanese farm villages. There were only diligently working farmers here and there among the rice fields. Perhaps this was rural scenery of the sort that I saw on returning to my family's ancestral village as a primary-school student after World War II. It felt as though the rural landscape of old Japan had been moved to this spot. Maybe it was because the flora looked so similar to Japan's that I thought Korean farm villages were beautiful; and maybe that explains why I searched for something Japanese within them.

In Korea, particularly the south of the country, the flora are essentially the same as those in Japan. From the wildflowers and weeds along the roadside to the trees lining the streets, and beyond to the shape and taste of the vegetables that appear on dinner tables, all are the same as in Japan. Naturally, I thought there would be tea plants, as well as a tea-drinking custom, but I was wrong. There is no general tea-drinking custom in Korea today, and with rare exception, there are no tea plantations.

If we look back through history, we see that Korea is rich in tea history, but then at a certain juncture tea rapidly disappeared. That process began in the Yi dynasty (1392–1910). So when did tea first appear on the Korean Peninsula? Historical chronicles such as the *Samguk sagi* (History of the Three Kingdoms; 1145) and *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms; 1281) reproduce the traditional explanation that tea was brought from China in the early seventh century. Essentially reliable records, however, indicate that Korean envoys dispatched to China brought back tea seeds on their return to the Kingdom of Silla in 828, and planted them on Jirisan Mountain in the south. This seems close to historical fact. If this is the case, then it would appear that Japan and Korea

followed a very similar trajectory in terms of the period and environment in which tea seeds were imported. In brief, the influence exerted by the Tang, a particularly powerful Chinese dynasty, on surrounding smaller states was immense. Outstanding cultural products flowed out from the Tang dynasty to surrounding countries. Tea was one such product. Around the time that envoys from Silla were heading to the Tang court, Japan, too, was assembling a fleet of ships to carry envoys to the Tang. Japanese monks enamored of Tang Buddhism took passage on those ships. The earliest record of tea in Japan appears in an entry in the *Nihon kōki* (Later Chronicle of Japan) for 815, just thirteen years before the record for Silla. When Emperor Saga (r. 809–823) and his entourage embarked on a progress to Karasaki in modern-day Shiga Prefecture, the most senior monk at Sūfukuji Temple, Eichū (743–816), made tea for the emperor. Eichū had traveled to China as part of an official mission, and had spent some thirty years in the Tang capital of Chang’an. He brought the Chinese custom of drinking tea with him back to Japan.

It is unclear how tea developed in Korea after the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392) unified the Korean Peninsula, but the tea brought to Japan gradually disappeared from society, barely surviving in the limited context of court ritual. However, as the dynastic rulers of China shifted from Tang to Song, the quality of the culture also changed. A new type of tea appeared. It is generally believed that it was the Zen monk Yōsai who was responsible for the introduction of a new form of tea to Japan. Some seventy years before Yōsai brought tea to Japan in 1191, the Song-dynasty style of tea had already spread to the Goryeo kingdom. After Song envoys visited the Goryeo court in 1123, they left a record of their travels in a book titled *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* (Illustrated Account of the Embassy to Goryeo in the Xuanhe Era; 1124).

The book mentions the envoys' experience of tea rituals at the Goryeo court:

The tea prepared in Goryeo was bitter and disgusting, but everyone was thrilled to drink the Chinese brick tea (*tuánchá*; Jp. *dancha*). During the ceremony they used a *tenmoku*-style tea bowl and a celadon water pitcher, and the silver brazier and kettle used to boil the water were all in the Chinese style.

During the twelfth century—which corresponds in Japan to the late Heian period (794–1185) when retired emperors exercised political power—Song Chinese tea was enjoyed by Koreans principally in the Goryeo court. Koreans and Japanese accepted tea in an extremely similar fashion.

Tea drinking gradually spread in Japan, and just as it was becoming a pleasant pastime, a massive change happened in Korea. In 1392, the Goryeo dynasty gave way to the Yi dynasty (1392–1910). The Yi dynasty took a strict Confucian ideology for its governing principle. This rigid Confucianism chose corrupt Buddhist temples as its first targets. Temples were subsequently destroyed, and many monks were branded as pernicious and sent into exile. The aftershocks of the persecution struck tea practices. Tea was not simply a beverage in Buddhist temples; rather tea-drinking situations amounted to banquets where alcohol and food were served. This is precisely why tea was condemned by rigid Confucian ideologues. And yet it would take another several centuries before tea was effectively eliminated from everyday life in Korea, and people lost interest in it.

Here I must note that steeped or infused tea (*sencha*) was the only form of tea that barely survived in Korea. In China, tea preparations changed from the Song-dynasty use of powdered and

whisked green tea leaves (*matcha* in Japanese) to the Ming-dynasty (1368–1644) practice of steeping tea. Chinese-style steeped tea differs from the present-day Japanese variant in that it is primarily pan-roasted green tea mixed with semi-oxidized oolong-style tea; a vestige of this Chinese style of steeped tea survived in Yi-dynasty Korea. While Song-style powdered whisked tea grew ever more popular in Japan, tea culture faded and declined on the Korean Peninsula. Up until then, tea had followed a very similar historical trajectory in Japan and Korea. But, from around the fifteenth century, these two peoples headed off in separate directions, as is symbolized in their tea culture. Japan now began to embark upon its own distinctive path.

### The Place of Sen no Rikyū

Was it not the appearance in Japan of *wabi-cha* that led Japanese tea to set off on its own unique, and hence solitary, path? Up until this point, tea played a part in the special occasions in people's lives, nothing more. There were no specialist makers of tea, nor facilities for tea-making. People enjoyed their own personal styles of tea, and enjoyed drinking tea in banquet settings or during festivities. But then, in the Muromachi period (1336–1573), tea appeared as a new performing art. Tea changed the various formats of the banquet themselves, and eventually accommodated them within the art of tea. This led to the creation of the tea gathering (*chakai*).

Tea gatherings inspired new forms of the meals served at banquets. The “formal meals” (*honzen ryōri*) served on official occasions throughout the Muromachi period also gradually began to change under the influence of chanoyu. As Portuguese missionary and sailor João Rodrigues Tçuzu (1561–1633) wrote in his unfinished *Historia da Igreja do Japão* (History of the Japanese Church; 1627), a new chanoyu style influenced banquets, replacing the previous

seven- or five-course meals. This was in the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1600), the age of Rikyū. In the established formal seven-, five-, or three-tray meal format, meals comprised cold, hard-to-eat foods, in quantities greater than anyone could possibly manage. Conversely, in the new chanoyu meal style, which was known as *kaiseki*, guests were served with ready-to-eat warm food prepared in an edible quality and quantity. Chanoyu now transcended the simple drinking of tea, as it incorporated a meal and alcohol, demanding beauty of the utensils and adding to the mix the beauty of etiquette. It involved the presentation of all these elements in a single, complexly structured manner. This novel, stylized way of consuming tea, drawing on the refined simplicity of the *wabi* concept, is what is known as *wabi-cha*.

You can remove one component of *wabi-cha* and that component will certainly not lack meaning on its own, but *wabi-cha* is complete in its totality. Architecture, gardens, utensils, cuisine, tea-making procedures (*temae*), and style (*shukō*): it was Sen no Rikyū who in a single masterstroke perfected and gave striking new emphasis to all these elements. Rikyū heralded the arrival of a new culture. The creation of *wabi-cha* reached its fulfillment in Rikyū.

And yet, precisely because the structure of Rikyū's *wabi-cha* was so sound, it could not tolerate the accommodation of any other tea style. This is what I meant when I referred at the outset to the solitary nature of chanoyu. Rikyū's tea was not comprehensible to all. Or, rather, it was a tea that was possible to understand but not always possible to perform. Was Rikyū himself aware of that? The *Nanpōroku* (Southern Record; 1690), an authoritative seven-volume source on Sen no Rikyū's way of tea, states:

There is no question but that, within ten years, the fundamental way of tea will die out. When it dies out, people in society will



believe, on the contrary, that it is flourishing. The miserable end—when tea becomes completely a matter of worldly amusement—is visible now.\*

I do not know if these are actually Rikyū's words. But at least the person who created the *Nanpōroku* a century after Rikyū's death knew in his heart that Rikyū's chanoyu (*wabi-cha*) was not something that could be understood by the many; it would go out of style and survive in solitude. The people who did carry it forward were "outsiders," so to speak.

Today tea is striving once again to walk the main road of Japanese culture. Or I should say, rather, that it seems to be trying to find its way as a universal culture for the world, not just for Japan. What possibilities are there for chanoyu to shatter its solitary shell and walk the cultural mainstream? One belief has it that the more singular it is, the more universal its appeal will be. Indeed, the question of whether chanoyu can find a universal path is one that remains to be answered.

In this book, I am in fact setting out in pursuit of the before and after of the creation of *wabi-cha*. To investigate the styles and forms that *wabi-cha* gave rise to, and the traditions it was rooted in, is to be struck yet again by the enormity of Sen no Rikyū the person. What Rikyū created—or, conversely, what Rikyū excluded—is truly immense. Rikyū invented a new paradigm with his establishment of *wabi-cha*. He drew on elements of ancient Japanese belief systems and folk culture and gave them a new life in the tea room (*chashitsu*), in the tea-making procedures, and in the utensils. In so doing, he invented a new cultural common sense for Japan.

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\* Nishibe, "Zen Monks and the Formation of the Way of Tea," trans. Hirota Kimiko, 46.

## *Nijiriguchi* and *Mawashinomi*: The Crawl-through Entrance and Passing the Bowl

### The Birth of the Crawl-through Entrance

I am sure I am not the only person to hit my head or knock my back as I entered the tea room in my early days of studying tea.

The crawl-through entrance, or *nijiriguchi*,\* is extremely small at only around 2 *shaku* 3 *sun* tall in Japanese traditional measurements; that is, about 69 centimeters tall. In width it is just 2 *shaku* 1 *sun*, about 63 centimeters. How odd to have to enter and exit via such a narrow entrance! This is just one awkward thing people encounter when starting tea. Indeed, since the Edo period (1603–1867), some people have ridiculed the need to crawl in and out of a tea room. Tamiya Kitsuan (d. 1815) wrote in his *Guzasso* (A Collection of Foolish Thoughts) of 1833 that “snatching up one’s straw sandals and squeezing inside is as becoming as climbing into the sack with a streetwalker [*yabochi*].”† (The Japanese term *yabochi* refers to a streetwalker who, with no fixed place of abode, sells sex to clients outside on a straw mat.) Undoubtedly, Tamiya made his comment in a spirit of malevolent ridicule. And yet somehow it conveys the strangeness felt by anyone unfamiliar with tea on first seeing a crawl-through entrance.

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\* The *nijiri* of *nijiriguchi* derives from the verb *nijiru*, meaning to shuffle forward or backward in the formal *seiza* posture. The *-guchi* (*kuchi*) here means “entrance.” To enter through the *nijiriguchi*, one must kneel down on the threshold and bend forward and, with the help of arms extended in front, crawl forward into the room.

† Kumakura, “Rikyu and the Birth of the *Nijiriguchi*,” trans. Alfred Birnbaum, 41.

So who invented this extraordinary entrance that seems to forbid entry, and why?

It was Sen no Rikyū who invented the crawl-through entrance. Incidentally, the Japanese word used during Rikyū's time was typically *kuguri* (stoop-through), not *nijiriguchi*. In any case, the boats floating by the river's edge in the Hirakata district of Osaka are thought to have been the prompt for Rikyū's invention.

The entrances to the cabins of the Hirakata riverboats were small, and [Rikyū] thought there was an interesting *wabi* quality to how people had to bend down to enter them, so he adapted that form of entrance for the small tea room.\*

Riverboat cabins have low ceilings. Samurai and commoners alike had to bow their heads and crouch down to enter. This posture was *wabi* in feel, and for that reason interesting. There is an inventiveness in Rikyū's idea here that suggests the insight of a real master.

Inspiration from the riverboat cabin entrance led to yet more new imaginings. Cultural historian Hayashiya Tatsusaburō (1914–1998) proposed that in a riverboat, people have a shared destiny. With the riverbed just a single plank of wood away, it amounts to a case of “bitter enemies in the same boat.” People who emerge from the tight entrance into the cabin come to constitute a new group with a shared fate. Indeed, this is one possible interpretation.

Architect Horiguchi Sutemi (1895–1984) researched Rikyū's

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\* Matsuya, *Rikyū-den* [Transmissions Pertaining to Rikyū]. The original text of the *Chadō shiso densho* dates to the first half of the seventeenth century, and was compiled by Nara tea master Matsuya Hisashige (1567–1652).

tea rooms and recorded his impressions of the Myōkian tea room as follows:

If I were to use a more familiar expression to convey my feelings on entering the Myōkian tea room via the crawl-through entrance, I would say I felt a shiver run down my spine. I was thrilled, and I completely forgot myself. Surely this is what it means to say you are mesmerized.\*

This was indeed the formative experience that led Horiguchi to study tea rooms. When he declared himself mesmerized, he was speaking not only of the crawl-through entrance, but it clearly played a major role in shaping his experience. We, too, can often get a cool, refreshing impression on our first sight of the tea room from the crawl-through entrance. Surely, though, we experience some doubts when we try to explain that the invention of this extraordinary entrance was inspired by nothing more than that of a riverboat cabin. After all, the crawl-through entrance marked a 180-degree reversal from the usual Japanese entrance into a room from a hallway via a sliding door panel.

When the renowned figure Rikyū invented his crawl-through entrance, which seems to refuse access, did those around him meekly accept the idea? Historical documents indicate that critiques of the entrance, like Tamiya Kitsuan's, appeared in the mid-Edo period, but during Rikyū's own day, the crawl-through entrance encountered no criticism. Rather, people promptly took to it, and it proliferated. If that was indeed the case, then was there perhaps some preexisting knowledge that made it easier for people to accept the concept? For example, was there something in

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\* Horiguchi, *Rikyū no chashitsu* [Rikyū's Tea Rooms].



Crawl-through entrance (*nijiriguchi*)

that era which people thought resembled the crawl-through entrance, an entrance through which people could only pass by crouching and folding their legs beneath them?

A search for something similar in that period suggests the so-called “mouse gates” (*nezumi kido* or *nezumi do*), the entrances to the box seating for audiences at noh and kabuki theaters. In the theater pictured on page 30, there is an entrance beneath the surrounding curtain. In the kabuki theater of the early Edo period, the announcer would read the titles of the plays by the entrance,

and those who had paid an admission fee would crouch down and enter the theater via a narrow entrance next to a guard. The entrances got the name “mouse gates” from the fact that they were so narrow that only a mouse could get through them.

Mouse gates have a surprisingly long history. The author of the *Kiyū shōran* (Survey of Interesting and Entertaining Facts; 1830), Edo-period scholar Kitamura Intei (1783–1856), references a “fox gate” (*kitsune do*) mentioned in the early thirteenth-century *Kokon chomonjū* (Notable Tales Old and New), explaining that it meant the door was as small as a foxhole. He went on to say, “There is a still smaller one called a mouse gate. It serves as the entrance to theaters that stage *sarugaku* [the performance arts of *noh* and *kyōgen*].” And yet the example quoted in the *Kokon chomonjū* was like a simple wooden back door. We can find countless examples of visual evidence for mouse gates in early genre paintings. Because the majority of those pictures post-date Rikyū’s death, they are inconclusive as evidence. However, let us take one example—namely, the *Rakuchū rakugai zu* (Scenes in and around the Capital) screens. These screens, said to have been painted approximately a quarter-century after Rikyū’s death, show a narrow hole-like entrance at the front of a theater in the Shijō-kawara district of Kyoto.

The term “mouse gate” or *nezumi do* dates back even earlier. It actually appears in a document from the fourteenth century period of the northern and southern courts. The entry for May 13, 1339, in the records of Zenrinji Temple in Wakayama Prefecture refers to a fundraising performance of *sarugaku* performance art. The term “mouse gate” appears there. This means that in Rikyū’s day, and, indeed, long before, a mouse gate served to separate the space of the performing arts from the everyday world.

The inner spaces marked off by the mouse gate were those of



“Mouse gate” (*nezumi do*) in front of the Edo-period Nakamuraza kabuki theater—detail from the *Edo fūzoku zukan* (Edo Seasonal Genre Scenes). Reproduced by permission from Suwa Haruo, *Kabuki kaika* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1970).

*sarugaku* performance art and of kabuki drama. This was a realm apart, ruled by a space and time distinct from that of the quotidian world. Any who entered that world were drawn headfirst into a dramatic space. Can the same not be said of the crawl-through entrance in *chanoyu*? A tea-room interior is a realm apart from the everyday world. What might occur between host and guests once they enter the tea-room? The sense of anticipation reaches a peak as one stoops through the crawl-through entrance. This is an entrance that turns back the unregulated flow of the everyday world. The entrance has an almost religious quality, in the sense that the world into which the guest has struggled to gain access is completely transformed. Is this not the essence of the crawl-through entrance?

There is perhaps something strained about the argument that

links the crawl-through entrance to the folk practice known as *tainai kugiri* (“passing through the birth canal”), where one ritually passes through a tunnel or ring to symbolize rebirth. And yet surely there were similarities apparent to the workings of the medieval mind. There was the belief that one could be “born anew” and receive a new life force by crawling through a narrow hole, as noted by Hayakawa Kōtarō (1889–1956) in his book *Hanamatsuri* (Flower Festival; 1930).

This led to a theory that the crawl-through entrance was associated with the birth canal, through which a child departs the mother’s womb.\* The tea room is here likened to the mother’s womb, and the comforts experienced there constitute a form of womb memory. I am not certain that this view is correct, but folk customs reveal many examples of a narrow passageway, like that of the birth canal, serving as an entrance to a transformative experience. For example, a ring of plaited miscanthus called a *chinowa* is set up for the summer purification ceremony held at Shinto shrines. One passes through the miscanthus ring to purify heart and body and pray for protection from calamity. In some regions of Japan, there is a folk practice of pregnant women crawling through a small torii gate to pray for a safe birth. In all these cases, the mother’s birth canal image is somewhere in the background.

Such metaphors exist not only in Japan. For example, in China there is the world of Peach Blossom Spring, and there is Alice in Wonderland in Europe. Both feature a narrow tunnel as the entrance to rebirth or to another realm. In essence, distinctive narrow entrances have existed across all times and places, and no doubt they inspired Rikyū in the creating of his tea-room entrance.

So can we say that the crawl-through entrance was Rikyū’s

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\* Anzai, *Chadō no shinrigaku* [The Psychology of Tea].



own creation? Not necessarily. In fact, prior to Rikyū there were entrances to the tea space through a narrow gate. The following description is found in the entry for April 20, 1462, in the *Hekizan nichiroku*, a diary written by medieval Zen monk Unsen Taikyoku (b. 1421). When Unsen Taikyoku visited the home of a person named Eian, he encountered a gate located some way from the house. The gate was narrow, but by twisting his body he was able to enter. Beyond the gate, there was a small structure made of good lumber. The interior of the structure was decorated with Chinese artworks (*karamono*) such as a Muxi painting of a flock of birds, and there he drank tea from the south of Uji, Kyoto. We can see that the special narrow gate separated the outside world from the building where Taikyoku drank tea. In today's terms, this was like passing through the *rojiguchi*, or the gate to the tea-room garden.

The *Rakuchū rakugai zu* (next page) carries a depiction of such a *rojiguchi* opening directly onto the road outside. It is just about the size of a crawl-through entrance, and the host appears on the inside, while guests are giving way to each other on the outside. In the past, this type of small gate functioned as a street entrance. Was it not Rikyū who transferred the idea to the tea room? There are no records of a crawl-through entrance prior to the Taian two-mat tea room that Rikyū is said to have built at Yamazaki in 1582. In other words, similar entrances existed in folk customs and in medieval records, but it was Rikyū's creativity, we might say, that applied the principle to the tea room.

The implication for chanoyu of rebirth, of purification by passing through a crawl-through entrance, was a disengagement from the everyday world. The tea room is the place for dislocation from the quotidian; it is a realm that transcends the everyday. That is why samurai took off their swords, which were symbols of



*Rojiguchi* gate opening onto a street—detail from the *Rakuchū rakugai zu*, left screen. Private collection.

social rank, and left them on the sword rack outside before passing through the crawl-through entrance.

There is no historical evidence that Rikyū conceived of the crawl-through entrance on seeing a mouse gate. And yet we can imagine that when Rikyū invented it and revealed it to people, they were undeterred precisely because they had previous experiences of similar structures.

The attribution of almost all chanoyu-related inventions to Rikyū was a convenient device for later generations to talk of his greatness. Nevertheless, the fact is that Rikyū did create the most important forms of the tea aesthetic. I have already mentioned the crawl-through entrance. But this was by no means conceived in isolation. The crawl-through entrance naturally determined the size of the tea room, and the size of the tea room determined how tea was prepared and, in turn, the etiquette of the guests. So, what aspects of tea preparation (*temae*) and what dimensions of guests' etiquette did Rikyū invent? Let us now turn our attention to these questions.

## Passing the Bowl

First, let us consider the practice known as “passing the bowl” or *mawashinomi*.

There are two methods of tea preparation in chanoyu: thick tea (*koicha*), and thin tea (*usucha*). Thin tea, with its frothy top, is the tea most commonly drunk at gatherings today. Thick tea is smooth and dense, made by rhythmically blending powdered tea leaves and hot water together with the whisk. Several servings of thick tea are prepared in a single bowl, and the bowl is then passed around, with each guest sipping in turn. It is a somewhat unusual practice that takes some getting used to.

The practice of passing the bowl was for a long time known as “tea sipping” (*suicha*). It seems that tea sipping was yet another of Rikyū’s inventions. According to the eighteenth-century *Chanoyu kojidan* (Old Chanoyu Tales), compiled by the samurai and tea enthusiast Chikamatsu Shigenori (1697–1778), “in the past, one bowl of thick tea was made for each person, but the host and guests found it tedious since it took so much time, and that is why Rikyū devised the ‘tea-sipping’ method.”

Before Rikyū’s time, then, thick tea was made in individual servings, a method known as *kakufukudate*. And on occasion, it seems, Rikyū himself made single portions of thick tea. On October 23, 1588, Rikyū hosted a tea gathering at Jurakudai, the palatial Kyoto residence of the overlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi, as a farewell for the revered monk Kokei Sōchin (1532–1597). Rikyū made a bowl of tea for guest Shun’oku Sōen with three scoops of tea, and another bowl with five scoops for guest Gyokuho Jōsō. Rikyū thus prepared tea of varying thicknesses to suit guests’ individual taste. It is clear from this that he did not prepare the tea for shared “tea sipping,” but prepared an individual bowl for each guest.

And yet Rikyū himself wrote of the “tea-sipping” method for guests. There is a need to interrogate its reliability, but the historical source *Ishin-kō yori Rikyū no o-tazune no jōsho no utsushi* (Transcription of the Inventory of Lord Ishin’s Questions to Rikyū) is a compilation of questions posed to Rikyū by Lord Shimazu Yoshihiro (1535–1619) of the Satsuma domain in south Kyushu. One question he posed concerned the kind of tea to be made when five or six guests have gathered. In response, Rikyū said, “It is good for the host to make two bowls of tea, and three guests share a bowl in *kabuki-cha* fashion.” Basically, he advised preparing two bowls of tea, and getting three guests to drink one after the other from a single bowl of tea. Although Rikyū here used the term *kabuki-cha* for this sharing style, this source indicates that the practice of sharing tea from the same bowl was used in Rikyū’s time.

So the question then is whether “tea sipping” existed before Rikyū’s time. Unfortunately, no reliable pre-Rikyū sources exist, and so one cannot know for sure, but to the best of my knowledge, records of “tea sipping” only date back as far as 1586, five years before Rikyū’s death.

The *Matsuya kaiki* (Matsuya Family Records of Tea Gatherings) entry for November 9, 1586, states that when Yamanoue Sōji (1544–1590), one of Rikyū’s leading disciples, made tea for Toyotomi Hidenaga (1540–1591), “the tea was of the *gokumu* variety, one of quality unsurpassed; four or five scoops of tea and one ladle cup of hot water; served in ‘tea-sipping’ fashion. Hisamasa was the first to drink, followed by others.”

Thus, Sōji used a tea of unsurpassed quality in abundant quantity, and had his guests drink it in the shared “tea-sipping” manner. Matsuya Hisamasa (1521–1598) was the first to drink from the bowl. References to “tea sipping,” which had never before appeared, featured frequently from around 1586 to 1587. An



Passing the bowl (*mawashinomi*) of thick tea (*koicha*)

entry in the *Sōtan nikki* (Diary of Sōtan) for January/February 1587 says: “Thick tea. One bowl for three people in ‘tea-sipping’ fashion. The host took up the whisk again, and drank.”

This seems to indicate that after three people had drunk in “tea-sipping” style, the host poured hot water onto whatever tea remained in the bowl, whisked the mixture, and drank it.

If we accept that Rikyū started the practice of passing the bowl, then how did he come up with this new method of drinking for guests?

The practice of passing the bowl coincided with the medieval custom of communal drinking and eating, which aimed at harmonizing guests’ experience of an event. In Japanese the phrase is *ichiza konryū*, or “establishing a seated-as-one experience.” Another related key term, “one taste, same heart” (*ichimi dōshin*) suggests that passing the bowl was about generating a sense of oneness by having all guests sip the same tea from the same vessel. Such practices were not limited to the medieval period or to Japan; indeed, they are universal to humankind. It goes without saying that circulating a wine cup was the typical form of this custom. The poet Doi Bansui (1871–1952) began his verse “Kōjō no tsuki” (Moon over the Ruined Castle) with the following line:

“At a cherry-blossom banquet at the splendid castle in spring, the moonlight casts a shadow on the sake cup being circulated.” This is an image of a samurai banquet, where the cup, circulated between the lord and his vassals, solidified the vertical relationship of lord and vassal. Circulating a single vessel of rice wine was a ritual affirmation of shared bonds. Passing the bowl of thick tea mirrored this ritual, and it saw host and guests, confined to a small tea room, affirming the bonds between them.

And yet, as already noted, it is not possible to confirm the existence of the practice of passing the bowl before Rikyū’s time. The first mention of “tea sipping” appears in 1586. That being the case, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that the passing of the tea bowl began within the tradition of circulating the wine cup, and that Rikyū then took this, establishing it as a practice within chanoyu.

What gave rise to this tea-drinking method? The theory in the aforementioned *Chanoyu kojidan* is that the practice started because of the time it took to make individual bowls of tea. Indeed, if the host used a different bowl to make thick tea for each of four or five guests, it would take an extremely long time, at least if contemporary methods were used. If we look at pre-Rikyū sources, we find the practice of the host placing several tea bowls on top of a portable stand (*daisu*) from the start, and making tea in them one after the other. Even so, the new style of passing the bowl cannot simply be explained as a time-saver.

If this new “tea sipping” was indeed invented by Rikyū, then we probably should keep within our purview its historical background; namely, the Azuchi-Momoyama period, which saw an end to centuries of social convulsion.

That Sen no Rikyū, a single member of the Sakai merchant class, became tea master to the ruler of the realm, and that he

acquired a status under the Toyotomi regime that gave him political power comparable to that of Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga, constitutes evidence of the workings of social convulsion. Indeed, Rikyū and his culturally creative activities appeared as rays of light precisely because of the dynamic flow of that age of turbulence. However, as soon as Hideyoshi had completed his unification of the realm, he implemented policies to freeze vertical movement. He had weapons confiscated and land surveyed. He was able to smother the energies of the lower classes who had overthrown their social superiors, but it proved impossible to contain the upheaval in the entertainment world overnight. People whose dream of removing their social superiors had been destroyed now created their own strange customs that involved turning their backs on the world. Such people were known as *kabukimono*, "outlandish fellows." Rikyū was himself a precursor, but the real age of outlandish fellows did not occur until some ten years after his death. There was an incident in which the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867) took action against this brotherhood. These men had taken to calling themselves the "band of thorns" (*ibaragumi*) because their thorny behavior alienated people. It is noteworthy that the *Keichō kenmonroku anshi* (Observations on the Keichō Era; 1601–1611) characterized them as follows in an entry of June 1609: "Those hooligans hang long tobacco pipes (*kiseru*) from their belts as though they were swords; they cavort with the lowlifes and pass around their pipes, sharing a smoke."

These outlandish fellows—outlaws, effectively—used large pipes to share a smoke of tobacco, which was a recent import to Japan introduced by merchants from Europe; in this way, they pledged oaths of brotherhood. The passing around of the tobacco pipe was simply another manifestation of the circulation of the wine cup or tea bowl.

The practice is now in decline, but I still remember clearly that when the hippie subculture first appeared in the 1960s, hippies would circulate a marijuana joint to show their allegiance to one another. For the outlandish fellows of the Keichō era (1596–1615), tobacco was a drug not unlike what marijuana was for hippies. Their behavior led to the outlawing of tobacco smoking, and, precisely because it was outlawed, the circulating of the tobacco pipe no doubt strengthened its meaning among them as a ritual to affirm brotherhood. Today, there is an annual “naked” festival (*hadaka matsuri*) held on January 8 at Yakushidō Temple in Ichinobe-chō, Ōmi-Yōkaichi. It begins with young men gathering at the temple for the rite of *wakashū* initiation. A tobacco tray is taken out and passed around, starting from the senior members, and everyone in turn takes a puff from the pipe. This ritual is a contemporary example of the practice of circulating a pipe as a method of pledging group allegiance among young men.

The spiritual origins of circulating a pipe were probably located very close to those of Rikyū’s “tea sipping” or passing the bowl. Tea has stimulant properties that are not inferior to those of tobacco. The strange ritual of sharing sips of tea from a bowl in the chamber-like tea room was perhaps well suited to this age of social upheaval. I have unthinkingly drifted away from my main argument with this discussion, but here let me say that it was Rikyū who established the practice of passing the bowl in chanoyu, a style of tea which imposes on participants a fearsome psychological tension. The passing of the tea bowl, modeled on the folk custom of bond-pledging rituals, added a clandestine hue to tea that was entirely fitting for that period of social upheaval.





Chapter 2

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**BREAKING AWAY FROM  
THE MEDIEVAL**

## The Structure of a Tea Gathering (*Chakai*)

### Letters on Drinking Tea: *Kissa ōrai*

The formal tea function (*chaji*) is popular amongst those who study tea today.

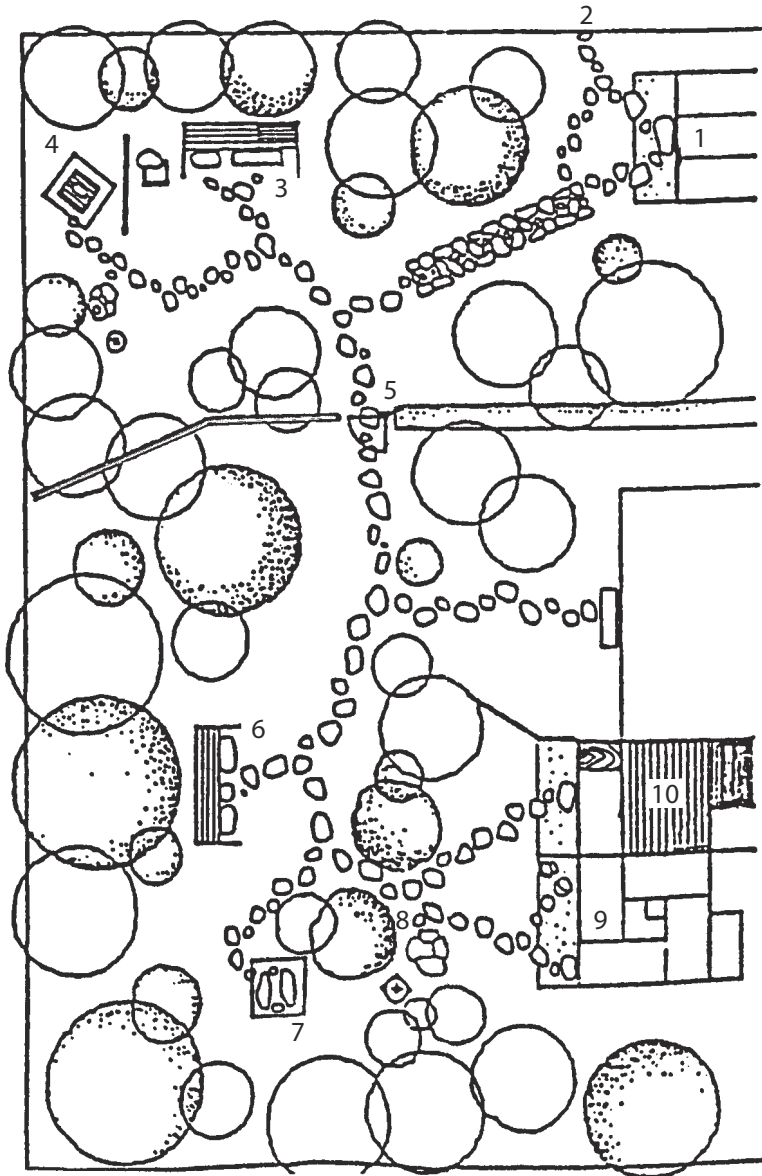
The modern form of *chanoyu* developed alongside large-scale tea gatherings (*ōyose chakai*). As a result, the term for tea gathering, *chakai*, suggests the presence of many people all pushing and shoving. More and more people were growing tired of such conditions, and this is probably one reason for the popularity of formal tea functions, which are held with a small number of participants, the ideal number being four or five.

So what is a formal tea function? Let me note its features briefly. I will take as my example the standard midday version held during the sunken-hearth (*ro*) season, which runs from November through April. The host sends a letter to the guests. He or she checks the RSVPs and starts preparations, but here let us skip over those preparations and proceed directly to the order of events on the day itself. At the appointed time, the gathered guests pass into the antechamber (*yoritsuki*), which serves as a waiting room. Here, they drink a light aromatic infusion as they wait for everyone to assemble. They confirm among themselves who will take the roles of main guest (*shōkyaku*) and last guest (*makkyaku*), and then make their way to the waiting bench (*koshikake*) along the garden approach (*roji*) to the tea room. In due time, the host comes out from the tea room area carrying a pail, uses it to refresh the water in the basin for hand and mouth rinsing (*chōzubachi*) in the garden, and then opens the gate (*sarudo*) that separates the inner and

outer garden approach and greets the guests. The guests watch the host return to the tea room and then follow, rinsing hands and mouths at the basin before opening the crawl-through entrance (*nijiriguchi*) and entering the tea room.

After the host and main guest exchange greetings there, the host begins the charcoal-laying procedure or *sumidemae*. The host performs this first laying of charcoal (*shozumi*) for the guests to see, and lights incense before serving the *kaiseki* meal. This begins with the host carrying in a meal tray for each guest, on which there is a dish called a *mukōzuke* (literally “far-side placing”). It often features sashimi or vinegared fish. Arranged in front on the tray is a bowl containing rice and another containing soup. Next to be brought in are the sake pourer and sake cups. The guests all drink a single round of sake poured by the host, and then a succession of dishes are brought in: boiled delicacies (*nimono*), grilled foods (*yakimono*), and tidbits called *shiizakana*. All the while, more rounds of sake are offered. The host then serves pickled vegetables (*kō no mono*), bringing the *kaiseki* meal to a close. Finally, the host serves dainties, concluding what is known as the *shoza*, or first seating.

The guests leave the room temporarily, returning to the bench in the garden for an intermission (*nakadachi*). In the meantime, the host removes the hanging scroll from the tea room’s display alcove (*tokonoma*), arranges flowers in its stead, and prepares the tea utensils. The host then strikes a gong, known as the *dora*, to invite the guests to return to the tea room. The guests rinse hands and mouths once again and file into the tea room, where the host prepares thick tea (*koicha*) for them. This thick-tea preparation marks the end of some tea gatherings, but in many instances the host replenishes the charcoal (a process called *gozumi* or “latter charcoal”), brings in dainties, changes utensils, and serves thin tea (*usucha*).



Plan of a tea room (*chashitsu*) and tea garden. Reproduced by permission from page 42 of the original Japanese edition.

1 Antechamber (*yoritsuki*)

Outer-garden:

2 Garden entrance (*rojiguchi*)

3 Outer-garden waiting bench (*soto koshikake*)

4 Toilet in outer garden (*shimohara setchin*)

5 Gate between inner garden and outer garden (*sarudo*)

Inner-garden:

6 Inner-garden waiting bench (*uchi koshikake*)

7 Toilet in inner garden (*suna setchin*)

8 Hand- and mouth-rinsing basin (*chōzubachi*)

9 Tea room (*chashitsu*)

10 Preparation room (*mizuya*)

The entire program to this point would typically have been carried out in a tea room no larger than four and a half tatami mats in size (*koma*). However, today it often happens that after thick tea has been served, the host has the guests move to a larger room (*hiroma*), where the mood changes and the host serves dainties and prepares thin tea. After drinking the thin tea, the guests go out into the garden, which has been purified with a sprinkling of water, and say their farewells. So concludes the *goza*, or latter seating. This is essentially the order of events in a formal tea function, as it has been since Rikyū's time. On average, it takes about four hours. So, we might ask, what form did a tea gathering assume before Rikyū?

