

Minnan Eisai and Hirado

- The Introduction of the Rinzai school of Zen and Matcha tea to Japan -

Noboru YAMASHITA

Center for Language Studies, Nagasaki University

明庵栄西と平戸

一本への臨済禅と抹茶の紹介

山下 龍

長崎大学言語教育研究センター

アブストラクト

明庵栄西禅師は、日本の臨済宗の開山として知られているが、茶湯の世界では、栄西が、抹茶と南宋時代の中国で流行っていた喫茶を紹介したことで有名である。栄西は、2度中国へ渡ったが、日本へ臨済宗の教えと抹茶の実を持ち帰って来たと言われているのは、その2度目、建久2年(1191)、長崎県の平戸に帰着した時である。栄西は、一般的に背振霊仙寺(現在の佐賀県)で、日本で初めて茶を栽培したとされる。しかし、帰着後、滞在していた平戸にも、栄西の茶の遺跡があり、この論文は、平戸での栄西の茶と禅の遺跡について論ずる。

Abstract

Buddhist monk Minnan Eisai is popularly known as the founder of the Japanese Rinzai school of Buddhism and is often credited with the introduction of Zen Buddhism to Japan. He is also known as the person who introduced matcha tea from China to his home country. Eisai arrived back in Japan at the island of Hirado, but his stay here is hardly mentioned in any work on either Eisai or matcha tea. This paper will discuss the reasons for Eisai's travel to China and will investigate the traces Eisai left in Hirado on his return. It will discuss the possibility

that he first taught Rinzai in Hirado and also cultivated tea there.

Keywords: Eisai, Hirado, Zen, Rinzai, Matcha tea, chanoyu, tea ceremony

1. Introduction

Minnan Eisai¹ (明庵栄西, 1141-1215), was a Japanese Buddhist priest of the end of the Heian (794-1185), beginning of the Kamakura-period (1185-1333).

Dissatisfied with Buddhist practices in Japan, Eisai travelled to Southern Song China (1127-1279) twice, to study recent developments of the teachings of Buddhism in the country that was at that time regarded by Japanese monks to be the center of Buddhist practices and scholarship.

Eisai is popularly known as the founder of the Japanese Rinzai school (臨済宗) of Zen (禪) Buddhism, the school of Zen he studied during his second visit (1187-1191) to China.

As will be discussed later, parts of the doctrine and practices of Zen Buddhism had been introduced to Japan earlier and had been integrated into the practices of the esoteric Tendai school (天台宗), one of the dominant Buddhist schools in this time period. Rinzai was therefore not the first form of Zen Buddhism that was introduced to Japan. It was, however, the first school that developed into an institutionalized independent monastic organization.

After its introduction to Japan, Rinzai, which strongly emphasized discipline, personal effort and the promise of enlightenment rather than heaven as Tendai and Shingon did, had a profound influence on the practice of Buddhism as a religion and the regulations of monastic life. Rinzai monasteries became centers for Chinese learning and through their knowledge of the cultural developments in Southern Song China, also greatly contributed to the development of art forms such as calligraphy, painting and *chanoyu* - the Japanese tea ceremony² - in other words, of what we at present know as traditional Japanese culture.

Next to his involvement in the propagation of Rinzai, Eisai is also known for introducing ‘matcha’ (抹茶) tea³ and the ceremonies that were used for the preparation of tea at the time of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) in China to his home country.

For anyone not involved in the world of chanoyu, the introduction of something as

trivial as a kind of tea, in essence just a variation on other existing kinds of tea, may seem insignificant. However, whereas in its land of origin matcha tea has grown out of fashion hundreds of years ago and has completely vanished, in Japan matcha is still one of the more popular kinds of beverages. What is more important, chanoyu, one of the foremost expressions of Japanese culture, centers completely on its preparation.

In 1191, Eisai returned from his second visit to China, arriving back at the island of Hirado, in present Nagasaki prefecture. Eisai stayed for some time in Hirado, but most works concerning him do not mention his activities at the island at all, although one would expect him to have started teaching Rinzaï there soon after his arrival.

Concerning the introduction of matcha to Japan, his stay in Hirado is also largely ignored. According to the ‘sadô-daijiten’ (茶道大辞典)⁴ and most other works of authority on chanoyu in Japan, Eisai established the first plantation for tea cultivation at Furise Reisen-ji temple (背振靈仙寺) in present Saga prefecture, however, the Senkô-ji temple at Hirado also claims to have the oldest tea plantation in Japan.

This paper will first discuss how Zen Buddhism was introduced to Japan and the reasons why in this particular time period, monks like Eisai travelled to Southern Song China. It will then show that it is likely that Eisai started teaching Rinzaï doctrine directly after his arrival in Hirado and it will discuss the possibility that the first matcha tea plantation was also established at the island.

2. The Introduction of Buddhism and the Zen school of Buddhism to Japan

According to tradition, Zen Buddhism originated in India and was introduced by the monk Bodhidharma to China during the fifth or sixth century. Not many details are known about where Bodhidharma had achieved his knowledge of Buddhism and what his background was. The oldest record in which an entry concerning him appears is ‘The Record of the Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang’ (洛陽伽藍記)⁵ that was compiled in 547. In this entry it is mentioned that Bodhidharma was the third son of an Indian King but more precise information concerning his life before coming to China is lacking.

Concerning the Zen school of Buddhism he propagated, known in China as ‘Chan’, the same can be said. It is not clear what it actually beheld and how he formed it. Any knowledge that we have of this first stage of Zen doctrine depends mainly on the traditions that are handed down within the various schools of Zen Buddhism.

Zen became the largest school of Buddhism in China during the era of the Song dynasty (950-1300), when a strictly organized system of temple ranks and

administration was developed. In this period the practice of Zen also took the shape that we know today, the use of zazen-meditation and koan⁶ for individual study were institutionalized, and the rules and regulations that formed the code of conduct for monastic life were determined.

