

The Development of Tea in Japan from Kissa to Chanoyu

- The Relationship between the Warrior Class and Tea -

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お茶の喫茶から茶の湯への発展 — 武家社会とお茶の関わり —

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お茶は、和尚達により中国から日本へ紹介されたことが、一般知識であると考えられる。しかし、お茶の喫茶から、茶の湯への発展に関しての武家社会の関わりは、詳しく知られていない。この論文は、足利将軍家、織田信長、豊臣秀吉、千利休、そして、利休の後継者である古田織部を紹介し、彼らのお茶の発展への役割に関して論ずる。

Abstract

The fact that tea was first introduced from China to Japan by Buddhist monks is common knowledge. However, the role played by the warrior class in its development from simple tea consumption or '*kissa*' to '*chanoyu*' is not very widely known.

This paper will discuss the roles played by the Ashikaga shogun family, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Sen-no-Rikyû and Rikyû's successor Furuta Oribe in this development of tea.

Keywords: Tea, Chanoyu, Ashikaga, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Sen-no-Rikyû, Furuta Oribe

1. Introduction, the Relationship between the Warrior Class and Tea

The consumption of tea has been a part of Japanese culture for hundreds of years. It was first introduced by Buddhist monks at the beginning of the ninth century and in the sixteenth century developed into *chanoyu*, the Japanese tea-ceremony¹.

Chanoyu is one of the more widely known forms of Japanese culture. For ages, it has attracted the attention of Japanese and foreigners alike. We find its first descriptions in Western literature in the diaries of the Portuguese Jesuit missionaries like João Rodrigues (1561/1562-1633/1634). In his ‘Account of Sixteenth-Century Japan’ written in 1620 and 1621, he gives one of the clearest descriptions we have in any language from this time period, of the form and etiquette of chanoyu.²

Chanoyu does not merely refer to the preparation of tea nor is it just a way to satisfy one’s thirst. It is a structured framework of rules and forms of codified etiquette that transform a commonplace thing as the preparation and drinking of a simple cup of tea into a living art form that functions as both a way of social entertainment and relaxation, and as a way of spiritual training that has fascinated many over hundreds of years.

This paper will discuss how the consumption of tea or ‘*kissa*’ developed into ‘chanoyu’ and will in particular pay attention to the role the warrior class played in this development.

That wealthy merchants like Sen-no-Rikyû played an important part in the creation and popularization of the chanoyu tea ceremony is widely known, however this paper will consider the role that the Ashikaga shoguns, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Sen-no-Rikyû and Rikyû’s successor Furuta Oribe played in this development of tea and show how the involvement of the warrior class gave chanoyu its elevated status.

2. The Introduction of Tea to Japan and the Development of the Custom of Tea Drinking until the Thirteenth Century

Chinese tea was first introduced to Japan at the beginning of the Heian period (794-1185) when official Japanese embassies known as ‘*Kentôshi*’ (遣唐使) travelled to Tang dynasty China to study Chinese culture, the administration of the country, and so on. These embassies were usually accompanied by Buddhist monks who could read and write Chinese, and travelled to China to study Buddhist doctrine, as China at that time was the center of Buddhist scholarship.

Among the monks that were part of these embassies were Saichô (最澄, 767-822) and Kûkai (空海, 774-835), who both travelled to China on the same embassy in 804.

Saichô traveled at the request of the imperial court and returned to Japan in 805, whereupon he founded the Shingôn school of Buddhism; Kûkai returned in 806 and founded the Tendai school. Shingon and Tendai would become the dominate schools of Buddhism of the Heian-period.

The drinking of tea was at the time already a custom at the Buddhist temples in China and it was mainly at Buddhist temples that tea was consumed in Japan. Interestingly, the records concerning both Saichô and Kûkai are among the oldest remaining records of tea consumption in Japan. The oldest reliable record of tea consumption by a Japanese person, albeit in China, is actually that of Saichô, who drank the beverage at his farewell party before his return to Japan in 805.³ According to Sencha-tea specialist Ogawa Kôroku⁴, Saichô is also responsible for bringing the first tea seeds to Japan and planting these at what is now known as the Hie Tea Plantation (日吉茶園) in Ôtsu, Shiga prefecture. Of Kûkai's consumption of tea, a record as early as of July 814⁵ exists.

At temples tea was first and foremost consumed as a beverage that stimulated good health and as a means to stay away awake during meditation practice.

The most well-known record that has an entry concerning the early drinking of tea is the Nihon Kôki (日本後記), the third of six volumes on Japanese history that were compiled on orders of the Japanese court. The Nihon Kôki is regarded as a reasonably reliable source and has an entry for the twenty-second of April, 815, that describes how emperor Saga (嵯峨天皇, 786-842), who ordered the compilation of this third volume, was served tea by a monk named Eichû (永忠, 743-816).⁶ Although there are some doubts about the correctness of the dates in this article (Eichû was probably in China at the time he supposedly served tea to the emperor) it does show that at this time tea was consumed at the court. Although there is no evidence of the performance of a tea ceremony like those that became fashion in the sixteenth century, it is clear that in this era tea became fashionable at the imperial court as an exotic beverage linked to what was then in Japan the highly respected culture of the Chinese Tang dynasty.

The tea that was consumed at that time was probably so-called '*dancha*' (団茶) or brick tea, and although there is some discussion about whether a beverage like tea indigenous to Japan, might have existed before the introduction of Chinese tea, the tea bushes that are found in Japan to today originate from China.

In 894, official relationships between Tang Dynasty China and Japan were abolished by then ambassador to China, Suguwara-no-Michizane (管原道真, 845-

903)⁷, officially because of the decline of the Tang Dynasty. After the abolishment of official relationships, there were still some informal contacts, but there were no large-scale exchanges and the interest of the Japanese court in China also largely disappeared. Tea was still produced in Japan, but only on a minor scale.