The *Kissa ōrai* (Letters on Drinking Tea), which was completed in the early fifteenth century, is the oldest historical document describing how tea gatherings were conducted. The Japanese term for tea gathering, *chakai*, first appears in this source. The *Kissa ōrai* is a type of textbook that explains chanoyu in the form of an exchange of letters between two correspondents. It is thus a fictional depiction of an ideal tea gathering of the sort that took place well over six hundred years ago in the early Muromachi period (1336–1573). Here I have extracted just the order of events that shaped the tea gathering; for details, readers should consult the original book. According to the *Kissa ōrai*, this is what happens.

As a visual image, I would like you to call to mind the Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku) at Rokuonji Temple in Kyoto. With the Golden Pavilion as the guest reception area, tea begins. First the reception space is adorned and people assemble. The tea gathering starts with a dish of *kuzukiri*, or kudzu-starch noodles, known also as *suisen*, and three servings of sake. Then *sōmen*, or thin wheat noodles, and tea are served as a second stage. The original *Kissa ōrai* text mentions a “thereafter” (*shikaru nochi*). I take it to mean

that the *sōmen* and tea mark the conclusion of one stage, and “thereafter” the tea gathering moves to its next stage. The table below sets out tea-gathering proceedings; the suggestion is that the three servings of sake (*sake sankon*) in the first stage are a legacy of ceremonial sake drinking known as *shiki sankon*, which defined the warrior banquet.

The *Kissa ōrai* text continues with a reference to a banquet where delicacies from the mountains and the sea are served as rice accompaniments. The meal is without doubt sumptuous, unlike the *kaiseki* meal typical of Rikyū’s *wabi-cha*. Guests eat fruit after

### Tea Gathering Proceedings

According to <i>Kissa ōrai</i>	
Before the Tea Gathering	(1) Exchange of letters
	(2) Tea enthusiasts finally arrive
First Stage	(3) <i>Suisen (kuzukiri)</i> served with three rounds of sake, <i>sōmen</i> served with single exchange of tea
Second Stage	(4) Delicacies from the sea and the mountains served with rice (5) Finest orchard fruits provide sweet taste
Third Stage	(6) Guests leave seats to enjoy refreshing garden coolness
Fourth Stage	(7) Enter tea drinking pavilion on second floor (8) Tea and dainties presented (9) Tea presented; tea-tasting games played, such as <i>shishu jippuku</i> (“four types, ten sips”).
Fifth Stage	(10) Tea utensils put away (11) Delicacies served, sake served, and numerous rounds drunk (12) Singing, dancing, koto and flute music heighten gaiety

the meal and then leave their seats. This concludes the second stage. The guests now either enjoy the cool breeze in the shade of trees or take in the scenic garden. (This fictional gathering takes place in the summer season; the weather is quite hot.) We can assume this third stage corresponds to the intermission of a modern formal tea function.

Imagine the fourth stage as taking place on the second floor of the Golden Pavilion. The second-floor windows are open; the room is decorated with both rare utensils and imported hanging scroll paintings. In this setting, the tea serving begins. The actual

<b>Rikyū-era proceedings</b>	
Before the Tea Gathering	(1) Preliminary greeting (2) Guests gather in antechamber (3) Guests enter garden approach, wait at bench (4) Host goes to welcome them (5) Guests use water basin to cleanse hands and mouth
First Seating ( <i>shoza</i> )	(6) Guests enter tea room via crawl-through entrance (7) Host conducts charcoal laying ( <i>shozumi</i> ) (8) <i>Kaiseki</i> meal, <i>ichijū sansai</i> ("one soup, three dishes") (9) Dainties
Intermission ( <i>nakadachi</i> )	(10) Guests go out into garden, wait at bench
Latter Seating ( <i>goza</i> )	(11) Guests return to places in tea room (12) Thick tea is made (13) Host conducts charcoal replenishment ( <i>gozumi</i> ) (14) Dainties and thin tea served
After-Tea Gathering	(Rikyū rejects After-Tea Gathering) (15) Move to separate room (16) Sake and delicacies brought in (17) Singing and linked-verse recitation performed



form of tea served and its preparation differ completely from today's tea. Today, tea is made in tea bowls, and those bowls are passed to the guests. In the *Kissa ōrai* period, tea bowls containing dry powdered tea were distributed to the guests; a person carrying hot water and a tea whisk then came around to each guest, poured hot water into the tea bowl held by the guest, and, wielding the whisk, made the tea. Remnants of this can be seen today in the annual Yotsugashira tea event held at Kenninji Temple in Kyoto on April 20, the anniversary of the birth of Zen monk Yōsai. It helps us to imagine how a young servant would have made tea in bowls held by the guests, before the start of tea-tasting games where participants had to identify teas grown in different districts. This is essentially the latter seating of a present-day formal tea function. Preparations are made and guests take thick tea. These procedures constitute stage four.

At this point the *Kissa ōrai* states that once the sun is setting and the tea ceremony is coming to an end, the tea utensils are cleared away. Now begins stage five, which is essentially a sake party. It becomes an informal gathering where various appetizing delicacies are arranged before guests, who exchange cups of rice wine. Heavy drinkers laugh at the non-drinkers, who in turn make sarcastic remarks about the heavy drinkers. The guests turn bright red as they get drunk, looking like red autumn leaves in a frost. They sing, they dance, the music rings out, and eventually it is nightfall. The reader might wonder when in the world these banquets end. The *Kissa ōrai* does not describe their ending, so guests probably keep on drinking through the night. This is perhaps like the “after-parties” familiar today.

Such was the earliest format of the tea gathering (*chakai*). And it feels very different from today's formal tea function or *chaji*. So what is the same, what is different? First, the differences.

The overall five-part structure is different. The tea-gathering format perfected by Rikyū consists of three parts: the first seating (first stage) focuses on the charcoal-laying procedure and the *kaiseki* meal; there is an intermission, the second stage; the latter seating, which constitutes the third stage, is focused on tea preparation. The *Kissa ōrai* tea gathering has two extra stages, the three servings of sake (*sake sankon*) and single serving of tea at the beginning, and the sake party at the end. Here we will focus only on the format of the tea gathering, and ignore the atmosphere and the method of tea preparation.

What, then, is the common element? It consists in the aforementioned fact that the basic Rikyū-era tea-gathering format was already in place; that is, the first seating with a meal, an intermission, and the latter seating with its preparation of tea. We can offer two interpretations of this. First, the format of the formal tea function (*chaji*) greatly changed around Rikyū's time with the perfection of *wabi-cha*. Second, the formal tea function's basic format nonetheless was the successor of the earliest type of tea gathering; namely, Japanese banquet traditions. So why did the five-stage format change to a three-stage format? And why did this three-stage format finally solidify into the formal tea function?

### The Discarded After-Gathering Stage

My hope is to discover a historical document that could shed light on the process by which the tea-gathering format described in the *Kissa ōrai* changed to that of tea gatherings held in Rikyū's time. Unfortunately, no such convenient document survives. There is, however, the *Chōka chanoyu monogatari* (Epic Poem of the Tale of Tea), attributed to artist and linked-verse poet Sōami (d. 1525). It tells us not about the orderly *wabi-cha* advocated by Rikyū, but about a disorderly, more playful form of tea gathering

much closer to that of the *Kissa ōrai* realm. The research of tea scholar Tsutsui Hiroichi (b. 1940) provides detailed information regarding the *Chōka chanoyu monogatari*, and I draw here on the relevant sections of his work.

Here the overall tea-gathering format is essentially that of the present-day formal tea function: entering the garden approach, first seating, intermission, latter seating, departure. However, the addition of an after-gathering stage, and the overall content, differed greatly. First, the guests' initial entrance into the tea room was not via a crawl-through entrance, which is fundamental to a contemporary tea room, but rather via a covered corridor running along its perimeter, as in the old style. I shall not discuss here the charcoal-laying procedures, but note that the youthful guests who appear in the *Chōka* tale were extremely ill-mannered. While the standard procedure had the guests enter the room and then admire the display in the *tokonoma* alcove and the sunken hearth before taking their seats, the protagonist of the *Chōka* tale simply "sat right in the middle of the small space, cross-legged, and gave a big yawn." This raises the major question of when guests stopped sitting cross-legged in tea rooms. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter 3, but here all we need note is that sitting "cross-legged" was a sign of poor manners.

A meal then followed. The guests ate with chopsticks and directly with their hands. They spoke of this and that, and chattered while humming tunes. The sake served during the meal was drunk from large cups, so much so they all became drunk. The *Chōka* was originally meant as a didactic tale about the boorish nature of the guests, and the depiction here is unsparing. After the meal ended, the guests went into the garden for the intermission, and washed hands and mouths at the basin there before returning to their seats. This was the second entrance. As was

standard practice, they then drank tea before making their exit.

The format described in the *Chōka chanoyu monogatari* is generally the same as that practiced today, except in the finer details. In other words, the mood was like that portrayed in the *Kissa ōrai*, but the format represented that of the *wabi-cha* tea gatherings from around Rikyū's time. What occurred, however, was a truly dreadful banquet akin to a drunken spree. So long as tea gatherings were ostentatious banquets, they always had the potential to slip into informality. We saw this in the fifth stage described in the *Kissa ōrai*. The *wabi-cha* style of tea gathering was born from a rejection of the raucous playfulness found in the tea gatherings that preceded it.

Let us take another look at the *Kissa ōrai*. What were the discarded first and fifth stages? If we were to identify a vestige of that first stage in present-day formal tea functions (*chaji*), it would be the exchange of sake cups during the *mukōzuke* course. As will be discussed later, this has been incorporated into the first seating of the present-day tea gathering.

Rikyū completely rejected the fifth stage, the “after-tea gathering.” This is when, after a tea gathering officially ends, delicacies are served once again, more sake is drunk, and the atmosphere assumes a playful character. Early modern historical sources indicate that after the tea gathering, the guests moved to a larger reception room (*hiroma*), or a room called the *kusari no ma* (literally, “chain room”), where a kettle was suspended by a chain over a sunken hearth. There, games such as *yōkyū* (miniature archery), singing, or linked-verse composition were played. Rikyū, however, rejected this after-stage. His concern was to limit the time. A tea gathering should not last longer than four hours. Naturally, four hours was not enough time to include an after-stage. Even today, however, there are formal tea functions that include an after-stage. At one

such event which I attended, the guests assembled at eleven in the morning, and the event ended at seven in the evening. Rikyū questioned what more could be desired after serving a *kaiseki* meal, making thick tea with a focused heart, and replenishing the charcoal and preparing thin tea. He believed the after-stage completely negated the sincere presentation of tea. The *Hiraki no ma no ben* (Comment on the Tea-Gathering After-Stage) document of daimyo Ii Naosuke (1815–1860), who continued Rikyū’s *wabi-cha* tradition and infused it with a modern spirit, inherited and echoed Rikyū’s rejection of the after-stage, which Naosuke referred to as *hiraki no ma*.

In fact, a considerable number of tea gatherings hosted by others during Rikyū’s time included an after-stage. But so far as we can judge from our most reliable historical sources, Rikyū himself did not hold any such tea events. In this manner, he drew a line between his own practices and the trends of the day. He not only rejected the after-stage drinking party, but also excised all such party-like elements from tea. His purpose was to inject into chanoyu a new spirituality that drew on the influence of Zen. Why, then, did Rikyū in the end construct the three-stage tea gathering of first seating, intermission, and second seating? Is there not some deeper meaning to what we take as completely normal; namely, the eating of the *kaiseki* meal after the first entrance to the tea room, and the drinking of tea after the second entrance?

The tea gathering was from the outset one variant of the banquet. Just as the banquet was the standard form of a public ceremony, so the tea gathering too had a ritual character. During the age of the military unifiers of Japan—that is, from the end of the sixteenth to the start of the seventeenth century—chanoyu took the form of an official ritual. One such example was the imperial palace tea gathering where Toyotomi Hideyoshi presented tea to Emperor Ōgimachi (r. 1557–1586). In the Edo period (1603–

1867), a little after Rikyū's time, the second Tokugawa shogun Hidetada (1579–1632) made formal visits referred to as *sukiya o-nari*, or “official tea-house visits,” to his close retainers' residences, when the standard formal etiquette of the military class till this time had demanded that an official visit of a shogun was to start with the ceremonial drinking of sake (*shiki sankon*). Hidetada, however, would enter the tea room and have a ritual banquet, and then change the venue to the reception room for the drinking party that constituted the after-stage. Compared to a conventional formal visit, the mood was much simpler and less tense. To approach this from the opposite angle, we might assume that the ritual engagement of host and guest that characterized the custom of passing of the sake cup at the start of a military banquet was incorporated into the character of the tea gathering, particularly its first seating.

Returning once more to the *Kissa ōrai*, we might recall that the first stage included the consumption of kudzu-starch noodles (*suisen* or *kuzukiri*) and the exchange of three cups of sake (*sake sankon*). This corresponds to the *shiki sankon* in a banquet. The *Kissa ōrai*'s second stage—in other words, a meal featuring delicacies from the mountains and the sea, with fruit served as “dainties”—was added to create the first seating of a tea gathering. According to present-day *kaiseki* rules, first a meal tray (*oshiki*) is placed before each guest, then the host brings lacquered sake cups and a sake pourer and pours for each of the guests in turn. This is a remnant of the “*suisen, sake sankon*” (kudzu-starch noodles and three rounds of sake) found in the *Kissa ōrai*. This was precisely the way in which tea gatherings maintained their ritual quality. And this is what made official shogunal tea house visits in the past, and tea gatherings today, into special occasions.

Rikyū infused his tea gatherings with a completely new spirit by excluding the drinking-party elements and excising the

sumptuous banquet. It was not necessarily Rikyū who incorporated the sake exchange and drinking banquet into the *kaiseki* meal, but he was responsible for introducing the practice of passing the bowl, which transformed the tea gathering into a ritual pledge suited to the age of warring states.

## The Tea-Room Space

### A Mountain Sanctuary in the City

The term “mountain sanctuary in the city,” which Rodrigues introduced in his seventeenth-century work *Historia da Igreja do Japão* (History of the Church in Japan), succinctly conveys the mountain image of the chanoyu environment. Language explaining the atmosphere of the garden approach and tea room in terms of a mountain sanctuary or residence shows what people of that time expected from them.

The garden approach or *roji* (which means, literally, “dewy ground”) is the mountain. When asked about the atmosphere of the *roji*, Rikyū quoted this poem by the monk Jien (1155–1225):

Fallen oak tree leaves  
are not as crimson maples,  
In thick heaps they lie,  
the loneliness of a path  
to a temple deep in the mountains.\*

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\* Kuitert, *Themes, Scenes, and Taste in the History of Japanese Garden Art*, 240.

Rikyū explained that the atmosphere of a narrow path leading to a temple in the mountains was suited for the tea-room garden approach. This explanation can be found in the *Sawa shigetsu shū* (Collected Tea Stories Pointing to the Moon), a collection of anecdotes on tea by Fujimura Yōken (1613–1699) compiled and edited in 1701 by his adopted son-in-law, Kusumi Soan (1636–1728). The original Jien poem ends, “the road is lonely” (*michi zo kanashiki*). In other words, the garden envisioned by Rikyū had a deep-in-the-mountains feel that encompassed his desire to create a realm apart within the city. It may be that Rikyū’s *roji* had a much more overgrown quality than is usual for modern-day garden approaches to the tea room.

Belief in a “realm apart” within mountainous terrain evokes the idea of another world existing in the mountains. Another world originally designated life after death, but over time it came to be understood as a space removed from the everyday, yet realizable in this world. The idea that a sacred realm unfolds in the mountains is also to be found in mountain-worship sects and elsewhere in East Asian religious thought. Buddhism has its sacred Mount Potalaka (Jp. Futarasan). There are many instances of artists re-creating the settings of Kannon’s Pure Land Mount Potalaka in the mountains, creating a landscape with ocean in the foreground and a unique mountain rising on the far shore, thereby conjuring a utopian realm that transcends the ordinary world. Though unrelated to chanoyu, a typical example of the re-creation of the Mount Potalaka Pure Land can be seen in the worship of the landscape around Lake Chūzenji and Mount Nantai in Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture, at Futarasan Shrine. Note that the “*futara*” in the shrine name uses characters that can also be read as *nikkō*, literally “sun-light.”

Belief in mountain utopias is found throughout human history,





The garden approach (*roji*) and middle gate (*chūmon*) of the Konnichian tea room. Photograph courtesy of Takemae Akira.

and can hardly be considered something unique to East Asia. As the German poet Carl Hermann Busse (1872–1918) wrote, “Over the mountains, far far away, there, people say, happiness dwells.” There is a widespread belief that happiness exists beyond the mountains. The understanding that mountainous realms are somehow apart existed in Europe, too; the concept is universal.

Buddhist temples were built deep in the mountains, as in the

case of Mount Kōya and Mount Hiei; the recluse Kamo no Chōmei (1155–1216) built his ten-foot-square hut on Mount Hino as a retreat from secular society. Normally, one would have to go into the mountains to enter an otherworldly realm. However, chanoyu reversed this notion, and gave rise to the concept of creating the mountainous realm or sanctuary within a city dwelling, summoning it into one's own living space. The idea that another realm lies within the mountains was the premise for realizing the “mountain sanctuary in the city” within a residence; namely, the garden approach and the tea room to which it led.

Let me mention here the related concept of the realm apart that lies beyond the seas. Just as people envisioned utopia existing in the mountains, so they have always imagined a utopia across the oceans. In Japan, a utopian concept can be seen in the Ryūkyūan belief in Nirai-kanai—a mythical realm where the deities dwell and from where they influence the human world—which lives on in various local customs in coastal communities in the Ryūkyū Islands. In Buddhism, we can also discern maritime utopian concepts in the depictions of Mount Sumeru above the waves, and the understanding of the aforementioned Mount Potalaka as being above the sea.

Fudarakusanji Temple was built in the present-day Kumano region of Japan, and there is a well-known tale of the head priest of that temple being placed on a ship and pushed out to cross the sea to Fudaraku. In the early modern era—that is, from the Azuchi-Momoyama period through the Edo period—the idea of a maritime utopia was brought close to home through the mechanism of the garden approach. This style of garden can often be seen, for example, in the chanoyu created for the imperial court and nobility. Gardens that conjure up an image not of mountains but of the sea, gardens that feature a boat and a pond—these

existed in early modern imperial court culture. When Emperor Go-Mizunoo (r. 1611–1629) abdicated and assumed the title of “retired emperor,” he had a large pond built on the grounds of his palace residence. He would take a boat to the opposite shore, where there was a tea room. This was a form of “tea entertainment,” with members of the court nobility assembling in the tea room, where they would enjoy an evening of chanoyu, and then return to his residence by boat.

An ocean-like pond, a boat, a structure on the opposite shore suggestive of a utopia, where various forms of pleasure are sought: all this calls to mind the boating scenes typical of early modern-era pleasure pursuits, as depicted, for example, on the Sōōji Temple folding screens (Tokugawa Reimeikai Collection). Such imagery exists not only in paintings. Hiunkaku Pavilion at Nishi-Honganji Temple in Kyoto is one example of an extant structure. It is reached by boat across a pond, and from the landing dock built beneath the reception room, guests directly enter the pavilion, which contains gathering rooms and a place for bathing. With its observation deck, the Hiunkaku is precisely the form of pavilion seen in early modern “pleasure paintings.” People could well have enjoyed chanoyu here.

The crossing of an ocean or a river is also linked to transcending the border separating this world and the other world. In folk customs, bridges everywhere perform a similar function. In Edo, there is the unusual Ryōgoku (“two provinces”) Bridge, which links two different provinces. Pilgrims performed ablutions in the Sumida River that ran beneath the bridge before setting off to Mount Ōyama. Bridges were places where members of arhat fraternities held rituals to welcome and pay their respects to arhats, enlightened ones who have reached nirvana, in the other world. Again, considering the noh play *Shakkyō*, literally “stone

bridge,” and various similar performance arts in which a bridge is the stage, it is easy to assume that bridges functioned as a boundary linking this world to the realm beyond.

The garden approach to the Kankyūan tea room of the Mushakōjisenke estate in Kyoto features a dry moat crossed by a stone bridge. The bridge takes the role of the middle gate (*chūmon*) in the garden; it is where the host meets the guests and where they exchange greetings. That is to say, the river and bridge bring to the garden a sense of the border between realms. They function as a dividing line between this realm and the other.

This aspect of the garden approach shows that chanoyu is not an activity of this realm; it strives rather to be an act that resides within the sacred, other realm.

### **Garden Approach (*Roji*) Practices**

Gods are spiritual beings, and the garden approach is a place where people and gods come together to purify and be purified. In the garden, there are thus certain practices to be observed.

The most important garden practice involves the cleansing of hands and mouth. The *Nanpōroku* states, “The hand-rinsing basin is where people who visit the garden, and those who receive them there, mutually cleanse themselves of the dust of the world.”

Thus, the heart of *wabi-cha* is found in the treatment of the water in the basin. Indeed, the cleansing of hands and mouth is more than a question of hygiene. Since antiquity, there have been rituals for purifying (*kessai*) the body in Japan. This is no different from the practice of rinsing hands and mouth before praying at a Shinto shrine. The purification is meant to prevent the impure from entering a sacred space.

The term *shiba chōzu* (“brushwood cleansing of hands”) is also found in the *Nanpōroku*. The explanation offered there is that

Shugendō mountain ascetics, finding themselves in the mountains without water for purification, broke off some tree leaves (*shiba*) and used them to rub their hands clean. The term *shiba chōzu* is not used in modern-day Shugendō, but traces of the practice remain in chanoyu. There is the requisite rubbing of hands together before picking up a Chinese (*karamono*) tea container. This action is intended to ensure the hands are prepared and nimble, so as to avoid mishandling the precious tea container or staining it with the oil from one's hands. In fact, however, the principle is just the same as “brushwood cleansing of hands”; that is, a way to purify the hands without using water. Another term for it is *kara chōzu*, where *kara* means “empty” and *chōzu* “hand rinsing.”

In folk customs, too, there is the water-free hand-purifying method; there it is known as *chiri chōzu*, where *chiri* means “dust.” The same term is applied to a move in traditional performing arts. For example, a dancer crumples a piece of paper between her hands, then tears it into pieces and throws it behind her back. This is said to be the gesture of a young woman making a wish and hoping for its fulfillment. A similar action can be seen when sumo wrestlers enter the ring. They squat at one of the cardinal points of the sumo ring, bring their hands together in front of them, and clap; they then spread their hands to either side with the palms facing up and turn their palms down. When they bring their hands together in that first action, they rub their palms together to remove any dust, which they then fling away by turning their palms downward. This, then, too, is a water-free act of purification.

Guests cleanse their hands and mouths to prepare for entering the tea room's sacred space, but tea gatherings have not been characterized consistently by such logic. There are many examples of tea gatherings held in Rikyū's day where guests did not rinse their hands and mouth before entering the tea room for the first



Rinsing of hands and mouth (*chōzu*)

seating. It seems, though, that they always rinsed them before the latter seating, in which there was the tea drinking. From the host's perspective, the guest is akin to a god, a rare and exalted visitor. That is why the host welcomes them to a place that is purified. This explains the practice of sprinkling water (*uchimizu*). Water is sprinkled over the garden three times in the course of a tea gathering, with the first sprinkling occurring before the guests' arrival. Before the intermission, when guests go out into the garden, the space is purified again. And there is a final sprinkling, called *tachimizu*, where *tachi* means "departure." The host sprinkles water for a third time before the guests get up to leave. The garden is thus repeatedly purified. Further, as will be discussed below, in tea-preparation methods of old, the host also rinsed his hands and mouth before starting to prepare tea. The host purified himself before the guests to show that he welcomed them as sacred beings.

The garden's serene, mountain-like quality evokes the animistic world. At just the time Rikyū was active, the Satsuma-domain samurai Uwai Kakuken (1545–1589) wrote in his diary, *Uwai Kakuken nikki*, about the intermission, recording that “thereafter all guests left the tea room, saying they would spend a while gazing into the distance.” Some people clearly spoke, then, of being in the garden to “gaze into the distance.” It would be rash to link this distant gazing to the practice of ancient emperors surveying their realm, but some folk rituals still tell of a person who stands at the front of a procession and looks out far into the distance; this practice continues today. In brief, the garden is a separate, special realm that demands actions of a ritual sort that are removed from everyday life.

The starting point for Rikyū's creation of the early modern way of tea (*chadō* or *sadō*) thus embraced various aspects of the deep culture of the Japanese people. These aspects were then read back into the *wabi-cha* system, their essence wrapped, as it were, within a new structure, where they constituted an etiquette that has sustained the formal tea function till this day.

## Seclusion

The special nature of a tea room lies in its being a secluded, hermetic space. While Japanese homes are open spaces “created with summer in mind,” the tea room is quite different. The tea room is characterized by the fact that it is structured as a sealed space, enclosed on four sides by walls, with only a small entrance and small window connecting it to the outside world. And not only is the tea room physically sealed; when it is in use for a tea gathering, the protocol for the guests further underscores that it is a psychologically sealed space, too.

After receiving the host's welcome, the guests advance through

the garden approach and pass through the middle gate, which the final guest closes. Then, when they have entered the tea room, the last guest closes the crawl-through entrance, shutting the small latch attached to it. Thus, twice, three times over, the tea room is shut off from the outside world. The guests sit for several hours inside this space secluded from the outside world, and it is very similar to the act of seclusion associated with different religious ceremonies.

Since antiquity, the Japanese have consistently withdrawn inside shrines and temples, shutting themselves off. This cloistering (*sanrō*) is an act of purification, as people seclude themselves inside a temple or shrine for a set period, cutting off communications with the outside world. One well-known example of this is Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto, where legend has it that withdrawing there for prayer can help with the conception of a child. And various regions of Japan have *igomori* or “seclusion” festivals, in which seclusion takes center stage.

For example, there is such a festival held at Wakiidenomiya Shrine in south Yamashiro, Kyoto. Its centerpiece is seclusion overnight in the shrine building. Those inside cook rice, which is then offered at set places in the village. If the rice, which is arranged on camellia leaves, has disappeared by dawn, it means the gods have accepted it. These seclusion festivals involve only a limited number of people entering the shrine building and participating in the food preparation. The lights are all extinguished, including those in the shrine offices; sounds and light from outside are excluded. Indeed, it is this act of seclusion in a sealed space that guarantees the protection of the gods.

A more open form of this festival can be seen in the *kamakura* snow domes built in the city of Yokote, Akita Prefecture, in northeast Japan. The *kamakura*—the term is a local variation of



*kamikura*, or “god seat”—involves making a snow dome as a place in which the gods can reside; it is designated as the seat for the god of water. People seclude themselves inside the hollowed-out snow dome, where they share food and drink in the presence of the water god in the belief that this will protect them from disease and calamity. Why do we not think of the tea gathering as sharing something in common with the phenomenon of the seclusion festival? For here, too, guests withdraw inside the sealed space of a tea room for several hours, severing all contact with the outside world and sharing food and drink with others.

The anthropologist Namihira Emiko (b. 1942) hypothesizes that the word *kegare*, meaning “impurity,” derives from the phrase *ke ga kareru*, meaning “the spirit withers.” We live our lives in a state of extreme wariness lest our spirit leaves us. We fear the deflating or withering of our spirit, and we pray that our bodies might be animated, filled with spirit. Indeed, we experiment with seclusion as a way of reviving our spirits during the change of seasons and at turning points in the annual cycle when it is easy for our spirit to be lost.

Is not the point of a tea gathering, when host and guests withdraw to a tea room for four hours, to replenish the spirit? What makes this possible is the creation of the small tea room with its crawl-through entrance. Undoubtedly there flows subconsciously through Rikyū’s tea something in common with the aforementioned practice of seclusion that endures in folk customs.

## Why Is Tea Preparation Called *temae*?

### ***temae*: “Before the Point” or “In Front of You”?**

The first thing that troubles the novice tea practitioner is the order of the different stages in tea preparation, or *temae*, as it is called in Japanese. Take the following situation: You remember that once you have put the tea in the tea bowl, the next step is to open the lid of the water vessel (*mizusashi*)—but, in your haste, you mistakenly ladle up the hot water instead. Quite a few people make such mistakes when they start to learn tea. The more complicated the procedure, the more confusing it becomes: How best to fold the *fukusa* silk cloth neatly? How to prevent the *chakin* linen wiping cloth from losing its shape?

But when, we might ask, did tea preparation become so complicated? First of all, what does the Japanese word for tea preparation, *temae*, actually mean? I was taught that *temae* is the most logical, economical sequence of actions needed to make delicious tea. But is there really a direct connection between the various specific ways of handling the ladle (*hishaku*), for example, and making delicious tea? I fail to see a direct link. In that case, there must be some other reason for the birth of this complicated procedure. We must think carefully about this process of *temae*, which is at the heart of tea practice.

The word *temae* is confusing in Japanese since the *te* can be written with either the character for “point,” or the character for “hand.” It seems clear that the “point” character is a later alternative used principally for its sound value. Does that mean, then,

that the “hand” character is correct? This, too, is doubtful. Today most Japanese write *temae* using the “point” character, and this is the convention I adhered to in the original Japanese version of this book.

The Japanese phrase *cha o tateru*, “to whip up tea,” is old. The verb *tateru* means “to invigorate” or “to make abundant.” The noun *date*—written with different characters—refers to an aesthetic of dandyism that derives from the verb *tateru*. The Japanese phrase “to whip up tea” does not mean just whipping the tea to a foam in a literal sense, then. Rather, it implies a stirring up of the spirit of the tea. In pre-Rikyū tea texts, *temae* was often substituted by the phrase *cha no tateyō*, “the manner of invigorating the tea.” The *tate* character here, literally “to stand [something] up,” is a homonym for the *tate* character that means “to construct.” As a result, sometimes this “construct” character was used in place of the “stand up” character in the word *temae*.

And yet in the past it often happened that *temae* was written using the “hand” character, as in the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, a 1588 record composed toward the end of Rikyū’s life by his disciple Yamanoue Sōji. This is a reliable historical source, and we can assume that this is the first appearance of the “hand” character in the word *temae*.

I think there is a special significance to the choice of this character. It is precisely because “hand” is used for *te* that the *mae* character—meaning “before” or “in front of”—comes to life. *Temae* thus comes to mean “before, or in front of, the body”; it signifies the self. In making tea, one is working in the place most proximate to the self, using one’s own hands. The job of making the tea, whisking the tea, is thus literally *temae*. This is a fairly straightforward interpretation of what *temae* means. *Temae* may have had a humbling resonance, and perhaps this is why the

“point” character was later substituted for it; it gave to the word a Sinitic authority. The character for “point”—read as *te* or *ten*—was presumably adopted from the Chinese-sounding compound *tencha*, used to mean the act of whipping up powdered tea with hot water. This is mere conjecture on my part, however.

### Host (*Teishu*) and Guest Spaces

I previously wrote that Rikyū created the crawl-through entrance. When I did so, my presumption was always that it determined the form of the tea room, and that it further shaped the practice of *temae* tea preparation. Indeed, these three—the entrance, tea room, and tea preparation—are all closely connected.

Before the crawl-through entrance was created, one entered a tea room via a normal *shōji* or paper-paneled sliding partition accessed from an adjoining veranda. In other words, the room was not specially designed as a tea room. One entered the room as one entered any normal reception room. At the risk of exaggeration, it was with the creation of the crawl-through entrance that a tea room could become a special kind of space. To understand what made that space special, we must first think back on Japanese architectural traditions. Pillars are the basic support system in Japanese architecture. In many instances, easy-to-remove wall partitions or panels known as *fusuma* or *shōji* are inserted between these pillars. Japanese interiors are partitioned only by fluid fittings of this sort. Remove the *fusuma*, and you get an interior that extends out to the adjoining garden. This explains the expression “garden and room are one.” In essence, Japanese rooms are open, the antithesis of confined spaces. This is quite different from European and American architectural traditions with their basic structures built around thick walls.

But tea-room architecture alone defies Japanese tradition.

What impression do people get on visiting Rikyū's tea room Taian (see frontispiece) at Myōkian Temple in Kyoto? I urge you to go and visit Myōkian if you have not yet done so. The tea room there fully deserves its designation as a national treasure. When you pass through that crawl-through entrance and are inside, it is as if you have entered a cellar-like space, which, indeed, has the air of a secret, closed room. (Note that today, for reasons of preservation, entry into the room is not permitted.) This is not the kind of ambiguous space that allows easy communication with the outside world; it is an independent space clearly partitioned off from the outside by rough clay walls. It is a constricted space. Its designation as a national treasure might suggest a representative Japanese structure, but in fact its space rebels against Japanese tradition. And what explains it is the crawl-through entrance.

If, on the other side of the crawl-through entrance, there were a spacious room, then there would be no strange sensation of the sort one gets at Myōkian. The Myōkian tea room is an extremely small space, barely two tatami mats in size, which makes it all the more moving. In brief, the creation of the crawl-through entrance demanded a tea room that was four and a half mats at most, and if possible, smaller than that. Rooms of that size are called "small rooms" (*koma*), as opposed to the so-called "spacious rooms" (*hiroma*). The tea-room space was shrunk from four and a half mats to two mats, then further to one and three-quarter mats. This meant at the same time a decisive shrinking of the distance between the host making the tea and the guests. The guests can closely observe the movements of the host's hands and feet right before their eyes. The host is watched; the host's awareness of having his actions observed leads to the formation of still more beautiful postures, still more refined actions. This was undoubtedly the motive force that created today's complex, but elegant, *temae*

procedure. Let us reflect on this point from a historical perspective.

On October 30, 1975, an interesting experiment took place in the Kō no ma, the main reception hall designated an important cultural property at Nishi-Honganji Temple in Kyoto. The experiment was an attempt to revive the performing arts of the Azuchi-Momoyama period some four centuries ago. The Kō no ma is a vast room with an elevated section and an adjoining lower-level 162-mat space, set against an alcove known as an *oshiita*, an earlier form of today's *tokonoma* display alcove. When eighteen of the tatami mats are removed from the central section of the main room, a noh stage is revealed. Top-quality boards, like those used for theater stages, comprise the flooring underneath the tatami mats, and the stage itself has acoustic effects and other functions built into it. This 1975 experiment deployed the stage for a combination of noh, flower arranging, and tea ceremony. Between the two noh plays, tea master Yabunouchi Jōchi (1936–2018) performed a tea ceremony in the Momoyama manner, which makes use of a *daisu*, the classical form of utensil stand. A noh theater stage normally has a large painting of a pine tree as its backdrop. In this instance, a sizable gold-leafed folding screen provided the backdrop, with a formal ikebana arrangement in the *rikka* (literally, “standing flowers”) style featuring a pine bough placed in front of the screen. All this took place during the day, but the room interior was darkened, the dark relieved only by flickering candlelight. I thought about this as I watched. I was positioned by the elevated section of the room, near the corner of the stage. I was directly opposite, diagonally the furthest removed, from the spot where the master was making the tea. I could honestly see almost nothing of the details of his tea preparation. I could only identify his larger movements, his pouring of hot water, his wielding of the tea whisk. This made me wonder whether



Tea preparation—detail from *Chōbazu byōbu* (Folding Screen Depicting Horse Training), c. 1600, six-panel folding screen, 154 cm × 355 cm panels, Taga Taisha Shrine Collection, Shiga Prefecture.

guests seated far away in the elevated section of a spacious drawing room or reception room were ever able to see the tea-making.

As the historian Murai Yasuhiko (b. 1930) has discussed in the 1971 book *Sen no Rikyū*, the space for preparing tea was originally outside the room where the tea gathering was being held. An example can be found in the *Chōbazu byōbu* (Folding Screen Depicting Horse Training), which belongs to Taga Taisha Shrine and dates from the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. The painting shows tea being prepared with a *daisu* utensil stand and a brazier-and-kettle set (*furo-gama*) arranged in a space separate from where the military lord watched the horse training. The lord's banquet and the tea preparation occupied separate realms. The

tea was merely prepared and then carried to the lord for his enjoyment. In other words, with tea preparation and banquet taking place separately, it was not yet possible for guests to enjoy the beauty of the tea preparation process.