According to the *Nihon Shoki* (日本書紀)⁷, after the *Kojiki* (古事記) the second oldest work of classical Japanese history, Buddhism was first introduced in 552, when king Seong of Baekje (?-554), a kingdom at the Korean peninsula, sent a mission that included Buddhist monks to Japan.⁸ Although there are Chinese texts that mention older missions, there is no evidence to support these texts.

The Zen school of Buddhism was first introduced to Japan in the seventh century by monks like Dôshô (道昭, 629-700), who visited Tang dynasty China (618-907) around 653, where he was exposed to the teachings and meditation techniques of the Zen school. At that time Zen was still one of the minor schools of Buddhism in China and his main purpose was to study the Wéishí school (唯識宗), in Japan known as the Hossô-shû (法相宗) school. Although he was not a Zen monk and did not propagate Zen as a separate school of Buddhism, he did found the first meditation hall in Japan at Gangô-ji temple (元興寺) in Nara.

During the Nara (710-794) and beginning of the Heian (794-1185) period, more Japanese monks travelled to China to study Buddhism and consequently some of them also became familiar with Zen.

Saichô (最澄, 767-822) who founded the Japanese Tendai school (天台宗) of Buddhism and his successor Ennin (圓仁, 794- 864)⁹, were also acquainted with Zen through their travels around China and the latter recorded some of these encounters in his diary.¹⁰

For a variety of reasons Chinese monks also visited Japan, some taking part in envoys and others to propagate Buddhism. Gikû (義空, ?-?) , for instance, was sent from the monasteries of Mount Wutai in North China on request of an envoy from Empress Danrin (檀林皇后, 786-850)¹¹, the first consort to emperor Saga (嵯峨天皇, 786-842). He supposedly also introduced Zen to the emperor.¹² Another example is Dôsen (道璿) who arrived in Japan in 736.

Although Zen was known in Japan since the end of the seventh century, it did not become a separate school of Buddhism for centuries. Saichô adopted parts of its practices and doctrine and in this way Zen was incorporated in the traditions of Tendai, together with the Shingon school (真言宗), one of the two most influential schools of Buddhism in Japan at that time. There is some discussion as to what extent Saichô

adopted Zen, but there is general consent among Buddhist scholars that he established the doctrine of the Japanese Tendai school by integrating Buddhist precepts based on the exoteric Lotus Sutra (法華經), esoteric Buddhism (密教), Buddhist prayer known as nenbutsu (念仏), and Zen.

Official embassies to China had ceased from 894. There were some informal contacts in the 11th century but there were no large scale exchanges. One of the main reasons Zen was not established as a separate Buddhist school in Japan was probably this close of official relations between China and Japan from the 9th century, because of which Buddhist monks in Japan were not aware of the developments of Zen into one of the largest and most influential school of Buddhism in China.

Another reason was the popularity of Tendai and Shingon among the circles affiliated with Japanese nobility. It was not until the thirteenth century and the rise to power of the warrior class that Zen would become a school of direct importance.

3. Renewed Introduction of Zen Buddhism

Towards the end of the Heian period, official relations with China were restored, which resulted in an influx of information concerning the cultural and religious developments in China in the several hundreds of years that had passed. This again led to a surge in the interest in Chinese culture which for obvious reasons also strongly influenced Japanese Buddhism and as a result, many Japanese priests visited China to study Buddhist practices that were new to them.

In 1127, the capital of the Chinese Song dynasty had been moved to Southern China, the period that followed is hence known as the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), and most priests traveling to China took up residence in this part of China.

When relations with Japan were reopened again in the late 12th century, Buddhism in China had changed greatly. The doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism (淨土宗) and its recitation of the Amitâbha Buddha prayers had spread widely and Zen had become the dominant branch of Buddhism, becoming more popular than Tendai and the other older schools.¹³

A group of central monasteries, known as the ‘5 mountains’ or ‘Gozan’ in Japanese (五山) had been created and this system was later also adopted by Japanese Zen. Next to these five central monasteries, 35 lesser monasteries had also received official status and the Zen school had established strong ties with the civil government bureaucracy.¹⁴

During the Southern Song dynasty, Zen reached its height of social prestige and

influence in China and it was this firmly established Zen that visiting priests from Japan encountered.¹⁵

Many of the monks that traveled to China, came from Enryaku ji-temple (延暦寺) at Mount Hieizan (比叡山), founded by above-mentioned Saichô. Enryaku-ji was the headquarters of the Tendai school and one of the foremost centers for the study and practice of Buddhism in Japan.

It seems that many monks had become discouraged by the state of Buddhist practice at the end of the 12th century and were hoping to find new texts, practices and teachings that could revitalize Buddhism in Japan. The founders of the Rinzai and Soto school (曹洞宗) of Zen, Eisai and Dôgen (道元, 1200-1253), of the Jôdo school (浄土宗), Hônen (法然, 1133-1212), and of the Nichiren school (日蓮宗), Nichiren (日蓮, 1222-1282) were all originally ordained as monks of the Tendai school. This fact gives an indication of both the high level of Buddhist scholarship that was achieved at Hieizan, as well as the existing dissatisfaction with contemporary practices among the monks of Enryakuji-temple.

4. Minnan Eisai and his travel to China

Eisai was born in 1141, in what at the time was known as Bitchû (備中国), present day Okayama prefecture. He was born to the Kaya (家屋) family that served as priests of the lower rank (konegi, 権禰宜) of Kibitsu Shrine (吉備津神社)¹⁶.

In 1151 at age ten, he entered Anjô-ji temple (安養寺) in Okayama, and in 1153 at age 12, he moved to Enrakuji-temple at Hieizan to start his official training as a monk of the Tendai school. He received the name Eisai in the year after that.