Towards the end of the Heian period, official relations with China were restored and as a result, many Japanese monks visited China to study the developments in Buddhist scholarship. One of them was Minnan Eisai⁸ (明庵栄西, 1141-1215). Dissatisfied with Buddhist practices in Japan, Eisai travelled to Southern Song China (1127-1279) twice.

Eisai is popularly known as the founder of the Japanese Rinzai school of Buddhism and is also known as the person who introduced *matcha* tea from China. There is a strong possibility that in the same era, other monks brought tea to Japan as well, however it is really not significant if Eisai was or was not the first to introduce matcha tea; the more important fact is that in this time period tea was brought to Japan by Buddhist monks and eventually a custom of drinking tea or ‘*kissa*’ (喫茶) developed.

In 1214, Eisai presented the *Kissayôjô-ki* (喫茶養生記), a work of his own hand in which he explained, among other things, the medicinal qualities of tea to the third Kamakura shogun (1185-1333), Minamoto-no-Sanetomo (源実朝, 1192-1219).

According to the Azumagami records (吾妻鏡), Sanemoto suffered from a hangover and after being cured from this inconvenience by drinking a cup of tea, took a great liking to the beverage.⁹ After this, the custom of tea drinking spread among the members of the higher ranks of the warrior class of the Kamakura shogunate.

3. The Custom of Tea Drinking until the Fifteenth Century and the Role of the Ashikaga Shogun Family in its Development.

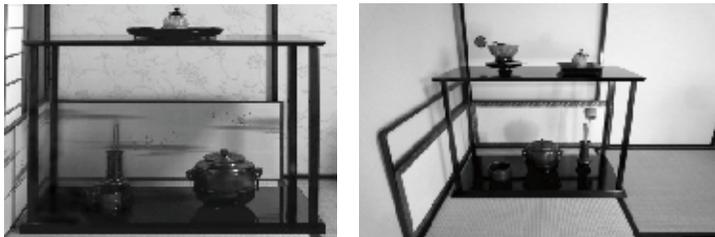
In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, the Kamakura and Muromachi period (1336-1573), there was a revival of interest in Chinese culture among the members of the elite of the warrior class and the imperial court. The consumption of tea became part of gatherings at which Chinese scrolls and other artifacts were exhibited and next to this a new form of amusement known as ‘*Tôcha*’ (闘茶) developed. *Tôcha* can be translated as ‘fight-tea’, it is a game at which the participants try to guess if the tea that is served is from the Uji-area (宇治)¹⁰ around Kyoto, so-called ‘*honcha*’ (本茶) or ‘real’ tea, or not and therefore making it ‘*hi-cha*’ (非茶) or ‘not’ tea.

The fact that the Ashikaga shogun family took a liking to tea drinking greatly stimulated the spread of this custom among the members of the elite, and it was under their patronage that it became part of the customs and etiquettes of the high class

nobles and feudal lords. The Ashikaga controlled six of the seven tea plantations at Uji and also established an impressive collection of famous tea utensils or ‘*meibutsu*’ (名物) from China that was known as the Higashiyama Collection (東山御物). Of course, not all utensils were *meibutsu*, and the name used for utensils from China in general is ‘*karamono*’ (唐物).

The Ashikaga employed the so-called ‘*dôbôshû*’ (同朋衆), chamberlains to the shogun who were usually skilled in incense, flower arrangement, art, literature, poetry and tea, and who were mainly responsible for his entertainment. An interesting work by two of them, Nôami (能阿弥, 1379-1471) and Sôami (相阿弥, ?-1525), is the ‘*Kundaikansou-chôki*’ (君台観左右帳記)¹¹, that gives a good impression of the cultural interests of the Ashikaga and through them, the cultural interests of the elite of the Muromachi period.

Part two of the *Kundaikansou-chôki* explains the way the ‘*sho-in*’ (書院), the official rooms used by the shogun, were to be decorated, and in part three the arrangement of the tea shelf is discussed. The ‘*Kundaikansou-chôki*’ and other works show that tea was usually, but not always, prepared in a room separate from the room where the shogun and other important guest were entertained, and that for this preparation a simple lacquered, four legged shelf known as ‘*daisu*’ (台子) was used.



Examples of the *daisu* shelf as it is used at present.

The *daisu* shelf had originally been brought from China where it was used to store tea utensils in. Over time, the habit of making tea in a separate room was abandoned and a ceremony for tea preparation in the presence of guests developed, first using the *daisu* and other shelves. Later the ceremonies were simplified.

The *daisu* shelf is still used today and is mostly used for ceremonies that involve either important guests, or for special ceremonies known as ‘*ken-cha*’ (献茶) that are dedicated to the Buddha or the Shinto gods.

In the 1400’s, the consumption of tea also spread amongst commoners. Tea was served at the gates of temples and shrines, a practice that is known as ‘*ippuku-issen*’

(一服一錢), ‘a cup of tea for a *sen*’. The word ‘*sen*’ can be translated as a ‘dime’ or any other coin of little value, which indicates that tea could be bought per cup and was not only readily available, but was also enjoyed by people of every status.

From a beverage consumed by Buddhist monks at temples for health purposes, the drinking of tea had developed into a custom for both court nobles and the elite of the warrior class. It had become a part of the social rituals and etiquettes of the Muromachi elite and was strongly connected with the enjoyment of Chinese culture and Chinese artifacts. Utensil for the preparation of tea had become part of the collection of even the shogun, and under the supervision of the *dôbôshû* chamberlains, the preparation of tea had become ritualized and codified.

4. The Development of Tea Drinking in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century, Wabi-Cha

Although in the Muromachi period tea had become available as a beverage to people who did not belong to the elite, the culture that surrounded the enjoyment of tea had a strong connection to the enjoyment of Chinese culture and in particular the exhibition of tea utensils, scrolls and other artifacts from China. Taking part in tea ceremonies was therefore a matter that could only be afforded by the higher-ranking members of the warrior class and the court.

However, a new form of tea appreciation developed known as ‘*wabi-cha*’ (侘茶) for which historically a tea master known as Muruta Shukô (村田珠光, 1423-1503) is credited. Much about him remains unclear, but it is assumed that he was ordained as a monk and therefore his family name is usually abbreviated.