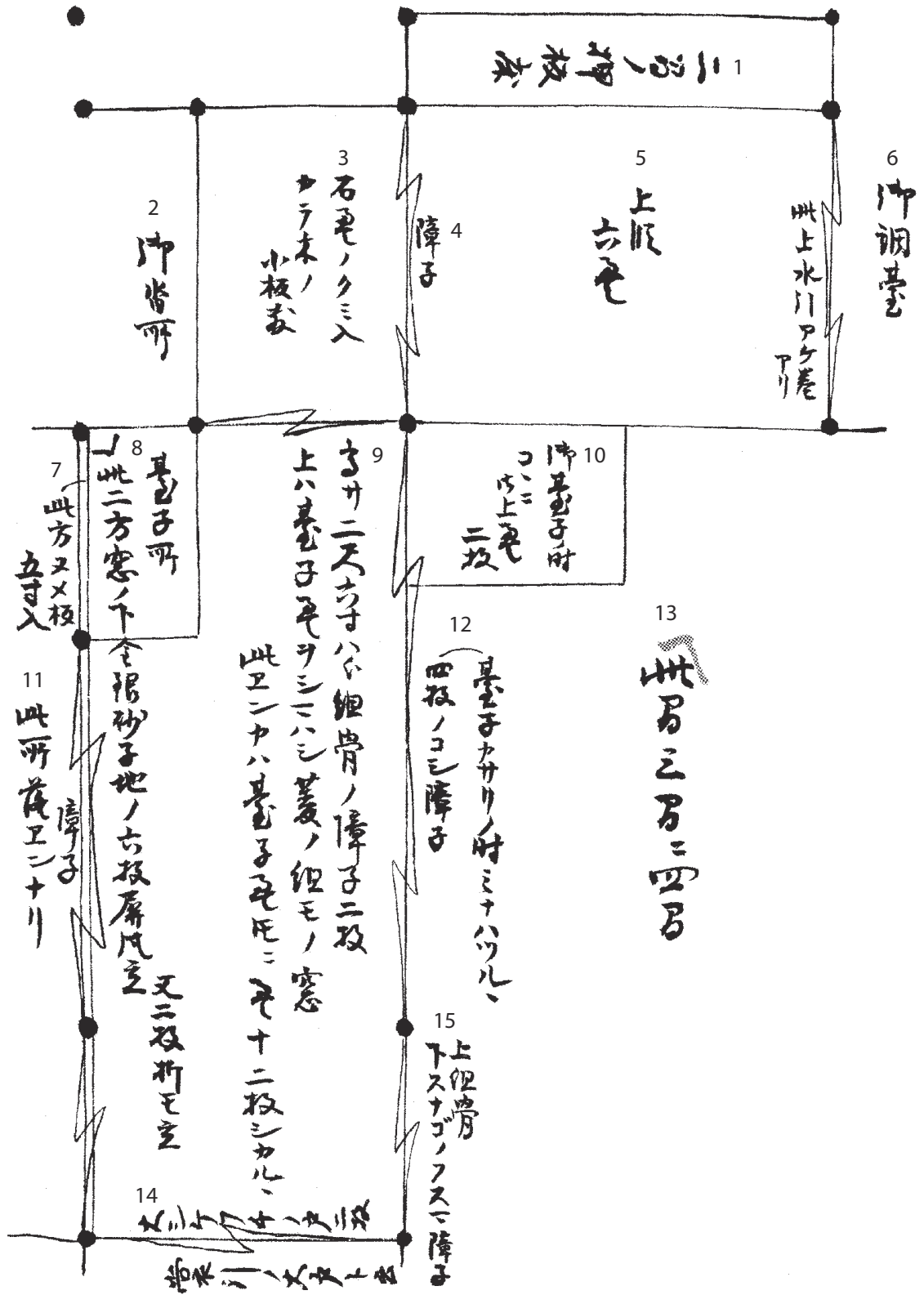
Later, gradually, the place of tea preparation appeared before the guests; it moved from a separate space into the tea room. But originally tea was prepared in an adjoining room known as a *ganro no ma*, after the round hearth (*ganro*) set in its floor. The *ganro no ma*, as a room specially outfitted with a round hearth for tea-making, was certainly designed for the preparation of tea, but it was not a tea room (*chashitsu*) per se. The *ganro no ma* acted as a place for tea preparation, one joined back-to-back with a tea reception room. This arrangement can be seen at Keikan Sansō, the villa of Ichijō Kanetō (Akiyoshi; 1605–1672). Originally located in the Nishi-gamo district of Kyoto, it was later moved to its current location in Kamakura.

### From Tea Preparer to Host

The chanoyu style performed in the late fifteenth-century Higashiyama period is known as *shoin daisu* tea. *Shoin* refers to the formal reception room; *daisu* is the large utensil stand on which tea-making equipment was arranged. During such events, guests could see the tea preparer in the distance. What I thought of when watching the aforementioned Kō no ma tea ceremony was the sketch of the Higashiyama palace's *midaisudokoro*, literally “the place for the imperial utensil stand,” as seen in the *Nanpōroku*.

The *Nanpōroku* sketch shows a veranda (*engawa*) one and a half *ken* wide by four *ken* long (approximately 2.73 by 7.27 meters) in one corner of which is the single-mat area for the utensil stand. A six-mat elevated area is adjacent to the other corner of the veranda. To the side of that elevated area is a canopied dais





Sketch of the location of the imperial utensil stand (*midaisudokoro*) in the Higashiyama palace, as seen in the *Nanpōroku*. Reproduced by permission from Nanbō Sōkei, *Nanpōroku: Ei'inban* (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1986).

- 1 Two-mat display space (*oshiita*)
- 2 Vestibule for storing guests' footwear (*mikutsusho*)
- 3 Small room with imported tropical rarewood (*karakī*) flooring and checkerboard-pattern latticed ceiling
- 4 Sliding papered panels (*shōji*)
- 5 Six-mat raised room (*jōdan-no-ma*)
- 6 Canopied dais (*michōdai*); purple curtains above the entrance to the canopied dais, tied with a trefoil (*agemaki*) knot
- 7 Smooth edging boards of five *sun* (about 15.15 centimeters) width
- 8 Mat for the utensil stand (*daisu*); six-panel folding screen (*byōbu*) covered with gold- and silver-flecked paper stands under windows facing in two directions; otherwise, two-panel folding screen here
- 9 Two sliding papered panels of exposed papered lattice, two *shaku* six *sun* eight *bu* height (approximately 81.21 centimeters); two diamond-patterned windows above utensil stand display mat; twelve mats spread on this veranda, including mat where utensil stand is displayed
- 10 Two raised mats placed here when utensil stand is used
- 11 Sliding papered panels (*shōji*); lower veranda located here
- 12 All four *koshishōji* (part-solid [wood], part-papered sliding panels) are removed when tea utensils are displayed on utensil stand (*daisu-kazari*)
- 13 Room three by four mats in size
- 14 Sliding wooden storm doors, two panels (*mobiki no ō-do*)
- 15 Part-solid (wood), part-papered sliding panels (*koshishōji*), with upper section of exposed papered lattice (*kumi-bone*) and lower of paper flecked with gold or silver

(*michōdai*) where the noble guest sits, and there is a two-mat display space (*oshiita*), which all makes for a grand drawing room. During tea preparation only, there are two tatami mats placed one *ken* (approximately 1.82 meters) away from the area for the utensil stand where the tea is being prepared. This is where persons of elevated rank took their place to watch the tea preparation. According to the *Nanpōroku*'s notes for the tea maker, at the far end of the veranda there is a large entrance (called a *mobiki no ō-do*) through which the tea maker steps onto the veranda, where, outside the door, there await two attendants tasked with preparing the tea utensils. Then the tea maker—referred to here as *cha sahai no hito*, literally “tea management person”—first rinses his hands and mouth before taking up the tea utensils and carrying them to the utensil stand. There is a note of warning at this point, explaining that the hand- and mouth-rinsing place is visible to those occupying the elevated section of the room, and so the tea maker must be careful there, too. Here let me make two observations. First, the “tea manager” is quite different from the later tea host; this was a person whose function was simply to make the tea. This role was probably played by the Ashikaga shoguns' aesthetic advisors and cultural curators (*dōbōshū*) who were active in the so-called Higashiyama culture that flourished around the villa of the eighth Ashikaga shogun located in the eastern hills of Kyoto. Second, there is an emphasis on the tea-maker rinsing his hands and mouth.

In the *Kissa ōrai*, too, the host of the tea gathering and the person who prepared the tea were two different people. The host was on the side of the guests, while a person in his service served the tea. Let us take a look now at the *Kodensho*, a sixteenth-century tea text written about 150 years after the *Kissa ōrai*. This is what it says about tea preparation:

The tea preparer always washes his hands and mouth thoroughly, bows politely to the *senmoto* [host], takes the tray down from the *tokonoma* alcove, and pulls the *kakurega* [a tripod-shaped lid rest for a kettle] close by.

First, the tea preparer—the “tea manager” mentioned above—appears. Then he bows once to a figure referred to as the *senmoto*, who is clearly the host (*teishu*), not the main guest. Later in the same book there is a chapter on the way for a *senmoto* or host to drink the tea which he has prepared for himself before he takes care of the tea utensils. The implication is that during the Higashiyama period, the tea preparer and the host were quite separate. But only fifty or sixty years later, the *Kodensho* describes a scene in which both the host and the person making tea on his behalf appear in the preparation of tea. While one should not jump to conclusions, this seems to indicate a new trend of the host merging with the person who does the tea preparation. As the tea preparer came to assume the status of host, so the etiquette described in both the *Nanpōroku* and the *Kodensho* of tea preparer—not guest—rinsing hands and mouth disappeared.

The *temae* process was established when the tea preparer ceased to be a man of lower rank, and the event organizer became the host. As a result, guests turned their attention to the conducting of the *temae*. The guests’ seats and the tea preparer’s seat acquired parity; the process by which this occurred can also be explained in terms of the change in the structure of the tea room. In the period when the tea preparer was simply a functionary, the space for tea preparation was set outside the banquet seating room. I previously noted that this was a separate tea-preparation area or a room with a round hearth built into its floor (*ganro no ma*). In the elevated space depicted in the *Nanpōroku*, the tea was

prepared before the gaze of the high-ranking persons, even though they were seated some distance away. The tea I watched on the stage of the *Kō no ma* came across as quite ethereal and archaic. And yet, in all these cases, the tea was still prepared in a lower section of the room. Did the creativity of *wabi-cha* not lie in erasing the elevated space, and so at a stroke closing the distance between tea preparer and guests? Tea served in a small room, symbolic of the birth of *wabi-cha*, shows that host and guests are equal. The sunken hearth first appears before the guest in these small rooms, where it is situated as a so-called “outside hearth” (*dero*), since it is outside the tatami mat where tea is prepared. The outside hearth lies between guests and host, who sit facing each other on either side of it. The host is completely the equal of the guest, and further, the host now prepares tea before the guests’ eyes. Inevitably, the guest is now forced to focus on the host’s tea-preparation methods. It was, as I mentioned earlier, the creation of the crawl-through entrance which made this tea form possible.

Of course, the basics of tea preparation were in place before Rikyū. However, it was only after his time that the finer details were settled. The tea room contracts, and because the guests’ eyes can now capture everything, those eyes work hard not to overlook the subtlest of movements. Diary entries on tea gatherings after Rikyū’s time suddenly begin to note the finest of details, and this is proof of the scrutiny of the guests’ eye. One entry in the *Matsuya kaiki* tea diary kept by the Matsuya family of lacquer merchants and tea enthusiasts gives a detailed description of tea as prepared by tea master Kobori Enshū (1579–1647), noting even the handling of the small linen wiping cloth (*chakin*).

Matsuya Hisashige (1567–1652), who wrote the entry, was moved by the beauty of what he saw: the linen cloth arranged in the tea bowl was taken out, refolded, and then placed on top of the

vessel for fresh water (*mizusashi*). Matsuya wrote of how stylish (*date*) the form of the linen cloth was after it was twisted into a ring shape. The proximate distance needed to see the shape of the linen cloth, the gaze directed at it, the aesthetic awareness of the detail: all these elements were essential for the establishment of *temae* tea-making procedures. And as they became established, so they acquired a life of their own, giving rise to all manner of variations, ever more complicated, ever more beautiful.



Chapter 3

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**TEA DEVOTEE (*CHAJIN*)  
PRACTICES**



## From Sitting Cross-Legged to Sitting Formally

### Crowded Tea Gatherings

In *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), the American anthropologist Edmund T. Hall (1914–2009) proposed that the Japanese have their own unique way of handling crowded situations. Among animals, too, there are some species that like crowding and others that do not. For example, when walrus crowd together, they really huddle in close, jostling together like potatoes in the scrub pot. But when birds such as swans or ducks gather, they absolutely avoid stacking up or rubbing up against each other. I am sure to be reprimanded for comparing the Japanese to walrus, but people on those crammed Japanese rush-hour trains or bodies squished together at midwinter “naked” festivals (*hadaka matsuri*) look to me much like walrus huddles. And yet in their everyday lives, the Japanese seek to avoid close physical contact; there is none of the physical touching seen among European, American, or Arabic peoples.

Here I refer to Hall’s theory because the sensibility regarding person-to-person distancing that flows through the foundations of Japanese culture differs from that of Europe and the US. Too close a proximity prompts disagreeable feelings, and yet a great distance feels strange too. The desirable distance between people depends on the individual, but there are differences based on each ethnic culture too. Japanese culture is fundamentally one in which people maintain distance from one another. A single tatami mat is used as a measurement for such things, with a half mat considered appropriate for sitting, a full mat for sleeping. There is also the etiquette of placing one’s folded fan on the tatami mat in front

of oneself when making a formal greeting. These examples point to the Japanese people's dislike of physical contact. However, in special instances—many of these occur on festive occasions—there is close contact of a sort unimaginable to a European or American, and it serves as a mutual expression of intimacy.

I have chosen to address this topic because I think it is possible that the tea-room interior, from the outset, was a device for generating the tension that is unique to crowding. When I earlier mentioned Myōkian Temple in Kyoto, I noted that the tea-room interior conveys the sense of a cellar. From its rough plaster walls reminiscent of a farm shed, its small windows which let in little light, and its crawl-through entrance, one cannot help but get the sense of a sealed chamber. Inside this chamber, one's gaze is limited by the walls, the people, and the tea utensils. Undoubtedly the impression is of people more proximate than they actually are. The inside of a tea room is a "crowded space." Crowding, in and of itself, creates tension. The tea room engenders tension, and there is a kind of excitement that accompanies it.

The *Matsuya kaiki* tea diary kept by three generations of the Matsuya family covers the years 1533–1650. It gives information from which we can tell how many people gathered in what amount of space. I have organized that information in table 1 (overleaf).

We learn that in the middle decades of the sixteenth century—in other words, before Rikyū led the tea world as tea master to the military and political rulers of the day—there were typically one or two guests in a four-and-a-half-mat room. This gave each guest about one and three-quarters mats of space; always more than a single mat. Then, during the period of Rikyū's greatest activity from the Great Kitano Tea Gathering of 1587 to his death in 1591, there was a sudden contraction and subsequent crowding of the tea room. Each guest had less than a single tatami mat, and in

Date	Total Guest Space (tatami)	No. of Guests	Tatami Space per Guest	
1559	June 3	3.5	2	1.75
	June 4	3.5	2	1.75
	June 5	3.5	2	1.75
	June 5	3.5	2	1.75
	June 6	3.5	2	1.75
	June 6	3.5	2	1.75
	June 7	3.5	2	1.75
	June 8	3.5	2	1.75
1563	February 13	5	5	1
1565	March 11	3.5	4	0.87
1568	February 10	3.5	3	1.16
	February 12	3.5	1	3.5
	February 16	3.5	1	3.5
	March 23	3.5	1	3.5
1584	February 27	3.5	2	1.75
1585	January 14	2	2	1
	July 17	1.5	2	0.75
	August 1	1.5	2	0.75
1586	February 9	1.5	3	0.5
	June 7	2	1	2
	June 8	1.5	2	0.75
	June 9	3	1	3
	June 10	2	2	1
	June 11	3.5	2	1.75
	June 12	1.5	2	0.75
	December 10	2	2	1
1587	March 3	1.5	2	0.75
	September 22	1.5	2	0.75
	November 26	1	2	0.5
	January 19	1	2	0.5
1588	February 23	1	2	0.5
	March 1	2	2	1
	December 4	1.5	2	0.75
	December 31	1	2	0.5
1589	January 18	1	2	0.5
	March 13	1	2	0.5
	November 4	1	2	0.5
1589	November 10	1	2	0.5
	December 29	1	3	0.33

Date		Total Guest Space (tatami)	No. of Guests	Tatami Space per Guest
1590	January 24	1	2	0.5
	September 7	1	2	0.5
	December 9	3.5	2	1.75
	December 12	1	2	0.5
	December 31	3.5	3	1.17
	December 31	1	2	0.5
1591	April 8	1	2	0.5
1593	January 27	1	2	0.5
1594	March 27	1	2	0.5
	October 3	2	2	1
	November 23	2	4	0.5
1595	December 4	1	2	0.5
	December 7	3.5	6	0.58
1596	April 5	3	2	1.5
1597	October 21	3	2	1.5
1599	March 19	3	4	0.75
1601	December 14	3	3	1
	December 15	3	3	1
1606	February 23	2	4	0.5
	April 18	3	2	1.5
	May 20	3.5	5	0.7
1608	April 10	2	1	2
	April 10	3	1	3
	May 7	2	3	0.67
	May 8	1	2	0.5
	May 22	1	3	0.33
1609	January 17	3.5	2	1.75
1616	July 18	3	6	0.5
1617	July 6	2	2	1
1618	July 11	2	2	1
1622	March 4	3	5	0.6
	November 30	3	2	1.5
1623	January 4	3	5	0.6

Note: A single tatami measures 189 by 94.5 centimeters. Total guest space is calculated by subtracting the tatami used by the host from the size of the tea room. Tatami space per guest is equal to the total guest space divided by the number of guests.

the vast majority of cases, only half of one. At the tea gathering held on December 29, 1589, there were three guests in a two-mat tea room. Since the host needed one mat for tea preparation, the three guests would have had to sit on a single tatami mat. This reminds us of Rikyū's words as recorded in the *Kōshin gegaki* (Kōshin's Summer Notes), a book on tea written between 1662 and 1663 by the fourth head of the Omotesenke lineage, Kōshin Sōsa (1613–1672): “Two guests in a room of four and a half mats, and three guests in a room of one full-sized mat and one three-quarter-length mat (*ichijō daime*).” Incidentally, it seems that there were two distinctive uses of tea rooms from the last years of the sixteenth century through the early years of the seventeenth. One was for the earlier, more relaxed form of tea, while the other was for the Rikyū style of *wabi-cha*; the two seem to have coexisted.

If, in general, we assume that a guest's space is half of a Kyoto-sized tatami mat, and two guests shared a full mat, then they could sit in a relaxed manner. If there were three people on one tatami mat only drinking tea, then they would be able to sit, but that is always assuming that they sit as we do today. The earlier way of sitting demanded half a tatami mat because people sat cross-legged.

In 1566, two years before the great warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) entered Kyoto, Rikyū was forty-five years old and in his prime. This was the year when Jitsugyō, head monk of Kōmyōin at Kōfukuji Temple in Nara, wrote his own reflections on studying tea. His writing is included in the previously quoted *Kodensho*. It includes one passage, briefly discussed in chapter 2, with the heading “Notes on How the Host Drinks Tea.” This is a record of the host's actions as he prepares his own bowl of tea. After he has whisked the tea in the tea bowl, he places it to his right side before taking up the ladle (*hishaku*) and putting the lid

on the kettle. So far so good, but he then writes of “raising a knee once more” to drink the tea. What could this mean? Further, after drinking the tea, he sits in the “relaxed sitting style” (*anza*) as he clears up the utensils. Clearly, the expression “raising a knee” means that he sits with one knee elevated, a position known as *tatehiza*. The “relaxed sitting style” he adopts for clearing up the utensils is close to a cross-legged posture. But what was his position before he raised one knee? Here another term appearing in the passage is noteworthy: *kashikomatte* (“respectfully”). Prior to raising his knee, he was in a “respectful” posture; namely, what we call today *seiza*, a formal sitting posture where one kneels with the backside resting on the heels and the insteps flat against the floor. Thus, in this short passage, there appear all three sitting styles used in tea: the relaxed sitting style known as *anza*; the single-raised-knee style, or *tatehiza*; and the formal, respectful sitting style that is referred to as *seiza* in modern-day Japanese.

The relaxed style is probably the oldest of them all. Sitting relaxed and sitting cross-legged are different. The Japanese word for the latter is *agura* or *agumu*. But the relaxed style as seen in portraits of aristocrats involves sitting with the soles of the feet placed together, or with the ankles crossed in front of the body. This is also referred to as “musician’s posture” or *gakuza*, possibly deriving from how court musicians sat. In fact, we do not know whether the “relaxed” sitting mentioned in the *Kodensho* is cross-legged (*agura*) or “musician’s posture,” but it is probably the former. It is, in any event, a relaxed posture.

Though of a slightly later era, the late sixteenth- to early seventeenth-century diary of Kyoto townsman Hariya Sōshun, *Sōshun-ō chadō kiki gaki* (What Old Man Sōshun Has Heard about the Way of Tea), has the following account:

The guests return to the reception room. After the host has finished laying the charcoal, he opens the sliding door to the preparation room and enters. From the entrance the host and guests exchange greetings, and the host invites his guests to “sit in a relaxed manner” (*roku ni*). If it is winter, he suggests his guests wear head coverings (*zugin*), since his top priority is ensuring the guests’ comfort and ease. Then, once the *kaiseki* meal is over, he invites his guests again to “sit in a relaxed manner.” And after the intermission, before he takes up the tea utensils during the tea service, he tells the guests yet again to “sit in a relaxed manner.” Once the guests are comfortable, he begins.

The word *roku*, scattered throughout this passage, has several meanings, but here it seems to imply “feeling at ease,” or “relaxing.” In other words, *Sōshun* is time and again urging his guests to sit comfortably.

### ***Tatehiza* and *Kashikomaru*: Raised-Knee Sitting and Formal Sitting**

Sitting with one knee raised was the natural posture during a tea gathering. There are probably quite a few readers who wonder if this was actually the case, but it most definitely was. It was the most natural of postures not only in tea, but also throughout East Asian culture. It seems, though, that at some stage in their history, the Japanese forgot about the one-knee-raised posture. The *noh* theater is the one place where this posture endures. Instructions in *noh* to “stay down” mean that actors, whether playing the main parts or auxiliary ones, sit in this knee-raised manner. It is the most natural way of sitting on a flat surface.

How should we read the *Kodensho* article mentioned above? If we read the key term *anza* to mean the most relaxed posture assumed by the host when tidying away the tea utensils, then



Supporting actors in an old-style noh play wait in raised-knee sitting style (*tatehiza*). Reproduced by permission from page 87 of the original Japanese edition.

sitting with one knee raised suggests a state of greater tension. After all, it was at the very least the posture the host assumed when drinking tea.

The raised knee appears also in the *Usoshū*, an anonymous four-volume set of tea books dating from the late Muromachi period and contemporaneous with the *Kodensho*. The text relates how the guests sat with raised knee after seeing the host take out various precious utensils. That is, the understanding was clearly that when the host had completed that phase, the guests would sit with one knee raised.

The posture did not disappear in the early modern era. The *Hosokawa chanoyu no sho* (Hosokawa's Book on Chanoyu), a tea text written by Sen no Rikyū's beloved disciple Hosokawa Sansai (1563–1646), also describes sitting with one knee raised. A copy of this text appeared in 1641, about half a century after Rikyū's death. In it there is one passage which I interpret to mean that when the guests are in a relaxed posture, the host keeps his



knee raised, and when the guests are in the more tense formal posture, he retreats a little, sets his left hand down on the mat, and uses his right hand to place the bowl containing the prepared tea in front of them at a spot six *sun* (approximately 18.18 centimeters) from the frame of the sunken hearth. Let me add here that my understanding is that if the guests are sitting in the relaxed style, the host sits with one knee raised as he prepares tea. Then there is the following passage:

From his relaxed position, the host raises his knee, takes up the ladle (*hishaku*), sets it onto the mouth of the water vessel (*mizusashi*), and leaves it there.

This refers to the host's actions after preparing tea but prior to scooping water from the water vessel and pouring it into the kettle. Up until this point, the host has been "relaxed," which probably means he was seated in the relaxed *anza* manner. It would be inappropriate to remain relaxed at this stage, so he now raises one knee. In this era too, then, it seems the raised-knee posture denoted a state of heightened tension.

I cannot easily imagine Sen no Rikyū with one knee raised, or sitting cross-legged as he tidied up the tea utensils. Because we tend to think of sitting in *seiza* as the tea posture, we imagine Rikyū seated in this manner. This fixed image of formal sitting during tea, however, is challenged by much counter-evidence both before and after Rikyū. The formal *seiza* sitting style was not as fixed as we like to think. So then where did it come from?

Let us return to the earlier quotation from the *Kodensho*, in which a sitting posture described as *kashikomatte*, "respectfully," was mentioned. The same term is discussed in the *Wakun no shiori*, a dictionary compiled by the mid-Edo-period linguist Tanigawa



The *seiza* or *kashikomaru* formal sitting posture (left), *kamei* turtle position (center), and *tatehiza* knee-raised sitting style (right)—details from Wakabayashi Atsumu, “Kaiga shiryō nado kara mita Nihonjin no ‘seiza’ kihanka e no puroseshu” (The Normativization of Japanese ‘Formal Sitting’ as Seen through Paintings and Other Materials). Thirty-Sixth Conference of the Japanese Society for History of the Performing Arts Research, Report Materials, 1999. Courtesy of the Japanese Society for History of the Performing Arts Research.

Kotosuga (1709–1776). The dictionary entry gives the verb *kashikomaru*, or “sit respectfully,” to mean sitting with both knees on the ground and the buttocks on the feet. It describes what we call *seiza* today. The use of this verb implies the humble, self-abasing posture of prostration assumed by lower-ranking persons before nobility. Further, because one assumes this posture in the presence of the nobility, it is accompanied by the greatest tension. The aforementioned *Usoshū* indicates that, if the guest is a noble or other higher-ranking person, then the host will sit “respectfully” from start to finish while making tea; that is, he will sit in *seiza*. If the host is of a status equal to his guests, then he makes the tea seated in relaxed fashion, *anza*. Vassals would assume the formal sitting position, *seiza*, in the presence of their lord.

It is a tense posture, and at the same time a ritual posture. It seems that there were at least two types of respectful sitting. The term *kamei*, or “turtle position,” describes a more ceremonial style which appears in the twelfth-century *Chōshūki* (Record of a

Long Autumn), written by the late Heian-period court noble and poet Minamoto no Morotoki (1077–1136). It has the following:

After bowing once to the Minister of the Left, he adopted the turtle position (*kamei*) and remained prostrate.

This turtle position was assimilated into chanoyu along with the formal, respectful way of kneeling.

The *Chawashō*, one of the Sen family texts from the latter half of the early modern era, tells how Bunshuku Sōshu (1658–1708), the fifth-generation head of the Mushakōjisenke tea lineage, prepared tea sitting with his buttocks on the floor and his feet splayed either side. This was what the nobility referred to as turtle sitting (*kamei*), because the position of the feet resembled that of a turtle's. Grandmothers used to sit like this, so it was also called the “granny posture.” But in fact, this was the formal sitting posture assumed by court nobles when they sat for long periods at court. This no doubt helps explain why it was adopted into chanoyu. It was, to be sure, less rigid than the formal sitting style of today, and when brought together with the reverent *kashikomaru* formal sitting style there was no place left in chanoyu for a “relaxed” or “knee-raised” posture. And so it was that the sitting style adopted in tea preparation today was arrived at.

This shift in tea manners—from relaxed sitting to knee-raised sitting to formal kneeling—reflects the changing nature of tea from amusement to discipline. Sitting cross-legged in the tea room was forbidden. As we have seen in chapter 2, the *Chōka chanoyu monogatari*, thought to have been written at the beginning of the early modern era, stated that “[The guest] sat right in the middle of the small space, cross-legged, and gave a big yawn.” This was an admonishment against such poor manners on the part of guests,

and it indicates that sitting cross-legged in a small tea room was no longer appropriate. The sixteenth-century *Bunrui sōjinboku* (Classifications of Tea), an exemplary early text in three volumes, advises one to “look at whether the reception room is large or small, whether the guests are many or few, and then to sit in such a way that one’s *hakama* [a traditional Japanese trouser-like garment with wide, loose legs] does not splay out.” Here was an important lesson for the crowded tea room.

In other words, the aspect of amusement in tea was gradually lost as tea became a place of heightened tension. As it did so, the tea room became ever smaller, the people in it all the closer, which in turn played its part in heightening the sense of intimacy and the feeling of tension. There was an accompanying shift away from an easy, relaxed sitting posture to the formal sitting posture, *seiza*.

## The Origins of Tea’s Walking Style

### The Culture of Walking

Japanese women, it is said, walked with their feet turned inward; that is, they walked “pigeon-toed.” But was this really the case?

Evidently it was not; indeed, pigeon-toed walking proves to be a modern phenomenon, a type of discipline enforced on women over the last 150 years or so. Originally, it was not linked to gender, and indeed there are no images of a pigeon-toed Kannon, the Bodhisattva who is thought to typify femininity. Clear depictions of pigeon-toed women are only to be found in the ukiyo-e, say, of the early nineteenth century. It seems that pigeon-toed walking was

a gendered symbol of women's "reserved" or "docile" nature, forced upon them in Meiji-era (1868–1912) education. The view that women wearing kimono must walk pigeon-toed in order to look elegant is a groundless stereotype. Indeed, neither in India nor in any other culture where women wear wrap-around garments have people considered pigeon-toed walking to be beautiful. If this is the case, the Japanese aesthetic that considers it beautiful must be something old-fashioned, influenced by the old Chinese aesthetic of binding women's feet.

Here I do not intend to debate whether pigeon-toed walking is beautiful or not. But it is surely important to note that, regardless of whether it is historically old or new, pigeon-toed walking had significance for the Japanese people of the past. Men and women walked differently during the Edo period (1603–1867). As seen in the early eighteenth-century essay collection *Mukashimukashi monogatari* (Tales of Long Ago), walking styles were already differentiated according to age, profession, and gender from the start of the Edo period. A simple glance at a person's gait would indicate how old the person was and what kind of work he or she did. This is an extended citation from the above-mentioned essay collection:

Women's customs in the past were different from those today. . . . How they walked on the street depended on their age, as did the objects they hung from their sashes (*obi*). If you looked at five people or ten people walking together, you could tell a person's age by the designs on their *kosode* [literally "small-sleeve," a kimono with close-fitting sleeves], and by how they walked on the streets. You could estimate their age. Even if their faces were covered, you could judge whether they were young or old by their manners; you could discern that even from a distance.

In the past, then, a simple glance at a person's gait or their customs would be sufficient to suggest their age and their standing in society. So what was the situation when this *Mukashimukashi monogatari* was written in the early eighteenth century?

Another passage says:

Everyone has their sash pulled high up to their chest so that from the back, a long section of the kimono appears below it. And they clump along in an inelegant manner. From a distance you cannot tell a young man from an old woman.

This sounds just like the lament of someone today.

Setting aside the Edo-period lament, parents until very recently taught walking to their children as a form of discipline. Parents would say, "Don't bustle along when you walk!" or "Stand up straight while walking!" Some decades ago, the training in how to walk was still more particular. Walking was something children practiced, and assimilated.

The reason I bring up walking style as a relevant historical issue is because the importance of walking style is often emphasized in chanoyu, but its origin is never truly considered.

Later generations thought that it was Rikyū who paid close attention to walking style. Here I note an episode in the *Nanpōroku* that has Takeno Jōō insisting both guests and host wear *geta*, a type of elevated wooden clog, in the garden approach. This was to avoid their feet getting wet when they walked through heavily dew-covered grasses and plants. The *Nanpōroku* goes on to say that the sound of a person's *geta* will reveal who is experienced or inexperienced. The walking style of an experienced person is one that does not clatter, but rather moves quietly and effortlessly.

It was Jōō, then, who decided that *geta* were to be worn in

the garden approach to the tea room. His reference to thick dew on the grass needs some explanation. If stepping stones had been arranged in the garden approach as they are today, one would not wet one's *tabi*, those split-toed socks worn with sandals, even if there was a slight rain. But in Rikyū's day, some gardens were simply grass. Rikyū's tea room in Mozuno in Sakai is said to have been of that type. To walk on grass thick with dew, *geta* are indispensable. This explains Jōō's concern.

But Rikyū thought otherwise. Walking on stepping stones in *geta* naturally creates noise. On hearing the noise, you can distinguish tea experts from the inexperienced. The expert walks calmly and quietly, unconcerned by unwanted or distracting thoughts. Indeed, the sound of those who focus on their way of walking is in disarray. Dreadful though it may seem, it is true. This being the case, why not switch to *setta*, soundless leather-soled sandals? Rikyū's invention of *setta* as footwear for the garden approach was intended to eliminate this needless worry.

The *Nanpōroku* notes that Rikyū had sandals with leather soles made to his specifications in Imaichi-chō, Sakai, and used them in the garden approach. Rikyū's view was that, at the time, fewer than five of the dozens of *chajin* or tea devotees in Kyoto, Sakai, and Nara were able to manage walking in *geta* properly. He saw no point in forcing people to do something that was beyond them. As a result of his innovation, less attention was paid to how people walk in the garden approach.

### **Gliding Walk (*Neri-aruku*)**

In 1938, the Meiji- and Shōwa-era pioneer of women's education Ōe Sumi (1875–1948) published *Reigi sahō zenshū* (Complete Etiquette Methods). This book explains how to sit, how to stand, and of course how to walk. It identifies two ways to walk. One is

the so-called gliding walk. The explanation she offers is as follows:

- 1) In a standing position, put your hips into position and ready yourself.
- 2) Fix your gaze on the floor about one and a half tatami mats [approximately 3 meters] in front of you, and step forward with the foot furthest from the display alcove. Without lifting the sole of the advancing foot from the floor, gradually step forward, and, breathing in deeply, take a full stride. During this process, keep the advancing foot light and have the other foot support the body weight.

The explanation continues, but it is hard to understand by written explanation alone. Note, however, that in the gliding walk, “the sole of the foot is not lifted from the floor.” The explanation confirms this point at the end:

The knack to this walking style is, regardless of whether the foot is advancing or retreating, never to remove the heel from the mat. . . . Pay particular attention to keeping the upper body upright, with the hips pulled back and the knees unbent.\*

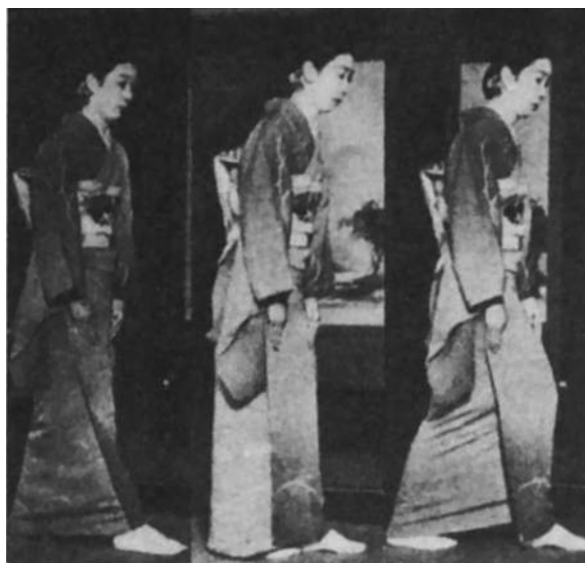
No matter how many times you read an explanation of an action, it is impossible to understand until you have seen it in practice. The essential point of this gliding walking style is anyway to never let the heel leave the ground and to bend the knees as little as possible.

I am sure some readers have spotted my intention in mentioning the gliding walk. In brief, my interest in tea walking techniques

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\* Adapted from the original by the author.





Gliding walk (*neru*). *Left to right*: Foot further from the display alcove advances; foot closer to the display alcove is raised; foot closer to the display alcove advances. Reproduced by permission from Ōe Sumi, *Reigi sahō zenshū* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1938).

lies in my concern to identify the origins of how one walks in the tea room, rather than in the garden approach. A sliding step or “foot-sliding,” known as *suri-ashi* in Japanese, is the set way for walking in a tea room. So where did this sliding step originate? I think that its origins lie in the gliding walk.

The gliding walk is of great vintage. The verb “to glide” (*neru*) appears in Murasaki Shikibu’s eleventh-century *Tale of Genji*, indicating that it was fully established in Heian-period imperial court rituals. This same gliding method then appeared in various later forms, referred to by an array of terms such as *kata-neri*, *otoshi-neri*, *hoso-neri*, and *ara-neri*. We must seek the origins of all these forms in China.

As indicated by the Sinologist Tanaka Kenji (1912–2002), two types of walking appear in the Chinese Confucian *Book of Rites* (*Lǐjì*); namely, *xuqu* (Jp. *josū*, literally “slow”) and *jiqu* (Jp. *shissū*,

literally “fast”). However, this is complicated by a note identifying three styles: in essence, these are walking, walking fast, and running. Basically, however, there is just slow and fast. These two walking types are not simply a question of speed, but also of style.

In the *Kǒng Yǐngdá shū*, a commentary on the *Book of Rites* by Confucian scholar Kǒng Yǐngdá (574–648), there is the phrase, “Do not lift the foot, and ensure that the *qi* flows.” There are many commentaries on the *Book of Rites*, some of which say that the instruction not to lift the foot pertains to slow walking, and means to drag the heel. The phrase in Kǒng Yǐngdá’s commentary means that the foot should not leave the ground, and the *qi*, which appears to indicate the bottom hem of a skirt-like garment, should flow along the ground like water. So this walking is effectively sliding along the ground or, as mentioned earlier, “foot-sliding” (*suri-ashi*).