The Tendai school, generally known as Tiantai Buddhism out of Japan, was the first school of Buddhism that was completely of Chinese origin, contrary to the schools that were founded prior in China and that were regarded as originally Indian schools of Buddhism. Until the rise of the Zen school, it was one of the leading schools of Chinese Buddhism.

Tendai regarded the Lotus Sutra that preached Buddha-hood for all living creatures as its supreme teaching and also had a system of meditation. Eisai studied amongst other things, the Buddhist theology of the Tendai sect and Mikkyô (密教) or Vajrayāna, a form of esoteric Buddhism.

Dissatisfied with Buddhist practice in Japan, Eisai travelled to Southern Song China for the first time in 1168. Here he studied at Mannen-ji temple (萬年寺) situated at Tiantai-mountain (天台山), the mountain the school derives its name from. Eisai

travelled to China to study and practice the Tendai doctrinal system. However, when he arrived in Tiantai he found that Tendai had become strongly affiliated with Zen. He left for Japan in the same year and returned to Mount Hieizan.

In 1187, he travelled to China again, this time with the intention of a pilgrimage to India for which he first had to travel through China. However, not receiving permission to go to India, he boarded a ship to return to Japan, when a storm forced him and his companions to Rui'an (瑞安) in the Eastern coastal province of Zhejiang (浙江). Eisai then decided to travel to Mount Tiantai again, where he became acquainted with the Ōryū (黃龍派) school of Rinzai Zen or Lin-chi in Chinese. He enrolled under Zen master Kian Ejō or Hsu-an Huai-ch'ang in Chinese (虛庵懷敞) who in 1191, recognized his enlightenment and gave him the seal of direct transmission (印可).

Eisai was not the first monk who studied Rinzai to return to Japan. Kakua (覺阿, 1143-?), like Eisai originally ordained as a Tendai monk, had traveled to China in 1171 and had arrived back in Japan prior to Eisai.¹⁷ Kakua returned to Hieizan and remained a Tendai monk. Although he was probably the first monk to have studied Rinzai and returned to Japan, he did not establish a Rinzai school and as can be seen from the fact that his date of death is unknown, died in obscurity.

Dainichibō Nōnin (大日房能忍, ?-?), was another Tendai monk who became involved in the propagation of Zen and who was originally ordained as a Tendai school monk. After studying texts on Zen that were brought from China, he wrote a paper on the insights he had achieved through his study and practice of the Zen doctrine. Unlike Eisai and Kakua, Nōnin did not travel to China himself but he had two of his students travel overseas to have his state of enlightenment acknowledged. They succeeded and Nōnin received proof of his enlightenment from Settan Tokukō (拙庵德光, 1121-1203)¹⁸. Settan played an important role in the development of the Ashokaō-ji temple (阿育王寺) as one of the five central temples or 'mountains' of Chinese Zen Buddhism, but was also strongly criticized by Tendō Nyojō (天童如淨, 1163-1228) for his lacking attitude.¹⁹

After obtaining the proof of his enlightenment Nōnin established his own school of Zen, known as the Bodhidharma school (日本達磨宗). However, in 1194, under pressure from the influential monks of Tendai at Hieizan, the imperial court forbade him to propagate Zen any longer. Although both Kakua and Nōnin taught the Zen doctrine in Japan before Eisai, they did not succeed in establishing a lasting tradition of Zen schools.

5. Eisai in Hirado, Shufun-an and Senkô-ji Temple

In July of 1191, at age 51, Eisai left Southern Song China and returned to Japan, where he arrived without any delays in Hirado at Kibiki (木引) in Ashi-no-ura (葦ノ裏). The arrival of Eisai has been recorded in the *Kôzengokokuron* (興禅護国論)²⁰, written by Eisai himself around 1198, and is also confirmed in the second volume of the *Genkôshakusho* (元亨釈書)²¹, the first book on Buddhist history that was presented to the imperial court in 1322 by Kokan Shiren (虎関師錬, 1278-1346)²².

At the end of the twelfth century, Hirado had not yet developed into the international harbor it would become halfway through the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, when it was a center for trade with Chinese, Portuguese and later Dutch and English merchants. It was however, because of its vicinity to the Asian continent and its convenient geographical position in connection to the seasonal currents, a well-used port for travel to and from the Asian mainland. More than three and a half centuries before Eisai, the famous Shingon monk Kûkai (空海, 774-835)²³ had also travelled by way of Hirado when he left for China to study the *Mahāvairocana Sutra* (大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經)²⁴, in 804.

At Hirado, Eisai was welcomed at a small temple which was built by a certain Kiyotsura (清貫), who is described as senior-assistant minister of popular affairs²⁵. The name of this small temple where Eisai was welcomed was 'Fushun-an' (富春庵), as can be seen from the following entry for 1191 by Kôhō Tōshun (高峰東暎, 1714-1779) in *Nihon-Zenshū-Shisho-Senkō-shoshi-ryakunenu*²⁶:

着肥前州平戸島葦浦、戸部侍郎清貫者創小院（旧号富春庵改号千光寺）迎師

The entry first mentions that Eisai returned to Hirado Island in Hizen, the name the area of present Saga and Nagasaki prefecture was then known by, and also like the aforementioned works, specifically mentions Ashi-no-Ura as the place where he landed.

The entry continues saying that Eisai was welcomed at a small temple that was made by Kiyotsura, but it does not mention a surname. It remains unclear who this Kiyotsura was and why he would have built a hermitage there, as there remain no records that connect any Kiyotsura in this era to Hirado. In some works concerning Eisai, the name Fujiwara-no-Kiyotsura (867-930) appears. This Kiyotsura is a historical figure who held the position of senior-assistant minister, but considering the fact that he died more than 250 years before Eisai reached Hirado, it does not seem

likely that he is the person that is referred to.