This *wabi-cha* is generally described as a simpler, more rustic kind of ceremony than what was practiced at the court of the Ashikaga. It wasn’t merely centered on *meibutsu* utensils, but other *karamono* and utensils from Japanese origin were also used.

Yama-no-ue Sôji (山上宗二, 1544-1590) wrote in his tea record ‘*Yamanouesôji-ki*’ (山上宗二記)¹², that on the request of *dôbôshû* Nôami, Shukô instructed Ashikaga Yoshimasa (足利義正, 1436-1490), eighth shogun of the Ashikaga shogunate, at his retreat at Higashiyama in Kyoto. This is usually seen as evidence of the fact that the *dôbôshû* took an interest in *wabi-cha* as a form of entertainment for the shogun and that through them it spread among the elite.

However, although the *Yamanouesôji-ki* is regarded as a reliable source, Nôami was no longer alive when the retreat in Higashiyama was built. As there is no other source

that links Shukô directly to the Ashikaga, it is difficult to accept this source as evidence of a connection between Shukô and the Ashikaga, and in that way link his wabi-cha directly to the tea practices at the shogunal court.

Although there is no evidence of a direct transmission of wabi-cha to the Ashikaga, it is clear that a form of the ceremony for the preparation of tea developed that was not centered on the use of meibutsu utensils and that was eventually adopted by the elite. Most meibutsu were after all in the possession of the Ashikaga, and even ordinary karamono could not easily be purchased if one did not belong to the higher classes of the elite. It is natural that eventually a ceremony would be created that depended less on the use of karamono, and when it became popular among the lower ranks of the elite, this wabi-cha in its turn influenced the practice of tea of the higher elite.

A discussion of the contents of Shukô's form of tea practice is complicated by a lack of reliable sources. The only record that discusses his practice in detail, and that for that reason is widely quoted, is the 'Nanpôroku' (南方録), supposedly written by Nanbô Sôkei (南坊宗啓). Nanbô Sôkei was according to the Nanpôroku, a student of the famous tea-master Sen-no-Rikyû (千利休, 1522-1591). According to tradition, the work itself was 'discovered' over a number of years by Tachibana Jitsuzan (立花実山, 1655-1708), a counselor of the daimyô of Fukuoka. Problematically, Nanbô Sôkei does not appear in any record of his time at all, and there are also many inconsistencies in the text indicating that Jitsuzan rewrote the text or even compiled it himself completely. For that reason, this source cannot be used as proof of anything more than Jitsuzan's own view on the tea ceremony¹³.

The Sadodajiten, one of the foremost encyclopedias on tea, states that even though the Nanpôroku is most likely not an original work by a student of Rikyû, it still holds great value for historical research. However, the use of the Nanpôroku as a source has led to a great number of misconception concerning the history of the tea ceremony in Japan and is best avoided¹⁴.

It is clear that in the fifteenth century a new form of tea appreciation and ceremony which was not solely centered on karamono utensils developed. It came to be known as wabi-cha and became widely popular among the members of the elite of both the warrior and merchant class. What role Shukô exactly played remains unclear, but his name is mentioned in a number of sources and it is very well possible that he was one of the driving forces behind the development of wabi-cha. Although these kind of developments in history are seldom the work of just one man, Shukô probably played an important part in its popularization and has become its symbol.

Another tea-master that played an important role in the development of the tea ceremony was Takeno Jôô (武野紹鷗, 1502-1555), a merchant who had settled in the city of Sakai (堺), present Osaka prefecture. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sakai was an important international trade center and had become one of the richest cities in Japan. The more wealthy members of the merchant class adopted some of the cultural interests of the court such as poetry and the tea ceremony, both as a way of confirming their social status and as an enjoyable form of leisure.

Jôô lived in the time of the ‘Warring States’ or ‘*Sengoku*’ period (戦国時代, 1467-1603), a period of continued warfare between the feudal lords of the country. He mainly traded leather goods to the warrior class, and as leather was an indispensable commodity in wartime, his business consequently flourished. As a wealthy man he could afford to study waka poetry and also became known as a master of the tea ceremony, which by that time had become known as ‘*chanoyu*’ (茶の湯). Among his students were the aforementioned Sen-no-Rikyû and Imai Sôkyû (今井宗久, 1520-1593), both wealthy merchants of Sakai-city, who would play an important role in the development of *chanoyu* and Japanese politics.

From various entries in the *Yamanouesôji-ki*, it is clear that Jôô used rooms of four-and-a-half tatami to perform tea ceremonies. The four-and-a-half tatami room is at present still considered to be the basic size for a tea room, and is a room in which both *daisu* shelf ceremonies like that of the Ashikaga, as well as the new *wabi-cha* ceremonies could be performed.

Jôô did not use the ‘*nijiri-guchi*’ (躡口), the low entrance that is now one of the characteristics of rooms for *chanoyu*, and neither did he make use of a specially-designed garden or ‘*roji*’ (露地), another characteristic of *chanoyu* as it is practiced at present. The use of both the *nijiri-guchi* and *roji* came into fashion during the time that his students Rikyû and Sôkyû became the leading men in the world of *chanoyu*.



Nijiri-guchi of Kan'untei (閑雲亭) Hirado



Nijiri-guchi of Shôkintei (松琴亭) Kyoto

An interesting fact concerning the rooms Jôh used, is that they typically contained a one tatami size ‘*tokonoma*’ (床の間) alcove with a kind of wallpaper on the wall. This kind of *tokonoma* can be used for the formal exhibition of utensils that, because of the high status attached to them according to traditional etiquettes, should not be displayed in a smaller *tokonoma*. The dôbôshû of the Ashikaga had determined ranks for all utensils, depending on who had made them and where they originated. There were for instance, different ranks of *meibutsu* and ranks for *karamono* that were not *meibutsu*, but that still held a higher status than utensils not imported from China. This system of ranking is also known as ‘*shin-gyô-sô*’ (真行草), a system of ranks of which ‘*shin*’ is the highest rank, followed by ‘*gyô*’ and the lowest rank of ‘*sô*’. This system has many further subdivisions and is attached to most forms of traditional Japanese arts like flower arrangement, calligraphy and incense.