The Japanese were influenced by Chinese walking styles. When Japanese nobility thought of the gliding walk, they referred to this *Book of Rites*. The Heian-period manuals on court etiquette even quoted from the *Notes on the Book of Rites* (*Lǐjì zhùshū*).

When you are about to step out, first lift the tips of the toes and then draw the foot along, keeping the heel on the ground.

Heian-period manuals for court etiquette tell us that this way of walking was called *ogimushi*—literally “inchworm.” As the foot advances, the toes are lifted and the heel slides along the ground, in a style of walking that resembles an inchworm; hence the name. Diaries of Heian nobles indicate that questions of when and where one glide-walks were of great importance in court rituals. By the Muromachi period (1336–1573), courtiers seemed no longer to understand the walking methods described

in these manuals, and some had to be trained by court etiquette specialists. Sanjō Kintada (1324–1384), whose diary *Gogumaiki* covers the years 1361 to 1383 and details information on court rites of the day, was one such courtier. The advice from the court etiquette specialist of the day, Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388), was to aspire to “a walking style that advances smoothly, as if one foot is gliding through the air.”

As we can see here, a gliding walk meant sliding the feet along the ground while raising and lowering the toes. The upper body, in conformity with that walking style, glides in a stable posture.

Even today we have the verb *neri-aruki*, literally “glide-walk.” A procession or pageant is called an *o-neri* to describe how it glides along. The high-ranking courtesans of Shimabara and other pleasure quarters walk in a way that traces the Chinese character for “eight”; it too is called *o-neri* or a “glide.” This most ritualistic court style of walking spread to the common people in later periods, and as a result, the gliding technique was adopted as an ostentatious walking style for festive events.

### **Feet on the Ground**

The gliding walk used in court rituals requires a stable upper body, and in this sense it is very close to the sliding-walk method adopted in chanoyu. So, we might ask, did the foot-sliding style used in the tea room itself derive from the gliding walk?

Unfortunately, there is no available proof of the origins of tea’s foot-sliding walk. But my hypothesis is that this is indeed the case. The way actors walk in the noh theater, another performing art, is the closest to that used in tea. There are some who say that tea walking originated in noh. If we ask, then, where the noh walking style came from, the probable answer is the gliding-walk style.

During the time of the great noh playwright Zeami (1363–1443)—that is, from around the mid-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century—there was no foot-sliding walk as there is in noh today. Noh adopted the style around the beginning of the Edo period. By this time, noh had become one of the official ceremonial performances for the shogunate, and to that end it acquired a refined, courtly, and ritual quality. It is said that the Shinto rituals at Yoshida Shrine in Kyoto exerted a major influence on that ritualization process. The gliding-walk style was the formal way of walking in Shinto rituals.

When, though, did the sliding walk enter tea? The issue of walking style is something only very recently taken up in tea books. I have yet to find anything on this subject in old texts. Even searching through the training manuals that I have on hand, nothing on the subject appears until the early Shōwa era (1926–1989). In his *Chanoyu sahō* (Way of Tea Etiquette; 1937), Fukian Kyokutei explains that you should, firstly, walk quietly with an appropriate stride; walking with giant steps, walking fast, or other types of noisy walking are totally forbidden. You are, he writes in a reference to foot-sliding, to walk as if slightly rubbing the tatami flooring with your feet.

Again, in Japan’s first radio broadcast on chanoyu—“Chanoyu sahō” (Chanoyu Etiquette; 1927–1928), a program presented by Kameyama Sōgetsu—the term *suri-ashi* does not come up, but in one episode a walking sound was played over the airwaves to convey the walking tempo. The narrator said,

The late tea master Yūmyōsai Genshitsu, eleventh [*sic*] generation head of the Urasenke lineage, was known during his lifetime as a great master of the procedures for tea-making. When Yūmyōsai was at home with nothing to occupy him, he would walk

smoothly around his reception room. As he walked around the room for the second or third time, he would knock his head against the pillars. Why did he hit his head? Because the rhythm of his walking style became erratic.

That Yūmyōsai (1852–1917) would “walk smoothly” tells us that he was practicing his foot-sliding walk. Thus, we can say that today’s foot-sliding walk undoubtedly existed in the Meiji era.

However, there is a mid-Edo-period (early to mid-eighteenth century) tea book called *Chafu*, a massive, eighteen-volume tea encyclopedia. In volume twelve, there is an entry headed, “Things to Keep in Mind during Tea-Making.” It states how it is appropriate for the host, after the guests have entered the room and taken their seats, to clear his throat audibly as he moves from the adjoining room to the preparation room (*mizuya*) so that the guests might hear him coming, and furthermore to walk in such a way that his foot movements are heard by the guests.

The sound of foot movement is, in other words, the sound of feet sliding along the tatami mat. Is it not safe to assume that today’s foot-sliding walk did not exist in tea before the beginning of the Edo period? However, at some point from the mid-Edo period onwards, the foot-sliding walk became the standard in the tea room. Why?

People often say that one’s feet are on the ground, or not on the ground, in the sense of being down to earth. To have your feet on the ground means to be calm, realistic, steady. The opposite of having your feet on the ground is to be in jumping-for-joy mode, to be in a merry state of unbounded joy. As chanoyu developed into *wabi-cha*, it became a place of ascetic practice designed to achieve new spiritual heights; it metamorphosed from the realm of merrymaking into a solemn tea ritual. At the same time, chanoyu

adopted a walking style that was not commonplace, but solemn, rather, and still. It remains unclear whether the origins of tea walking are in *noh*, or whether, as was the case with *noh*, the style was adopted directly from the gliding walk characteristic of court ritual.

## *Chajin*: Tea Devotees and Their Appearance

### Outfitting the Guest

Takayama Ukon (c. 1552–1615), a daimyo and favorite disciple of Rikyū's, could not contain himself when he learned that a tea gathering was being held at Rikyū's place. The guests—the warrior Gamō Ujisato (1556–1595) and another Rikyū disciple, Hosokawa Sansai—were not unknown to him. He set off for Rikyū's place, determined to have the tea master admit him to the event.

But Rikyū was upset. When he heard that Ukon was waiting in the entrance, he was displeased with his take-it-for-granted attitude. Rikyū even considered having the door attendant send Ukon away, beloved disciple though he was. In the end, Rikyū went to meet him in the entrance, intending to scold him.

There he saw Ukon standing disheartened, dressed in a thick, pale blue-green, lined cotton kimono and rough, patched formal samurai overgarment (*kamishimo*). When he saw Ukon's appearance, Rikyū relented, and made up his mind to admit him as a guest; indeed, his main guest. Ujisato and Sansai had already arrived, and were undoubtedly dressed in proper *kosode* kimono, or had on the formal samurai overgarments, splendid but inappropriate for *wabi-cha*. It was Ukon's simple cotton overgarment that

made him eligible for special treatment. Rikyū apologized to the others, explaining why he now welcomed Ukon as his main guest. As the scholar Nishibori Ichizō (1903–1970) noted in his *Chadō kōgenroku* (Records of Sayings on the Way of Tea; 1942), this was a tea gathering where Ukon's appearance accorded with the spirit of *wabi*.

When *wabi-cha* emerged as a new tea style, it led to a new way of thinking about a tea devotee's appearance. As Rikyū wrote in the manuscript *Rikyū kyaku no shidai* (Rikyū's Precepts for Guests), it was probably Takeno Jōō who first insisted on appearance.

Jōō said that you must wear *tabi* [split-toed socks] in both winter and summer. But summer heat makes you sweat, and an unexpected tea event means that even if you have on clean new *tabi*, you should take them off, wash your feet well, and enter the tea room that way.

Today, too, people wear *tabi* in both summer and winter. But this way of wearing *tabi* in summer—taking off even fresh new *tabi*, washing the feet, and entering the tea room barefooted—was an Edo-period practice.

If tea were nothing more than a passing pleasure, then there would be no reason to create rules for attire. Jōō's insistence on *wabi-cha* also meant the beginning of a new emphasis in choices of attire. He did not insist on new restrictions or taboos; rather, his aim was to express *wabi*—that is, an unostentatious aesthetic of refined simplicity, in terms of dress. The Takayama Ukon episode related above is one such example.

During Rikyū's time, the attire worn by tea devotees gradually came to follow one style. The *Yamanoue Sōji ki* record is revealing here. Yamanoue Sōji advises guests going to a tea event to

wear a jacket of a high-quality bleached cotton known as *sarashi*, lined with finely woven, soft lightweight silk in plain weave. Paper should be used for the collar and cuffs, so that they could easily be replaced. However, for events such as the debut appearance of a precious utensil, or a first visit to that host's tea house, the guest should wear a dressy kimono with close-fitting sleeves (*kosode*)—preferably new—for his outer layer.

The writer then recommends a *kosode* of colored cross-weave silk or Chinese-style silk brocade (*karaori*) when attending an event held by a high-ranking person. So a more decorative formal outfit was acceptable, but only on special occasions. For a tea gathering held by a *wabi chajin* or *wabi* tea devotee—that is, a tea devotee who is guided by the aesthetic principle of *wabi* and has cast off the social and mental fetters of earthly existence—the writer advises that padded (lined) cotton or paper garments waterproofed with persimmon sap were entirely appropriate. Indeed, it seems that a persimmon-sap-waterproofed garment best pleased one aspiring to be a *wabi* tea devotee. But it was important not to overdo it.

Take the example of the Great Kitano Tea Gathering. Rikyū saw Sansai wearing a garment of paper fabric, and ordered him to go change his attire. On that grand occasion, no matter how *wabi* it might be, a paper garment was deemed unsuitable. At a major tea gathering, the rules as set out in the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* record applied:

When going to a higher-ranking person's event, one should wear a *jittoku* [short, jacket-like outer garment] or *kosode*, and in either case, it should be new.

The arrival of *wabi-cha* meant a new distinction in attire between formal and informal. So what was the appearance of a



noble or great personage like Toyotomi Hideyoshi at an event like the Great Kitano Tea Gathering, where Rikyū scolded Sansai for wearing a paper garment?

According to the *Sōtan nikki*, a grand tea gathering was held at Osaka Castle on February 10, 1587. The entry relates how Toyotomi Hideyoshi wore, for his overgarment, a *kosode* of sumptuous Chinese-style brocade with a five-layered collar. Above it he draped a short overcoat (*dōfuku*) of white paper, lined with fine silk. His sash was red and very long, and tied in such a way that one end hung down beneath his knees. On his head he wore a yellow-green (*moegi*) head covering of silk crepe, under which his hair was left loose. His *kosode* was so long that his feet were not visible.

Unusual in the above account is the mention of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's hair being left loose underneath the yellow-green silk crepe head covering. Loose, untied hair has deep meaning in certain folk customs, but its appearance here could be called "outlandish." There is also the curious observation of his feet being hidden beneath the hem of his garment, as though he were a man of small build. It was gaudy attire, certainly, but this was how the ruler of the realm appeared at an important tea event.

In the *Sōtan nikki*, there are four references to Hideyoshi's attire, including this one. Two times he is noted as wearing a *hakama*, the traditional loose trouser-like garment. And at a tea gathering held the year before his death, he wore—appropriately enough for a man of advanced years—a persimmon-sap-waterproofed paper kimono and the head covering typical of a *wabi* tea devotee. In any event, these entries show that there were no set rules for the attire to be worn at tea events by high-ranking men such as Hideyoshi. One gets the sense that participants wore gaudy attire at festive tea events, while people adopted the attire of a *wabi* devotee for private tea events.

### “New Is Good”

The *Yamanoue Sōji ki* recommended that both the *jittoku*, the jacket-like outer garment, and the *kosode*, the main kimono garment, be new, which seems somewhat extravagant for a *wabi* tea devotee. There were, however, certain items of clothing and personal use that even a *wabi* tea devotee had to have new. Yamanoue Sōji wrote that for each occasion the following should be procured new and unused: a sash, a head covering, a set of tissues, a pair of cloths for wiping sweat, a folding fan, and a sturdy pair of straw sandals. He adds that, on the condition that guest and host are on close terms, the over-jacket (*jittoku*) need not be brand new. But “it is best if the vest (*kataginu*) and trousers (*hakama*) are always new.”

*Wabi* lies in a freshness, an untainted newness. New tissues and cloths for hand-wiping are to be expected for each event, but to get a new fan and a new pair of straw sandals each time would be a considerable expense. This explains why it was permissible to wear older garments at tea gatherings among those on close terms. According to the *Chōandō ki*, the tea-ceremony memoirs of tea master and monk Kubo Toshiyo (1571–1640), Rikyū said that all that was necessary was gray-colored attire made of ink-dyed cotton, but the sash, *tabi* socks and fan must be new each time. This corresponds with the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* account, although the latter omits reference to the *tabi* socks. The *Chōandō ki* continues, “Thereafter, Rikyū gray (*nezumi iro*) became all the fashion.” The tone referred to as “Rikyū gray” created the chanoyu image; this is a point worth stressing. In another place, Rikyū said that he disliked indigo-dyed navy blue. In terms of color, too, *wabi-cha* began to insist on exclusively gray tones, principally “Rikyū gray.” The references to tea attire in the *Chadenshū* (Collection of

Tea Transmissions) of 1847 make it clear that in the past, no one wore dark navy blue for tea. This was because the color impeded the way of tea. Rikyū usually wore black, but he would always choose a color—not necessarily black—which did not clash with the mounting of a renowned hanging scroll if one were to be hung in the tea room. This level of severity in matters of color, however, can be considered a relatively late development.

New, unworn *tabi* were essential, but unlike today's, which are typically white, dark-blue *tabi* were also worn. As noted above, Takeno Jōō insisted on the wearing of *tabi* in both summer and winter. The reason he made this stipulation was because *tabi* were originally designed to keep the feet warm in winter, and it was therefore not normal to wear them in summer. The *Fuhaku hikki*, a 1798 book written by tea master Kawakami Fuhaku (1716–1807), mentions that at summer brazier-season (*furo*) tea events, *tabi* were not worn. So, up until the mid-Edo period at the very least, in the summer people attending tea events went into the tea room in bare feet.

The normalization of *tabi*-wearing at tea events raises the question of the materials used to make *tabi*. In the medieval period, *tabi* were often made of leather, but cotton *tabi* also appeared during the period from Jōō to Rikyū. These cotton *tabi* were worn for tea, which lead to their nickname *sukiya tabi*, literally “*tabi* for the tea room.”

The Edo-period historical study *Ryūtei ki* by popular novelist Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783–1842) quotes the following from a 1554 tea text: “Do not wear leather *hakama*, or leather *tabi*, and do not wear one *dōfuku* overcoat over another.” Thus we know that leather *tabi* were worn during the first half of the sixteenth century. We can surmise that there were already cotton *tabi* by that time, too, since the author pointedly refers to leather. It is surely

reasonable to assume this much. As the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1600) progressed, cotton *tabi* were frequently given as gifts, which is an indication of the spread of cotton *tabi* usage. And there is no need to repeat here that the appearance of *tabi* influenced the style of walking in the tea room, as well as the colors of the tea room. That being the case, we can consider the appearance of *tabi* as one component in Rikyū's perfecting of the appearance of tea.

Of course, in Rikyū's time, tea attire had not been completely codified. Much that was taken for granted during Rikyū's time was later lost. An example would be the head covering (*zukin*) that is almost never seen today.

Head coverings frequently appear in records of Hideyoshi's attire. The portrait by Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539–1610) of Rikyū shows him wearing a head covering (see frontispiece). When Kobori Enshū was a child of ten years old, serving as an attendant to Toyotomi Hidenaga (1540–1591), he met Rikyū when the latter visited Hidenaga to teach him tea. He saw Rikyū wearing a cotton head covering on that occasion.

Today head coverings are only permitted for particularly meritorious old people, but in the past there were no such taboos; they were worn freely. Many tea masters were tonsured religious figures who followed in the tradition of the men who served as the Ashikaga shoguns' aesthetic advisors and curators (*dōbōshū*). To protect their shaven heads from the cold, they needed to wear a head covering. But with the advent of the Edo period, tea masters of that tradition became a thing of the past. In their place, domain lords such as Furuta Oribe (1544–1615) and Kobori Enshū, two of the greatest tea masters of their time, came to the fore.

Other tea masters in this new era included the four men known as Sen Sōtan's "Shitennō" (Four Heavenly Generals): Yamada Sōhen (1627–1708), Sugiki Fusai (1628–1706), Miyake Bōyō (1580–1649),



Portrait of Miyake Bōyō. Reproduced by permission from Hayashiya Tatsusaburō and Murai Yasuhiko, *Zuroku chadōshi* (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1962).

and Fujimura Yōken (1613–1699). Of the four, only Sōhen had a Buddhist background, in his case affiliation with the True Pure Land sect. The three others all had different backgrounds, with Fusai a low-ranking Shinto priest from Ise, Yōken a merchant, and Bōyō a Confucian. Naturally, none of them had a shaved head, and none wore clerical attire. For example, the image here of Miyake Bōyō shows that even though his hair has thinned on account of his advanced years, he is not bald. His garments are bright red. This, combined with his silk over-jacket, is the attire of a Confucian scholar. Of course, he does not wear a head covering with this outfit. Thus, the typical image of a tea master changes from that of a religious figure similar to the shogun's aesthetic advisors and curators (*dōbōshū*) of yesteryear to that of a layman. This aspect of the development of early modern tea is symbolized in the disappearance of head coverings.

## Tea Names and *Jittoku* Jackets

### Assumed Names

When one has studied and attained a certain level in chanoyu, it is normal to receive a tea name, or *chamei*, from the head of the tea family. There are three Sen tea lineages descended from Rikyū, and they bestow two-character tea names, the first character of which is always *sō*. This explains why another term for *chamei* is *sōmei*.

Why is it the practice in tea not to use one's real name, but rather an assumed name? In fact, of course, the practice is found not only in tea; many other Japanese cultural genres involve the bestowal of an artistic name. The use of assumed names, which have meaning only in a given realm, became normal practice. The assumed name expresses the idea that one's own name belongs to the secular world, and that one has now entered a separate, specific realm.

As I mentioned above, in chanoyu the name that one receives begins with the *sō* character. The heads of the three Sen families respectively have *Sōsa*, *Sōshitsu*, and *Sōshu* as their tea names. In giving their students a *sōmei*, they effectively impart the *sō* of their own name to the student. We might then inquire into the origin of that *sō* character in the three Sen families' tea names. The character *sō* was in the Buddhist names (*hōki*) granted by the Zen temple Daitokuji to subsequent generations of Sen family heads.

It was the custom at Daitokuji to include the *sō* character, or another character read *shō* or *jō*, in the Buddhist names they bestowed on their monks. For example, the names of famous monks affiliated with the temple include Ikkyū Sōjun (1394–1481),

Shun'oku Sōen (1529–1611), Kokei Sōchin (1532–1597), and Takuan Sōhō (1573–1646), where Sōjun, Sōen, Sōchin, and Sōhō are their Buddhist names. Tsuda Sōgyū (d. 1591) and Imai Sōkyū (1520–1593) were two late sixteenth-century tea devotees from Sakai who received *sō* names. This practice applies to the three Sen family heads, too. Few names using the *shō* (*jō*) character were given by Daitokuji, but one example is found in the Buddhist name of the monk Ittō Shōteki (1539–1612). The *shō* or *jō* character informed the creation of the names Takeno Jōō and Yabunouchi Jōchi, significant figures in the history of chanoyu.

In other words, tea names with this *sō* character stand as proof that the holder is a lay person who has taken Buddhist vows at Daitokuji, just like the Daitokuji monks, who also have *sō* names. These names express the half-monk, half-layperson quality of the tea devotee. For as long he uses his tea name, a devotee must assume the self-awareness of one who has left the secular world behind. Again, the idea that one must abandon the secular world was the reason for abandoning one's secular name. Tea names take their cue from Buddhism.

Rikyū's Buddhist name was Sōeki, and this is how he appears in contemporary diaries of tea gatherings. The first time he was referred to as "Rikyū" was at a tea event held for Emperor Ōgimachi (r. 1557–1586) in the Kyoto imperial palace in 1585. The emperor is said to have bestowed the name "Rikyū" on him as an honorary title of the sort given to lay Buddhists monks. Thereafter, Rikyū used both Rikyū and Sōeki, a combination of lay Buddhist title and Buddhist name. The name Ikkyū Sōjun is a similar pairing of Ikkyū, a lay title, and Sōjun, a Buddhist name. In brief, tea devotees could receive the same titles as those bestowed on Buddhist monks, all the while maintaining a lay lifestyle.

People who seem to be half-monk, half-layperson appear

throughout Japanese history. For example, the medieval shoguns' cultural advisors (*dōbōshū*) were of this type. These men took so-called *ami* names, such as Nōami, Geiami, and Sōami. The *ami* character is an abbreviation of Amidabutsu, or Amitabha Buddha, the principle object of worship in the Ji sect of Buddhism. Regardless of whether or not these men were actually Ji-sect monks, their assumption of Ji-sect names enabled them to transcend ordinary secular status. Many of these close attendants of the shogun were of humble origins, but they were required to wait on preeminent people. So they took on a Buddhist monk aspect and transcended their secular selves in order to be allowed to sit with them. Their use of assumed names to suggest a Buddhist connection is the same as the contemporary use of tea names. Just as in the past an *ami* name differentiated a person from the lay world, so, too, does chanoyu make such a distinction through its use of tea names.

### **What Is a *Jittoku*?**

If a tea devotee's tea name signals his half-monk, half-layperson status, then it is the *jittoku*, a type of short over-jacket, which renders that status visible.

Even today, the *jittoku* is formal wear for a suitably qualified male tea devotee. It is made of black silk gauze fabric (*sha*), fastened with flat straps, and is somewhat shorter than the more commonly worn *haori* kimono jacket.

Of course, *jittoku* are not only worn by tea devotees, and the *jittoku* of older periods seem to have been quite different from those of today.

Dictionaries and encyclopedias such as the Meiji-period *Koji ruien* (Encyclopedia of Ancient Matters) suggest that the term *jittoku* first appeared in 1422 in the *Kaei sandai-ki* (Record of the Flowering Three Generations), the records of the Muromachi



shogunate. When the military commander Hatakeyama Mochikuni (1398–1455) made his pilgrimage to the Ise Shrines, his entourage wore *jittoku*. By the first half of the fifteenth century—even before the birth of Jukō and the creation of *wabi-cha*—*jittoku* were already worn as travel attire.

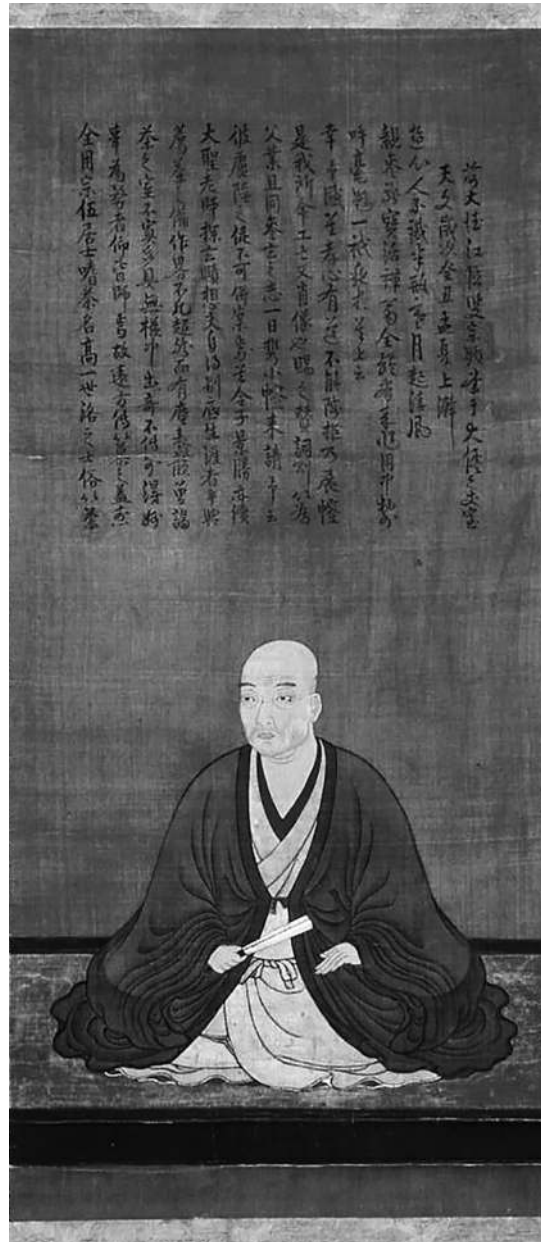
The oft-quoted etymology of *jittoku*, which is written with two characters meaning “ten” and “virtues,” is that it was a corruption, or slang variant, of the monk robe known as a *jikitotsu*. It is easy enough to understand that a pronunciation change may explain how *jikitotsu* became *jittoku*, but the actual process by which travel attire and a monk’s robes were transformed into *jittoku* is somewhat complicated.

Here I will omit the interim reasoning, and simply explain that the most important factor is that a *jittoku* was originally dyed black. That is, a *jittoku* was an overgarment meant to symbolize the shedding of worldly attachments.

So how did the *jittoku* make its way into chanoyu?

The portrait of Jūshiya Sōgo (d. 1552), tea devotee and older colleague of Jōō, shows him wearing a *jittoku*. The inscription is dated 1553, which makes this the oldest known portrait of a tea devotee. The *jittoku* is painted in such a manner that the garment beneath is visible through the weave; it was probably the thin, semi-translucent silk weave known today as *sha*. However, textual sources also specifically describe the fabric used for *jittoku* as being one of two different kinds of semi-transparent silk weaves, known as *sha* or *ro*. Sometimes, sources list the fabric as silk. Thus we know of instances in antiquity where the *jittoku* was simply silk cloth of some description—but, crucially, it was always dyed black.

In antiquity, the Japanese realm of refined aesthetic pursuits was closely linked to retreats into Buddhism. For example, during



A *jittoku*, as worn in a portrait of Jūshiya Sōgo. Courtesy of Santokuan Bunko.

the Heian period (794–1185) the imperial guard Satō Norikiyo (1118–1190) found it difficult to abandon his devotion to the art of poetry, and so he severed his connection to the secular realm, dedicated himself to poetry, and retired from the world as the poet Saigyō. In other words, as Mezaki Tokuei (1921–2000) observes in

his *Saigyō no shisōshiteki kenkyū* (A Historical Study of Saigyō's Thought; 1978), it was common for practitioners of the Japanese arts to act as if they had abandoned the secular world for the purpose of indulging in cultural pursuits.

But to distance oneself from the secular world did not mean a monastic life. Rather, a man would take vows and live in his own home. Such men were in effect half-monk, having received a Buddhist name, but they were laymen with ordinary lay jobs. They were indeed half-monk, half-layperson. This was the lifestyle adopted by tea devotees from Jōō and Rikyū onwards.

The 1723 *Chadō bōgetsushū*, a set of records of the Yōken tea tradition, relates a famous episode concerning the young Rikyū. The youth Yoshirō (Rikyū's childhood name) was long desirous of participating in a tea event held by Jōō, and eventually Jōō invited him to a ceremony to mark the opening of a container of new tea leaves. (The event is known in Japanese as *kuchikiri*.) The event was scheduled for the following day, but Yoshirō took the liberty of declining, and asked Jōō to wait three days. Three days later, Yoshirō appeared with his head newly shaved and wearing a *jittoku*. He said, "I asked for a three-day postponement because I had to go to Kyoto to get a *jittoku*. That is why I sought postponement."

This episode, edited by later generations, does symbolize how a tea devotee begins with the wearing of a *jittoku*. And it is appropriate that Yoshirō was not only wearing a *jittoku*, but also had his head shaved.

There is a fascinating passage in the entry for August 7, 1584, in Tsuda Sōgyū's *Tennōjiya kaiki* (Records of Tennōjiya), a record of tea gatherings compiled by the Tennōjiya merchant family. It explains that a person from Kyoto named Toraya Yashichi was introduced into the discipline of tea, whereupon Tsuda Sōgyū

bestowed on him the name Jōi, before presenting him with a *jittoku* in honor of the occasion.

The young Rikyū got himself a *jittoku* to wear on that day, but Tsuda Sōgyū presented a *jittoku* to Toraya Yashichi to mark his birth as a young tea devotee. In either case, the *jittoku* marked the devotee's new independent standing as a “tea person” (*chajin*).

In the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, formal tea attire for a tea devotee included the *kosode* kimono, a short loose-fitting overcoat or *dōfuku*, and other garments. Clearly, the *jittoku* was not the only formal attire. Indeed, in the portraits of Rikyū and Sōtan owned by the Omotesenke tea tradition, both men are depicted wearing short, loose-fitting overcoats; there are no *jittoku* in sight. Note, however, that in the Masaki Art Museum's portrait of Rikyū, he *is* wearing a *jittoku*. As is evident from Tsuda Sōgyū's record mentioned above, some at the time did consider the *jittoku* to be formal tea-devotee wear. Eventually, the *jittoku* established itself as formal wear for tea devotees, as distinct from simple tea practitioners.

The *jittoku* appeared when a person was inducted into the way of tea; one wore the *jittoku* to assume a Buddhist bearing. In other words, the sort of disposition demanded of someone who undergoes Buddhist training is what qualifies him to wear a *jittoku*.

The *Chanoyudō kikigaki* (Commentary on the Way of Chanoyu) is a tea text of unknown date written by the Kanazawa samurai Ōhira Gen'emon and handed down in the Omotesenke tea tradition. It includes an observation on a tea gathering held in 1660 by the fourth-generation head of the Urasenke lineage, Sensō Sōshitsu (1622–1697). Ōhira, who was a disciple, observed that Sensō “took off his *jittoku* when he was acting as serving assistant at the gathering.” He was helping serve the *kaiseki* meal that preceded tea, and of course the menu included fish dishes, so it was not Buddhist vegetarian cuisine. At the risk of overthinking

this, it could well be that he took off his *jittoku*, symbolic of his Buddhist vows, in order to avoid breaking those vows by serving meals that included fish.

A tea gathering was a temporary retreat from the secular world. Tea devotees do not renounce the world and leave their homes permanently; they remain ordinary lay people. Is a tea gathering not, then, a way for them to escape the secular world temporarily? This is surely why there has been such a distaste for the dust of the world entering the tea room, and why Rikyū admonishes participants to avoid discussing topics of worldly interest. Indeed, tea replicates the form of a thatched hut in the mountains, and demands that one stoop down to get through the crawl-through entrance. None of this is ostentatious; what is desired by Rikyū is a *wabi*-ness. It is the wearing of *jittoku* which symbolizes the spirit of a *wabi* tea devotee.

## Chapter 4

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# TEA-GATHERING STYLE

## The Genius of Style (*Shukō*)

### Happenings

In the 1960s and 1970s, “happenings,” a type of art movement, were all the rage. Today, the term “happening” has been absorbed into the Japanese language with the meaning of “something unexpected,” but then it was a term referring to a specific art or theater movement. A happening had no script or libretto; it only had actors, audience, and a performance place; nobody knew what would happen or how it would develop. Happenings were a revolt against earlier art forms, which were all produced in a calculated manner. They sought to extract some unimagined creativity by acting from a blank page. And yet, happenings sought only the unexpected, and as such, appear not to have had fruitful outcomes. That is because, from the outset, they abandoned production. A good analogy can be found in theater, where two things are needed: a purposefulness directed at a particular outcome, and a one-off unexpectedness that is to be articulated within the space of the stage. Both are necessary.

The same can be said about a tea gathering (*chakai*). The work of the host and guests make a tea gathering a place where unexpected developments occur. The guests’ actions are born from accommodating the host’s thoughts and desires. When the workings of both align, then a truly great tea gathering is achieved. The interest of a tea event lies in that which cannot be planned or calculated. This is similar to a happening. And yet without some form of production process, nothing significant will come of a tea gathering. Such significant outcomes are premised on the role

of the host as producer. This is where the Japanese term *shukō*, variously translatable as “style” or “ingenious idea,” comes into it. Japanese culture is probably the culture that most delights in style in this sense. It is hard to convey to foreigners the subtlety of this sort of style. It is perhaps similar to, but nonetheless distinct from, the Western European idea of a “theme.” To put it bluntly, style is when you apply artistic ingenuity to a given theme. As Hata Kōhei (1935–) writes in *Shukō to shizen* (Style and Nature; 1975), it is a man-made, artificial thing, but it will only succeed if it appears natural. To paraphrase the words of tea master Katagiri Sekishū (1605–1673), as recorded in his 1665 *Sekishū sanbyaku-ka-jō* (Sekishū’s Three Hundred Articles), that which has aged is good, and that which has been made to age is bad. However, conversely, the more that style in this sense is artificial, the more it is attractive. That is because the genius of style and the unexpected are two sides of the same coin.

It was not so long ago, it seems, that ingenious style entered chanoyu. During the nascent period of *wabi-cha*, it was chanoyu itself that imparted style to the banquet gathering. In other words, banqueting’s long history, stretching back to antiquity, indicates that banqueting styles emerged in response to the fashions and institutions of different periods. In medieval banquets, it was linked-verse poetry (*renga*), flower arranging (*ikebana*), and chanoyu itself that gave these events their style. Thus, there were some banquets where one drank sake and composed linked verse, and others where the interest was in *ikebana*. There were also banquets that combined two or more of these aspects of style. Chanoyu itself was certainly one style. Thus, it was only after tea gatherings were released from the banquet construct and became independent events that ingenious style could develop within them. This development postdates the formation of *wabi-cha*. Tea was



nothing more than a stylistic addition to a medieval-period banquet; it then acquired a unique style of its own. The critical juncture was “summer bath” tea (*rinkan chanoyu*).

### Summer Bath Tea (*Rinkan Chanoyu*)

Even a non-drinker finds a glass of beer tasty after walking in hot weather. And for a drinker, there is nothing tastier than a cold beer after a hot bath. In a period when beer was not available, tea was the after-bath drink. In the summer, rinsing off the sweat of the day in the bath and putting on fresh, newly washed clothes, then enjoying a cup of tea: this was luxury, the luxurious style of summer.

The following anecdote is from the Edo-period (1603–1867) collection of essays *Unpyō zasshi* (Clouds of Floating Grasses). It was one summer day, and Rikyū was visiting the poet and tea devotee Hechikan in the Yamashina district of Kyoto. As he was about to enter the garden approach, Rikyū noticed that some trick was in play. He thought, “That Hechikan, he is up to no good.” It was some sort of pitfall. “Ok, I will play along with Hechikan’s trick.” So did he cry out, and stumble into the trap set for him? It was Rikyū, after all, so he may well have done something of the sort. Hearing Rikyū’s voice, Hechikan rushes from the tea room. “Oh! How careless of me!” Apologizing profusely, he leads Rikyū to the bathing room, relieves him of his soiled garments, and lets him take a bath. He lays out a new summer robe and has Rikyū change before inviting him into the tea room. Washed clean of all the sweat and dust of the road, enjoying the sensation of the fresh garments on his skin, Rikyū quietly enjoys Hechikan’s inventive “style.”

This tale recounts Hechikan’s creative intent and Rikyū’s “tea-sensitivity” in responding to the host. But this is not what I want to concentrate on here. I want to focus on the bath and its

role in imparting style to the summer tea function. In fact, a summer bathing session was a very common way of adding style to a medieval banquet. This practice was then inherited as an aspect of style in tea gatherings during Rikyū's time.

The fifteenth-century *Kagakushū* and other medieval dictionaries include terms for summer bathing pronounced *rinkan* and written with various character combinations that can mean, for example, “in the forest” or “washing off sweat.” According to the folklorist Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), there were in his time place-names where the character for forest or grove was read *furo*, which is homophonous with the Japanese word for bath. So it could be that the “in the forest” characters are very old. The word *rinkan* does not simply mean bathing in summer; it implies heating the bath, inviting guests over, and enjoying all manner of performing arts after bathing. Chanoyu was one such art.

The following is the description of a *rinkan* tea event in the famous fifteenth-century *Kyōgaku shiyōshō*, the diary of the monk Kyōgaku (1395–1473). First, here is the relevant passage:

Today was the first *rinkan* of the year. All of the young members of the Furuichi family were on bath-preparation duty. The tea event was held in the bath area; tea from Uji (good tea) and tea from other sources (low-grade tea) was presented in two containers. Dainties consisted of two pails of white melon and a tray of bayberries. A light repast of *sōmen* noodles was served. For seasoning, roasted salt was served on lotus leaves.