The entry also mentions the name of the small temple Eisai was welcomed at as Fushun-an, which later was renamed Senkô-ji temple.

Kôhō Tōshun was the 335th abbot of Kennin-ji temple (建仁寺) in Kyoto, which was founded by Eisai himself. It is not clear on what historical sources Kôhō bases this entry, but considering the fact that his entry concerning something as trivial as Eisai's place of arrival is consistent with the abovementioned works, the tradition of the Rinzai school seems to be trustworthy.

The existence of a temple with the name Fushun-an is also proven by an entry in volume 20 of the Go-kaden-kōshō (御家伝草稿)²⁷ records of the Matsura (松浦) family²⁸, the feudal lords that ruled Hirado from halfway through the sixteenth century.

In volume 20, the following article appears on the 25th of May, 1695:

木引富春庵 龍燈明山千光寺

右之通 元禄八乙亥 五月廿四日 山号寺号被相 被仰出候事

This entry describes that on May 24th of 1695, Fushun-ji temple at Kibiki, received 'Ryūtō Myōsan (龍燈明山)²⁹ as its 'sangō' (山号) and Senkō-ji' (千光寺) as its 'jigō' (寺号)³⁰. This entry is of a date 500 years after Eisai visited Hirado and it makes clear that a temple with the name Fushun-an, the same name as mentioned by Kôhō, then still existed at the same location Eisai had landed and where he was welcomed by Kiyotsura. It is, of course, not very likely that the same building that Eisai stayed at still existed, but there is no other explanation for the usage of that name for a temple at that specific location, than that concerned a successor to the original temple where Eisai stayed. If Kiyotsura is indeed assistant-senior minister Fujiwara Kiyotsura, that structure could be the successor of an even older temple structure. However, as it is not clear who this Kiyotsura was, that is a theory that will lead far away from the present topic.

The entry in the Go-kaden-kōshō does not explain why the name 'Fushun-an' was changed to Senkō-ji. However, 'Senkō' is actually a name that Eisai received while he was studying in Southern Song and in Japan he is often referred to as 'Senkō-kokushi' (千光国師), which is an honorary title that was bestowed on Eisai. Considering the historical connection between Eisai and the temple at this location, it seems likely that the temple was given this name to commemorate the relationship between this temple and Eisai. However, no clear proof of that exists.

The same record also mentions Rinzai monk Bankei Yôtaku (盤珪永琢, 1622-1693), who was also bestowed with the posthumous title of koku-shi, as ‘chûkô’ (中興) of the Senkô-ji temple. A chûkô in Japanese culture is a person who is responsible for the revival of a school of religion or art and is therefore regarded as kind of a second founder. It seems that the Matsura family felt Senkô-ji was of such importance that they invited one of the most respected monks of the Rinzai school at that time for this position.

Bankei was also asked to become the founder of the Yûkô-ji temple (雄香寺), which was established on request of the 30th lord of Hirado, Matsura Takashi Yûko (棟雄香, 1646 -1713) and still serves as the main temple for the Matsura family.

According to the same entry from the 25th of May in the records of Kôhō Tōshun, Eisai first taught Zen in Hirado in August of 1191, at Fushun-an.

八月始行禪規、僅十輩、不幾海衆滿堂

This is sometimes mistakenly regarded as the first time that Zen was directly transmitted from China to Japan, but as mentioned, Eisai was not the first person to travel to Southern dynasty China and study Zen. Monk Kakua had travelled to China before Eisai and there at the Reiji-temple (靈隱寺) in Hangzhou, he received instruction in Rinzaï Zen from Katsudōeon (瞎堂慧遠, 1103-1176)³¹, also known as Bukkai Zenji (仏海禪師). Kakua had received the ‘Inka’ (印可) or proof of Dharma transmission and after returning to Japan, he stayed at Hieizan where he probably remained until he died. There are no records of importance that concern him, and he obviously did not succeed in spreading Rinzaï Zen in Japan.

The significance of Eisai propagating Rinzaï Zen in Hirado lies not in the fact that his practice of Zen in Hirado may or may not have been the first time the doctrine of the Rinzaï School of Zen was taught in Japan, but in the fact that it was the first time for Eisai, the founder of the first school of Zen that grew into a Buddhist monastic institution.

The successor of Fushun-an, the present Senkô-ji temple, does not stand at the original location where Fushun-an was built. Entries of the third of February 1702, in two records of the Matsura family, mention that the temple was rebuilt and one of the two specifically mentions that it was rebuilt at a different location, albeit within the Hikibie area where it originally was situated.

The first is a short entry in the Kasetōden-yon, honden (家世統伝四, 本伝)³².



Entrance to the present Senkô-ji temple in Hirado



The main building of Senkô-ji temple

木引村泉光寺再建

This can be translated as; ‘rebuilding of Senkô-ji, Kibiki village’. This entry uses a different character for Senkô-ji writing it as ‘泉光寺’ and not ‘千光寺’. Using different characters for the same pronunciation was common practice during the Edo-period and as there are no other temple in Kibiki village, it is clear that this article concerns the same temple.

The second entry is from Part 23, Yûkô-kô 5, of the Go-kaden-kôshô (御家伝草稿二十三、雄香公五)³³ because of its length, only the part showing the request for the rebuilding or relocation of the original Senkô-ji temple will be printed here.

木引村千光寺今度 全提ト申ス僧再興仕度ト申二付 唯今千光寺屋敷畠モ無之不宜候 (一)

The entry mentions that there has been a requested from a monk for the re-establishment of the Senkô-ji temple at Hibiki, which at that point does not own any land at all. The entry continues in the part that is not shown, mentioning that at the request of lord Yûko, a plot of land that was owned by Murata Gonuemon (村田今右衛門) was given to Senkô-ji and the original temple was moved to its present location.