In the case of *chanoyu*, a one-tatami *tokonoma* was regarded as ‘*shin*’, and the fact that Jôh used these in his rooms for the tea ceremony is evidence of that fact that although the *wabi-cha* practiced by Shukô and Jôh was not as centered on *karamono* as the tea ceremonies performed at the court of the Ashikaga shoguns, it still made extensive use of them.

According to tradition as recorded in the *Yamanouesôji-ki* and other works, Jôh was the first tea-master to not only display Chinese, but also Japanese hanging scrolls in his rooms. This is an important development in *chanoyu* as it indicates the first movements away from a tea ceremony centered on Chinese artifacts. In the following decades, hanging scrolls would become one of the most important and appreciated artifacts in the tea room.

The custom of tea drinking and *chanoyu*, the ceremony used for its preparation, had become more widespread than it had been in the fourteenth and at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and its practice had spread from the members of the imperial court and the elite of the warrior class to the upper members of the merchant class. Even though tea practice was known as ‘*wabi-cha*’ -simple and rustic tea- the use of *karamono* was common and the simple fact that most of these utensils had to be imported from China and that the rooms had to be especially designed for the purpose of holding a *chanoyu* ceremony, meant that *chanoyu* at this level could only be enjoyed by members of the elite.

5. The Development of Tea drinking in the Sixteenth Century, the Role of Oda Nobunaga and the Merchants of Sakai

From the second half of the Heian-period to the beginning of the sixteenth century, the city of Sakai had developed into an important international trade center and had become one of the richest cities of Japan. Sakai was a free city, like Hakata (博多), a trade center in the north of Kyushu, meaning that it was not controlled by a feudal lord but by a city council known as ‘*Egôshû*’ (会合聚)¹⁵, in the case of Saikai consisting of wealthy merchants. Many of these rich merchants like the aforementioned Sen-no-Rikyû and Imai Sôkyû were also involved in chanoyu.

The merchants of a trade city like Saikai, had direct access to all sorts of goods imported from China and other Asian countries, and they also had the financial means to purchase them. Sakai was booming and so was the practice of chanoyu amongst the elite of its merchant class.

In 1543, the first Portuguese merchants reached Japan and trade relationships, also known as ‘Nanban trade’ (南蛮貿易), were established between both countries.

The Japanese had a great interest in Portuguese matchlock guns, which later came to be known as ‘Tanegashima’ (種子島), the island at which the first Portuguese had arrived. The Japanese were already familiar with the use of gunpowder and possessed a kind of cannon, known as ‘*teppô*’ (鉄砲) that had been introduced from China, but the Portuguese guns were lighter and more accurate.

Japan was at that time in a constant state of war, the Warring States Period (1467-1603), and obviously weaponry was in great demand. Trade with the Portuguese centered on Nagasaki, but the Japanese soon mastered the manufacturing of firearms and Sakai became a center for their production.

Feudal lord Oda Nobunaga (織田信長, 1534-1582) made extensive use of the firearms that were produced in Sakai and wanted to bring the area under his direct control because of its important position as a trade and a gun manufacturing center. In 1569, he demanded a kind of war-tax, from Sakai, known as ‘*yasen*’ (矢銭/屋銭), thereby forcing the city to show they would subdue to him. The city council considered fighting Nobunaga, but under leadership of Imai Sôkyû (himself also a trader of, among other things, gunpowder and firearms) decided to give in to his demands.

Nobunaga is well-known as one of the three feudal lords that unified Japan, the others being Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1537-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (徳川家康, 1543-1616). What is less-known about Nobunaga is that he had a profound

influence on the development of chanoyu.

Towards the end of the Muromachi period, the political power of the Ashikaga shogunate had seriously weakened and Nobunaga, then on his way to power, had as part of his strategy to gain control over Japan supported the shogunate. When he thought the time right, however, he deposed the fifteenth and last Ashikaga shogun and in 1573 became shogun himself.

Nobunaga adopted the Ashikaga's exclusive tea culture, symbol of the elite's fortune and cultural sophistication and turned it into one of the political tools affirming his position as the ruler of Japan. Nobunaga accumulated the most famous utensils in the land, by force when necessary, as he did during the 'Hunt on Meibutsu' (信長名物狩り) in 1569, and granted them to his loyal retainers, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1536-1598), his successor as ruler of Japan, being one of them.

Nobunaga handled chanoyu as a political tool and even his choice of tea-masters can be seen as a political move; all of them were members of the Egôshû of Sakai, one of the richest and therefore powerful cities in Japan at the time.

The first amongst his tea-masters was Imai Sôkyû, who received a stipend of 2,200 koku, possibly a reward for the role he played in avoiding a war between Nobunaga and Sakai in 1569. His other two tea-masters were Tsuda Sôgyû, (津田宗及, ?-1591) and Sen-no-Rikyû, who held the junior position.

Nobunaga's political handling of chanoyu is usually referred to as '*Ocha-no-yu-go-seidô*' (御茶の湯御政道) or 'tea politics' and it was this way of using chanoyu as a part of politics that gave it its position as one of the foremost forms of Japanese culture, placing it at the center of the cultural interest of the ruling elite of the country, the warrior class.

Interestingly enough, there is hardly any evidence in the 'Nobunaga-kô-ki' (信長公記)¹⁶, the records of Nobunaga and others sources showing that, despite this use of tea as a political tool, Nobunaga himself had more than a superficial interest in chanoyu. Consequently, although Nobunaga played an important role in confirming and solidifying the position of chanoyu as an essential part of the cultural interest and etiquette of the elite of the warrior class, leading to its rapid development in the sixteenth century, his influence on the contents of chanoyu is negligible.