This tea gathering was held on July 11, 1469, so it was already summer. The author Kyōgaku, a monk at An'iji, Kōfukuji Temple, was invited to a banquet held by Furuichi In'ei (1439–1505), one of the powerful warrior monks at Kōfukuji. This entry describes

the bathing and tea event (*rinkan*). Kyōgaku says that this was the first bathing and tea event of the year, and all of the young members of the Furuichi family prepared the wood and heated the bath. It may not seem to matter who prepared the bath, but that is absolutely not the case. Here the term *taku*, literally stoking the fire, would seem to indicate who was playing the role of host for the bathing banquet. Stoking the fire for the bath—not leaving such bath preparation to those of lower rank—was surely one aspect of a host’s act of welcoming his guests. From a later age, there is this comment in the *Rōjin zatsuwa* (Reminiscences of an Old Man), a collection of discourses by the Confucian physician Emura Sensai (1565–1664):

Once, when [Gamō] Ujisato entertained his vassals, he himself donned a protective headcloth and fired the hot water for the bath.

This passage leaves little doubt that the person who fired up the bath was unexpectedly important. Indeed, the *Kyōgaku shiyōshō* always notes who fired the bath. Here lies the problem. The chanoyu was carried out in the bathing environment, and two types of tea were involved: one a higher-grade tea from Uji, another, a lower grade tea from a different region. This meant that there was to be a tea-tasting contest in which guests would attempt to distinguish real Uji tea from that of other regions. And melons, bayberries, and *sōmen* noodles were laid out for guests to enjoy freely. Thus, we can see that tea with a bath was central to the ingenious style of the banquet on this occasion. Earlier scholars dubbed this type of tea gathering “a bathing and tea event” (*rinkan chanoyu*), and highlighted it as one type of chanoyu popular during the medieval period. The *Kyōgaku shiyōshō* goes on to say that Kyōgaku did likewise, and then some 150

other men got in the bath, and even the maids got in the bath.

The *Kyōgaku shiyōshō* mentions many other bathing and tea events, indicating that a banquet with bathing was an extremely common form of “summer style.” An examination of each of those events shows it was not only chanoyu that imparted style to bathing and tea gatherings. In the entry for August 26 of that same year (1469), the author said that there was *rikka*- (literally, standing flowers) style flower arranging at a bathing and tea event. Small folding screens were set up on small boats, a painting was hung, and then two vases of flowers were arranged. *Renga* (linked verse) also added style to summer bathing events. In the entry for July 29, 1457, there is this:

A *rinkan furo* event was held, Kan'en fired the bath, and a *renga* poetry composition session occurred. . . . *Sōmen* noodles were served, and because one of my fellow participants said, “Let us hold these *renga* gatherings once a month from now on,” we created a small folding-book-style notebook of the *renga* composed. “The wind in the pines disperses the heat, a passing shower.” The bath was prepared because the entire group desired it.

Guests clearly participated in a linked-verse session even as they enjoyed a summer bathing event. Kyōgaku composed the opening line about wind in the pines (*matsukaze*). This is what I meant when I said earlier that chanoyu, along with linked verse and ikebana, was just one of the many different ways of adding ingenious style to a summer bathing party banquet.

### **The Question of the *Sairei zōshi* (Festival Picture Scroll)**

If summer bathing events were such a common a way of adding ingenious style to tea events before Rikyū's time, then perhaps

there is some visual source that conveys the appearance of such an event. In the *Zuroku chadōshi* (Illustrated History of the Way of Tea), historians Hayashiya Tatsusaburō (1914–1998) and Murai Yasuhiko (b. 1930) introduced one scene from the *Sairei zōshi*, a Muromachi-period (1336–1573) picture scroll (see page 126), as good visual evidence of bathing at a chanoyu event. Murai offered the following explanation:

The photograph is a precious picture suggestive of a bathing and tea event, with the bath in the center surrounded by duckboards, where the tea is prepared. A man, naked from the waist up, carries in the light meal served before tea on a tray. A built-in desk and shelves can be seen in the neighboring room.

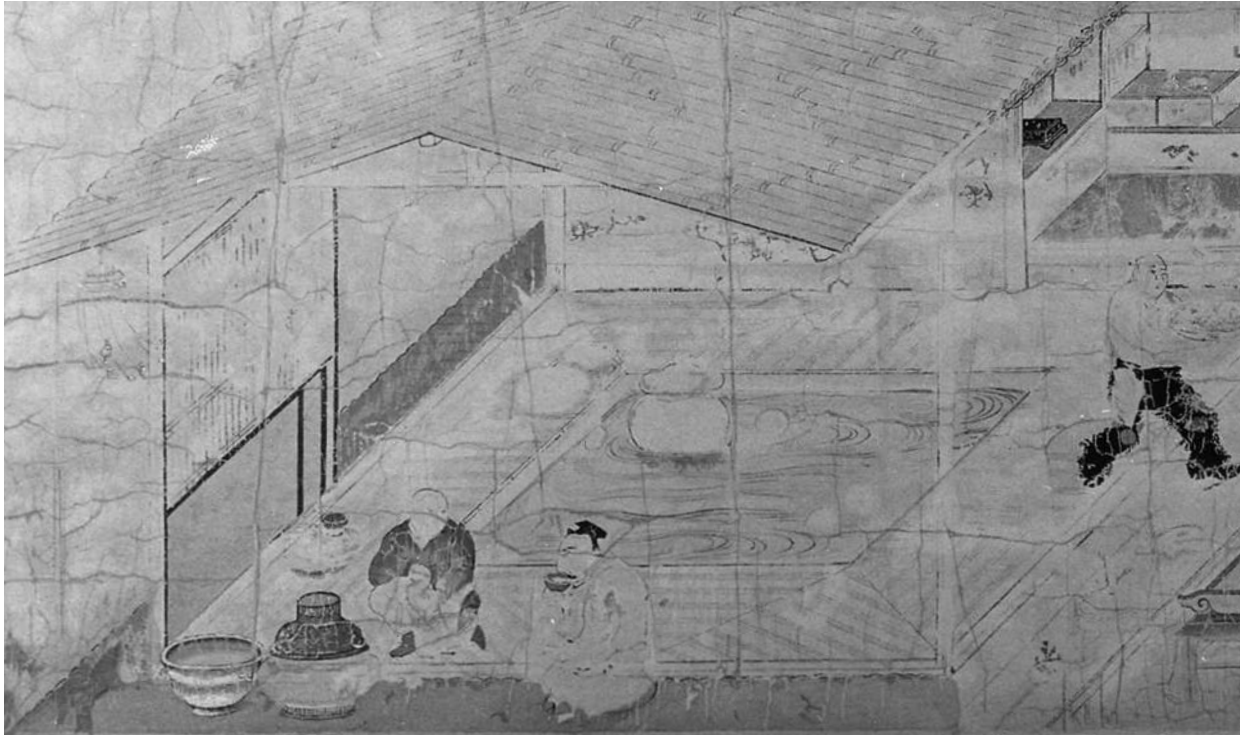
Was it actually like that?

I certainly thought that all was just as Murai described it. However, in an essay published in the summer 1939 issue of the journal *Heishi*, Sawashima Eitarō described the building as “a simple structure with a bamboo roof that accommodates a spring.” The very idea of a bath is somewhat strange. Indeed, this building proves not to have been a bath at all, but rather a pavilion built over a spring.

Why would it be odd if this central area of the scene from the *Sairei zōshi*, drawn with a water motif and surrounding duckboards, were in fact a bath? To answer this, we must first think about the history of the bath. There are two bathing styles: bathing in a bathtub as is practiced today, and the steam bath, which was common in the past. Generally speaking, there were three options. The steam bath was the most common form, with the hot-water cauldron outside. The steam would rise from it and be drawn into a room surrounded by duckboards. The people taking

a bath would enter the steam room through a narrow entrance, sweat in there, and then go out to the duckboard-floor area, where they would pour cold or hot water over themselves. This bathing style can be seen in the *Boki-e*, a set of mid-fourteenth-century picture scrolls depicting the biography of Kakunyo (1271–1351), the third head priest of Honganji Temple, as well as in other works. The second option combined the steam bath and bathtub. In the *Ippen shōnin e-den*, a late thirteenth-century illustrated biography of the monk Ippen, there seems to be both a steam bath and an adjoining bathing room. In the third option, the bathtub was central. The mid-fourteenth-century *Zegaibō emaki* (*Zegaibō Picture Scroll*) depicts a bathhouse and outside it a large cauldron where water was boiled; the hot water was then piped to the boat-shaped bathtub where it accumulated. These bathtubs closely resemble today's European-style bathtubs. The striking aspect of these different options is the fact that there was no medieval bathing style which involved heating water beneath a bathtub, as was common in Japan until very recently. Thus, in order to fill the bathtub, one had to either pipe hot water in or carry it in by hand. Naturally, if the bathtub is big, then it cools down quickly, so a bath has to be small. Again, in order to economize on fuel, measures were taken to prevent the steam escaping: sealing the room and providing a low entrance. These factors apply to both a steam bath and a bathing room.

Let us return to the problem of the *Sairei zōshi*. First, if the water-ripple motif drawn in the center of that picture is a bathtub, it is the only one of its kind; it is too big. There are no pipes for drawing the hot water from the cauldron, so it means that one would have to take the hot water by bucket, but the bathtub is too big for that to make sense. Second, such an exposed bathing room is not possible. As noted above, since the room is not sealed, the



steam will escape and the humidity will go elsewhere. There are many instances of bathhouses being separate structures, probably on account of humidity and fire hazards. There is a *shoin*-style room next to the bathhouse in the *Sairei zōshi*, but that cannot be right. Given what we know of the styles of medieval baths, the tea event depicted in the *Sairei zōshi* is not one of tea in a bath setting. And if it is not a bath, then the water with its duck-board surround is surely a spring, and the structure is a spring pavilion.

The mid-twelfth-century *Senmen Hokekyō sasshi* (Fan-Shaped Lotus Sutra Album) owned by Shitennōji Temple is a representative set of secular paintings from the late Heian period (794–1185). One of the paintings in the set appears to show a spring pavilion that has no walls, only pillars. The right side has duck-boards surrounding a gushing spring, beside which is one man cooling off and another fanning himself. The water flows beneath



Detail from the *Sairei zōshi*  
(Festival Picture Scroll).  
Courtesy of the Maeda  
Ikutokukai Foundation.

the boards and out from under the veranda, and it looks extremely cool. While the *Sairei zōshi* is remote from the sixteenth century in terms of historical period, the water surrounded by duckboards can most easily be understood as a gushing spring. Precisely because it is spring water, one might directly scoop it up and use it to prepare tea. This clarifies the meaning of the kettle and portable brazier placed on the duckboards. If there were a kettle, brazier, and a set of utensils on the duckboards in the spring pavilion depicted in the *Senmen Hokekyō sasshi*, then it would be just like the image depicted in the *Sairei zōshi*.

Although this has been a rather complicated investigation into some of the issues surrounding a single painting, it does not, of course, negate the value of the picture in the *Sairei zōshi*. The water-ripple motif in the center might not be a bath after all, but it nevertheless remains a precious historical document for learning about medieval chanoyu. It does still show that the tea preparer



continued to be someone of a lower status than the guests or host, and that preparation of tea was confined to the corner of a corridor.

### After-Bath Facilities

The well-bucket water vessel, bentwood receptacle for rinse water, and a green bamboo lid rest were all things that Jōō thought of when he had tea in an after-bath relaxation area after bathing.

This comment by Kubo Toshiyo (1571–1640), also known as Chōandō, was recorded in his memoir *Chōandō ki* just before his death. It recounts Takeno Jōō’s tea preparation in an after-bathing area. Kubo was a craftsman from Nara who specialized in making cloths, cloth pouches, and bags for tea utensils. Kubo followed Kamo no Chōmei in favoring a small, square abode like that of a temple abbot’s quarters. He asked Kobori Enshū to name his house, whereupon Enshū said, “You are ignorant, unlike Chōmei, so I name your house Chōandō.” Enshū was here playing on the word *chōmei*, which can mean “abundant light,” and *chōan*, which can mean “abundant darkness.” Such is the origin of the name Chōandō (the suffix *-dō* means “abode”). The *Chōandō ki* was Kubo Toshiyo’s record of the tea stories he had heard and seen in his youth; the citation above is one such example. His point is that the well-bucket style of water vessel, the bentwood rinse-water receptacle, and the freshly cut green bamboo lid rest were all Takeno Jōō’s contrivances. In turn, those contrivances all came from his idea of holding the tea gathering in the after-bath area. There are thus two parts to Kubo’s observation.

There is a reference to a well-bucket water vessel. Today there is an extant example of such a water vessel owned by Rikyū. It is a distinctive tea utensil in that it was an everyday object which nonetheless appealed to the *wabi-cha* aesthetic. The bentwood item

referred to is made of unvarnished wood and intended for rinse-water. The use of bare wood, instead of a more formal lacquered utensil, was meant to convey the unvarnished beauty of the wood itself. The same can be said for the green bamboo lid rest. In other words, these three tea utensils were chosen for their *wabi* aesthetic, selected intentionally for the beauty of their unvarnished quality, unlike formal lacquered utensils. However, according to the *Chōandō ki*, Jōō's creative achievement here, his repurposing of these ordinary items as tea utensils, was born from the genius of his style, which is evident in the combining of bath and tea.

Indeed, an after-bath relaxation space is an extension of the bathing experience. It might be useful to imagine again the bath at the Hiunkaku in Nishi-Honganji Temple, with its steam bath in the back, the wood-floored area in front of the bath, and then, one step higher, the after-bath relaxing room, which faces the pond. Precisely because this was chanoyu hosted in an after-bath area, the host cleverly incorporated utensils that were intended for the bath; or at least they were reminiscent of those used in the bath. This ingenious scheme of his was surely ideally suited to a *rinkan* chanoyu, a “summer bath tea.”

As noted previously, *rinkan* meant summer hospitality in the form of bathing. *Rinkan* itself is not directly linked to chanoyu. Therefore, the style imparted to the Furuichi family's summer bathing banquets sometimes took the form of flower arrangement, at other times tea, and still other times linked verse. Consistent across all these events were a liberated sensibility, an indulgent gathering that featured sake and performing arts, and a spirit of play. And yet the ingenious style of summer bathing tea did not emerge directly from such events. In addition to a bath, critical to the creation of this summer bathing style of chanoyu were new utensils and a new spirit. Jōō's after-bathing tea essentially formed

a single innovative style, with tea as the main component and bathing as a subsidiary component. Later tea masters—more specifically Rikyū—took Jōō's liking for summer bathing tea, kept the utensils, and stripped away their bathing context.

Jōō's bathing tea—that is, his contriving of a summer tea function—was perhaps a major discovery for chanoyu, which drew typically on winter style. However much Jōō innovated with his summer tea function, so long as he linked the tea event to bathing, he could not remove the licentiousness associated with bathing parties. The relaxed, liberated season of summer and the still more liberated mood of bathing were contrary to Rikyū's chanoyu, which aimed for a higher spirituality and a greater tension.

Tea at the spring pavilion as depicted in the *Sairei zōshi* is an ingenious summer style. The half-monk, half-layman shogunal attendant-like figure shown preparing tea on the duckboard flooring of the spring pavilion is a pre-*wabi-cha* figure. A situation where a host and guests enjoy a more complete style of tea preparation (*temae*) in a single room—where the spring pavilion does not impose its tastes on the surrounding mood, or prevent the tea gathering from affecting its participants—was probably more in line with Rikyū's emphasis. For Rikyū, a summer bathing party was but a trick contrived to surprise guests, and as such, it had to be rejected.

This does not mean that bathing tea events completely disappeared after Rikyū. Bathing and tea still appeared together, connected in some way with pleasure. One such event was held at Matsudaira Fumai's Kanden'an tea room. Matsudaira Fumai (1751–1818) was responsible for the Izumo Matsue domain's reforms. He was an important late Edo-period daimyo and a tea devotee known for the major tea-utensil collection chronicled in his *Unshū kurachō* (Unshū Storehouse Catalogue; 1811). He preferred tea



The second-story tea room in an Edo-period bathhouse. Reproduced by permission from Santō Kyōden, *Kengu irigomi sentō shinwa*, 1802, *kibyōshi* illustrated book, 3 vols., University of Tokyo General Library. Courtesy of the University of Tokyo General Library.

rooms with annexed bathing rooms. Today, visitors to Kanden'an do not approach via the formal route; rather, they are directed around the back. Originally, however, one first arrived at the hut-like waiting area constructed on the highest point in the Kanden'an compound. The tea room was built as a place where one could relieve the fatigue of a day spent outside, on the way back from hunting or some other such pursuit. So he had a steam-room-style bath built in this waiting area. Here Fumai's "ingenious style" was to have guests wash away their sweat and don fresh clothing, before descending the stone steps of the garden approach to the tea room. So while we could say that the Kanden'an is indeed a revival of the bathing and tea combination, we must not forget that the pleasure of hunting also had a vital role to play.

The bathing-tea connection was also not completely severed among ordinary people. In 1802, the novelist and ukiyo-e artist

Santō Kyōden (1761–1816) produced an illustrated satirical novel titled *Kengu irigomi sentō shinwa* (New Bathhouse Tales of Wisdom and Folly). This book was a so-called *kibyōshi*, literally a “yellow cover,” a type of popular fiction. The novel describes commoners relaxing in the second-story after-bath area of a two-story bathhouse. The illustrations depict people sitting, eating snacks, and sipping bitter tea. The text states, “Well, have some snacks!” rather than repeating esoteric concepts emphasized in the way of tea and in Zen, such as “Written words have no standing.” This is probably Kyōden’s ironic comment on how the way of tea had become so distanced from tea with its former associations of uninhibited play. The spirit of summer bathing tea lived on among the common people.

## *Furyū, Yatsushi, Mitate:* Elegance, “Humble Guise,” and Refashioning

### **Elegance (*Furyū*)**

Summer bathing tea, tea-tasting contests, and tea events held in a palace were all ways of adding style (*shukō*) to a banquet. They do not mean that the tea gathering had now been perfected. Indeed, the style of tea gatherings did not become established until the development of *wabi-cha* under Jukō and later tea masters. However, “elegance” (*furyū*) was one of the concepts which exerted a profound influence on tea-gathering style. Elegance in this sense was the most elevated form of style in medieval-period performing arts.

An entry in the *Kanmon gyōki* (Diary of Imperial Prince

Fushimi no Miya Sadafusa) for April 12, 1416, describes a scene where various handmade objects exemplifying elegance were shown to Prince Sadafusa (1372–1456) for his enjoyment. Elegance is the quality of handmade objects that are the epitome of style. The concept of elegance today is slightly different from what it was formerly, and the differences are marked by a difference in pronunciation: *furyū* for the older concept, and *fūryū* in contemporary usage. For example, first there was an object made in the image of the folk deity Daikokuten. It was said to be made entirely from vegetarian foodstuffs, vegetables, and seaweed. The diary entry records that the form of the object was exactly like a real Daikokuten sculpture. A second example was a handmade figure of a court official wearing the formal *sokutai* outfit with sword. This figure was placed beneath a setting of willow and cherry trees, and it, too, was made entirely of edible items. The dewdrops on the willow branches were made of edible materials, and there was a banner made of kombu seaweed. Next there was an ox cart, and then Mount Fuji. Those two objects were made of silk, paper, and folding fans. In this fashion, various handmade items epitomizing elegance were lined up before the prince. People said, “We gaped in shock, they were so amazing.” To this day, objects that embody elegance in this sense can be frequently seen in the adornments of the portable shrines and carts that appear at festivals held throughout Japan.

What we understand from this diary entry is, firstly, that elegant objects were greatly enjoyed for their entertainment value by the court nobility in medieval Japan. Second, their elegance was appreciated as a type of style. There was a mysteriousness about the materials and their combinations, and there was the quality of surprise in the completed object. The extravagance of it all was amazing. Third, while I have not cited relevant sections here,

this elegance was often on display at regular monthly chanoyu events. Thus, we can easily imagine that style, as it applied to tea gatherings, was influenced by such ideas of elegance. Might we perhaps say that Toyotomi Hideyoshi's tea events of a somewhat later period partook of this elegance? Was Hideyoshi's golden tea room not a case of elegance in its most extravagant form? Again, when Hechikan at the Great Kitano Tea Gathering opened up a huge red-lacquered umbrella one and a half tatami lengths in diameter to shield the tea-serving area from the sun, was this not also an example of elegant style intended to amaze?

Elegance always placed the highest value on extravagance and eccentricity. Elegance meant material objects that drew interest on account of their ability to amaze people. This being the case, the mainstream of *wabi-cha* style was bound to flow along its own distinctive path.

### **The *Yatsushi* Aesthetic**

No matter how extravagant the object, and regardless of its capacity to amaze, the concept of elegance in the end implies artifice. The stylish quality of this sort of elegance lay in the fact that the object concerned was not the real thing; it was made of materials you would never expect the genuine article to be made of. There is an inherent interest in this sort of "fakery" (*modoki* in Japanese). To fake is to challenge the original. Indeed, to fake is by definition to imitate. But, fakery has its own appeal and its good qualities, too. Tea masters had an eye for noticing its interest. *Ganmodoki*, literally "fake goose," is of course not real goose meat; it is just a tasty substitute for goose in the vegetarian food world.

If we set aside the slightly humorous feel of the idea of fakery, then *yatsushi* emerges as another concept that has a similar

sentiment, but it evokes rather a sense of pathos. The *wabi-cha* spirit is to be found in the twin concepts of “fakery” (*modoki*) and “humble guise” (*yatsushi*). A *wabi* tea devotee may wish to compete with the real thing, but he can hardly re-create the world of sublime Chinese objects (*karamono*). This is what led to the creation of a separate realm featuring the treasures of fifteenth-century Higashiyama Culture in a “humble” imitation of those Chinese objects.

Indeed, the four-and-a-half-mat reception room created by Jukō was itself an example of the humble guise. A true formal reception room meant that the display alcove (*tokonoma*) had paper applied to its walls, on top of which was applied a paper layer decorated with ink painting. The aforementioned *Nanpōroku* states, however, that the papering on the wall of Jukō’s display alcove had no painting; it was just plain white “chicken’s-egg paper” (*torinokogami*). The display alcove had taken on a humble guise. It maintained the basic form, but eliminated extravagance to keep it simple. Jukō’s ceiling was cedar-paneled, unlike those found in a room of the *shoin* architectural style, and for the roof he used small wood-strip shingles like those used for Buddhist temples. The *Nanpōroku* goes on to say, “In general, the sorts of objects which would be displayed on a *shoin* built-in desk were placed there, but they were fewer than usual.” *Shoin*-style tea was pared down to the extreme and assumed a humble guise in Jukō’s four-and-a-half-mat room.

And yet there were some who said that even Jukō’s employment of the “humble guise” was only half-hearted. Takeno Jōō experimented with an even more thoroughgoing type of humble guise. Jōō rejected the practice of papering the display alcove walls and left the bare earthen walls exposed. He switched the wood lattice in the window to bamboo. He changed the crosspiece at the foot of the display alcove from pure black lacquer and gave





Plain wood container for fresh water (*mizusashi*)

it either a thin lacquer coating or left it completely unlacquered as plain white wood. Abbreviation and the use of raw, untreated materials together constituted the aesthetic of the humble guise. The beauty of plain materials is to this day symbolic of one aspect of the tea world. In the eye of the tea devotee who dares to avoid porcelains and lacquered wares, and chooses an unvarnished wood container for fresh water, we can discover the irreplaceable aesthetic of the pure and simple that is at the heart of *yatsushi*, the assuming of a humble guise.

The verb from which the noun *yatsushi* derives literally means “to render something shabby,” “to change something so it is no longer conspicuous,” “to abbreviate.” These only go some way in conveying the idea of the aesthetic involved. The humble guise always involved a double-layered appearance. To take examples from the kabuki theater, one could say that the figure of the townsman Sukeroku is the humble guise of Soga no Gorō, a samurai character; or that the greengrocer’s daughter Yaoya Oshichi is the humble guise of the Heian-period poet Ono no Komachi, though this perhaps takes the comparison too far. Sukeroku and Oshichi are both assumed guises, and in reality they both possess rare

powers and appearance. To borrow the words of the kabuki researcher and director Gunji Masakatsu (1913–1998),

It is when the wealthy man Izaemon appears as a poverty-stricken figure in the play *Yūgiri Izaemon* that the expression “humble guise” (*yatsushi*) appears. The idea always implies a layer on top of that person’s actual status, and that overlap functions as the object of appreciation.\*

Some might question the wisdom of applying impressions of premodern society to medieval tea. But I find there was an awareness of the aesthetic of the humble guise in the pursuit of beauty by both Jukō and Jōō. If that is so, what is the genuine article against which tea’s humble guise measures itself? It goes without saying that it is the world of sublime Chinese objects. There is no need to interpret Jukō’s expression, “It is good to tether a fine horse to a straw hut,” as simply a case of the harsh contrast between a straw hut and a fine horse. The “fine horse” here is the genuine article. In this case, the humble guise of that genuine article is the straw hut in its fallen-on-hard-times, destitute form. In any case, this humble-guise aesthetic informed ideas of style from the early fifteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century, from the age of Jukō through to Jōō.

### Rikyū’s Style

If we go looking for style in tea, unexpectedly Rikyū rarely appears. This is not to say, of course, that there is no style in Rikyū’s tea. And yet in one aspect, I think that Rikyū sought to reject style. The *Nanpōroku* is a work of literature which hoped to

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\* Gunji, *Kabuki no bigaku* [The Aesthetics of Kabuki].

resurrect Rikyū's form of tea, and while we cannot take it as a true historical record, there are these words of Rikyū's in the section on tea gatherings:

Of all the tea gatherings held in a year, the only events recorded in this diary were those which involved changes in utensils or style. I do not approve of such a selection process. This is something I want to discuss when we meet. Even if one does not seek any change at all, one's thoughts and emotions change bit by bit amid the same things, day after day. The interesting aspects of a tea gathering lie in how such change always occurs. I have no interest in a tea gathering that pursues the rare or unusual in tea preparation, adornment, or utensil selection.

When Nanbō Sōkei, a late sixteenth-century Zen monk and tea devotee, wrote of Rikyū's tea gatherings, he omitted those that used the same utensils and tea-making procedures (*temae*), recording only those events that manifested changes. When he presented his writings to Rikyū, Rikyū rebuked him. He explained that it is not good to pursue only those events which featured stylish preparation and unusual decorative displays. The changes in the heart that occur when both the utensils and tea-making procedures are the same are what matters. In fact, if we look at the *Rikyū hyakkaiki* (Record of Rikyū's Hundred Tea Gatherings), a reliable record dated 1590 of about one hundred tea gatherings held by Rikyū, it is surprising how few changes there are in the utensils. No doubt as he faced his guests, Rikyū experienced changes in his emotions not revealed in the tea record, but the style that would have been evident on those occasions is very hard to put into words.

Since Rikyū's tea had little patience with changes in utensils,

or the appeal of decorations, or inspired combinations of utensils, what did his tea emphasize? The historical materials introduced by Horiguchi Sutemi in *Rikyū no cha* (Rikyū's Tea; 1951) contain a record of a tea gathering in the *shoin daisu* style hosted by Rikyū on October 23, 1588, at Jurakudai, a palace constructed in 1587 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. There were four guests, including Shun'oku Sōen of Daitokuji. One of the guests mentioned by name was Kokei Sōchin, a Zen monk close to Rikyū. Beneath Kokei's name was appended a comment to the effect that "because of problems with Hideyoshi," the event was held while Kokei was away in the west of Japan. Kokei had aroused Hideyoshi's anger during the enshrinement of warlord Oda Nobunaga, in what was known as the Tenshōji incident, and was banished from Kyoto to western Japan. His name was listed, but he was not actually present. He was in exile in Kyushu. The aim of this tea gathering was for Rikyū to bring together Zen monks with whom he was intimate, drink tea together, and think of the now-distant Kokei.

Rikyū decorated the alcove (*tokonoma*) on this occasion with calligraphy by the Chinese Zen monk Xūtáng Zhìyú (1185–1269), who was commonly known as Ikushima Kidō. This calligraphy—a poem of four seven-character lines, known as *qiyan jueju* in Chinese—encapsulated all aspects of that tea gathering's theme:

On a cool misty morning when the tree leaves had separated  
 from their branches,  
 an exceptional monk set out from the Zen temple,  
 East, west, south, or north, not a soul out there,  
 Hurry back to tell me your thoughts.

The tea gathering was on October 23, 1588, and appropriately for that season the poem describes the clear freshness of a cold

morning as the leaves fall. A monk whose brilliance is beyond compare leaves the Zen temple. And yet no one is there, east, west, north or south. Return and narrate your feelings! It was as if the poet were speaking of Kokei, banished to far-off western lands. There could be no hanging scroll more appropriate for this tea gathering. Moreover, concealed here was Rikyū's bold challenge to Hideyoshi.

This work by Zhìyú (Ikushima), considered a great treasure (*meibutsu*), was in fact owned by Hideyoshi. It just so happened that Hideyoshi had recently ordered Rikyū to get the precious scroll remounted, and Rikyū therefore had it in his keeping. Rikyū, unbeknownst to Hideyoshi, then used this scroll in his farewell party for Kokei, whom Hideyoshi had sent into exile. Here is surely evidence not only of Rikyū's shrewdness, but also of his thoughtfulness in offering hospitality to Kokei, who was not actually present.

Rikyū's style at its finest might be found in these intense interpersonal relations, or in the encounters between person and object. In comparison, the significance of style more commonly associated with, say, a sensitive matching of utensils failed to interest him.

In fact, the honing of intricate sensibilities about utensil combinations probably only occurred after Rikyū's time. The selection of utensils for their seasonal feel, the choice of utensils and adornments in line with utensil names and forms: Is this not all a mid-Edo-period sensibility, several generations after Rikyū's time?

### ***Tsukeai* and *Mitate*: Linking and Refashioning**

Linking and refashioning were concepts central to early modern-era style.

The concept of linking emerged from the *renga*, or "linked verse," poetry form. Linked verse is a literary art in which the

repeated adding of a first stanza (5-7-5 syllables) and a second stanza (7-7 syllables) of a *waka* five-line poem gradually serve to expand the poem's imagery; in such instances, a close connection between first and second stanzas is essential. The connection is known as "linking" (*tsukeai*). The high-ranking aristocrat Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388) identified thirteen types of linking, and Konishi Jin'ichi (1915–2007), the great scholar of Japanese literature, wrote the following explanation of a representative type of linking called "four hands" (*yotsude*).

*yotsude* (four-hand link)

These verses should dovetail firmly without overtones:

<i>futatsu tatsunari</i>	two standing
<i>mizudori no koe</i>	waterbirds' voices
<i>kamishimo no</i>	upper and lower
<i>Kamo no kawara no</i>	Kamo/duck riverbed
<i>miyabashira</i>	shrines

The *futatsu tatsunari* (two standing) of the first verse can be taken to modify the two shrines, Kamigamo and Shimogamo, in the second. The place-name Kamo is understood to mean *kamo* (duck) and thus is related to "waterbird." (This is the process of *torinashi* described above.) Riverbed and waterbird are "related words" (*engo*). This is a model *shinku*.\*

The two "shrine pillars" and the "two standing" are an example of linking, as are "waterbird" and "Kamo" (or *kamo*, the character for duck). These diagonal connections across the poem's structure

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\* Konishi, "The Art of Renga," trans. Karen Brazell and Lewis Cook, 53–54. Translation adapted.

constitute a four-hand linking. There is nothing lyrical about this; it is an example of taut but unimaginative linking. Real linking is more complex. There are many types, such as *kokoro-zuke*, when the second verse picks up and links to the meaning or sentiment of the opening verse; *kotoba-zuke*, word-based connections; or *yojō*, which is suggestion rather than open expression. Many chains of associations typical of linking are alive in the style of tea gathering. For example, if a host were to use a tea container known as *tama-mizu* (literally, “jewels of water”) together with a fresh-water vessel known as *shiba no iori* (literally, “brushwood hut”), then this would be an example of aesthetic linking. The link derives from waka poetry, in which both phrases commonly appear. Be that as it may, given that Takeno Jōō practiced as a linked-verse master until he was thirty years old, the spirit of linking presumably existed in tea from the nascent period of *wabi-cha*, but it is not clear.

Then again, what about “refashioning,” or *mitate*?\*

Not only in tea, but in kabuki, in *haikai* (an early form of Japanese verse or prose from which the haiku form was developed), and in everyday relationships—indeed in all aspects of pre-modern life—the concept of “refashioning” (*mitateru*) was prominent. One type of publication unique to early modern Japan was the “refashioned ranking chart.” These were refashioned versions of the sumo ranking chart, and there were all sorts, from those ranking restaurants and wealthy men and scholars to others ranking ceramic incense containers made from molds, for example. The style associated with “refashioning” became deeply embedded in tea.

Refashioning in the sense intended here is best reflected in the

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\* This translation follows Timon Screech in rendering *mitate* as “refashioning.”





new utensils of renown. Kobori Enshū was active during this period. In response to popular demand for renowned utensils, Enshū selected and named an overwhelming number of them. But this did not mean that Enshū had at his disposal an endless number of names. What he frequently used, therefore, was names taken from poetry. He would “refashion” some ancient poetic sentiment to suit the shape of a vessel, or choose a name from some ancient *waka* verse, then write that verse on the box or cylinder made to contain the utensil. This procedure was Enshū’s invention. For example, the *marutsubo* (literally “round jar”) tea container named Ōsaka had its name selected by Enshū from a poem in the *waka* anthology *Kokin wakashū* (Collection of Japanese Poetry Ancient and Modern; commonly abbreviated as *Kokinshū*). The poem is as follows: “Though the stormy wind of Ōsaka is cold, without knowing my destination, I sleep with my lonely thoughts.”

Utensils named in this manner came to occupy a place of distinction, and a central theme for tea gatherings was the style that derived from aligning the utensil, based on its name, to the season and to the particular guests present.

Jumping to the modern era, there is a relevant story from around 1912. Here let me record the details of a tea gathering which brought about the renaming of a tea connoisseurs’ group; the group had previously been known as the Wakeikai, and its name was changed to the Rakankai.

There were sixteen Wakeikai members, and this was an occasion when their cultured friend Tominaga Fuyuki invited all sixteen to his new residence in the Honjō Yokoami district of Tokyo. Given that Tominaga always thought the members resembled arhats (*rakan*), and that there were exactly sixteen of them—sixteen being the number of a typical Buddhist arhat grouping—he decided to refashion the name of the connoisseurs’ group

accordingly. He wrote the nameplates Tsuruhiko Sonja for Ōkura Tsuruhiko, and Katsunori Sonja for Masuda Katsunori, giving to both the Buddhist honorific *sonja*. He used Zen-temple tableware to serve Indian cuisine at the banquet. One of those present added up all of the monetary gifts given to celebrate his new residence, and the sum amounted to more than the cost of the new building. Masuda Katsunori immediately made a comic verse (*kyōku*) about this cost: “Shujin wa ‘yokuami da,’ kyaku wa mina ‘son ja.’” Literally, “The host is *yokuami*; the guests are *sonja*.” *Yokuami* plays on the Yokoami district, where the host’s residence is located, while also humorously implying that the host is a *yokuamida*, or greedy Buddha. *Sonja* plays on the losses (*son*) made by the guests who contributed to the banquet, as well as their status as guests of honor (*sonja*). The verse was met with great acclaim, and the group duly came to be known by its nickname, the Arhats’ Club (Rakankai).

I refer to this episode to show that it was actually in the modern period that the concept of “refashioning” established itself in an informal context. Particularly, Takahashi Sōan (1861–1937) and other tea connoisseurs used a type of wordplay in their “refashioning.” This was an attempt to summon tea back from its overly rigid realm. Conversely, it is true that it also created a fashion for tea events with a farcical quality. The use of style associated with refashioning always carries such a risk, and yet it remains central to the style of tea today. The overuse of linking and refashioning can create “over-linking,” with all the negativity which that entails. Thus, the tea devotee must be innovative with the style of his tea gatherings while striving for a subtle balance between “connection and separation.”

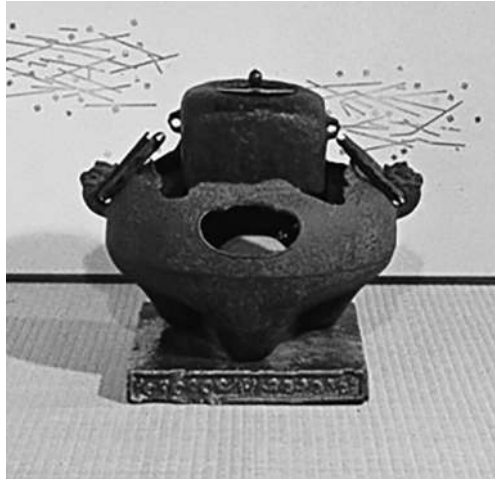
## The Advent of Seasonal Sentiment

### Seasonal Greetings

A sense of the seasons is rapidly being lost from contemporary life. Today, it seems as if the performing-arts world will be the only sector to maintain a sense of the seasons. Haiku, ikebana, kabuki, and chanoyu, too, all are important parts of that sector. There are few people today just starting the study of tea who are not surprised at the level of importance which the tea world attaches to the seasons. Be it through hanging scrolls, utensils, or adornments, the seasons contribute the most important aspects of tea style (*shukō*). For example, in October tea gatherings at the end of the “portable brazier season,” the worn brazier (*yatsure-buro*) is used. This distinctive type of brazier invokes the remnants of late autumn, and its style adroitly combines the visual interest of its worn appearance with a sense of the seasons.