As can be concluded from the above, the original Fushun-an temple was renamed Senkô-ji, possibly to honor Eisai, in 1695 and was transferred in 1702 to the location in Kibiki where it is now situated.

The exact location of the old Fushun-an is not described in any of the remaining records in Hirado, but according to local tradition it was situated at a location close to the present Senkô-ji. At the presumed location of the old Fushun-an, a large stone can be seen, that according to same local tradition was used by Eisai himself for zazen-

meditation.



The zazen-meditation stone of Eisai



Close-up of the zazen-meditation stone of Eisai

There are no contemporary records remaining that directly link this stone to Eisai or describe him using it. However, as can be seen from the above entries, there are hardly any contemporary records concerning Eisai's stay in Hirado and the existing records are not very detailed concerning his activities on the island. The lack of written proof therefore does not necessarily rule out the possibility that he did actually perform meditation on it. The stone itself is not of any special quality and is the kind of stone that can be found anywhere in the mountains in the vicinity. As the present location is not a mountain itself, it is quite impossible the stone somehow ended up there naturally, so it must have been relocated to this spot with a specific goal. The fact that this stone is situated at the location where, according to the local tradition, the old Fushu-an had been built, makes it plausible that this was indeed the location of Eisai's Fushu-an.

An investigation of the stone itself by the author, who is also registered as a zazen instructor of the forenamed Yûkô-ji temple, did confirm that the stone is indeed very well suited for the practice of zazen.

As is clear from the above entries, lord Yûkô treated Senkô-ji temple with the greatest respect, supporting its move to a more suitable location. The involvement of monk Bankei in the re-establishment of Senkôji temple on request of the Matsura family again shows the importance that was still given to places related to him, even 500 years after Eisai had stayed in Hirado.

One question that does arise is why the temple needed the help of the Matsura family in 1702 in the first place, if the temple was treated with that much respect. The reason for that is that it was only the 29th generation of the Matsura family, Shigenobu Chinshin Tenshou (鎮信天祥, 1622-1703), the father of lord Yûkô, who converted to Rinzai Zen and before that the family had belonged to a different school of Buddhism. Until the 29th generation, the family did not seem to have had any interest or

involvement in the legacy of Eisai.

6. Eisai in Hirado, Fushun-en Tea Plantation

As mentioned before, next to introducing Rinzaï Zen to Japan, Eisai is also known as the person who first brought matcha green tea to his home country and introduced the tea practices of the Southern Song dynasty.

Eisai himself did not mention the fact that he carried seeds of the tea bush with him when he returned to Japan in his own works and there is therefore no definite proof that he actually did plant tea seeds in Japan.

As has been discussed earlier, Eisai was not the only, nor the first monk to visit China at the end of the twelfth century and he was most certainly not the only monk who was strongly influenced by the culture and religion of the Southern Song dynasty. For that reason, one would expect that other monks were also interested in the tea culture that was a part of monastic life and brought back tea to Japan, as well. After all, the same had happened at the beginning of the Heian-period (794-1185), when tea was first introduced to Japan and in 815, even presented to emperor Saga (嵯峨天皇, 786-842) by monk Eichû (永忠, 743-816), as can be found in the *Nihon Kôki* (日本後記)³⁴.

As mentioned, there is the strong possibility that in the same era, other monks brought tea to Japan, as well. However, as in the case of the teaching of the Rinzaï Zen doctrine, it is not significant if Eisai was or was not the first to introduce matcha tea, the more important fact is, that Eisai succeeded in spreading the custom of its cultivation and was also partly responsible for spreading the custom of tea drinking as will be discussed later.

The *Sadôdaijiten*, (茶道大辞典) and other works that discuss the history of tea, mention Reisen-ji temple at Mount Sefuri-san in present Saga prefecture as the place where Eisai in 1193, two years after his return to Japan, first cultivated the tea seeds he brought back from China.³⁵

It seems strange if not illogical, that Eisai would go through the trouble of bringing back seeds of the tea bush to introduce tea to his home country and would then wait for two years before finally planting these.

Except for being somewhat awkward, it also seems quite unlikely from a botanical point of view. One of the specific qualities of the seeds of the tea bush is that they are in fact rather weak and generally lose more than 80% of their strength over one year of storage. It seems therefore unlikely that Eisai would have succeeded in cultivating tea had he indeed waited for two years to plant the seeds he brought back from the

Southern Song.

What is more, Eisai returned to Japan in July, which when we consider the seasons for the cultivation of the tea bush, meant that the seeds he brought back were from the year before and already close to one year old at the time he arrived in Japan. It seems therefore likely that he planted these seeds in Hirado first, and brought the seeds from his plantation in Hirado to other places in Japan, although there are no documents to support this.

Another possibility that cannot be ruled out is that he did not actually plant the seeds he himself brought back from China, but planted seeds he received from someone else that returned to Japan after he did. In that case, it is possible that the tea plantation at Sefuri was indeed the first tea plantation in Japan, albeit not started with the seeds Eisai himself brought back, as tradition states.



Fushu-en Tea Plantation



At the right, the stone reading 'Fushu-en' can be seen

At present, at a location between the site of the present and the old Fushun-an and Senkôji-temple, a tea plantation can be found that is known as Fushun-en plantation (富春園). In it stands an old stone in which the kanji-characters for 'Fushun-en' are carved. The origin of this stone is unclear and as there is no date written on it, the reasons for it being situated at that spot remain obscure. There is no way of telling if this stone dates from the era that Eisai visited Hirado, but it does show signs of considerable aging and could date from the Edo-period or before.