6. The Development of Tea drinking in the Sixteenth Century, the Role of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Sen-no-Rikyû

In 1582, Oda Nobunaga was attacked by his own general Akechi Mitsuhide (明智光

秀, 1528-1582) at Honnô-ji temple (本能寺) in Kyoto. He was faced by an overwhelming number of enemy soldiers and committed *seppuku* (切腹) or ritual suicide. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, one of Nobunaga's most trusted generals, defeated Mitsuhide at the battle of Yamazaki (山崎の戦) and then took control over the country.

After Nobunaga's death, Hideyoshi continued his policy of Ocha-no-yu-go-seidô. The famous golden tea room he had designed by Rikyû is an excellent example of this. A reconstruction of this room can be seen at the MOA in Atami. Although historical sources indicate that Hideyoshi did enjoy tea as a form of private leisure as well, he had this particular tea room built in 1587, to impress emperor Ogimachi (正親町天皇, 1557-1586), whom he had invited to take part in the Great Tea-party at Kitano (北野大茶会).

This tea-party itself is another example of this policy, as it was organized solely to affirm Hideyoshi's position as the new ruler of Japan and the visit of the emperor was the ultimate affirmation of his power.

In addition to the emperor, Hideyoshi's also invited all tea-masters of the land to take part in the Great Tea-party and declared that anyone not participating, and consequently not recognizing his authority, would thereafter be prohibited from performing the tea ceremony. Although it would have been quite impossible for him to realize total control of the performance of the tea ceremony, with this demand he showed that it was he alone who could decide who was and was not allowed to perform tea, at the time the most popular cultural activity amongst the elite and essential for a career in Hideyoshi's administration.

Hideyoshi continued to employ the same tea-masters as Nobunaga had done, but there was a shift in the power balance and Sen-no-Rikyû became the leader of the three, known since the days of Nobunaga as the 'tenka-san-sôshô' (天下三宗匠), the three masters of the country¹⁷.

A history of the Japanese tea-ceremony usually centers on Sen-no-Rikyû (千利休), who is popularly known as Rikyû (1522-1591). Rikyû was without a doubt the most influential tea-master of his time, if not in the whole history of chanoyu. He was by no means the only tea-master of Nobunaga or Hideyoshi, but next to being the latter's leading tea-master, he also became one of his most trusted advisors and in this way became one of the most powerful and influential men in Japan. In the family records of daimyô Ôtomo Sôrin (大友宗麟, 1530-1587) the following entry can be found:

内々の儀は宗易、公儀の事は宰相存じ候¹⁸

For private matters [one asks advice from] Sôeki, for official matters [one asks] the

chancellor. Sôeki was Rikyû's former name, while 'chancellor' points to Toyotomi Hidenaga (豊臣秀長, 1540-1591). The same entry continues to explain that there was no one else that could speak directly to Hideyoshi like Rikyû could.

As the tea master and advisor to Hideyoshi, Rikyû was accepted by all as the foremost among the tea-master of the country. He had such an influence on the world of chanoyu that it now seems like everything originated with Rikyû and he is often even referred to as a 'tea saint' (茶聖). Most schools of chanoyu try to link themselves one way or the other to him, and every utensil of some excellence of which the origin remains somewhat obscure now seems to be regarded as something that stemmed from the genius of Rikyû.

It is, however, important for a good comprehension of the historical development of chanoyu and the social structure of society in his time-period, to understand the reason why he had such a lasting influence on its development.

Rikyû was obviously blessed with great talents in many fields: he had an eye for beauty in art, had well developed social skills, and a good sense for and understanding of the political developments in society. Starting from a relatively humble background, all of these talents helped him to achieve the position of one of the most trusted vassals of the ruler of Japan. It was this position of the leading tea-master and advisor of Hideyoshi that made it possible for him to extend his influence.

Some might argue that he reached this position solely because of his talents as a tea-master, but that would be rather naïve and ignores the social structure of Japan in the Azuchi-Momoyama era (1573-1603). It is important to realize he was by no means the only tea-master of his status and that both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi had employed numerous other tea-masters, socializing with even more.

It is evident that Rikyû's position as Hideyoshi's most trusted advisors and as his leading tea-master were dependent on his personal relationship to Hideyoshi. It was Hideyoshi's position as the ruler of the realm that gave Rikyû the stage on which to display his talents and skills, and it was in the end Hideyoshi who took his elevated position from him when he ordered him to commit seppuku in 1591.

From various entries in the Yamanouchi-ki it can be seen that at the beginning of the 1580's there is a change in the chanoyu practiced by Rikyû: he started making smaller, rougher tea rooms that became known as 'souan' (草庵), and developed a form of tea ceremony that accordingly became known as 'souan-cha' (草庵茶).

Rikyû started to design tea rooms of a size that had not been used before, using only two tatami, one for the host to prepare the tea and one for the guest. He later even

designed rooms of 1-3/4 tatami, usually called one-tatami-daime, the smallest possible size to perform a ceremony on. Until that time, most tea rooms were four-and-a-half or three-and-a-half tatami rooms.

In the same period he also started to use walls that were plastered with a kind of mixture of straw and clay, instead of wallpaper like Jôô had done and which therefore could not be used for karamono. He also appended the low *nijiri-guchi* entrance that has become one of the characteristic of chanoyu (see p. 7) and created a new rougher and simpler kind of tea room than was used before.

The utensils he used changed as well. From karamono and meibutsu he started to make more use of bamboo tea scoops, and he was the first tea-master to use bamboo flower vases. He made use of Japanese pottery and is also credited with the design of ‘Raku tea cups’ (楽茶碗), a roughly-made tea cup that is still very popular among the practitioners of chanoyu.

In 1591, Hideyoshi’s younger brother Hidenaga, who was also one of Rikyû’s patrons died, and in that same year Rikyû was ordered by Hideyoshi to commit seppuku. It will lead too far from the subject of this paper to discuss the reasons why he was forced to do so, but it seems likely that with the dead of Hidenaga, the power balance at court shifted leaving Rikyû, a commoner from a relatively low background in the world of the warrior class elite, in a precariously weak position.