But let us look through the historical sources. Was a sensitivity to the seasons there in *wabi-cha*’s formative period? That is most likely not the case. Indeed, even in Rikyū’s time, seasonal sensitivity was in much shorter supply than has been thought. Sense of the seasons proves unexpectedly to be a product of the early modern era.

This applies not only to chanoyu. Let us look at an example. Letters carry seasonal greetings. We are taught that letters start with a respectful address, and must always contain a greeting related to the season. We learn that using the simple phrase *zenryaku*—that is, “[opening seasonal greeting] omitted”—is extremely rude. In fact, though, the convention of putting time- or



Worn brazier (*yatsureburo*)

season-sensitive greetings into letters is a relatively recent one.

By way of example, let us look at Rikyū's letters. A cursory glance through Kuwata Tadachika's 1961 book on Rikyū's letters, *Rikyū no shokan*, reveals that few of his letters begin with seasonal greetings. Letters typically start with the reason for writing, as in "The lid of the tea container is ready . . ." He omits almost all extraneous words. One letter that has something like a seasonal greeting—"Amid the ongoing rain . . ."—is an invitation to a tea gathering during a long period of autumnal rain. That is about all.

I do not yet have a real grasp of when the requirement for seasonal greetings in letters began. I imagine it was in the early Edo period, around the Genroku era (1688–1704), but I cannot be sure. In older times, Muromachi-period guides to letter writing do contain seasonal greetings. But this was one form of letter-writing among many, and it may have been atypical. Looking at the writing on the back of the paper reused for the *Sanetaka kōki*, the diary of the nobleman Sanjōnishi Sanetaka (1455–1537), we find that examples of seasonal greetings are extremely rare. The addressee is unknown, but there is a letter dated to 1473.

The snows where you are must be as charming as they are here. Your coming-of-age robes (*genpuku*) have been finished as scheduled . . .

We can see that the writer was moved to begin by recording his joy at the snowy scene, which suggests his refined sentiment, but this was uncommon. The roughness of the letters written by samurai of the Warring States period did not demand the writing of seasonal greetings. Nor do such greetings appear in letter-writing etiquette books from the later Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1600) through the early Edo period. In which case, we must assume that the first articulation of seasonal sensitivity was in the Edo period. This was when everyone became conscious of the seasons.

### The Seasons in Tea Gatherings

I wonder how much seasonal sensitivity worked its way into tea prior to Rikyū. Let us look at a tea-gathering record for an event hosted by Takeno Jōō, included in the *Matsuya kaiki*. The entry is for May 27, 1542, and we find in it almost no evidence of a sense of the seasons. The event is described in considerable detail, but most of this is given over to descriptions of the famous paintings, tea jar (*chatsubo*), and tea container (*chaire*). In other words, the tea devotees of Jōō's period were interested above all in utensils of renown. Rather than rejoicing at the style the host imparted to his tea gathering, guests wanted to see the famous utensils in the host's possession. This applies to Jōō's tea gathering referred to above. Matsuya Hisamasa and Hachiya Matagorō traveled from Nara to attend the tea gathering to be held in Sakai. When they arrived at their inn, a messenger from Jōō visited them there and asked whether they would like to see the Matsushima tea jar or the wave painting by Yu Jian, both famous objects owned by

Jōō. The two guests, Hisamasa and Matagorō, discussed the matter. Matagorō wanted to see the Matsushima jar, but Hisamasa was obsessed with the wave painting. In the end, the two failed to agree, so they said to the messenger that either object was fine; they would leave it up to the host. The following day, they went to the tea gathering, and Jōō generously brought out both treasures for them to see: the wave painting and the Matsushima jar. The two men were overjoyed.

While it is a mistake to take a single tea gathering as a measure for the whole, we can get from the above episode some indication of how insensitive tea gatherings were to the seasons from the items displayed in the alcove (*tokonoma*). Works of Zen calligraphy suggest no seasonal sensitivity on the part of the host, but if the object displayed in the alcove is a painting or *waka* calligraphy, then naturally the host would choose a subject suited to the season. Or, at least, this is what we might expect. However, another old record of tea gatherings, the 1548–1566 diary of the merchant and tea devotee Tsuda Sōtatsu (1504–1566), covers a total of 380 tea gatherings which he himself hosted, and mentions hanging scrolls 160 times. Content-wise, there are seventy-two mentions of Muxi's painting of Chuanzi Heshang, fifty-seven of a painting of a round fan, eight of color paintings, four of calligraphy other than Zen, and nineteen of Zen calligraphy. This means that there were 129 occasions on which either one or the other of two hanging scrolls—Muxi's painting of Chuanzi Heshang or the round fan painting—featured; that is, 80 percent of the total. To put it bluntly, when Tsuda Sōtatsu was selecting a scroll to hang in the display alcove, he repeatedly used these two scrolls over the course of eighteen years. Evidently, he gave no thought to expressing the seasons through his choice of hanging scroll.

This trend continued for a considerable time, as is evident

from the *Tennōjiya kaiki* (Records of Tennōjiya) tea diary cited in chapter 3. It includes a total of 1,488 entries for the tea gatherings either hosted or attended by three generations of tea masters: Tsuda Sōtatsu, Sōgyū, and Sōbon.\* It has been calculated that only fifteen types of hanging scrolls of any description are recorded in those entries. This appears to suggest that tea devotees were not especially interested in hanging scrolls of any description.

Reading through the *Tennōjiya kaiki* in search of seasonal sensibility, you would perhaps look first to the adornments in the alcove, to flowers in addition to the hanging scroll. And you would expect seasonal foods to be included in the *kaiseki* meal, and tea-utensil names to reflect seasonal style.

In fact, flowers feature only rarely in early records of tea gatherings. In the aforementioned record of Tsuda Sōtatsu, he only makes twenty-one mentions of flower vases for the 380 tea events he records. Of course, we cannot say with certainty that only 5 percent of tea gatherings had flower arrangements, but at the very least it is clear that the interests of tea devotees of the time did not lie in flowers. Tea utensils, however, were a different matter altogether. The *Bunrui sōjinboku* (Classifications of Tea) cited in chapter 3 notes that there were “proximate” tea utensils—in other words, utensils in which the owner was deeply interested—and conversely, those in which they had lesser interest, “remote” utensils.

There are proximate (*chikai*) and remote (*tōi*) utensils. *Chaire* (thick-tea containers) and *tenmoku* [tea bowls] are the most proximate. *Mizusashi* (water vessels), *mizukoboshi* (rinse-water receptacles), *chashaku* (tea scoops), *hishaku-tate* (water-ladle

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\* The Tsuda were a family of wealthy merchants from Sakai; Tennōjiya is the name of their business establishment.



Arranging flowers for tea (*chabana*).  
Photo provided by author.

stands), and *futa-oki* (lid rests), are the next most proximate. *Ha-chatsubo* (leaf-tea storage jars), *kōro* (incense burners), paintings, and *hana-ike* (flower containers) are remote. However, it is said by some that *ha-chatsubo* are the very most proximate.\*

Thus, it is clear that hanging scroll paintings and flower vases were of less interest to tea people than tea containers and *tenmoku* bowls. This explains why there are few records of hanging scrolls and flower vases in the tea-gathering records mentioned above.

And yet it seems that flowers attracted attention earlier than hanging scrolls. While Tsuda Sōtatsu mentions flower vases in only 5 percent of his entries, his son Sōgyū records flower vases 25 percent

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\* Tanikawa, “The Esthetics of Chanoyu, Part 3,” 38, 40. Translation adapted.



of the time. Fully one-quarter of all entries mention flower vases and the kinds of flowers used. Thus was established the practice of “flowers for tea” (*chabana*).

Flowers were not governed by form in *wabi-cha*, as is implied in the expression *nage-ire* or “throw-in.” Flowers were simply “thrown into” a flower container suspended from a hook on the wall or pillar. Very few flower types were included. It is in the modern period that we get hundreds of types of flowers. Flowers are by definition seasonal, but there was no interest in rare flowers. Rather, interest focused on “forbidden flowers”; those that were not to be used. The flowers not to be used were patterned after the forbidden flowers in ikebana, but tea also forbade flowers with a strong scent. There were flowers which, though not forbidden, did not find favor with Rikyū.

The *Rikyū-den* (Transmissions Pertaining to Rikyū) makes it clear that Rikyū disliked both Japanese gentians and chrysanthemums because it was impossible to tell whether a few days had passed and the flowers were no longer fresh. For Rikyū, the splendor of flowers lay in the fact that they were alive and were subject to change. As Murata Sōshu, Jukō’s successor who was active in the sixteenth century, said, “What we admire in a flower is the beauty in the moment it is seen. So look first at the flowers; the painting may be enjoyed later.” Flowers that changed from moment to moment were considered flowers appropriate for tea, and this awareness marked what was likely the first type of seasonal sensitivity to emerge in chanoyu. I am reminded here of an early anecdote about Rikyū’s morning-glory tea recorded in tea master Fujimura Yōken’s collection of anecdotes on tea, the *Sawa shigetsu shū*. It tells of how Toyotomi Hideyoshi, having heard of the beautiful morning glories in Rikyū’s mansion, requested a morning-glory tea gathering. When he went to attend the

gathering, Hideyoshi was appalled to find each and every morning glory in the garden had been pulled out. Mightily displeased, he continued into the tea room. There he was met with the sight of the single most beautiful morning glory in the garden on display. Morning glories wilt rapidly; it had been masterfully displayed at the height of its beauty. Rikyū, it is said, was lavished with praise.

**“I offer thin tea to Bashō’s spirit on his memorial day,  
thinking, ‘How cold it is!’”\***

There are many episodes told about Rikyū in which he places great emphasis on the seasons. And yet were all of these episodes really about Rikyū? Most are nothing more than unreliable folklore. During Rikyū’s time, it seems that the idea of seasonal tea-making procedures had yet to be established. To begin with, tea gatherings were not held throughout the year. They were generally winter events, which left little scope for seasonal expression. In Rikyū’s time, it seems that tea functions finally came to be held in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. And yet, unlike the practice of today, it was by no means strange for a sunken hearth to be used in summer, for a brazier to be used in winter, or indeed, for a kettle chain and bamboo hook to be in evidence all year round.

There is an article in the *Nanpōroku* which has Rikyū scolding Nanbō Sōkei. It was just before the start of the rainy season, and on the day in question it had started to drizzle, and it was extremely chilly. Nanbō was hosting guests Rikyū and Sōgyū. It was so cold that Nanbō removed the lid of the fresh-water vessel, but did not pour more water into the kettle before preparing the tea.

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\* Translated from a haiku by the poet Miura Chora (1729–1780): *baseo* [bashō] *ki ni / usucha tamukuru / samusa ka na.*

Fellow guests praised Sōkei's adroit attempt to prevent the hot water from cooling, but Rikyū scolded him. His point was that adding cold water to hot water had nothing to do with the surrounding air temperature. Rather, it was a matter of *yuai*, the state of the hot water. At that time, the processed leaves used for making powdered green tea were preserved by sealing the newly picked tea leaves in a tea jar. They would be taken out in early winter. That is why this tea had the greatest vitality in early winter. Tea from that same tea jar would be used over the course of a year, and so summer tea was most lacking in vitality. Rikyū said that adding water to the kettle was to aid the tea's vitality; it was a fundamental step in the tea-making procedure (*temae*). It was not permissible to alter at will fundamental elements of tea on account of the season or the outside temperature. The *Rikyū hyakkaiki* shows that Rikyū held tea gatherings day in and day out, rarely changing utensils, in order to adhere to the same principles. Such was Rikyū's tea.

With Rikyū's disciple Furuta Oribe, and Oribe's own disciple Kobori Enshū, the form of tea changed greatly. Oribe placed great emphasis on the use of flowers in the tea gathering, as is evident from events he hosted where he would display flowers but no scrolls. In Enshū's time, tea events with a clearly defined seasonal sensibility gradually started to appear. First, there was the fact that the poetic names that Enshū liked to assign to objects were often seasonal in nature. The poetic traditions from the *Kokinshū waka* anthology period onward underwent a major revival, cherished as they were by Enshū. However, it was the power of *haikai* which firmly rooted seasonal sensibility in the world of tea, and in the lives of the Japanese people.

The intertwining of tea and *haikai* was not yet apparent. There is evidence of the *haikai* world's awareness of tea in one passage of Matsuo Bashō's (1644–1694) famous poetic travel

diary from 1687, *Oi no kobumi* (Records of a Travel-Worn Satchel), where he writes:

Saigyō's *waka*, Sōgi's *renga*, Sesshū's painting, Rikyū's tea—the spirit animating them is one.\*

Clearly, the *haikai* world was taking notice of tea before Bashō placed Rikyū in the aesthetic tradition that began in the medieval period. The following is a verse entitled “Chashitsu nite” (In the Tea Room) by Nishiyama Sōin (1605–1682):

Smoothly  
the guests rise  
a passing shower falls.†

Looking even further back, there are also these verses in the 1633 *Enokoshū* (Puppy Collection) *haikai* anthology by the poets of the Teimon school:

Just as repeated bidding determines price, in passing the bowl of thin tea (*usucha*), it is truly thin pickings to draw the last straw!

From the beginning of the Edo period, then, *haikai* had an extremely close relationship with chanoyu.

After Bashō, chanoyu appeared even more frequently in *haikai*. The verse on Bashō's death anniversary at the beginning of this section was written by the poet Miura Chora (1729–1780), active during the period of *haikai*'s revival. Is it not an excellent poem

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\* Blyth, *Haiku*, 335.

† *kyakujin ya / sarari to tatta / hito shigure.*

on the chanoyu theme? Quite often specialist tea words were used to mark seasonal themes in *haikai*. Here are some examples: *ōbuku-cha* or “good fortune tea,” drunk at the beginning of the year; *hatsu chanoyu*, or “first tea” of the new year; *hatsu chasen*, “first [use of a new] tea whisk”; *cha-tsumi*, tea picking; *cha-yama*, “tea mountains”; *shincha*, “new [season] tea”; *sencha*, tea selection; *ha-cha*, leaf tea; *kairo*, “beginning of the *ro* (sunken hearth)” season; *ro-fusagi*, “end of the sunken hearth” season; *kuchikiri*, “unsealing the [tea leaf] jar”; *shiro-zumi*, “white charcoal.”

Conversely, from the tea side, how did tea connect to the world of *haikai*? I have yet to investigate when haiku, the poetic form developed from earlier *haikai*, was first displayed at tea gatherings. And yet the use of short comic *waka* verses (*kyōka*) which appear in the writings of tea devotees might indicate the potential for a sudden shift to *haikai*. Sōtan was one of those who occasionally included comic verse in his letters, and he was also adept at *haikai* composition. But the generation of Sōtan’s students was more familiar with haiku than with *waka*. As mentioned in chapter 3, Sōtan’s four main disciples were known as the Sōtan Shitennō. One of them, Sugiki Fusai (1628–1706), was particularly interested in *haikai*. There is a theory that his interest grew out of interactions with Bashō. This is a possibility we cannot necessarily discount, given that they did in fact live relatively close in what is present-day Mie Prefecture: Bashō in Iga, Fusai in Ise. More certain is the fact that Fusai’s mother Sugiki Mitsu (1583–1647) was an accomplished poet and disciple of the haiku poet Sugita Moichi (1586–1643). Thus, *haikai* interests abounded in Fusai’s environs. This is precisely why an incident like the following occurred.

Determined to go to Kyoto, Fusai set out from Ise, and had just reached the Suzuka pass when he heard two cries from a cuckoo. Fusai abruptly turned back. Ah! he thought, this must be

the time for the first catch of *katsuo* tuna. He sped back to Ise and immediately hosted a tea gathering at which *katsuo* tuna was served. The first catch of harvest is said to abound in vitality, and, invigorated by the thought that through this tea gathering he had extended his life by seventy-five days, he headed off to Kyoto once more. It was as if Fusai was performing the content of poet Yamaguchi Sodō's (1642–1716) “Me ni aoba” verse about new green foliage, a cuckoo in the mountains, and the first tuna (*katsuo*) catch of the year.

Horinouchi Senkaku (1675–1748) was one chanoyu poet, but first we must credit Kawakami Fuhaku (1719–1807), the founding patriarch of the Edo Senke tea lineage, who went so far as to leave a haiku anthology.

Fuhaku's “Saitan” (New Year's Day) from the *Fuhaku-ō kushū* anthology contains the following line:

*Cha no michi ya / furuki o mote / kesa no haru*

Carrying on the old chanoyu ways, I greeted the New Year's dawn.

From the middle of the early modern period onward, chanoyu began to incorporate seasonal references. As a result, seasons became the most important aspect of style at a tea gathering.



Chapter 5

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***WABI-CHA* ENVIRONS**



## The History of the Tea Whisk (*Chasen*)

### Tea-Whisk Development

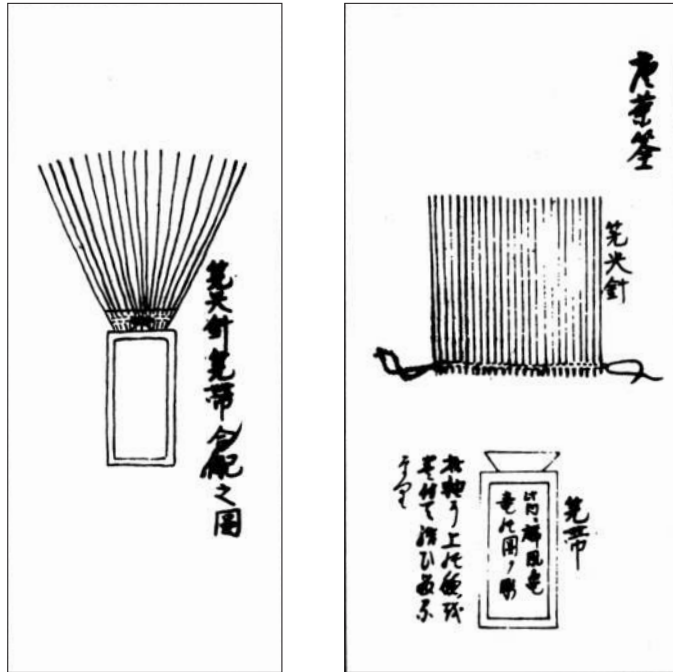
“No one in the world has ever set out to interrogate the tea whisk (*chasen*).”

Thus declared the great Edo-period literatus Konoe Iehiro (1667–1736) to his physician, Yamashina Dōan (1677–1746), who recorded the former’s words in his *Kaiki* (Chronicles; 1724). Who would propose interrogating something that, though beautifully made, is used once and then simply discarded, never to reappear in a formal setting? Absolutely no one investigated the origins of the tea whisk. From the time of Iehiro’s lament until very recently, nobody had taken on the tea whisk. Then, in 1974, Uchiyama Kazumoto published his book *Chasen hakubutsushi* (An Encyclopedic Chronicle of the Tea Whisk). This was the first book written about the tea whisk, and it is a valuable piece of fine scholarship. There have been numerous splendid, sumptuous books on tea bowls and tea containers (*chaire*), but, strangely, no monograph on the tea whisk. The fact is that, as Iehiro lamented, not a single person had ever set out to write such a book.

Uchiyama clarified many things, including, for example, the existence of burial mounds for tea whisks, known as *chasen-zuka*. Along with such new information, his book also corrected common misunderstandings of the past. However, the one thing that I cannot agree with is Uchiyama’s insistence on using a particular character in writing the compound word *cha-sen*. The character for *cha* is not a problem, of course, but there are multiple possibilities for the character for *sen*. Uchiyama insists that *sen* should

never be written with the character that can be read as *sasara*; it should be always written with a character whose alternative reading is *uke* or *ue*. A *sasara* is a small stiff brush used to scrub a pot or steamer. The *sasara* character has long been in common use because the tea whisk is shaped like a small brush. Uchiyama's point is that the tea whisks of today, superbly artistic and intricately worked, merit the *uke* or *ue* character—which, incidentally, means a type of fish trap made of bamboo. I choose to use the more common *sasara* character, and will here leave aside my argument for that. In any case, Uchiyama was that rare soul who finally investigated the history of the tea whisk, a history already becoming obscure by Iehiro's time at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Following Uchiyama, I, too, decided to investigate the tea whisk from some angles that Uchiyama did not address in any detail. The tea whisk, in fact, is a unique presence among tea utensils.

It was, naturally enough, not in Japan but in Chinese tea that the whisk first appeared. The oldest known mention occurs in the *Daguan chalu* (Daguan-Era Treatise on Tea; c. 1107), an important historical document on the Song-dynasty tea ceremony attributed to Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1126). According to that text, there was an extremely strong type of bamboo known as *jinzhu* (Jp. *suji-take*; literally “fibrous bamboo”). Even at the bamboo-shoot phase, the fibers of this bamboo variety were so strong that they were used to make strings for musical instruments, and in mature form it made good tea whisks. While the text does not clearly explain how to make the tea whisk, it seems artisans would shave off and bundle together thin strips of bamboo, and wrap their ends around a “shaft” of some sort. The *Chaju tuzan* (An Illustrated Guide to Tea Utensils), a thirteenth-century illustrated book on tea ware in China, includes one image of such a tea whisk, but here I have



Tang tea whisk (*Tō chasen*). Reproduced by permission from page 163 of the original Japanese edition. Courtesy of the Urasenke Konnichian Library.

chosen to show a different picture. This is a Tang-period (618–907) Chinese tea whisk from an Edo-period book titled *Chasen no ikken* (On the Matter of Tea Whisks). The book explains that a thread holds together the ends of thin strips of bamboo, and the thread is then wrapped around the neck of the shaft. The caption here states that images of Chinese unicorns, phoenixes, tortoises, and dragons were etched there, suggesting the shaft might have been made of metal. The *Daguan chulun* says that the body should be thick and heavy. In any event, clearly the Chinese tea whisk was a splendid tea utensil. It was etched and made of extremely durable bamboo, which suggests it was expected to last for quite a while. It clearly gives a quite different impression, in both form and usage, from the Japanese tea whisk which was treated without care.

So how did the Japanese tea whisk become what it is? Naturally, the type of tea whisk seen in the *Daguan chulun* must

have entered Japan during the age of the monk Yōsai; that is, during the Kamakura period (1185–1333), when Song-dynasty-style powdered green tea was imported to Japan. But in Japan, a length of bamboo was cut and fashioned into a strong brush-style tea whisk. The oldest visual evidence of a tea whisk can be seen in the late fourteenth-century handscroll known as the *Fukutomi sōshi* (Tales of Fukutomi). A tea whisk is depicted on a shelf next to *tenmoku* tea bowls, and it is essentially the same in form as a present-day tea whisk. It is made from a single piece of bamboo, and so is not the Chinese style. The form of the tea whisk, the end of which does not splay out, appears close to that used today in Shimane Prefecture in the making of *botebote-cha*, a coarse tea. The tea whisk that appears in the *Fukutomi sōshi* is similar in form to that which became common after the completion of the *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of the Great Peace) around the late fourteenth century. Kamakura-period tea whisks probably looked something similar, but there is no visual evidence extant. The *Teikin ōrai* (Correspondence on Home Education), an elementary textbook written in the fourteenth century around the same time as the *Fukutomi sōshi*, lists the following tea utensils: tea scoop (*chashaku*), tea cloth (*chakin*), tea whisk (*chasen*), and tea-whisk rest (*tosoku*).

The character used here for the *sen* of *chasen* is different again from the two I referred to above. It means a bamboo strip. There is, then, visual and textual evidence to confirm that, from around the fourteenth century, the form of the tea whisk gradually became clear.

### ***Ōbuku chasen yuraiki* (Account of the Origin of Ōbuku Tea Whisks)**

It was not until the Northern and Southern Courts period (1337–1392) in the fourteenth century that a legend arose about the as yet unclear origins of the tea whisk. This is the legend in the



Ōbuku chasen yuraiki (Account of the Origin of Ōbuku Tea Whisks).  
 Reproduced by permission from page 163 of the original Japanese edition.

Edo-period *Ōbuku chasen yuraiki*, which tells that the Heian-period itinerant monk Kūya (903–972) was the creator of the Japanese tea whisk. This document was likely printed as a handbill distributed by tea-whisk sellers to prospective customers. The text is as follows:

Origins of Our Temple’s Traditional Ōbuku Tea Whisks

Our founder, who was known as Kūya Shōnin, was the second son of the sixtieth-generation emperor Daigo. He resolved to seek merit by practicing the Ten Virtues, and became a monk for the sake of suffering beings in the Nine Spheres. He was an early proponent of the *nenbutsu* invocation in Japan. In an first year of the Tengyō era [938], during the reign of the sixty-first-generation emperor Suzaku, he built a structure which he called Shiunzan Kōshōji Gokurakuin, which was none other than

Kūyadō Temple. In the summer of the fifth year of the Tenryaku era [951], during the reign of the sixty-second-generation emperor Murakami, a plague entered the palace in [the capital of] Heian and spread throughout the land, and countless people died. [Kūya] Shōnin pitied the people, and prayed to the deity Gozu Tennō of Gion [Yasaka Shrine]. In the night, he saw a vision of Kannon of Eleven Faces, and upon praying, he received instruction to offer tea to Kannon and then give it to the plague-stricken people. The healing powers of tea had long been recognized. [Kūya] Shōnin, expressing his thanks, climbed the hill to Kiyomizu Temple, where he carved a statue of Kannon. He mounted it on a cart and pulled it around the city, exhorting the people to recite the *nenbutsu* and to have faith. He then set up a kettle in a grove south of Gion, crafted a *chasen*, and made tea. After offering tea to Kannon, he gave it to the sick, and they were immediately cured. The townspeople were overjoyed.\*

This paragraph first relates the connection between Kūya and tea whisks. There is no need for me to elaborate at length on Kūya, but he was a mid-tenth-century Buddhist saint and early *nenbutsu* practitioner whose asceticism attracted so many worshippers that he came to be considered an incarnation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. An earlier work written in 972, the *Kūyarui* (Eulogy for Kūya), had already recounted how in 951 Kūya had built a statue of Kannon (the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara) in his effort to stop the spread of an epidemic. The legend is built on the overlapping of the townspeople's supplications to Kūya, the

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\* Kumakura, "Chasen: The Tea Whisk," trans. Rebecca Otowa, 44. All subsequent quotations in the section "The History of the Tea Whisk (*Chasen*)" of this book are adapted from Rebecca Otowa's translations in this article.

“saint of the marketplace,” the people’s faith in Kannon, and the creation of the tea whisk.

The core of the Kūya legend, however, is the tea offering.

If at that time Kūya had had no special powers, he could not have saved the people from the plague. Following his good example, it became the practice to offer tea on the third day of the New Year; this practice was respectfully known as *ōbuku* (“serving the sovereign”). Even in these days, many people go to worship at Gion at the hour of the tiger, around four in the morning on New Year’s Day, and carry home a spark from the fire which burns before the deity, using it to [heat water to] make tea which they whip with a Kūyadō tea whisk in observance of the custom of *ōbuku*. The purpose of this is to guard against plague during the coming year.

*Ōbuku-cha* is a religious offering of tea. Tea is offered to the Buddha and distributed to the people as a beneficence. Drinking this tea was originally a way to ward off poverty, but later it became an annual ritual to ward off evil influences. The selling point for Kūyadō Temple in Kyoto was that a Kūyadō tea whisk was something to be thankful for, in that it brought good fortune. But given the origin of the legend, this gets things the wrong way around. It is highly improbable that tea was commonly consumed in Kūya’s time. That being the case, it is likely that, far later, those who were associated with the temple and sold Kūyadō tea whisks sought to increase sales by fabricating the story that Kūya was the originator of the whisks they sold, and connecting the story to the ideas of faith in Kannon and warding off evil (*yakubarai*). According to the *Ōbuku chasen yuraiki*, not only did Kūyadō Temple present tea whisks to the imperial court in the twelfth

month of every year, but they sold tea whisks to everyone, from nobility to townspeople. Also, the document claims that if you use the whisk to shake water onto the affected place or person, that water can dislodge bones stuck in the throat, and enhance the efficacy of any medicines that you drink.

An image of a tea-whisk seller is printed on the end of this handbill. He shares a likeness with the mendicant monks or *hachitataki*—literally “gourd-beaters” or “bowl-tappers”—that appear in the play *Hachitataki* (The Gourd Beaters), a piece in the repertoire of the comic *kyōgen* theater. It contains the following description:

Because his head is not shaved, he is not a monk; in that he wears a monk’s robe, he is not of the ordinary world. Selling tea whisks, he wanders through the world. With a gourd hanging from his hand, he chants verses about the evanescence of things. . . .

Thus the Kūyadō tea-whisk seller was also a half-monk, half-layman gourd-beater.

It was not only Kūyadō Temple that sold tea whisks through the medium of faith, particularly faith in Kannon. Tradition has it that stalls selling tea whisks appeared before the gates of Sensōji Temple in Edo every New Year; and in Nara, tea whisks were also sold at Nigatsudō Hall, a Kannon temple located within the Tōdaiji Temple compound. This we know from the *Unpyō zasshi* (Clouds of Floating Grasses), also discussed in chapter 4:

In the old days, rough tea whisks made from green bamboo were sold at Nigatsudō in Nara. It was a custom of the Southern Capital [Nara] for men and women, young and old, to purchase these and take them home as a souvenir of their visit to the temple, and to use them in their homes when making tea for guests.

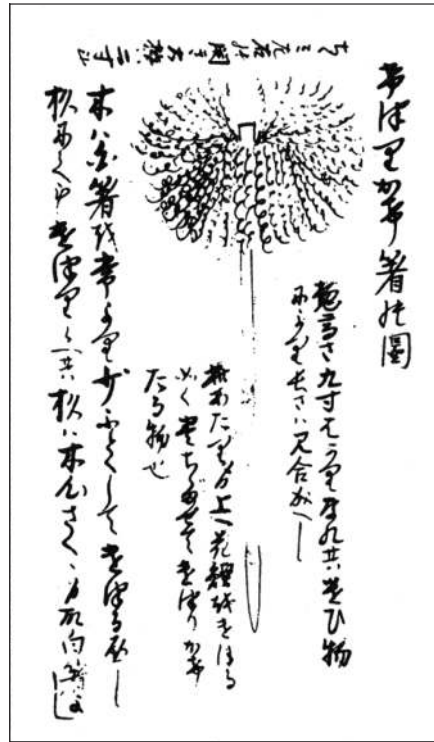


While it is not clear if the Nigatsudō tea whisks were sold at a particular season of the year, the mendicant tea-whisk sellers are said to have walked around selling their wares as preparation for welcoming in the New Year. They were made of green bamboo precisely because of its ability to ward off evil, and they were used as whisks for the special first tea of the New Year, the “great fortune” tea (*ōbuku-cha*), by way of celebrating the year that lay ahead.

### The Folk Nature of Tea Whisks

In his research, Uchiyama found that the oldest burial mound for tea whisks (*chasen-zuka*) is located at Gesshōji Temple in Matsue, Shimane Prefecture, and it dates to around the 1870s. The next-oldest tea-whisk burial mound is at Tokyo’s Mukōjima-Hyakkaen Gardens. Interestingly, the inscription on the Hyakkaen stone that marks the tea-whisk burial mound is by the Meiji-era (1868–1912) scholar Ōtsuki Joden (1845–1931). It was erected in 1892. At the present time, there are no known tea-whisk burial mounds dating back to the Edo period.

Of all the many utensils used in tea, why is it only tea whisks that merit burial mounds and commemoration? That is precisely because they were only to be used once, and then discarded. Even though tea scoops (*chashaku*) are also made of bamboo, they are carefully preserved and reused. The idea of making burial mounds for the exquisitely made tea whisks fated to be discarded (like calligraphy brushes and needles, for which there also exist burial mounds) is probably a modern phenomenon. So the practical question arises as to why tea whisks were used and discarded. There is also the question of why, in extreme cases, they were used only once. As I mentioned earlier, this is because of the tea-whisk seller’s sales pitch about their magical power to ward off evil and invite good fortune. The tea whisk itself has a purifying



A *kezurikake*. Reproduced by permission from page 169 of the original Japanese edition. Courtesy of the Urasenke Konnichian Library.

function, and removes the evil. In removing the evil, though, the whisk is polluted, which is why it must be discarded and never used again.

The aforementioned *Chasen no ikken* manuscript bears no colophon and is a pamphlet of thirteen pages, but it is an extremely important historical document. Judging from the writing style and the paper quality, it is a late Edo-period transcription. Of particular value is the section on the shape of the tea whisk. That section notes a *kezurikake*—an implement made of a whitened chopstick—as the source of the tea-whisk shape:

As to the wood, a white [willow wood] chopstick should be shaved to a thickness a little greater than is usual. While cedar may also

be used, its pith is rather rough; therefore, white chopsticks are most suitable. The chopstick depicted on the right is the kind which was used before true tea whisks were made. It was used for offering tea to the Buddha or gods.

This text is accompanied by a picture of a white-wood chopstick with its top part whittled into slivers. The caption says, “As in the drawing, the upper part of the chopstick . . . is to be whittled into curls similar to those formed when shaving dried bonito.” The size should be “roughly 2 *sun* (6.06 centimeters) in width” and “about 9 *sun* (27.27 centimeters) in total height. The exact size of the whittled chopstick may be adjusted according to use.”

Thus, although we do not know the source from which the writer of *Chasen no ikken* draws his information, he says that the tea whisk was born from the *kezurikake*, and that the *kezurikake* was indeed most suitable for the sacred preparing of a tea offering to the Buddha or Shinto deities. Further, white-wood chopsticks are the best material. Here, white wood means willow. This readily brings to mind the yearly New Year’s Eve *okera* pilgrimages to Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto, during which the pilgrims light twisted ropes of bamboo at the shrine, bringing the fire home and using it to prepare “good fortune tea” and the traditional New Year’s meal in the hope of good health in the year to come. The *kezurikake* is an integral element of the shrine procedures for this. Further, the *Ōbuku chasen yuraiki* mentions that on New Year’s Day, at the hour of the tiger—around four in the morning—one obtains a spark from the fire that burns in front of the gods enshrined at Gion. This is a reference to the *okera* pilgrimage.

A splendid circularity emerges from a single idea: tea-whisk creator → Kūya → Gion → *okera* pilgrimage → whittled chopstick → tea-whisk creator. The theory that the tea whisk derives from the

whittled chopstick was first suggested by Tada Yūji (1915–2013), and then introduced by Hayashiya Tatsusaburō as a “fascinating concept” in his coauthored volume *Zuroku chadōshi* (Illustrated History of the Way of Tea; 1962). The theory finds confirmation in the *Chasen no ikken*.

However, it is still not clear how the whittled chopstick developed into the tea whisk. Even if it was used for tea offerings to the Buddha and Shintō deities, I cannot imagine that the shaved section was dipped into the tea. Whittled items long ago developed out of a folk practice related to *shide*, those white strips of paper used in shrine rituals. “Flowers created from shaved wood (*kezuribana*) attached to sericea [*Lespedeza cuneata*]” appears alongside an explication of the “three trees and three birds” as related in the practice known as *kokin denju*, the secret transmission from master to disciple of interpretations of the *Kokin wakashū* anthology of *waka* poems. Perhaps those flower shapes whittled from wood resembled whittled chopsticks. The flowers in question were hanging decorations, and we might, if pushed, make a connection with the “tea-whisk display” (*chasen-kazari*) style of tea-making procedure (*temae*) which exists today, wherein the tea whisk is the special attraction. In any event, it seems that the tea whisk was inspired by the *kezurikake* shape.

The question, then, is when chanoyu became aware of the unique aspects of the tea whisk. To the best of my knowledge, the rule that a new tea whisk must be used each time first appears in the early tea text *Yamanoue Sōji ki* and also in the *Rikyū hyakushū* (Rikyū’s Hundred Verses), a collection of approximately one hundred *waka* verses on chanoyu practices. Even in Rikyū’s time, tea whisks numbered among the items which had to be new for each tea gathering. Even so, this alone is not sufficient for us to maintain that there has been any special recognition of the sacred nature

of whisks in tea history. How far can we trace back the first appearance of the Kūya legend's tea whisk seller? The *kyōgen* play *Hachitadaki* was not about Kūyadō Temple, but it was clearly about the sale of tea whisks. It is hard to determine the date of *kyōgen* plays, but I assume it dates to sometime early in the premodern era. Other textual sources include the *Kefukigusa* (Grass like Blowing Hair), a 1638 manual on *haikai* compiled by the early Edo-period haiku poet Matsue Shigeyori (1602–1680), which states,

The whisks of the Yamashiro area in Kyoto are poorly made; a mendicant (*hachitadaki*) makes them at Kūyadō.

And in the geographical record *Yōshū fushi* (Topography of Yōshū) of 1684, published by Edo-period historian Kurokawa Dōyū (1623–1691), there is this:

In Gokurakuji Temple in the Shijō area, a disciple of Kūya Shōnin concentrates on making tea whisks.