The location of Fushun-en plantation itself seems to have the right qualities for the cultivation of tea. The tea that is produced there at present has been used at different chanoyu gatherings and is usually received rather well.³⁶ However, although as discussed before, it seems likely that Eisai first planted the tea seeds he brought back from China in Hirado, it seems very unlikely that the present tea plantation was actually the tea plantation he founded.

An investigation by the author of the tea bushes that can be found at Fushun-en at

present, showed that they are at most one hundred years old. It is possible that about one hundred years ago, for one or another reason, all tea bushes at the plantation were replaced but there is no evidence that supports this possibility. It is therefore impossible to determine the establishment from a botanical point of view.

Since the second half of the fifteenth century, the Matura family of Hirado has had a strong interest in the tea ceremony or chanoyu. The 29th head of the family, lord Shigenobu Tenshō, the same person who was mentioned before as the first Matura to convert to Rinzaï Zen, was the founder of a school of tea known as Chinshin-ryū (鎮信流).³⁷ It is very well possible that he established a tea plantation at this location that was so strongly connected with the founder of the Japanese Rinzaï school. However, if he had done so, one would expect to find records of Fushun-en in the archives of the Matura family, but none exist. There actually exist no records that concern a tea of the plantation at this location or the consumption of tea from that plantation, at all. As the Matura family is strongly involved in chanoyu and there is no evidence that the Fushun-en plantation is in any way connected to their chanoyu tradition, it seems likely that the present Fushun-en plantation has been established relatively recently.

Except for the stone reading 'Fushun-en' and the local tradition that says that Eisai's 'Funshun-an' temple stood at a location just below the present Fushun-en tea plantation, there is no proof that the present plantation was established by Eisai. It is possible that the present tea plantation was founded in the Edo-period by the Matura family but there is no proof of that either. Only since the year 2000 has the city of Hirado, in association with Senkō-ji temple and Chinshin-ryū started working on improving the quality of the tea bushes at Fushun-en.

Although the original tea plantation of Eisai does not exist anymore at present, it seems likely that, unless he obtained seeds of the tea bush from someone who travelled back to Japan at a later date than him, Eisai first planted the seeds of the tea bush that he according to tradition carried with him from China, in Hirado.

7. Eisai After Hirado

After leaving Hirado, Eisai stayed in various places in the north of Kyushu and then traveled to Kyoto. Eisai started teaching the doctrine of Rinzaï but met with strong opposition from the clergy of the Tendai school. As a result, he was just like Nōnin, formally prohibited by the imperial court from continuing his propagation of Rinzaï.

Eisai, however, maintained that Rinzaï Zen is not a new Buddhist sect that would replace Tendai, but that it is an addition to the existing Tendai teachings, equal to the

Zen doctrine and practices Saichō had incorporated in the Tendai school. Eisai was not just saying this to convince the Tendai clergy from subduing him; he actually believed this was true. It is in this context that it is important to realize that Eisai stayed a Tendai priest all his life and that the Rinzai school as an organization was actually founded not by him, but by his successors.

In 1198, Eisai wrote *Kōzengokokuron*³⁸, in which he in Tendai fashion explains that it was to the advantage of the ‘secular Law’, in other words the worldly rulers, to protect the ‘religious law’, or temples, as Buddhist deities would then in return protect the state. However, he met with no appeal and as he was not able to defeat the opposition from the Tendai monks at Hieizan and was also met with fierce opposition from the Shingon-school, he decided to leave Kyoto.

Eisai then moved to Kamakura, the capital founded by the new warrior government, known as the ‘Kamakura-shogunate’ (1185/92-1333). The shogunate had moved its capital to Kamakura as a means of distancing itself physically from the old capital of Kyoto, in an attempt to reduce the influence of the powerful and demanding Buddhist schools as well as that of the imperial court and the court nobles.

At that time the Kamakura shogunate was trying to develop its own culture distinct from that of the imperial court in Kyoto to support its status as the new political and military power of the country, and welcomed the new teachings of Eisai.

It is not clear if the warrior elite actually really cared for the contents of Eisai’s teachings but they supported his propagation of Rinzai and he was treated with great respect.

There are 42 entries in the *Azuma Kagami* (吾妻鑑)³⁹, the records of the Kamakura shogunate, that concern Eisai. Although these entries show his strong relationship with the shogunate, he appears in them as an official priest at memorial services and prayers for the shogunate. He is, however, mentioned as a Ritsu Vinaya priest (律宗) and not as a Zen master. The Ritsu school is one of the six schools of Nara Buddhism and it seems he was present as a master of Buddhist ceremonies and not as much as a Zen monk.

After receiving the support and protection of the shogunate, Eisai in 1200, established the Jufuku-ji temple (寿福寺) on request of Hōjō Masako (北条政子, 1157-1224), widow of Minamoto-no-Yoritomo (源頼朝, 1147-1199) founder of the Kamakura shogunate.

Eisai increased his influence on the world of Buddhism when he, with the support of second shogun Yōriie (源頼家, 1182-1204), founded Kennin-ji temple (建仁寺) in

Kyoto, which was completed in 1205. He was also involved in the revival of Tōdai-ji temple (東大寺) in Nara.

Both Jufuku-ji and Kennin-ji were temples that followed the principle of Sanshū-kengaku (三宗兼学), meaning that the doctrine of Zen, Shingon and Tendai were taught at the same time. This can also be seen in the Shasekishū (沙石集)⁴⁰, a ten volume work on Buddhist traditions written by Mujū Dōgyō (無住道暎, 1227-1312) in 1283. According to Mujū, Eisai observed the teachings of Tendai, Shingon, as well as those of Rinzaï Zen. He also encouraged the practice of nenbutsu prayers.

Eisai would remain a Tendai priest to the end of his life and was not referred to as the founder of Rinzaï Zen until long after his death.