7. Tea after Rikyû, Furuta Oribe.

After Rikyû’s untimely dead, Furuta Shigenori (古田重然, 1544-1615)¹⁹, usually known as Furuta Oribe (古田織部) took Rikyû’s place as the most influential tea-master. Oribe was daimyô of Yamashiro-Nishioka (山城西岡) a domain of 35.000 koku²⁰ in the south of present Kyoto prefecture and one of Rikyû’s foremost students.

As a warrior, Oribe first served as a vassal of Oda Nobunaga and after the Honnô-ji incident (本能寺の変), at which Nobunaga was betrayed by his general Akechi Mitshuhide, Oribe became a vassal of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, then still known as Hasiba Hideyoshi (羽柴秀吉).

Oribe, became known as Furuta Oribe (織部), changing his name from Shigenori after 1585, when he was promoted to the lower fifth court rank (従五位下) and received an honorary position known as Oribe-no-shi (織部司)²¹. He then also received his position as daimyô of Yamashiro-Nishioka. Although he joined many of the battles and sieges that were fought by both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, he was not particular famous as a warrior, but is known as a tea master as the following quote by

Kumakura Isao shows:

茶湯沙汰計ニシテ世上武名トクナシ²²

When compared to chanoyu (he) has no name (for himself) as a warrior.

Oribe did, however, reach great fame as a tea master. Before reaching his forties he does not appear in any of the surviving records of tea gatherings and so it might be concluded that he did not have much of an interest in chanoyu. After Nobunaga's assassination he met Rikyû, who by then had become Hideyoshi's leading tea-master, for the first time. It seems that only after this meeting, Oribe became seriously interested in tea. He became a student of Rikyû and was later known as one of the seven most important students of Rikyû, the 'Rikyû-no-Shichitetsu' (利休の七哲).

There are a few different explanations concerning who these seven were, but the most reliable is probably the one that appears in the 'Kôshingegaki' (江岑夏書), written by Sen Kôshin Sôsa (千江岑宗左, 1613-1672) in 1633. Sôsa was a great-grandson of Rikyû and the tea master of the Kishû Tokugawa family (紀州徳川). The Kôshingegaki contains stories about the chanoyu of his father Sen Sôtan (千宗旦, 1578-1658) and great-grandfather Rikyû. The work is often used for research concerning the Sen family and seems to be a rather reliable source. Concerning the Shichi-tetsu it mentions the following²³:

- ① Gamô Ujisato (蒲生氏郷, 1556-1595) ④ Shibayama Kanmotsu (芝山監物, ?-?) ⑦ Furuta Oribe.
② Takayama Ukon (高山右近, 1552-1615) ⑤ Seta Kamon (瀬田掃部, ?-1595)
③ Hosokawa Sansai (細川三斎, 1563-1646) ⑥ Makimura Toshisada (牧村利貞, 1546-1593)

All of the above students of Rikyû were feudal lords, Hosokawa Tadaoki, for instance, was lord of the Kokura domain and is the first generation ancestor of the later daimyô family of Kumamoto. It is very well possible that these students were not necessarily his best students but they were his most important students seen from their social position. Society in the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-1600/3), was by no means as strictly divided between the warrior and other classes as it would become during the beginning of the Edo period. A good example of that is of course Rikyû, who although wealthy, was a member of the merchants class and yet became one of the most powerful and influential advisers to Hideyoshi. However, it should go without saying that a feudal lord had more power than a member of the other social classes.

Although the members of the Sen family can of course be regarded as the heirs and successors to their ancestor Rikyû, seen from the social structure of society, his place as the tea-master of the realm could only be taken by a member of the warrior-class.

The above quote of the ‘Kôshingegaki’, continues with the following sentence:

此内 織部茶之湯能無候²⁴

Which essentially means ‘Oribe has no talent for chanoyu’. It is however, important to realize that this record was written later in the Edo-period, by a person who, although an ancestor of Rikyû, was not a member of the warrior class and therefore could never reach the status of a daimyô like Oribe. It seems quite unlikely, considering the large following of students Rikyû had among the feudal lords of the country, that Oribe would have been named to this list if he did not have any talent for chanoyu at all.

Although he was a feudal lord of some rank, he would not have deserved a place in this list for that reason alone. It seems more likely that this remark is a personal judgement of Kôshin Sôsa himself, who probably did not agree with the way in which Oribe had changed chanoyu to his own liking, moving away from the sôan-cha chanoyu that was originally practiced by Rikyû.

Kumakura Isao, also shows that Tokugawa Ieyasu had a great liking for Oribe, which is interesting as Ieyasu did not show a great interest in chanoyu at any time.

古田織部事 家康公御意二入り御懇也、茶湯者也 其上古田度々功名有²⁵

In 1584, Oribe performed a tea ceremony at Osaka castle together with Oda Uraku (小田有楽, 1547-1622), a younger brother of Nobunaga and a famous tea master in his own right. In 1610, he was invited to Edo-castle by second Tokugawa shogun, Hidetada (徳川秀忠, 1579-1632). He travelled to Edo via Shizuoka where he performed a tea ceremony for Ieyasu, before traveling to Edo and performing a ceremony for Hidetada as well. From that time on, Oribe is regarded as the tea master of the Tokugawa shogunate, although such a position did not in fact officially exist. That does not mean, however, that he was not the instructor of the shogun; such records do not exist concerning Rikyû either. He does appear in the records of the Tokugawa family, the ‘Tokugawa Jikki’ (徳川実記)²⁶ in which he is praised as the best tea-master in the country (天下一).

According to Oribe’s own family record the ‘Furuta-kafu’ (古田家譜)²⁷, he was requested by Hideyoshi to create a form of chanoyu that was suitable for the ruling class as opposed to the form of chanoyu that was developed by Rikyû that was regarded as the tea of the commoner. Although Oribe did create his own school of tea that differed in many ways from that of Rikyû, there is no additional evidence that supports his claim.