Whisks thus definitely appear in the early seventeenth century. However, the historical texts are usually cited in connection with tea whisks made at Yamato Takayama in Nara Prefecture. The Takayama tea whisks were of high quality, and were used as tea utensils, as is evident from the *Yōshū fushi* comment that “this type was favored by Rikyū.” By contrast, the Kūyadō whisks were shoddy, and one imagines that they were sold not so much for their use in tea as for their religious significance.

The following is complete conjecture, but is it not perhaps the case that Rikyū and other creators of *wabi-cha* tried to strip away the talismanic folk quality that tea whisks were originally credited with? The rough brush-like whisk gradually evolved into

the intricate, many-tined style of whisk. Was it perhaps in that evolutionary process that tea whisks began to lose their “shaved-flower” aspect, and strengthened their tea-utensil nature? From Rikyū onward, tea sources frequently discuss how to handle the tea whisk, but not a single fragment suggests the sacred nature of a tea whisk. This is because, from an early stage, the sacred nature of a whisk was erased from the world of tea. The tea world banished sacred whisks of the Kūyado tradition as “shoddy items” (*sosōmono*). However, they continued to live on in annual folk rituals, and even the tea world could not completely eliminate their special powers. Tea whisks are discarded after a single use; burial mounds for tea whisks have been erected; and acts of commemoration are still performed. All of which goes to show that the power of the tea whisk flows deep through the world of tea to this day.

## The History of the Tea Shop (*Chaya*)

### **Purveyors of Herbal Extracts (*Senjimon-uri*)**

I have been able to clarify here, albeit only partially, how the distinctive, highly refined performing art of chanoyu is actually deeply rooted in the folk customs of the Japanese people, and has been strongly influenced by contemporary performing arts and rituals. Returning to the questions I raised at the beginning of this volume, chanoyu is absolutely not solitary. Indeed, tea embedded itself in daily life to the extent that the word “tea” appears in the colloquial Japanese expression for “everyday occurrence.” This is precisely why, in some regards, tea reached perfection as a performing art.

However, the perfection of chanoyu was achieved by a continuous denial of the everyday, even as it engaged with the everyday. To put it another way, chanoyu greedily incorporated the most commonplace things, and having incorporated them, it strove to remove from them all traces of mundanity. We can see that tension between incorporation and exclusion in the history of tea sellers.

In medieval times, Japanese people could freely enjoy tea as a luxury item. This was before the formulation of *wabi-cha*. The term *cha-uri*, literally “seller of tea” or “tea purveyor,” appeared in 1400. In 1403, the *Tōji monjo* (Documents of Tōji Temple) mentioned the presence of tea purveyors called *ippuku issen*, literally “one cup one coin,” in front of the gates of Kyoto’s Tōji Temple:

Written Oath (*ukebumi*) for One-Cup-One-Coin Tea Purveyors  
at the Great South Gate

We, the tea purveyors at the Great South Gate, humbly accept the following rules:

- As in earlier times, we shall live on the southern edge of the temple moat, and not move to the foot of the stone steps leading up to the gate, even for a short time;
- We shall not leave tea utensils in the room of lower-ranking shrine priests for the Chinju-Hachimangū house in Tōji, even for a short time;
- Likewise, we shall not take fire from the fires used for lighting incense at the various halls;
- We shall not draw water from the offering well at the Kanjōin (Abhiseka Hall).

Any of our number found in violation of even one of the above rules will be immediately expelled from the vicinity of the temple, as stated in this written oath, which we faithfully accept.

Fourth Month of Ōei 10 [May 1403]

[Dōkaku?] (seal)

Hachirō Jirō (seal)

[Dōkagoke?] (seal)

The “tea purveyors at the Great South Gate” phrase clearly indicates that the one-cup-one-coin tea purveyors sold tea to people passing along the street in front of Tōji Temple’s main gate, but it is hard to imagine that they normally set up stalls there. This document implies that tea purveyors would occasionally take up a position at the bottom of the stone steps leading up to the gate, and leave their tea utensils in a room in the Hachimangū house inside the temple precinct, and light their fire from embers in the temple. Thus, they were merchants who had portable tea utensils—not shops—and would sell tea on the street. One such tea purveyor is featured in the early sixteenth-century picture scroll *Shichijūichi-ban shokunin uta awase* (Poetry Competition between Artisans in Seventy-One Pairs); he sits on a low platform placed on the ground, with brazier and water bucket in front of him, as he sells tea. The equipment used for carrying the articles is not visible. In addition to the one-cup-one-coin tea purveyor, there is in the same picture a purveyor of herbal extracts, also known as a *senjimonno-uri*, literally a “seller of brewed or infused things.” This figure, who would have sold steeped herbal or medicinal drinks, carries his equipment suspended from either end of a pole. It appears that, initially, tea purveyors did not set out all their tea utensils as in a stall; rather, they carried their equipment to a specific place where they sat down to sell tea. Before long, tea purveyors would arrange their tea utensils in cases, like those of the herb-extract purveyors, so they could transport them in simple fashion. Later, it seems that they made chest-like containers



to carry their braziers and utensils around with them. Later still, there was a more developed form of portable tea stall which can be seen in *Rakuchū rakugai zu* (Scenes in and around the Capital) paintings, and in the sixteenth-century six-panel screen *Takao kanpūzu* (Maple Viewing at Takao).

These simple portable tea stalls soon evolved into tea shops (*chaya*), small structures that remained open at all hours. Eight years after the publication of the historical materials cited above about Tōji Temple, there was a prohibition on tea purveyors operating in front of the gate, “gathering prostitutes for the benefit of visitors.” Prostitutes were clearly now involved with tea shops. In the Edo period, *chaya* or tea shops were always regarded as being associated with the pleasure quarters. Tea shops did not simply serve tea; they were connected through tea to pleasure-seeking. But let us omit here the process by which tea shops developed into purveyors of tea specifically for pilgrims and pleasure-seekers, and turn our focus back to the issue of the portable tea stall.

Another prompt for us to imagine today the reality of portable tea stalls is to be found in *kyōgen* performances. The play *Senjimonō* (Herb Extract), found in the 1792 collection of playscripts *Ōkura Torahiro-bon*, is one such example. The eponymous herb-extract purveyor, having heard there is to be a music rehearsal in preparation for the Gion Festival, arrives in the hope of selling his herbal brews. He has a special festival license known as a *chaya no za* needed to set up a tea stall, and appears searching for a good spot, carrying a portable tea stall “in boxes on a shoulder pole.” Here is the exact kind of portable tea stall later used by Edo-period street peddlers, who would carry their wares suspended from either end of a pole carried across their shoulders.

It is not clear whether this purveyor of herbal extracts is true to the Muromachi period, or whether he has been subject to



Herb-extract seller and one-cup-one-coin tea seller—detail from the *Shichijūichi-ban shokunin uta awase* (Poetry Competition between Artisans in Seventy-One Pairs). Courtesy of the Maeda Ikutokukai Foundation.

Edo-period revisionism. I think during the Muromachi period the purveyor of herbal extracts did not in fact sell tea; rather, he sold drinks infused with citrus peel and herbs. There remains, however, the question of when the term *senjimonō*, literally “brewed or infused things,” came to mean nothing but tea. If we understand the term to mean tea, then anyway it was not powdered green tea, but rather steeped tea. The spread of steeped-tea drinking is fully documented for the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1600), but in the absence of research it is hard to be sure about earlier periods. Some research shows it had begun to spread from quite an early period. The aforementioned *Shichijūichi-ban shokunin uta awase* makes it clear that in the medieval period the herb-extract purveyors were itinerant, walking and carrying portable equipment; the one-cup-one-coin tea purveyor reacted against this practice by setting up a stall on a specific spot.

However, the seller in the *Senjimonō* comic play referred to above was clearly selling tea, and he wielded a tea whisk even

though the tea was steeped rather than powdered. This tells us two things: firstly, that there were people called *senjimonou-uri* who sold tea on the road from portable tea stalls; and secondly, that there was a form of steeped-tea drink that was prepared with a tea whisk.

It was thought that the tea served by both itinerant purveyors and by those who ran the portable tea shops seen in the *Rakuchū rakugai zu* was of the powdered variety; in fact, though, most of it was steeped-tea, which, it seems, was drunk after being whipped to a froth.

Whipped steeped tea might seem strange to many people, but consider *botebote-cha*, which is still consumed today in Izumo Province. It is a snack-like drink of low-grade green tea (*bancha*) with cooked rice and other things added in, whipped up with a whisk. It was precisely because there were itinerant purveyors of the handy steeped tea in the Azuchi-Momoyama period that tea came to be more closely linked to the lives of ordinary people. Of course, not all purveyors were itinerant; some set up more permanent structures.

### The Higaki Tea Shop

There is one precious building which conveys to us today the appearance and format of the portable tea stall popular among the masses from the medieval period through the Azuchi-Momoyama period and on to the Edo period. That is the Higaki Tea Shop (*higaki no chaya*; literally the “cypress-fenced tea shop”) in Kyoto.

The Higaki Tea Shop, with the arrival of summer, would traditionally open its doors and serve not only tea but also small dishes of food in the Tadasu-no-mori forest of Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto. But by the beginning of the Shōwa era, around the late 1920s, this custom had already died out.

From its former location in Kyoto’s Tadekura-chō, the tea

shop moved to the side of the road that cuts across the Shimogamo Shrine precincts and leads to Mikagebashi Bridge. There, the tea-shop owner would set up small platforms along the stream where customers would drink tea and enjoy snacks. This practice, too, came to an end in the mid-1960s.

However, even though the shop itself has disappeared without a trace, there is a record of its history. When we look for the proper origin of one-cup-one-coin tea sellers, this extant record of the Higaki Tea Shop is about the only resource available to us today, making it very valuable.

Unexpectedly, the Higaki Tea Shop appears in *Kiichi Hōgen sanryaku no maki* (Kiichi Hōgen's Book of Strategy), attributed to the playwrights Hasegawa Senshi (1689–1733) and Bunkōdō. A play set to a chanted narrative accompanied by a shamisen (*jōruri*), it is known for its fourth act, entitled *Ichijō Ōkura monogatari* (The Tale of Lord Ichijō Ōkura). The Higaki Tea Shop is the setting for this act.

Sung: Is this the Higaki Tea Shop I have heard about? Excuse me, please allow me to sit.

Spoken: Yes, this is the Higaki Tea Shop. And as is widely known, my [tea shop] is actually also named Yoichi's Tea Shop. The shop is not permanently open, but I oblige if there are noh performances. Because I draw water from the Shirakawa River, where I live, and carry it over, the imperial name Higaki was given to my shop. Here is some freshly made venerable tea; please first let me serve a cup to you.

As is indicated by this passage, the Higaki Tea Shop was essentially a special tea shop that provided service when events were

held in the imperial palace. The *Higaki-ki*, a history in scroll format handed down through the generations at the tea shop, claims that the Higaki name derives from an ancient document styled “Higaki of Shirakawa [White River].” In this document, an elderly woman, who is in fact the renowned poet and courtesan Lady Higaki, is composing a poem when Fujiwara no Okinori, a senior-ranking official from Dazaifu (in present-day Kyushu), passes by her hut and requests some water. The poem is as follows:

My jet-black hair  
 Has turned as white  
 As the waters of the White River;  
 I at last realize  
 How old I’ve become.\*

And yet it seems there are various theories regarding the place-name Shirakawa. Some say that it is the Shirakawa in Mutsu Province in northeast Japan. Others claim it derives from a female entertainer who built a cypress-fenced (*higaki*) home in Dazaifu, and later moved to a hut in Shirakawa in Japan’s northeast, where, as in the previous account, Fujiwara Okinori stopped by to ask for water. Still others insist that it is the Shirakawa in Higo Province, present-day Kumamoto Prefecture, where there is a temple called Rendaiji. This theory draws on the fact that when the nobleman Kiyohara no Motosuke (908–990) became lord of Chikuzen Province, he took with him a woman named Inari and another named Higaki, and they lived in a place there called Shirakawa. Even though we cannot determine exactly which Shirakawa is referred to in the *Higaki-ki*, there is clearly some connection with the Shirakawa

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\* Tahara, “Yamato Monogatari,” 13.

stream that runs through the Higashiyama district of Kyoto.

I lived in Shirakawa in Jōshū (present-day southern Kyoto Prefecture), and whenever an emperor was enthroned or there was an annual ceremony or religious rite, I would always present myself, setting up shop within a simple enclosure woven out of thin strips of Japanese cypress. Everyone, from members of the nobility there on official business to lower-ranking officials in service to court society, would stop by my cypress enclosure and ask for tea. I can say that I was truly blessed to be permitted to ascend to the Shishinden Hall [Imperial Palace].

At some stage, the Higaki Tea Shop earned the privilege of setting up shop at the imperial palace. We do not know when that privilege began or ended. However, the aforementioned *Higaki-ki* states that it began in the time of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408). What was the Higaki Tea Shop like at this early stage? The service rendered to the imperial palace is described in the *Higaki-ki* as follows:

Anyway, when there was some important ceremony, such as an enthronement, I would always set up in the gardens of the imperial palace. . . . I would offer tea to princes and to members of the five great courtier families, calling at their respective gates, and to senior courtiers and the emperor's consorts. And every year on the second day of the new year and the first day of the eighth month, I presented tea to the court to mark those auspicious days, and in return I was honored with gifts. . . .

Of course, he did not only serve the great court families; he also purveyed tea to low-ranking courtiers.

The almost complete dearth of extant historical documents means that the history of the Higaki Tea Shop remains unclear. One reason for that dearth is the fire that swept through Kyoto in 1708, destroying the tea shop. Fire broke out in April of that year around the Aburanokōji District, and most of central Kyoto was burned to the ground. The fire claimed all the utensils and records of the Higaki Tea Shop. The *Higaki-ki* was compiled as a record of the lost Higaki Tea Shop.

Of course, during the current fire, I attended to the nobles and senior court officials—those allowed to enter the imperial presence—as well as lower-ranking officials in service to the nobility. I set up shop and served tea by way of contribution to the court in its plight. The documents and books of the Higaki Tea Shop were lost in this fire, but after things had calmed down, I asked for information here and there, and I am writing all these recollections down now to the best of my ability. But there are sure to be many things I have missed.

The *Higaki-ki* was compiled in the year after the fire, 1709, by Nobutaru, a holder of Junior Second Court Rank and a priest of Shimogamo Shrine. The new tea shop moved to Shimogamo Shrine after the fire, which explains Nobutaru's involvement.

One summer day, I set out in search of the portable tea stall that was formerly located at the Higaki Tea Shop. This set of equipment constitutes the actual physical form of the *higaki no ninaijaya* (portable tea stall of *higaki*). It is a superb piece of artisanship. This portable tea stall is at least one hundred years old, possibly even dating back to the Meiji era (1868–1912). It is still sturdy in spite of its unfortunate fate in the intervening years. For the stall once bore a chrysanthemum crest, described in the



Portable tea equipment from the Higaki Tea Shop.  
 Reproduced by permission from Hayashiya  
 Tatsusaburō and Murai Yashiko, *Zuroku chadōshi*  
 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1962).

*Higaki-ki* as having been there “from time immemorial.” But the crest was deliberately damaged during World War II, seemingly on the grounds that it was a vulgar use of the imperial symbol. Today the openwork petals are almost completely missing, cruelly broken off in several places by the work of some heartless person who was perhaps unaware that the use of the symbol had in fact been authorized.

### **Rikyū’s Departed Soul**

If the age of the portable tea stalls had indeed ended with the world of tea as enjoyed by common people, then there would be no need to mention them in the present research on *wabi-cha*. And yet the portable tea stall crosses paths with chanoyu in several settings. The historian Kuwata Tadachika (1902–1987) published a chronology of tea history (*Chadōshi nenpyō*) in 1973, and the



following appears in his entry for the seventh day of the seventh month of Tenshō 5 (August 1, 1577):

Sen no Sōeki [Rikyū] was instrumental in opening a tea room inside Azuchi Castle. This tea room copied the style of a roadside tea shop, and is revealing of Rikyū's *wabi* intentions.

The entry thus makes particular note of how Rikyū brought the lowly “roadside tea shop” into tea. Of course, the portable tea stall was among the kinds of roadside tea shops referred to. This is undoubtedly one of the intersections between portable tea stalls and chanoyu. I would really like more detail on the subject. Much remains unclear to me, and I am unfamiliar with the majority of related historical documents. But surely one source for this chronology is an entry for the seventh day of the intercalary seventh month of the same year (August 30, 1577) in the *Tennōjiya kaiki* (Records of Tennōjiya), mentioned earlier in chapters 3 and 4. (Kuwata seems to have mistaken the intercalary seventh month for the seventh month.) This is what it says:

Sen no Sōeki, Ryūsen, and Dōshitsu opened a tea room (*cha-shitsu*). A large suspended kettle, tripod, and a water container were placed within a *yoshidana* [large folding screen made of reeds, supporting a shelf of cedar wood].

The “large suspended kettle” can be taken to mean that the kettle hung from a pole-and-hook device above a sunken hearth (*irori*), evoking a certain ambiance. The sense is that this was no ordinary tea gathering. There are many examples of Rikyū adroitly introducing elements of the common people's tea culture into chanoyu, and it would not have been beyond him to take a

commoner's tea room as the stylistic theme for a tea gathering.

Hechikan's use of a red-lacquered umbrella to create a tea room at the Great Kitano Tea Gathering slightly reflected the air of a commoners' tea room. However, the first clear use of a portable tea stall at a tea event occurred after Rikyū's death; and, indeed, at a gathering held by people to mourn Rikyū's death. The *Oribe-den*, one of four biographies making up the *Chadō shiso densho* (Transmissions Pertaining to the Four Pioneers of the Way of Tea), compiled by the tea master Matsuya Hisashige, records a cherry-blossom viewing at Yoshino on April 1, 1599.

It describes how the party—comprising Furuta Oribe, Kanamori Yoshishige (1558–1615), Kobori Enshū (Sakusuke), Ishikawa Sadamichi, and others—set out to view cherry blossoms in Yoshino. There were about thirty in all, including Tennōjiya Sōbon, the Kyoto cohort, and the Sakai cohort. The Nara cohort, meanwhile, stopped by at Jōshū'in Temple as directed by Lord Inoue Gengo, where from morning to evening there was one feast after another of delicacies from the mountains and sea. “It goes without saying that everything was served on the special trays used to serve the nobility.” Various dances were also performed. At Hase, they were entertained by Lord Ozaki Kisuke, and Lord Kobori Sakusuke danced while Lord Oribe beat the drum.

The entry concludes: “We were invited to the garden of Chikurinbō Temple in Yoshino, where there was a portable tea stall on which hung a sign that read “Rikyū's Departed Soul,” and there we had tea.”

Toyotomi Hideyoshi died in 1598. He had repeatedly asked those who survived him to care for his young son Hideyori, and so ensure order in the realm endured, but the year after his tumultuous life ended Japan had once more descended into chaos. This anxiety and people's love and/or hate for the man erupted in that

raucous tea gathering at the height of the cherry-blossom season. After the banquet of delicacies from the mountains and sea, the people danced as the cherry-blossom petals fell. Of particular note is the last part of the quote. It states that a portable tea stall appeared in the garden approach (*roji*) in place of a regular tea room. Moreover, a plaque with the words “Rikyū’s Departed Soul” was attached to it. The entanglement of two deaths—that of Rikyū, who was forced to commit ritual suicide, and that of Hideyoshi, who ordered Rikyū’s death—gave rise to Rikyū’s soul appearing beneath those cherry blossoms. The portable tea stall was a temporary stage for this posthumous gathering.

Since then, tea devotees have on several occasions turned to portable tea stalls to generate the spirit of *wabi*. The Nara tea master Kubo Toshiyo (Chōandō), who encountered Rikyū in his youth, gave his chanoyu over to the portable tea stall in his later years.

Now that I have accumulated seventy springs and autumns, I have placed myself outside the floating world. I have built a thatched hut attached to a seven-*shaku* hall, which I have named Noda no Sansō, and I have set up a portable tea stall. Alongside, I have arranged a small folding screen.

So the old *wabi* tea devotee lived out his days quietly, one time taking his portable tea stall along through the mountains and over the bridge at Mizuya to Mount Wakakusa. The portable tea stall was not for selling tea; it was an expression of the spirit of *wabi*.

The portable tea stall was then revived in the modern era.

Chanoyu has become ever more refined since Rikyū, and all the more distant from the world of everyday things. However, it



*Misonodana* portable tea table unit. Reproduced by permission from *Sadōgu hyakka 3: Temae dōgu (jō)* (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 2007).

is also a fact that it has been animated by the regular incorporation of vitality from everyday life. It was the contribution of the fourteenth-generation head of Urasenke, the late Tantansai (Sen Sōshitsu XIV; 1893–1964), to revive the completely forgotten chanoyu of the portable tea stall. Anyone who has practiced the Urasenke style of chanoyu is familiar with the *misonodana*, a special tea table used for the table-and-chair style of tea, which takes after the shape of a portable tea stall. Tantansai is said to have designed it drawing on the ingenuity of entertainer and tea enthusiast Tanaka Takeko (1878–1947). Harada Tomohiko's *Kindai sukisha taiheiki* (Modern Tea Enthusiasts: A Chronicle of the Great Peace; 1971) provides a detailed description of this female tea master under her tea name Tanaka Chikkō. She was a woman of Gion, Kyoto, who appeared at the 1936 Shōwa Great Kitano Tea Gathering. According to Harada's book, she spent one thousand yen for that one-day event, a huge sum at the time. On that occasion, Tanaka used a white-wood table-type tea stand, and that became the prototype for the *misonodana*. I myself heard directly from Tantansai's younger brother, tea master Iguchi Kaisen

(1900–1982), that Tantansai praised the idea, and that he thus redesigned it to create the *misonodana*. The portable tea stall has been ingeniously reborn as the *misonodana* portable tea-table unit. *Misono* means “imperial garden,” and one wonders whether it was perhaps inspired by the *higaki no chaya* set up in the imperial palace gardens in an earlier age. In any event, the portable tea stall tradition has crossed paths several times with chanoyu, and the connection endures to the present day.

## Conclusion

I set out to make this book a somewhat different history of the Japanese way of tea. For this reason, I started with the question of why the style of tea known as *chanoyu* arose.

For example, why is the entrance to a tea room, known as the *nijiriguchi* or “crawl-through entrance,” so small? Why do we pass the tea bowl when drinking thick tea (*koicha*)? Why do we sit in *seiza*—that is, on our knees with our legs tucked under us—in the tea room? When did this practice begin?

To answer these questions, I decided to use methods applied to the study of the history of performing arts. The idea behind this was to consider what might be revealed—and what might remain obscure—by analyzing the history of the way of tea as a type of performing-art history.

There are two methods used in formulating the history of the performing arts. One is the “bearer method” or the “contextual method.” The other is the “performance method.” The former has been used in many previous histories of the way of tea; it involves reflecting on the kind of people who were responsible for developing and sustaining the way of tea through different eras. Who were these people, the “bearers” of the way of tea?

Let us consider Jukō (1422–1502), regarded as the patriarch of *wabi-cha*. Jukō was a monk at Shōmyōji, a Buddhist temple in Nara, and reached psychological maturity within the appropriate cultural traditions of Nara. In addition to his Buddhist training, Jukō also interacted with Furuichi Chōin (also known as Furuichi Harima; 1452–1508) and other powerful small landholders in

Yamato Province. This suggests that he knew about tea drinking as a popular pastime, since it was precisely such newly enriched members of society who were responsible for invigorating the practice of tea as a popular pastime. Furthermore, Jukō traveled to Kyoto, where he encountered the Higashiyama culture of the ruling military aristocracy of the day. We know that he was fully conversant with the aristocratic world of distinguished Chinese goods encapsulated in the fifteenth-century *Kundaikan sa'u chōki* (Records of the Shogunal Throne Room), a single-volume book which describes numerous Chinese objects and tea-ceremony utensils. The work is attributed to the poet and artist Nōami (1397–1471), curatorial advisor to the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490). Through the monk Ikkyū (1394–1481), he also came into contact with the esoteric doctrines of Zen culture. It has been argued that Jukō's personal characteristics prescribed the essential nature of the *wabi-cha* which he invented. In other words, Jukō's historical role as a representative “bearer” during tea's nascent period determined the nature of the way of tea itself; namely, as a fusion of the tea practices of the common class with those of the aristocracy. Such, anyway, is what I mean by the “bearer method” of tea history. It is a way of expounding the character and role of a performing art through the environment which created it.

Yet the autonomous development of a performing art cannot be explained solely through this method. Hence the need for the second “performance method.” This considers the essence of a performing art from and through its “forms,” or *kata*. For example, when we watch a noh performance, an actor will occasionally pound the stage with his foot—this is a type of *kata*. The same technique or “form” can be found in both traditional dance (*buyō*) and in sacred *kagura* dance. It is known as *henbai*, and originated in the appeasing, or containing of, an evil spirit by stomping on

the ground. In fact, the same technique can be seen in sumo, too. Wrestlers perform a ritual stomp known as a *shiko*, a word which originally meant “evil spirit” or “demon”; the stomp was intended to trample evil spirits into the ground. In brief, the performance method considers the essence and evolution of artistic expression by means of comparisons between different performing arts.

Up until now, there have been no studies of the history of tea using performance-art theory. Such practices as the ritual purification of the hands and mouth before entering a tea room, and the very nature of the crawl-through entrance, lend themselves to a performative perspective. I am fully aware that this method alone is insufficient. Nonetheless, in this book I have set out to explain the various forms and conventions of chanoyu from the vantage point of contemporary performing arts, rituals, and folk customs. My aim has been to write a history of tea that uses both the “bearer” and “performance” methods to answer the innocent questions that arise when we look at chanoyu today.





## Appendix 1: Historical Sources

### 1. *Kokoro no fumi*: “Letter of the Heart”

A thesis on tea, written as a letter to Furuichi Chōin (also known as Furuichi Harima) by Jukō, patriarch of *wabi-cha*.

To the Venerable Monk Furuichi Harima  
Jukō

In this Way,  
chief among evils is the heart’s  
overbearance, attachment to self.  
Begrudging the masterly and  
scorning beginners  
is thoroughly wrongheaded.  
You must approach the masterful,  
beseech their least word,  
and never fail to guide novices.

Critical above all else  
in this Way  
is the dissolution of the  
boundary line  
between things native and Chinese.  
This is vital, truly vital;  
attend to it with care.

Further:

These days mere novices  
take up pieces of Bizen or Shigaraki,  
talking of the “chill and withered”;  
and they make a show of  
being “advanced and deepened”  
though ignored by everyone—  
the situation defies all utterance.

“Withered”

means owning splendid pieces,  
knowing their savor fully,  
and from the heart’s ground  
advancing and deepening  
so that all after  
becomes chill and lean:  
it is this  
that has power to move.

Further:

Though it is so,  
the person wholly incapable  
must not turn contentious  
over the tools of the Way.  
And however artful one’s manner,  
a painful self-awareness  
is crucial. Overbearance and attachment  
simply obstruct.

And yet the Way  
lies unattainable  
if there’s no self-assertion  
at all also.

A dictum of practice

states:

“Grow up heart’s master,  
not heart mastered”—  
words of an ancient.\*

Jukō (1422–1502) was from Nara. At a young age, he entered the priesthood at Shōmyōji Temple, and later studied Zen Buddhism under Ikkyū Sōjun, who certified his attainment of enlightenment. Jukō received a work of calligraphy by the Chinese Chan (Zen) monk Yuánwù Kèqín (1063–1135) as proof of that attainment. While he is said to have reached a deep mastery of Zen, all is legend, and the real Jukō is difficult to fathom. Meanwhile, Nara was home to an extremely flourishing cultural circle, focused primarily on powerful local landholders. As noted in chapter 4, the highly successful tea banquets hosted by the Furuichi family were part of this cultural scene. Undoubtedly, Jukō was also thoroughly conversant with this realm of tea as entertainment. And yet he wrote a memorandum known as *Kokoro no fumi* for Furuichi Chōin (1452–1508), the Furuichi family head, to teach him something that was diametrically opposed to tea as entertainment; namely, the tea of the heart. Jukō’s *wabi-cha* may well have been influenced by the Zen philosophy of Ikkyū, but at its core was an aesthetic sensibility derived from the then-popular poetic form of linked verse (*renga*), which Jukō took as the basis for his attempt to find in tea a beauty of insufficiency.

First, in *Kokoro no fumi* Jukō mentions as obstacles to progress in the way of tea conceit (pride) and attachment to self (egoism), and urges that they be discarded. He proposes that the

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\* Hirota, “Heart’s Mastery,” 10. Translation adapted.

important thing for tea is to dissolve the line between native Japanese and Chinese elements. The *shoin daisu* style of tea was focused uniquely on Chinese art. Conversely, the unrefined tea of the commoner uses miscellaneous Japanese implements. Jukō contrasted the perfection and flawlessness of Chinese aesthetics with the “cold and withered” imperfect beauty symbolized by Japanese Bizen ware and Shigaraki ware ceramics. He sought to dissolve the line between native Japanese and Chinese elements, the better to achieve a fusion of Chinese and Japanese beauty. The dissolution also involved combining the utensils employed in the *shoin daisu* style of tea with those employed in the popular style of tea as a common entertainment. It was here in this dissolution that Jukō discovered the way of *wabi-cha*. Moreover, this new form of tea took issue with the stance of one’s heart (*kokoro*). An egoistic heart had no place in Jukō’s *wabi-cha*. And yet an egoistic heart remains a heart, without which there is no hope of progress. It is a matter of attaining a state where one’s actions are not dictated by conceit and attachment to self, but where, rather, one can use the heart with freedom. At this moment, tea begins to follow the path towards a method of self-cultivation.

## 2. Buddhist verse (*gatha*) by Dairin Sōtō on a portrait of Takeno Jōō

A Buddhist verse, or *gatha*, appended to a portrait of Takeno Jōō by Dairin Sotō, successor to Kogaku Sōkō of Daitokuji Temple.

Portrait of Ikkan Jōō, master of Daikokuan. Takeno Shingorō, Minamoto Nakaki. Native of Sennan.

Formerly, he had bonds with the unhindered cause of enlightenment, Amida’s Vow,

Then changed schools and actively endeavored [in Zen].

Realizing that the taste of tea and the taste of Zen are the same,  
He scoops up all the wind in the pines, his mind undefiled.\*

Takeno Jōō (1502–1555) inherited Jūkō’s tea style and greatly influenced Rikyū. Jōō was a townsman of Sakai, modern-day Osaka Prefecture, whose real name was Takeno Shingorō. As a young man Jōō set out to be a master of linked verse (*renga*). He was a merchant and, as one of Sakai’s wealthiest citizens, owned numerous renowned art works and tea utensils.

Jōō first trained in Zen under the monk Kogaku Sōkō (1464–1548) of Daitokuji Temple, and is thought to have received the Jōō name from him. After Kogaku’s death in 1548, Jōō continued his Zen practices under Kogaku’s disciple Dairin Sōtō (1480–1568), who inscribed the above Buddhist verse (*gatha*) on his portrait. The first line of the verse links Jōō with a vow to Amida (Amitabha), which indicates that Jōō was first a disciple of the Honganji, a sect dedicated to Amida. He later changed allegiance to Zen practices, seeking deeper understanding. The verse explains that as a result, he was enlightened to the fact that the taste of tea and the taste of Zen are the same. It is possible that the expression *chazen ichimi*, meaning “tea and Zen are one taste,” originated from these words in Dairin Sōtō’s verse. Of course, Zen and tea are completely different things, but there is something very similar in the states to which they both aspire, and there is a great deal of spiritual overlap between them.

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\* Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*, 81. Translation adapted and expanded.

### 3. *Matsuya kaiki*: Record of a tea gathering hosted by Sen no Rikyū

A record in the *Matsuya kaiki* (Matsuya Family Records of Tea Gatherings) of a tea gathering held by Sen no Rikyū on the morning of January 25, 1568.

Attended a tea gathering held by Sen no Sōeki in Sakai. There were three guests: Hachiya Jōsa, Yamatoya Shōtsū, and [Matsuya] Hisamasa.

After the meal, he placed the Tsuru-no-hashī vase in the display alcove (*tokonoma*) on a lacquered board, with water in the vase but no flowers.

[Sketch of Tsuru-no-hashī vase] purplish bronze (*shidō*), undecorated, approximately one *shaku* tall, with a ring base.

A narrow chain suspended a flat kettle over the sunken hearth. A bucket served as the water vessel. A Fujian *tenmoku* bowl on a stand and a *yarō* [*yakurō*] tea container. A lid rest in the style of a kettle tripod (*gotoku*). The rinse-water receptacle was Bizen ware and of the *bōnosaki* type. A Korean-made tea bowl was used for thin tea.

The food was a dish of a vinegared mixture (*namasu*) of raw snapper, sea cucumber, abalone, and burdock. Soup contained greens. Later, a second soup serving (*hikijiru*) contained rolled pieces of snapper. Rice. Pounded burdock root served as an accompaniment.

The dainties (*kashi*) were torrey nuts (*kaya*), persimmons, and octopus, laid on tree leaves on a tray.

Sen no Rikyū's childhood name was Yoshirō; he was born the son of a merchant in Sakai in 1522. It seems he became interested in tea in his teens, and from the time he took the tea name Sōeki in his youth he began to acquire renown as a figure involved in chanoyu. This record recounts the details of a tea gathering held by Rikyū (Sōeki) at the age of forty-six, when his status as a tea devotee had risen. He served a simple meal of two soups and two side dishes for the first sitting. For the latter sitting he used his beloved Tsuru-no-hashī (literally “crane’s bill”) flower vase, made of a type of bronze. (The vase has also been known as Tsurukubi, literally “crane neck,” from the resemblance of its long thin neck to that of a crane.) He put water in the vase but did not arrange any flowers in it, and welcomed his guests back into the room. The placing of a vase on display without flowers was a Rikyū original. This was presumably purely because he wanted the guests to admire the vase itself.

He prepared thick tea in a *tenmoku* bowl from Fujian Province in China, which came with a stand for such bowls. Thin tea he prepared in a tea bowl produced on the Korean Peninsula. Given that he used just the one medicine case (*yakurō*) style tea container, we can surmise that he used the same powdered tea to prepare both thick and thin tea.

#### **4. *Kōshin gegaki*: On Rikyū's design of the Amidadō kettle**

An article in the *Kōshin gegaki* (*Kōshin's Summer Notes*), a seventeenth-century tea book of memoranda by the fourth head of the Omotesenke lineage, Kōshin Sōsa (1613–1672).

The priest of the Amidadō (Amitabha Hall) in Arima wanted a large kettle. As he was acquainted with the person who then



served as Rikyū's amanuensis, he asked that person to have Rikyū fashion a paper pattern for him, and to have the kettle-smith Yojirō make the kettle. By and by, the finished kettle was delivered to Rikyū from Yojirō, and when Rikyū saw that it had turned out remarkably nicely, he made it a part of his own collection and used it at a tea gathering. After that, feudal lords requested permission to make copies of this "Amidadō" kettle, and the kettle became very popular. Because the kettle was originally requested by the priest of the Amidadō, it was named "Amidadō." When he commissioned Yojirō to make the first kettle, Rikyū noted in his instructions that a rough surface should be used for the overall texture. Sōtan said that he was eleven years old at the time, and he remembered being there when the order was placed.\*

So we see that the Amidadō kettle, the most famous of those favored by Rikyū, began with a priest at Amidadō in Arima wanting a large kettle. When Rikyū learned of this, he immediately cut out a paper model of the kettle he had in mind and commissioned kettle-maker Tsuji Yojirō to get to work. Rikyū was so pleased with the outcome that he kept it for himself.

In this manner, Rikyū was actively involved in the designing of new tea utensils. Until then, it had basically been a case of selecting existing utensils for use in tea, but Rikyū went one step further. He challenged himself to create new utensils for chanoyu. This was how kettles such as the Amidadō kettle came about, and how the "Raku tea bowls" of the late sixteenth-century potter Chōjirō (d. 1589) were created. This particular historical document is fascinating because it relates that Rikyū's grandson Sōtan

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\* Kumakura and Tsutsui, "Anecdotes About Sen Rikyū," trans. Gretchen Mittwer, 46–47. Translation adapted and expanded.

was present at the kettle master's workshop and that he overheard Rikyū telling the kettle master to score the surface of the kettle to make it rougher.

Sōtan recalled that this happened when he was eleven years old. It is a tale with a true sense of immediacy.

### 5. *Yamanoue Sōji ki*: Yamanoue Sōji's notes on Rikyū's *wabi-cha* (1)

An excerpt from the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* record kept by Rikyū's disciple Yamanoue Sōji, detailing some of Rikyū's thoughts on *wabi-cha*.