Except for his influence on the practice of Buddhism in Japan, Eisai also had a prolonged influence on the revival of the interest in tea, which was first introduced to Japan during the Heian period, but had grown out of fashion in the years after the official relationship between Japan and China was abolished.

In 1214, Eisai presented his Kissayōjō-ki (喫茶養生記) to the third shogun of the Kamakura shogunate, Minamoto-no-Sanetomo (源実朝, 1192-1219). Kissayōjō-ki can be translated as ‘Work on the prolonging of life and the practice of tea drinking’ and in it he discusses the medicinal qualities of tea, the way it should be cultivated, the methods necessary for its production, and the proper way of drinking it.

The reason why he presented this work to Sanetomo can be found in the Azuma Kagami records of the Kamakura shogunate.⁴¹ According to the entry of February the 4th of 1214, Sanetomo suffered from a hangover and recovered after drinking a cup of tea that was presented to him by Eisai. Eisai then also presented him with this work on tea. Sanetomo took a liking to tea, after which the custom of tea drinking spread among the members of the warrior class. Eisai is in this way responsible for the revival of the interest for tea in Japan and the growing appreciation among the warrior class for this beverage would again lead to the development of chanoyu at the end of the Kamakura period.

8. Conclusion

Minnan Eisai is popularly known for traveling to Southern Song China and on his return introducing the Rinzaï school of Zen and matcha tea to Japan.

Zen was first introduced to Japan at the end of the seventh century. Although it did not become a separate school of Buddhism for centuries, parts of its practices and doctrine were incorporated by Saichō in the traditions of the Tendai school.

Official embassies to China had ceased from 894 and even though there were some informal contacts between Japan and China in the 11th century, there were no large scale diplomatic or cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Towards the end of the Heian period, official relations with China were restored and many Japanese monks visited the country that was then regarded as the center of Buddhist scholarship.

Eisai, who was ordained as a Tendai monk at Enryaku ji-temple of Mount Hieizan, was one of them. Dissatisfied with Buddhist practices in Japan, he travelled to China twice to study the recent developments of the teachings of Tendai Buddhism. Eisai, however, found that Zen, which reached its height of social prestige and influence during the Southern Song dynasty, had become the dominant school of Buddhism in China. He had set out to study the developments of the Tendai school, but returned to Japan with a profound knowledge of Rinzai Zen.

In July of 1191, Eisai returned to Japan after his second journey to China, where he arrived at Hirado Island at Kibiki in Ashi-no-ura. He was welcomed at a small temple named 'Fushun-an' which was built by a certain Kiyotsura. It was here that in August of 1191, Eisai first taught Rinzai Zen. It was not the first time Zen was taught in Japan but it was the first time that Eisai, the founder of the Japanese Rinzai school, taught it.

The records of the Matura family, the feudal lords of Hirado, show that in the seventeenth century a temple named 'Fushun-an' was situated in Kibiki and that the name of that temple was changed to 'Ryûtô Myôsan Senkô-ji'. These records are proof of the fact that five centuries after Eisai had visited Hirado, there was still a temple known as 'Fushun-an' located in the same area that he had stayed. Eisai was also known as 'Senkô' and the fact that 'Fushun-an' was renamed 'Senkô-ji' temple, indicates that this temple was recognized as having a direct connection to Eisai. The same records also show that the present Senkô-ji temple does not stand at the original location of Fushun-an, but was moved to its present location in 1702.

Eisai is popularly known as the first person who brought matcha-tea to Japan. Eisai does, however, not mention this himself and there is no proof that he actually brought the seeds of the tea bush to his home country.

Tradition has it that he first cultivated tea in 1193, at Reisen-ji temple in present Saga prefecture. This seems quite unlikely from a botanical point of view, because the seeds of the tea bush lose more than 80% of their strength over one year of storage. As he returned in July, the seeds he supposedly brought back from China must have been picked the year before and were already old at the time he arrived in Japan. It seems

therefore likely that he planted these seeds in Hirado first, and brought the seeds from his plantation there to other places in Japan, although there are no sources to support this.

The original tea plantation of Eisai does not exist anymore at present. Fushun-en in Hirado is situated close to the location of the old Fushun-an and has the necessary qualities for a tea plantation, but there is no evidence that connects it directly to Eisai.

In 1214, Eisai presented *Kissayôjô-ki* to shogun Minamoto-no-Sanetomo, who took a liking of tea, after which the custom of tea drinking spread among the members of the warrior class. Eisai is in this way indirectly responsible for the revival of the interest in tea in Japan and the growing appreciation of the warrior class for this beverage would again lead to the development of chanoyu at the end of the Kamakura period.

Notes:

- 1 Minnan is also pronounced as Myôan. Buddhist scholars of the Rinzai school usually use ‘Minnan’. Eisai is also pronounced as Yô sai. Buddhist scholars belonging to the Rinzai sect seem to prefer this pronunciation. However, as he is more widely known as Eisai, that pronunciation will be used in this paper.
- 2 The tea ceremony is known as either ‘chanoyu’ 茶(の)湯 or ‘sadô’ (茶道).
- 3 Matcha is a finely ground powder of green tea, that has been especially shade-grown before harvest and from which the stems and veins are removed before grinding. It has a dark green color.
- 4 Iguchi Kaisen 井口懐仙 (2010). *Sadô-daijiten* 茶道大辞典. Kôdansha, Kyoto p.638.
- 5 Broughton, Jeffery L. (1999). *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen*. University of California Press, Berkeley. p. 54-55.
- 6 A question or statement used in Zen practice to test a student of Zen and to stimulate a deeper understanding of Zen doctrine.
- 7 The *Nihonshoki* was completed in 720, eight years after the *Nihonki*.
- 8 *Bowring, Richard John (2005). The religious traditions of Japan, 500–1600. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. p. 16–17.*
- 9 He is also known as ‘Jikaku Daishi’ 慈覚大師.
- 10 Reischauer, Edwin O. (1955). *Ennin’s Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*. Oxford University Press, New York. P. 44, p. 210.
- 11 Tachibana-no-Kachiko (橘嘉智子). She founded the Danrin-ji temple (檀林時) and hence became known as Empress Danrin.
- 12 Imaeda Aishin 今枝愛真 (1962). *Zenshû no Rekishi* 禪宗の歴史. Yoshikawa Kôbunkan 吉川弘文館, Tokyo. p.1-7.
- 13 Kenneth Ch’en (1964). *Buddhism in China: a Historical Survey*. Princeton University Press,