Although some of the changes Oribe made are now indeed part of the schools that have become known as *daimyô-cha* (大名茶) or the ‘tea of the daimyô’, there is no

evidence or indication that his school of chanoyu was actually solely created for the needs of the warrior class and not just to his own liking.

The most striking difference with Rikyû's tea can be found in the way in which Oribe constructed his tea rooms and the way in which he used various rooms as a part of the ceremony.

Were Rikyu built rooms of two or less tatami with very few windows, Oribe preferred rooms of a larger size and added a one-tatami space known as the '*shôban*' (相伴) seat that could be closed off with sliding doors. This space could be used by the servants of a feudal lord so that they could be present without actually being in the tea room itself. It could also be used to make a room larger when deemed necessary. This may sound insignificant, but the close exchange between the host and just one or two guests in the smallest possible room was a fundamental part of Rikyû's *sôan-cha*. The fact that Oribe actually made space in the room for the servants to follow their master can be seen as a strong separation from the chanoyu of his mentor. Indeed this was an innovation or adjustment that did seem to have the needs of the warrior class in mind.

Oribe also made use of the official '*shoin*' rooms for parts of the ceremony. Depending on the participants and the circumstances, guests would leave the room through the exit that was also used for serving of the meals that were part of the tea ceremony, the '*kyûji-guchi*' (給仕口) and would sometimes not use the *nijiri-guchi* at all. They would proceed to a more official *shoin*-style room known as the '*kusari-ma*' (鎖の間) where the entertainment of the guests would continue, before returning to the tea room itself and departing.

Another notable difference between the rooms designed by Rikyû and Oribe is that Rikyu's *sôan* tea rooms only had few windows and were rather dark, but Oribe preferred to make the room brighter and created a large number of windows, as he felt that would have a positive influence on the state of mind with which the participants took part in the ceremony. He also regarded windows as a part of the form or design of the room as can be seen from the following quote from his own records in which he essentially explains that it is important to have many windows in the room to make it brighter, that windows are a part of the rooms 'landscape', and they affect the state of mind of the participant:

数奇屋之窓ヲ多ク明ル心得之事。(-) 座敷之景ニ成故也、心ニ可有也。²⁸

Oribe was very much interested in form and where for instance Rikyû thought that the design of the '*tobi-ishi*' (飛び石) stepping stones in the garden of the tea room or '*roji*' (露地) should be designed with a balance of 40 percent on beauty and 60 percent

on practical use, Oribe designed them with 60 percent on beauty and 40 percent on practical use.

利休ハ渡りを六ふん、景気四ふんに居へ申候由、織部ハわたりを四ふん、
景気を六ふんにすへ申候²⁹

Oribe also designed his own earthenware, which is known for its extravagant shapes and colourful designs. His designs were so extremely different from what people were used to in those days that they were called ‘he-ukemono’ (へウクモノ)³⁰ or ‘strange’, in the records of Kamiya Sôtan (神谷宗湛, 1551-1635), a wealthy merchant and tea-master from Hakata, who also had a close relationship to Hideyoshi.

As can be seen from the above, Oribe had an elevated position as a daimyô and was respected by both Hideyoshi and the Tokugawa family that succeeded him. He was one of the foremost students of Rikyû and became his successor after the latter was forced to commit seppuku. He created a school of chanoyu that differed in many ways from what was usual in his days, and because of his connection to the Tokugawa family, to a certain extent also influenced the practice of chanoyu in general. After Oribe, tea rooms became lighter than before and new forms of pottery were designed.

During the Summer Osaka campaign of 1615, a vassal of Oribe was accused of high treason against the Tokugawa and Oribe was ordered to commit seppuku. It remains unclear whether he was indeed responsible, but Oribe did not defend himself and after him, his son also committed seppuku. The Oribe family became extinct.

Although Oribe created a radical new style of chanoyu, his overall influence on the development of chanoyu was in the end more limited than would be expected, because of his disgrace and untimely death. Although he is on the one hand remembered as one of the greatest tea-masters in history, he is also remembered as a ‘he-ukemono’. He was succeeded by his student Kobori Enshû (小堀遠州, 1579-1647), daimyo of Ômi-Komurohan (近江小室), who became the tea-master of the third Tokugawa Shogun Iemitsu (徳川家光, 1604-1651). Kobori will be the subject of a forthcoming paper.

8. Conclusion

Tea was first brought from China to Japan by Buddhist monks. Tea drinking or ‘kissa’ became fashion at the imperial court and Buddhist temples, but after the abolishment of relations with Tang dynasty China, the nobles lost their interest in Chinese culture and subsequently in tea, and the custom of tea consumption continued only in temples.

In the twelfth century, tea was reintroduced to Japan in the form of matcha tea and

through the monk Eisai, it became a popular beverage at the court of the Kamakura shogunate. The Ashikaga shogun family owned their own tea plantations and their chamberlains, known as dôbôshû, collected tea utensils from China, known as karamono. They also created a way of tea preparation that was first performed in an adjoining room, but over time became a ceremony that was performed directly in front of guests.

A new kind of tea known as ‘wabi-cha’ developed, that made less use of Chinese utensils. This form of tea practice also became known as chanoyu and spread from the wealthy merchants of trade cities like Sakai to the court of the shogunate.

When Oda Nobunaga deposed the last Ashikaga shogun and became shogun himself, he adopted some of the cultural activities of the Ashikaga, such as the tea ceremony, as a means of confirming his power. He does not seem to have had a great interest in chanoyu personally, but his treatment of it placed it at the center of the cultural interests of the ruling warrior class elite. Nobunaga’s influence on the contents of chanoyu was however, negligible.

Nobunaga’s successor Toyotomi Hideyoshi continued his tea politics and under his patronage and that of his brother Hidenaga, Rikyû became the leading tea-master in Japan. Rikyû was one of the most influential tea-master in the history of chanoyu and much of what we regard today as being characteristic of chanoyu is in some way related to him. Rikyû was succeeded by daimyô Oribe, who created a new style of chanoyu, but who, because of his untimely death, was unable to succeed in establishing a lasting school of tea.