Concerning guest etiquette: attention should be given to building a unified gathering (*ichiza konryū*). There are many secretly transmitted provisions. Jōō spoke of this matter for the benefit of beginners. At present, however, [such provisions] are rejected by Rikyū. He revealed fragments [of teachings] during a nightfall tea gathering. To begin with, even during a morning or evening gathering, and needless to say a gathering for the first showing of a treasured utensil, or, of course, the cutting of the seal on the jar of new tea, or even an ordinary chanoyu gathering, from the moment you enter the garden pathway until the time you depart, hold the host in most respectful esteem. Approach in the spirit that the encounter will occur but once in your life. Worldly gossip has no place here. Mu'an wrote a satirical verse:

*waga hotoke*  
*tonari no takara*  
*muko shūto*  
*tenka no ikusa*  
*hito no yoshi-ashi*

The Buddha I worship,  
 the neighbor's treasures,  
 sons-in-law, fathers-in-law,  
 the battles throughout the land,  
 and the judgement of others.

From this poem you should be able to grasp the point. All conversation during a gathering should be of matters relating to chanoyu. Further, there should be no talk until after the tea has been prepared.\*

Rikyū's disciple Yamanoue Sōji (1544–1590) left valuable historical records of his observations on chanoyu and of the teachings about tea he received from Rikyū.

For example, one passage in the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* has Rikyū speaking on the subject of the rules regarding conversation during a tea event. *Ichiza konryū* is a term used for tea etiquette, and it means “establishing a seated-as-one experience.” Takeno Jōō is said to have coined this for the benefit of novices. Rikyū, however, reportedly greatly disliked the expression, and proposed replacing it with the phrase *ichigo ni ichido*, “once in a lifetime.” In his teachings, Rikyū emphasized that one must approach a tea gathering in a state of tension, as though it were a once-in-a-lifetime experience. This he applied to morning or evening tea gatherings, and still more so to events where new utensils were debuted or the jar containing the year's new supply of tea was to be opened; the same went for ordinary tea gatherings. The great lord Ii Naosuke (1815–1860) later adjusted the phrase, changing it to *ichigo ichie*, “once-in-a-lifetime encounter,” a phrase that was thereafter adopted widely in society. This approach to a tea

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\* Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*, 205–6. Translation adapted and expanded.

gathering explains why senseless chatter and everyday gossip must never be allowed to intrude. As Mu'an (Botanka Shōhaku; 1443–1527) writes in his verse, one must not bring the following topics into a tea gathering: public affairs' such as legal proceedings; small talk; "the Buddha I worship" or any talk of religion; "the neighbor's treasures" or money; "sons-in-law, fathers-in-law" (i.e., family affairs); "the battles through the land" or politics; and "the judgement of others" or gossip about others. While this verse was probably first written as a guide for etiquette at linked-verse gatherings, Rikyū said the same applied to chanoyu.

## 6. *Yamanoue Sōji ki*: Yamanoue Sōji's notes on Rikyū's *wabi-cha* (2)

A further excerpt from the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* record kept by Rikyū's disciple Yamanoue Sōji, detailing some of Rikyū's thoughts on *wabi-cha*.

Sōeki (Rikyū) was the first to construct a tea room of one and a half mats in Kyoto. It was unusual for the time, and of questionable value for anyone other than Sōeki. Since he was a master (*meijin*), Sōeki could transform mountains into valleys, change west to east, and break the rules of chanoyu. He did it freely, and it was always interesting. But if the ordinary person were simply to imitate him, there would be no chanoyu.\*

This is another passage from the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* that relates how Rikyū's tea was gradually distancing itself from popular tea (the tea of the common people) to become a unique tea. This distancing was permissible because of Rikyū's standing as a tea

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\* Translated by Gretchen Mittwer.

master. When Rikyū created the *ichijō daimē* tea room (that is, one full-size tatami mat and one mat of approximately three-quarters length), people were no doubt surprised and astonished at how confined a space it was. This was the reality of Rikyū's breaking of conventions and, as Yamanoue Sōji puts it, transforming mountains into valleys and changing west into east. The more profound the ingenuity of his rule-breaking, the more Rikyū's tea distanced itself from society and set off on its own solitary path.

### 7. *Nanpōroku*: On the substance of *wabi-cha* (1)

An excerpt from the *Nanpōroku* (Southern Record) text.

We draw water, gather firewood, boil the water, and make tea. We then offer it to the Buddha, serve it to others, and drink ourselves.\*

What is chanoyu? A poem in the *Rikyū hyakushū* (Rikyū's Hundred Verses) collection of *waka* verses states: "Know that chanoyu is a matter of simply boiling water, making the tea, and drinking it." Chanoyu is not a matter of obsession with form. And yet when many set out to study tea, they tend to fixate on rules and procedures (*temae*), such as how to hold the ladle (*hishaku*) or how to fold the silk cloth (*fukusa*). The same applies to utensils. And it is no different for those who have become tea experts. They end up obsessed with utensils, wanting to gather and collect all those that take their fancy.

Yet what lies at the root of chanoyu is nothing more than boiling water, preparing tea, and drinking it. The *Rikyū hyakushū* verse warns us against focusing solely on the details of technique

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\* Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*, 217.

without understanding the fundamentals. In this regard, the *Nanpōroku* quotation above makes the same point: “Draw water, gather firewood, boil the water, and make tea.” This much is the same for both, but what follows in the *Nanpōroku* quotation is important.

It states that after preparing tea, “We then offer it to the Buddha.” This is because tea as articulated in the *Nanpōroku* is tea for Buddhist ascetic practice, and so the Buddha comes first. Next, you “serve it to others.” The verb “to serve” (*hodokosu* in Japanese) can mean “to distribute widely” or “to offer up for someone’s benefit.” In this context, we can suppose that it means not much more than making tea for people and having them drink it. But the most important point is that “[we] drink ourselves.” Does it not often happen that the host forgets that an important part of hospitality involves him or her partaking in the blessings of the occasion?

We tend to think that hospitality means only wholehearted service to others. Hospitality, in this thinking, is one-directional. Much in the way of saint-like religious dedication, it can also mean service without demands or expectations of recompense. Japan’s hospitality, however, is not a one-way service; it is important that it comes back around. That is the significance of “[we] drink ourselves.”

In Buddhism, there are the twin concepts of altruism and self-interest. Altruism is to perform acts of charity or virtuous deeds for others; it means sacrificing oneself for the benefit of others. Conversely, self-interest means to receive merit and benefit through one’s own actions. Buddha encourages altruism, and permits self-interest.

Japanese hospitality cannot be genuine if there is no self-interest. In chanoyu, tea preparation demands that every effort be made in preparing utensils, meals, and tea for the guests. So far, this is altruism. However, during the tea gathering, it may be that the conversation between host and guests takes off, and the host

might benefit from unexpected suggestions from the conversation or from the guests' behavior. The host might also gain new knowledge. Here, then, is self-interest. Of course, the pleasure of hosting a tea gathering is in itself the greatest example of the host's self-interest. By devoting oneself to others, one grows. This is what is meant by Japanese hospitality not being a one-way service; true hospitality lies in mutual enrichment.

### **8. *Nanpōroku*: On the substance of *wabi-cha* (2)**

This is a further excerpt from the *Nanpōroku* (Southern Record) text.

To delight in the refined splendor of a dwelling or the taste of delicacies belongs to the worldly life. There is shelter enough when the roof does not leak, food enough when it staves off hunger.\*

There is a tendency to view chanoyu as something extravagant. And indeed, it does have its extravagant aspects. Tea containers (*chaire*) and tea bowls at their most expensive can cost millions of dollars. Even among the utensils used at ordinary tea gatherings, there are any number that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Tea rooms themselves at first glance look rough and unfinished, but in fact sometimes they command a price of more than one hundred thousand dollars for every two tatami mats of space. The enjoyment of such extravagance is certainly one aspect of chanoyu. To deny that would be to discredit chanoyu.

However, there is a form of chanoyu that is quite the opposite. Rikyū's name for it was *wabi-cha*. In *wabi-cha*, all that is needed

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\* Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*, 217.

is a house that does not leak, and meals that prevent starvation. *Wabi-cha* describes an extreme form of chanoyu in which there is nothing left to discard.

Indeed, it is what might be termed *sosō* in Japanese, a word formed from the characters for “coarse” and “appearance.” That is, it indicates something with a rough, shabby aspect. Rikyū created a tea room that was the exact opposite of the elegant *shoin zukuri* architectural style that informed the design of homes of the military class and nobility of his time. For example, the pillars in these refined residences are always strictly straight, square pillars. Further, the edges of the square pillars are smoothly planed, to make them look beautiful. But in Rikyū’s tea room, the focal pillar was a log. For the thin pillars, too, he used logs where the bark was left partially intact and knots left exposed. Similarly, he used this kind of wood for the crosspiece at the foot of the display alcove. No one before Rikyū had attempted anything similar.

Shifting our attention to the interior of the display alcove, we notice Rikyū’s tea room had earthen walls. In Taian, the tea room created by Rikyū that is today designated a national treasure, the surface plastering of the walls is done away with; the walls have been left rough and the straw mixed into the viscous clay is left exposed on the surface. Moreover, this clay has been spread to cover the ceiling, so the interior of the display alcove is like an earthen cavern. It is the ultimate in coarse appearance, or *sosō*. Rikyū made a tea room that perfectly captured the extreme idea of “a roof that does not leak.”

Allow me a slight digression here. Rikyū’s originality is in fact the origin of modern Japanese architecture. Even now, the display alcove in traditional “tea-house style” (*sukiya zukuri*) architecture has earthen walls (although they are given a finishing coat of smooth clay). Logs of cypress or cedar (of course, beautifully polished) are



used as the pillar of the display alcove. It is no exaggeration to say that these innovations began with Rikyū's tea room.

Anyway, as I noted above, extravagant tea is one form of tea. The *Nanpōroku* refers to it as tea of the secular world. It acknowledges the existence of extravagant tea in the secular world, but then denies it here. Why would this be? We find the following in the same text: “Chanoyu of the small room is above all a matter of practicing and realizing the way in accord with the Buddha's teaching.” Distinct from the tea of the secular world, there is a form of chanoyu that follows Buddhist teachings and leads to enlightenment. It is a tea that has no need for anything superfluous.

As mentioned in item 2 above, there is an expression, *chazen ichimi*, meaning “tea and Zen are one taste.” Indeed, there are many similarities between chanoyu and Zen. Chanoyu has been strongly influenced by Zen, and it seeks its spiritual goals in Zen. The idea that chanoyu practices and Zen practices are one is expressed in the *Nanpōroku* assertion that tea practitioners should train themselves in the Buddha's way and so achieve enlightenment.

From the Zen standpoint of “having nothing” (*mu ichi motsu*), surely a roof that does not leak and meals that prevent starvation are sufficient. Herein lies the ideal of chanoyu.

### 9. *Nanpōroku*: On the substance of *wabi-cha* (3)

A further excerpt from the *Nanpōroku* (Southern Record).

In summer, impart a sense of deep coolness, in winter, a feeling of warmth; lay the charcoal so that it heats the water, prepare the tea so that it is pleasing—these are all the secrets.\*

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\* Hirota, *Wind in the Pines*, 223.

One day, someone asked Rikyū, “Please teach me the essence of chanoyu.” The person asking the question hoped that Rikyū would teach him some secret not given to others. Rikyū’s reply, however, came as a surprise. “In summer, impart a sense of deep coolness, in winter, a feeling of warmth. . . .” The secret turned out to be something utterly banal. When the questioner huffily said, “Everyone knows that,” Rikyū replied, “If that is the case, try and do tea in the way I have just described. If you succeed, I will become your disciple.”

The Zen monk Shōrei Sōkin (1490–1568) of Daitokuji heard this exchange. Sōkin was a renowned monk and Rikyū’s own Zen teacher. On hearing this exchange, Sōkin said, “It is as Rikyū says.” He then told the tale of Niaoke Daolin.

Niaoke (741–824), a Chinese Chan monk who lived in Hangzhou, would always sit in a tree for his meditation sessions. Indeed, his name Niaoke, literally “bird nest,” came from this practice of his. Bai Juyi (772–846), the leading Tang-dynasty poet, was then governor of Hangzhou. Bai Juyi visited Niaoke and asked, “What is the essential meaning of the Dharma?” Niaoke replied, “Shun all evil, perform only what is good.”

Bai Juyi replied, “Even a three-year-old child knows this!” Niaoke replied, “A three-year-old child may be able to say it, but not even an eighty-year-old man can do it.”

Enlightened by this response, Bai Juyi bowed deeply and departed, or so it is said.

In an age when air conditioners did not exist, it was no doubt hard to devise a way of creating cool in summer. In chanoyu, summer tea gatherings are held in the morning when the cool night air still remains. In winter, an ample amount of charcoal is put in the sunken hearth, and a wide-mouthed kettle is used to create plenty of steam and warmth. These contrivances are

not themselves a problem, but the challenge is to understand the reasoning behind them. And that reasoning lies in what is commonplace.

There is another story that is similar. Someone came to Rikyū and gave him money, saying, “Please buy a utensil that would suit me.” Rikyū duly bought him a length of white linen suitable for making the tea cloths (*chakin*) used in chanoyu. The recipient was dissatisfied, for anyone could buy such white linen. “I wanted a utensil that only Rikyū could select, and he comes up with just white linen cloth,” he said. When Rikyū heard this, he replied that white linen cloth with which to purify utensils is the life of a tea devotee; it matters more than even the most impressive utensils. It is the mediocre who tend to be obsessed with reputations, appearances, and trivial details. Here, too, Rikyū pointed out something entirely matter-of-course; namely, that what must be cherished is the “purity and cleanliness” which lies at the root of chanoyu.

What, then, is meant by the terms *hiden*, *mitsuden*, and *hiji*, which translate as “secret transmission,” “transmission of mysteries,” and “mysteries”? When a master teaches a secret to his disciples, he orders them to not tell it to anyone else. Keeping a secret is important. The fourteenth-century noh performer and dramatist Zeami (1363–1443), credited with the perfection of noh drama, once said, “What is hidden is the flower; what is not hidden is not.” By this he meant that people think something is rare or precious precisely because it is secret; nobody finds interest in something that is not secret. The content of secret transmissions is unexpectedly the commonplace. There are many secret transmissions which, when we learn them, make us think, “Is that all there is to it?” That said, it would be wrong to dismiss secret transmissions as banal. The problem is not with the content of the transmission; it is with the enlightenment of the receiver.

Even in the story of Bai Juyi, he was enlightened when he heard Niaoke's words. If, for the receiver of such teachings, the time is just right, even the slightest prompt can lead to enlightenment. But if it is not, then no matter how splendid the secret transmission, it ends up as a banal assertion of commonplace knowledge.

### 10. *Matsui-ke monjo*: A letter in Rikyū's hand

A letter written by Rikyū that is preserved in the *Matsui-ke monjo* (Matsui Family Documents).

Thank you very much for taking the trouble to send your message by courier.

I immediately departed [Kyoto] last evening, as Lord Hideyoshi, through his emissaries Master Tomisa [Tomisa Sakon] and Master Tsugesu [Tsuge Sakyō-no-suke Yoichi], ordered me to leave for Sakai.

I was surprised when I spotted Uyo-sama [Hosokawa Tadaoki] and Furuori-sama [Furuta Oribe] at the boat landing; they had come all the way to Yodo to see me off. Please express my gratitude to them both. With all best regards,  
Fourteenth day of the second month [April 6]

[To] Matsusa-sama [Matsui Sado-no-kami Tasuyuki]

[From] Rikyū Sōeki (handwritten seal [*kao*])

This is Sen no Rikyū's last letter. In spring 1591, Rikyū's seventieth year, Hideyoshi's hatred of Rikyū suddenly flared up. Undoubtedly, Hideyoshi and Rikyū's relationship had been gradually deteriorating.

The death of Hidenaga—Hideyoshi’s most trusted younger brother and a person who understood Rikyū—may have been a catalyst for this deterioration. As the leadership of Ishida Mitsunari and other direct retainers of Hideyoshi, who planned the mobilization of troops to the Korean Peninsula, grew more assertive, supporters of Rikyū gradually diminished in number. The decisive blow that led to Rikyū’s fall from favor was the denouncement of the wooden statue of Rikyū placed in the main entrance gate (*sanmon*) of Daitokuji Temple. That the statue of Rikyū—wearing leather-soled sandals (*setta*)—was placed on the upper floor of the temple gate was deemed the height of disrespect, since imperial envoys and Hideyoshi himself passed under it. This was the far-fetched reason for the censuring of Rikyū. Up until now, various theories have been advanced regarding the reasons for Rikyū’s ritual suicide. It can be considered the result of the complex interaction between Rikyū’s “mountains into valleys, west into east” spirit as recorded in the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*—that is, his insurrectionary belief in breaking with common sense and established rules—and Hideyoshi’s own measures to formalize a centralized power structure with himself at the pinnacle.

Rikyū no doubt took measures to reestablish himself amidst the growing criticism against him, but the situation suddenly deteriorated in spring 1591. By now, Rikyū had given in. On April 6, Hideyoshi ordered Rikyū to leave the capital immediately for Sakai. It was banishment from Kyoto. It is easy to imagine that ritual suicide awaited him next. Rikyū was to leave Kyoto alone, aboard a night boat on the Yodo River bound for Sakai. Needless to say, not a soul would be there to see him off. But surprisingly, when the boat arrived at the Yodo dock, Rikyū spotted his beloved disciples Hosokawa Sansai and Furuta Oribe, who had come to see him off in the pitch-black night. Rikyū was traveling

towards his death. And, indeed, in seeing him off, they were risking their own lives. One can only imagine Rikyū's delight when he noticed the two of them. This letter conveys that joy to Matsui Yasuyuki, Hosokawa Sansai's chief retainer. On April 19, Rikyū was called back to Kyoto. Then, on April 21, he committed ritual suicide.

## 11. Rikyū's last words

A death poem in Rikyū's own hand.

Seventy years of life—  
 Ha ha! and what a fuss!  
 With this sacred sword of mine,  
  
 Both Buddhas and Patriarchs I kill!  
 I raise the sword,  
 This sword of mine,  
 Long in my possession—  
 The time is come at last—  
 Skyward I throw it up!\*

Rikyū wrote these words of farewell while facing his death. The opening phrase about seventy years of life is a conventional description of someone's age at their death. The next phrases—translated by Suzuki as “Ha ha! and what a fuss!”—have been interpreted as a Zen monk's sharp, strong voice, like the sound of silk cloth tearing. The third and fourth lines are based on the words of the Chinese Zen monk Linji Yixuan (d. 866). Rikyū's

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\* Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 319.

treasured sword was a famous blade known for its sharp cutting edge. With this sword, Rikyū severed once and for all his doubts and attachments. Not only that, he severed ties with all the ancestors and Buddhas he had relied on in his Zen observances, and became nothingness itself. Such was the state he attained. But this process was incomplete, since the treasured sword remained in his hand. So the sword, too, he threw up to the sky, abandoning all things to attain a free, unfettered release, liberated from all obstacles. Such was Rikyū's state of mind as he faced death.

## Appendix 2: Glossary of Key Terms

Explanations for the key terms listed here draw heavily on Tankōsha Henshūkyoku, ed., *A Chanoyu Vocabulary: Practical Terms for the Way of Tea* (Tankōsha, 2007), an invaluable source for anyone interested in tea in Japan.

<i>anza</i>	安座	lit. “relaxed sitting style”; a comfortable sitting posture similar to a cross-legged position
<i>chabana</i>	茶花	lit. “tea flowers”; flowers used for display in the tea room; the arrangement is “throw-in” ( <i>nage-ire</i> ) style
<i>chadō (sadō)</i>	茶道	lit. “way of tea”; often used interchangeably with <i>chanoyu</i> , yet, more accurately, <i>chadō</i> consists in the spiritual discipline of <i>chanoyu</i> , implying a cultural realm of self-cultivation through the preparation, serving, and sharing of tea
<i>chaire</i>	茶入	tea container; the small, lidded ceramic jar for powdered green tea used in thick-tea preparation
<i>chaji</i>	茶事	formal tea function; usually of about four hours’ duration and held for a small number of guests, it comprises an initial seating at which a <i>kaiseki</i> meal is served, an intermission, and a latter seating where thick tea and then thin tea are served
<i>chajin</i>	茶人	lit. “tea person”; a “tea devotee” or “tea master”; one whose primary occupation is <i>chanoyu</i> ; a true follower of the way of tea in demeanor and attitude



<i>chakai</i>	茶会	tea gathering; in contrast to the formal tea function, the format is highly flexible; often only the more casual thin tea is served
<i>chakin</i>	茶巾	lit. “tea cloth”; a small, white, linen cloth with a rolled hem on the long sides, used in the tea-making procedure for wiping and purifying tea bowls
<i>chamei (sōmei)</i>	茶名(宗名)	tea name; a name received by a student from the head of the chanoyu lineage, acknowledging a certain depth of understanding in the art and spirit of tea; tea names given by the three Sen lineages (Omotesenke, Urasenke, Mushakōjisenke) and many others comprise two characters, the first of which is invariably <i>sō</i> , meaning “religious principle”; these names are commonly called <i>sō</i> names
<i>chanoyu</i>	茶の湯	lit. “hot water for tea”; the art of preparing and serving powdered green tea
<i>cha o tateru</i>	茶をたてる	lit. “to whip up tea”; implies both using the tea whisk to make the tea and “stirring up the spirit of the tea”
<i>chasen</i>	①茶筴 ②茶筌	tea whisk; tea utensil used to blend the tea powder and hot water together; made of a single length of bamboo, with a handle and thin tines; ① is historically more common, with the second character ( <i>sasara</i> ) referring to a stiff bamboo brush; ② is an alternative, where the second character ( <i>uke</i> or <i>ue</i> ) refers to a bamboo fish trap
<i>chasen-zuka</i>	茶筴塚	burial mound for tea whisks, typically located in temple grounds; chanoyu devotees here express their gratitude to the tea whisks which have served them well
<i>chashitsu</i>	茶室	tea room; a space designed for chanoyu; may indicate both the room itself and the entire structure in which the room is located

<i>chatsubo</i>	茶壺	tea jar; the ceramic jar for packing, sealing, and storing the processed tea leaves picked in spring
<i>cha-uri</i>	茶売り	lit. “tea seller”; a purveyor or street-seller of tea as a beverage
<i>chaya</i>	茶屋	lit. “tea house” or “tea shop”; an establishment selling tea and other refreshments; historically, some also acted as brothels
<i>chōzu</i>	手水	washing or rinsing the hands and mouth for ritual purification
<i>chōzubachi</i>	手水鉢	stone basin for hand and mouth rinsing; in <i>wabi-cha</i> garden approaches, the basin is low to the ground, requiring the guest to crouch down
<i>chūmon</i>	中門	lit. “middle gate”; the gate separating the outer and inner approach to the tea room
<i>daisu</i>	台子	classical form of stand on which tea utensils are set out for display and use; the original and most formal <i>daisu</i> are of black lacquer
<i>dero</i>	出炉	outside sunken hearth; a <i>ro</i> or sunken hearth situated outside the mat where tea is made; typical for rooms of four and a half mats or more
<i>fukusa</i>	ふくさ	double-layered square of silk cloth, folded in a triangle which hangs from the host’s sash; used to purify utensils during tea-making
<i>furo</i>	風炉	brazier in which charcoal is burnt to boil water in a kettle set above it; the <i>furo</i> season comprises the warm months from May to October, whereas the <i>ro</i> (sunken hearth) season spans the cooler months of November to April
<i>furyū</i>	風流	elegance; an important concept influencing the style ( <i>shukō</i> ) of a tea gathering; signifies objects that embody a certain extravagance, eccentricity, and ability to amaze the viewer

<i>ganro no ma</i>	丸炉の間	room having a <i>ganro</i> or round hearth built into the floor; in the early history of chanoyu, tea was made in a room equipped with such a hearth
<i>goza</i>	後座	lit. “latter seating”; the second part of a formal tea function following the first seating ( <i>shoza</i> ) and intermission, during which tea is made and drunk
<i>gozumi</i>	後炭	lit. “latter charcoal”; the replenishing of charcoal in the brazier or sunken hearth during the latter seating of a formal tea function
<i>hiroma</i>	広間	lit. “wide space” or “spacious room”; a tea room greater than four and a half tatami mats in size, often incorporating basic elements of a <i>shoin</i> reception room
<i>hishaku</i>	柄杓	ladle made of bamboo; used to scoop water out of the kettle or water vessel
<i>honzen ryōri</i>	本膳料理	banquet-style meal; a highly formalized cuisine in which various dishes arranged on lacquer trays are placed before the guest
<i>ichigo ichie</i>	一期一会	lit. “one lifetime, one encounter”; the concept that every tea gathering is to be approached as a once-in-a-lifetime experience
<i>ichimi dōshin</i>	一味同心	lit. “one taste, same heart”; idiom meaning people gathered for the same purpose, sharing the same feelings
<i>ichiza konryū</i>	一座建立	lit. “establishing seated-as-oneness”; establishing a feeling of unity among all those in a group
<i>jittoku</i>	十徳	lit. “ten virtues”; a jacket-like garment of black silk gauze worn over a kimono by tea masters
<i>kabuki-cha</i>	かぶき茶	“tea-competition” guessing game involving participants’ blind tasting of several bowls of tea from different regions; also a term used in historical documents to refer to passing the bowl or “tea sipping”

<i>kaiseki</i>	懐石	meal in chanoyu; <i>kaiseki</i> means “breast-pocket stone,” in reference to the heated stones Zen monks placed in their robes to ward off hunger; the simple <i>kaiseki</i> meal comprises a small number of side dishes in addition to rice and soup
<i>kakufukudate</i>	各服だて	lit. “individual-portions” tea-making; the preparation and serving of one bowl of thick tea per person
<i>kamei</i>	亀居	lit. “turtle position”; a sitting posture with buttocks positioned on the floor and legs folded with feet spread to the left and right
<i>karamono</i>	唐物	Chinese articles; a term used in chanoyu for articles of fine artistic quality introduced from China to Japan during the medieval period
<i>kashikomaru</i>	かしこまる	to adopt a respectful attitude; by extension, to adopt a respectful sitting posture, meaning to sit in <i>seiza</i>
<i>koicha</i>	濃茶	lit. “thick tea”; a smooth, dense blend of powdered green tea and hot water, usually prepared and served in a single tea bowl for passing from one guest to another
<i>koma</i>	小間	lit. “small space” or “small room”; a tea room of four and a half tatami mats in size or less, and characteristic of <i>wabi-cha</i>
<i>koshikake</i> (- <i>machiai</i> )	腰掛(待合)	waiting bench; roofed bench located in the garden approach to the tea room, where guests wait both before being invited into the tea room by the host and also during the intermission
<i>kuchikiri</i>	口切	unsealing the mouth of the tea jar ( <i>chatsubo</i> ); also, the celebratory tea function held for the event, often in early November, coinciding with the opening of the sunken hearth
<i>kusari no ma</i>	鎖の間	lit. “chain room”; a drawing room with a kettle suspended by a chain over a sunken hearth

<i>makkyaku</i>	末客	last guest; sits at the end of the row of guests and takes on a variety of small tasks to facilitate the gathering
<i>matcha</i>	抹茶	powdered green tea made from stone-milled tea leaves which have been steamed, dried, and rid of stems and veins; <i>matcha</i> for thick tea comes from newly sprouted tea leaves, and that for thin tea comes from mature tea leaves; <i>matcha</i> may also refer to the beverage made from powdered green tea and hot water
<i>mawashinomi</i>	回し飲み	the “passing-the-bowl” manner of shared thick-tea drinking; <i>mawashi-</i> derives from the verb <i>mawasu</i> , meaning “to pass [something] along,” and <i>nomi</i> means “to drink”; guests typically share a single bowl of thick tea, each sipping his or her own portion and wiping the rim of the bowl before handing it to the next guest, with the last guest drinking up the remainder; introduced by Sen no Rikyū as <i>suicha</i> , “tea sipping,” during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568–1600)
<i>mitate</i>	見立て	refashioning; from the verb <i>mitateru</i> , “to liken something to something else”; the concept of perceiving an object in a new light and repurposing it; often involves playful techniques of allusion and wordplay
<i>mizusashi</i>	水指	vessel for cold water; usually made of ceramic; water from the <i>mizusashi</i> is added to the kettle or is used to rinse the tea bowl or tea whisk near the end of the tea-making process ( <i>temae</i> )
<i>mizuya</i>	水屋	lit. “water room”; kitchen area attached to the tea room where utensils are readied for use in the tea room; the host accesses the tea room through the <i>mizuya</i>
<i>mukōzuke</i>	向付	dish in the <i>kaiseki</i> meal, usually of sashimi or a mixture of vinegared ingredients; it is placed at the far side ( <i>mukō</i> ) of the meal tray ( <i>oshiki</i> ), behind the bowl of rice and bowl of soup

<i>nakadachi</i>	中立	intermission in a formal tea function, during which guests return to the waiting bench in the garden approach
<i>nijiriguchi</i>	にじり口	crawl-through entrance leading into the tea room from the garden approach ( <i>nijiri-</i> derives from the verb <i>nijiru</i> , “to move forward or backward while maintaining <i>seiza</i> seated posture”); created by Sen no Rikyū as one element in his elaboration of a new style of tea room for his <i>wabi-cha</i>
<i>ninaijaya</i>	荷茶屋	portable tea stall; a tea vendor’s portable stall
<i>ōbuku-cha</i>	①王服茶 ②大福茶	① tea offered at a temple or shrine; distributed and consumed as a way to ward off poverty and evil influences, deriving from the practice of <i>ōbuku</i> (“serving the sovereign”); ② literally “great good fortune tea”; a special tea drunk at the start of the year to celebrate good fortune in the New Year
<i>oshiita</i>	押板	lit. “push board”; an earlier form of what is today called the <i>tokonoma</i> (display alcove); an alcove or niche with a long, narrow bottom board, in which objects and artworks are displayed
<i>oshiki</i>	折敷	meal tray used in a <i>kaiseki</i> meal; generally footless, rimmed, and made of lacquered wood
<i>ōyose chakai</i>	大寄せ茶会	large-scale tea gathering; caters for many guests and often involves successive seatings through the day; separate rooms or venues may be provided for serving thick tea, thin tea, and a light meal
<i>rinkan</i> (chanoyu)	淋間茶湯	summer bath tea; a bathing event involving the enjoyment of chanoyu
<i>ro</i>	炉	sunken hearth; a fireplace built into the floor of a tea room, used to boil water for tea; the <i>ro</i> season is winter, between November and April, whereas the <i>furo</i> (brazier) season is the summer months of May to October

<i>roji</i>	露地	lit. “dewy ground”; garden approach to the tea room, so named by Sen no Rikyū to associate its environment with the spiritual realm of the Buddhas and imply a purification as guests walk through to the tea room
<i>rojiguchi</i>	露地口	entrance to the garden approach; most often a small, simple gate built into a wall or high fence surrounding the garden approach
<i>sake sankon</i>	酒三献	lit. “three offerings of sake”; the conventional way to serve sake during a <i>kaiseki</i> meal in a formal tea function; the host pours sake for each guest three times over the course of the meal
<i>sarudo</i>	猿戸	lit. “monkey door”; a type of simple swinging door with a latch referred to as a <i>saru</i> (“monkey”); employed in separating inner and outer sections of the paths in the garden approach
<i>seiza</i>	正座	formal sitting posture; involves kneeling with backside resting on heels and insteps flat on the floor or ground
<i>sencha</i>	煎茶	steeped tea; tea that has been prepared through the infusion of tea leaves in hot water
<i>senjimonon-uri</i>	煎じ物売り	lit. “seller of brewed or infused things”; an itinerant seller of steeped herbal or medicinal drinks
<i>senmoto</i>	せんもと・ 盞本	host or <i>teishu</i> ; a term used in the sixteenth century, the characters for which mean “sake-cup origin”
<i>setta</i>	雪駄	leather-soled sandals; devised by Sen no Rikyū to be worn in the garden approach, avoiding the noisy distraction caused by inexperienced tea practitioners wearing elevated wooden sandals, or <i>geta</i>
<i>shoin</i>	書院	drawing room; a large tatami-floored reception room typically having a large display alcove, built-in staggered shelves, and a built-in <i>tsuke-shoin</i> desk

<i>shoin daisu</i>	書院台子	chanoyu which employs a <i>daisu</i> utensil stand and is conducted in a <i>shoin</i> -style reception room; typifies the formal style of chanoyu that originated in the Higashiyama period (late fifteenth century)
<i>shōkyaku</i>	正客	main guest; sits in the main seat during a tea function as the guest of honor
<i>shoza</i>	初座	lit. “first seating”; the first half of a formal tea function, involving the first laying of charcoal ( <i>shozumi</i> ) and service of the <i>kaiseki</i> meal
<i>shozumi</i>	初炭	lit. “first charcoal”; the first laying of charcoal during the formal tea function
<i>shukō</i>	趣向	style; the unique feature or cast of a tea gathering, achieved by applying artistic ingenuity to a given theme
<i>suicha</i>	吸い茶	lit. “tea sipping”; term used by Sen no Rikyū to describe the “passing-the-bowl” ( <i>mawashinomi</i> ) style of tea drinking
<i>sukiya zukuri</i>	数寄屋造り	lit. “tea-house-style construction”; refined and simple traditional architectural style informed by the art of chanoyu, employing such features as the decorative alcove ( <i>tokonoma</i> ) and stylized shelving
<i>sumidemae</i>	炭点前	procedure for laying charcoal in the brazier or sunken hearth, performed before guests; the first laying is called the <i>shozumi</i> and the second, to replenish the charcoal, the <i>gozumi</i>
<i>suri-ashi</i>	すり足	lit. “foot sliding”; the standard walking style in chanoyu wherein the foot slightly rubs the surface of the tatami
<i>tachimizu</i>	立水	final sprinkling of water in the garden approach by the host during the formal tea function; takes place before the guests leave (see also <i>uchimizu</i> )
<i>tatehiza</i>	立膝	lit. “raised knee”; a sitting posture with the knee of one leg raised



<i>teishu</i>	亭主	host; the person who hosts the tea gathering and performs the tea-making; usually the sponsor of the event
<i>temae</i>	①手前 ②点前	general term for tea-making and charcoal-laying procedures performed before the guests; written with either ① the “hand” character or ② the “point” character
<i>tencha</i>	点茶	the making of thick tea or thin tea by blending powdered tea leaves with hot water using a whisk
<i>tenmoku</i>	天目	style of tea bowl characterized by its funnel-shaped body, small foot, and delicate structure; said to be named for the area around Mount Tianmu in eastern China, where in the thirteenth century many Japanese monks studied at Zen temples, and from where they brought back tea bowls to Japan
<i>tokonoma</i>	床の間	display alcove; a decorative alcove or recess for displaying hanging scrolls, precious artistic objects, and flower arrangements; characteristic of all <i>shoin</i> -style reception rooms and tea rooms; upon entering the tea room, guests approach the <i>tokonoma</i> and view the display
<i>tuánchá</i> or <i>dancha</i>	团茶	Chinese brick tea; a form of preserved tea developed in ancient China; involves compressing and drying steamed ground tea into bricks for use as powdered or steeped tea
<i>uchimizu</i>	打水	sprinkling of water in the garden approach; water is sprinkled on three occasions during a formal tea function: first before the guests arrive ( <i>hatsumizu</i> ), where the host sprinkles water to welcome the guests; subsequently before the intermission ( <i>nakamizu</i> ); and finally before the guests leave ( <i>tachimizu</i> )
<i>usucha</i>	薄茶	lit. “thin tea”; a relatively thin blend of powdered tea and hot water compared to thick tea; served in single portions in separate bowls for individual

		consumption; thin tea is made by briskly moving the tea whisk back and forth to whip the tea powder and hot water together
<i>wabi</i>	わび	an aesthetic developed in chanoyu primarily by Sen no Rikyū; <i>wabi</i> , which derives from the verb “ <i>wabu/wabiru</i> ” (to be disappointed, to come down in the world) finds beauty in the austere, the simple, and the unostentatious; it also has a quality of untainted newness
<i>wabi-cha</i>	わび茶	lit. “ <i>wabi</i> tea”; the style of chanoyu developed by Sen no Rikyū; characterized by its use of a tea room of limited space ( <i>koma</i> ), unassuming utensils, and focus on the concept of a “once-in-a-lifetime encounter” ( <i>ichigo ichie</i> )
<i>wabi chajin</i>	わび茶人	lit. “ <i>wabi</i> tea devotee”; a person deeply involved with chanoyu and who embodies the aesthetic principles of <i>wabi</i>
<i>yatsureburo</i>	やつれ風炉	worn brazier; a style of iron brazier ( <i>furo</i> ) that has a weathered appearance, either from natural use over time or by design; conventionally only used during the final days of the <i>furo</i> season, heightening the sense of nostalgia felt at this time of the year
<i>yatsushi</i>	やつし	“humble guise”; the subtle act of taking on an inconspicuous, humble appearance
<i>yuai</i>	湯相	temperature of the hot water; essential to ensure the powdered tea has vitality and the bowl of tea made from it is as delicious as possible
<i>yoritsuki</i>	寄付	antechamber or waiting room where guests prepare themselves upon arrival at the tea-gathering venue



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