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- Princeton; Zurcher E. (1958). *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. Brill, Leiden.
- 14 An outline of the five mountain system can be found in: Imaeda Aishin 今枝愛真 (1970). *Chuusei zenshû no Rekishi 中世禪宗の歴史*. Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai 東京大学出版会, Tokyo. p.141-146.
- 15 Idem.
- 16 A shrine in present Okayama-city, Okayama prefecture.
- 17 Yanagida Seizan 柳田静山 (1967). *Rinzai no Kafuu 臨済の家風*. Chikuma Shôbo 筑摩書房, Tokyo.
- 18 Dumoulin Heinrich (2005). *Zen Buddhism: A History, Japan, Book 2*. World Wisdom, Bloomington.; Breugem Vincent (2006). *From Prominence to Obscurity: A Study of the Darumashû: Japan's first Zen School (Ph.D.Thesis)*, Leiden University.
- 19 Kagami Genryû (editor) 鏡島元隆 (2004). *Dôgen-zenji-zenshû, shôhôgenzô 2, dai16, gyôjige 道元禪師全集, 正法蔵, 第16, 行持下*. Shunjusha 春秋社, Tokyo.
- 20 Fujita Takuji 藤田琢司 (2014). *Eisai-zenji-shû Kyôzengokokuron sankan 栄西禪師集, 興禪護國論, 三卷*. Zenbunka-kenkyûsho 禪文化研究所, Kyoto. p. 1-290, p.399-560 ; Eisai (author) 栄西, Nishimura Eshin (editor) 西村恵信 (2003). *Kyôzengokokuron Chimyakudaigo kanchû 興禪護國論, 卷中, 宗派血脈第五*. Shikisha 四季社, Tokyo.
- 21 Kokan Shiren (author) 虎関師錬, Fujita Takuji (editor) 藤田琢司 (2011). *Genkôshakusho zennikan 元亨釈書, 全二卷*. Zenbunkakenkyûsho 禪文化研究所, Kyoto.
- 22 Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278-1347), patriarch of Japanese Rinzai Zen, also well-known as a poet.
- 23 Kûkai is also known as Kôbô-Daishi (弘法大師). He is the founder of the Shingon (真言) school of Buddhism and credited with the invention of the 'kana' writing system, the syllabary that are used together with 'kanji' or Chinese characters in the Japanese written language.
- 24 The Mahāvairocana Sutra, a manual on tantric Buddhism that was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese around 724, is one of two central texts in Shingon Buddhism.
- 25 戸部侍郎 kohôjirô or 民部大輔, minbu-no-taiyû, a position of the higher fifth court rank, 正五位下.
- 26 Fujita Takuji 藤田琢司 (2014). *Eisai-zenji-shû Nihonzenshû-shisosenkôsoshi-ryakunen 栄西禪師集, 日本禪宗始祖千光祖師略年*. Zenbunka-kenkyûsho 禪文化研究所, Kyoto. p.395-445, p.755-798.
- 27 Unpublished records in the possession of the Matura Historical Museum in Hirado. None of the records contain page numbers.
- 28 In case of the head branch of this family, the name is pronounced as 'Matura' and not 'Matsuura' as would be expected.
- 29 In note 1 is explained that in the case of Eisai, the same characters should be pronounced as 'minnan', but in case of the temple they are pronounced as 'myôdan'.
- 30 Temples usually have two names known as 'mountain name' (山号) and 'temple name'(寺号). The mountain name can be related to the location of the temple as is the case with the Tendai temples at Hieizan, but it can also be symbolic in cases of temples that are not even in the vicinity of a mountain and then usually refer to a mountain, often in China, that has a

- connection to the specific school of Buddhism the temple belongs to.
- 31 He is also known as the instructor of Ji Gong (済公 1130-1207), a Buddhist monk who became a minor deity. A Chinese folk hero who supposedly possessed supernatural powers which he used to help the poor and protect the people from injustice.
- 32 See note 27.
- 33 Gokaden-sôkô, Yûkôkôgo 御家伝草稿二十三、雄香公五, see note 27.
- 34 Nihon Kôki (日本後記) the third of six volumes on Japanese history, covering the period between 792 and 833. It 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)
There are some doubts about the correctness of this article, as the date Eichû supposedly presented the tea, does not meet the dates of Eichû's return to China. It is possible that his tea was given to the emperor by someone else, but was possibly offered by Eichû.
- 35 See note 4.
- 36 From the personal experiences of the writer, who has been involved in chanoyu since 1999.
- 37 Chinshin-ryû, is one of the few schools of tea that were founded by members of the warrior class that remain today.
- 38 See note 21.
- 39 National Institute of Japanese Literature 日本文学研究資料館, Azuma Kagami 吾妻鏡 database, 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
- 40 Watanabe Tsunaya (editor) 渡辺剛也 (1966). *Nihon-koten-bungaku-taikei 85, Shasekishû 日本古典体系 85, 沙石集*. Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, Tokyo.
- 41 See note 39. Role 23, entry of the 4th of February, 1214.