The position of tea practice as part of the etiquette and social customs of the elite of the warrior class is what gave it its eminent position and without the patronage of the warrior class, chanoyu as such would most likely never have come into existence.

Notes:

- 1 The tea ceremony is commonly known as either sadô or chadô using the characters 茶道, or as chanoyu using the characters 茶湯. Because of its older roots, the latter will be used in this paper.
- 2 Michael Cooper (2001), João Rodrigues Account of Sixteenth-Century Japan, The Hakluyt Society, London.
- 3 Hieizan, Senshû-in, fuzoku-gakuin 比叡山専修院附属学院 (1975). *Denkyô-daishi-zenshû, kenkaironengi* 伝教大師全集, 顕戒論縁起. Sekaiseitenhakkôkyôkai 世界聖典発行教会, Tokyo.
「三月の初吉、暁方の景濃し。新茗を酌みて以て行くを餞け、春風に対して以て遠くに送る」

- 4 Ogawa Kôroku 小川後楽 (1980). *Chanobunkashi Kissashuminonagare 茶の文化史, 喫茶趣味の流れ*. Bunichisôgoshuppan 文一総合出版, Tokyo. p.76.
- 5 Watanabe Shôkô 渡辺照宏, Miyazaka Yûshô 宮坂有勝 (1965). *Nihon-koten-bungaku-taikei, Sangôshiki/Shôryôshû, Shôryôshû 日本古典文化体系巻第4, 三教指帰/性霊集, 性霊集*. Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo. P. 568-572. July, 814 「窟観の余暇に時に印度の文を学ぶ、茶湯坐し来って乍(あるとき)に振旦の書を閲る。」
- 6 Nihon Kôki (日本後記), the third volume covers the period between 792 and 833 and was completed in 840.
Kuroita Katsumi (editor) 黒板克美 (1974). *Shinteizôhokokusitaikei, Nihonkôki 新訂増補国史大系, 日本後記*. Yoshikawa Kôbunkan 吉川弘文館, Tokyo.
Entry of 22 April, 815; 廿二日、近江国滋賀韓崎に幸す。(一) 皇帝輿を降り、堂に上り、仏を礼す。更に梵釈寺を過ぐ。輿を停めて詩を賦す。(一)大僧都永忠、手自ら茶を煎じて奉御す(一)
- 7 A scholar, poet, politician, who reached the senior third court rank. He was deified as Tenman Tenjin (天満天神), the Shinto god of learning.
- 8 Minnan is also pronounced as Myôan.
- 9 National Institute of Japanese Literature 日本文学研究資料館, Azuma Kagami 吾妻鏡 http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/infolib/meta_pub/AZMDefault.exe?DB_ID=G0037830azuma&GRP_ID=G0037830&DEF_XSL=default&IS_TYPE=csv&IS_style=default
Role 23, entry of the 4th of February, 1214.
- 10 There were seven tea plantations established in Uji of which six were controlled by the Ashikaga.
- 11 Sen Sôshitsu (editor) 千宗室 (1971). *Sadokoten-zenshû dai-ni-kan 茶道古典全集 第二巻*. Tankôsha 淡交社, Tokyo.
- 12 Idem. *Dai-roku-kan 第六巻*.
- 13 Hisamatsu Shinichi 久松真一 (1990). *Nanpôroku 南方録*. Tankôsha 淡交社, Tokyo.
Note 11. Idem. *Dai-yon-kan 第四巻*.
- 14 Kumakura Isao 熊倉功夫 (2001). *Nanpôroku-wo-yomu 南方録を読む*. Tankôsha 淡交社, Tokyo.
- 15 Also pronounced as ‘kaigôshû’.
- 16 Hori Shin 堀新 (1961). *Nobunaga-kô-ki-wo-yomu 信長公記を読む*. Yoshikawa Kôbunkan. 吉川弘文館, Tokyo.
- 17 A nickname that was given to these three tea-masters in later years.
- 18 Uit de *Ôtomoke-bunshoroku 大友家文書録*, weer gegeven in Tanihata Akio 谷端昭夫 (2007). *Yokuwakanu-sadô-no-rekishi よくわかる茶道の歴史*. Tankôsha 淡交社, Tokyo.
- 19 There is some discussion about his date of birth, this article follows the explanation of Kuno Osamu 久野治 (1997). *Oribe, Furuta-Oribe-no-subete Oribe 古田織部のすべて*. Chôeisha 鳥影社, Tokyo. P.72, p73.
- 20 A domain of 10,000 to 50,000 koku was regarded as a small domain, of 50,000 to 200,000 koku as a medium domain and of 200,000 and above as a large domain.
- 21 Also pronounced as ‘oribe-no-tsukasa’ and also written as 織部助 or 織部正.
- 22 Kumakura Isao 熊倉功夫 (others) (1995). *Shiryô-ni-yoru-chanoyu-no-rekishi ge 史料による茶の湯の歴史 下*. Shufu-no-tomosha 主婦の友社 p.139.

- 23 Note 11. Ibid (1977) *dai-jû-kan, Kôshingegaki*, 第十卷 江岑夏書. P.71.
一番 かもふ飛驒守殿, 二番 高山左近 南坊ノ事, 三番 細川越中殿 三斎ノ事, 四番 芝山監物殿, 五番 瀬田かもん殿, 六番 牧村兵部太夫殿, 七番 古田織部殿
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 See note 22.
- 26 See note 22.
- 27 Kuwata Tadachika 桑田忠親 (1979). *Sadō no rekishi 茶道の歴史*. Kôdansha 講談社, Tokyo. p.129-137.
- 28 Note 11. Ibid (1977) *dai-jûichi-kan, Sekishû-hyaku-ka-jô*, 第十卷 石州百ヶ条. P.255.
- 29 (1977). *Furuta-Oribe-chasho 1, Furuta-Oribe-tsukasadono-monsho 古田織部茶所 1, 古田織部正殿開書*. Shibunkaku 思文閣. p. 86.
- 30 Note 22, p.127-132