

Tea Saint: The Image of Sen-no-Rikyû in the Yamanoue Sojiki

- Rikyû's Way of Tea Explained by His Foremost Student -

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山上宗二記による茶聖としての利休像

— 利休一番弟子の茶伝書に説明される利休茶湯 —

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15 世紀にシンプルで素朴な形の茶湯が日本で発展し、侘茶と呼ばれるようになった。16 世紀に千利休は、豊臣秀吉の茶頭（茶堂）の一人となり、秀吉の後援の下で、現在の茶道への発展を主導したとされる。利休の茶道発展への影響は大きく、「茶聖」とも呼ばれる。しかし、利休茶湯に関する同時代の史料が少なく、彼の茶湯に関しての考え方について直接説明する茶書は、山上宗二記のみである。本稿では、この茶記著者である利休の一番弟子山上宗二の利休像と彼から見た茶道の歴史的発展について論じる。

Abstract

In the fifteenth century a simple and rustic form of tea appreciation developed in Japan that would later become known as ‘*wabi-cha*’.

In the sixteenth century, Sen-no-Rikyû became one of the tea instructors to Toyotomi Hideyoshi and under the latter's patronage, was largely responsible for the further development of this *wabi-cha* into the tea ceremony that we still know at present.

Rikyû had such an influence on the development of the tea ceremony

that he is often referred to as a ‘tea saint’. However, contemporary sources concerning him are limited and the only source that gives a more or less complete picture of his thoughts on the meaning of the tea ceremony is the ‘*Yamanoue Sôjiki-Record*’.

This paper will discuss Rikyû as he appears in this record and will discuss what facts are known about his role in the historical development of the tea ceremony seen through the eyes of one of his foremost students, Yamanoue Sôji.

Keywords: Sen-no-Rikyû, chanoyu, Yamanoue Sôji,
Yamanoue Sôjiki-record, wabi-cha

1. The Development of Tea Appreciation Prior to Sen-no-Rikyû

The consumption of tea has been a part of Japanese culture for hundreds of years. It was first introduced from China by Buddhist monks at the beginning of the ninth century. In 894, official relationships between Tang Dynasty China and Japan were abolished after which the interest of the Japanese court in China largely disappeared. Tea was still consumed in Japan, but only on a minor scale.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, there was a revival of interest in Chinese culture among the members of the court elite and warrior class. The Ashikaga shogun family took a great liking to tea and under their patronage the appreciation of tea became an important part of the customs and etiquette of the members of the elite. The Ashikaga also established a vast collection of Chinese tea utensils or ‘*karamono*’ (唐物) that was known as the Higashiyama Collection (東山御物). The collection was compiled by the *dôbôshû* (同朋衆), the chamberlains of the Ashikaga and became the standard for the appreciation of all sorts of utensils.

In the fifteenth century a new form of tea appreciation which is now known as ‘*wabi-cha*’ (侘茶) developed that did not solely center on *karamono*, but for which utensils from Japan and other countries in Asia were used. Traditionally, Murata Shukô (村田珠光, 1423-1503) is credited with its establishment.

Wabi-cha became extensively popular among both the upper-tier merchant class and elites of the warrior class and when Oda Nobunaga deposed the last Ashikaga shogun in 1573 becoming shogun himself, he adopted the Ashikaga’s exclusive tea culture as a symbol of his cultural sophistication and turned it into one of the political

tools affirming his position as the new ruler of Japan. He employed a number of tea-masters, one of them being Sen-no-Rikyû (千利休, 1522-1591), a wealthy merchant from the trade city of Sakai.

When Toyotomi Hideyoshi succeeded Nobunaga after the latter's untimely death, he continued to treat tea as a political tool. However, contrary to Nobunaga, he himself showed a great personal liking for it. Hideyoshi also employed a number of tea-masters and Sen-no-Rikyû is regarded as the most influential among them. During Hideyoshi's reign, tea practice or '*chanoyu*' as it was then known, further developed into the tea ceremony that we know at present. Rikyû is attributed such an influence on this development that he is often referred to as a 'tea saint' (茶聖) and every utensil or invention of some excellence seems to be regarded as having stemmed from his genius.

2. Historical Sources Concerning Sen-no-Rikyû, Tea-records and the Nanpôroku

In almost all books on chanoyu, Rikyû is presented as the person who further developed Shukô's wabi-cha into the tea ceremony that still exists at present, but Sen-no-Rikyû was certainly not the only tea-master of status and ability of his time. There were others, for instance Imai Sôkyû (今井宗久, 1520-1593) and Tsuda Sôgyû (津田宗及, ?-1591), who were also in Hideyoshi's service and who together with Rikyû were known as the 'three masters of the country' (天下三宗匠)¹. However, Rikyû was not only one of Hideyoshi's tea masters, he also became one of the latter's most trusted advisors. This combined position of tea master and advisor to the most powerful man in the country made him one of the most influential tea-masters of his time, but there remains in fact very little evidence of what his ideas concerning chanoyu were, what he actually achieved, or how his contemporaries viewed those achievements.

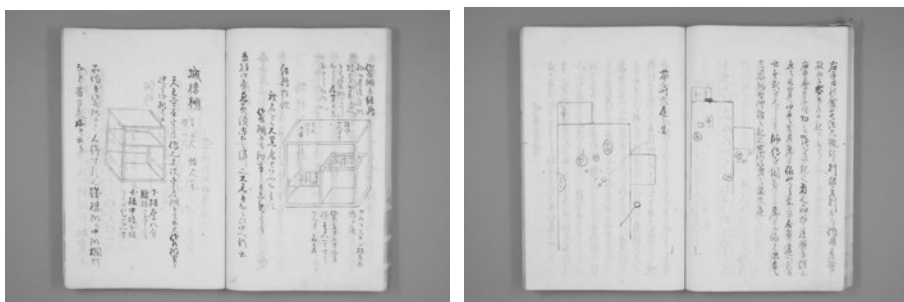
One would assume that there are numerous historical sources available concerning a man of such exalted status. However, on the contrary, a discussion of his ideas concerning chanoyu is seriously complicated by a lack of reliable sources. Rikyû himself did leave a number of private and business-related letters, however, he did not leave any detailed works concerning chanoyu.

To study the tea ceremony of Rikyû's time, there are some contemporary records of tea gatherings that can be used such as the 'Tenôjiya-kaiki' (天王寺屋会記), which is a compilation of tea-records written by three generations of the Tsuda family including Tsuda Sôgyû. Other famous records are those of the above-mentioned Imai Sôkyu and Kamiya Sôtan (神屋宗湛, 1551-1635), a wealthy merchant from Hakata. However, a

problem with using these sources is that, although these records generally have a high level of credibility, they typically only state the facts their writers found interesting concerning the various tea gatherings they participated in; the names of other participants, utensils that were used, the food that was served, etc. They do not discuss the philosophy behind chanoyu in any great detail. In some cases the writers just state the names of the participants and for one reason or another refrain from writing anything else.

Furthermore, the records concern only those gatherings the people who wrote them participated in; obviously, not all of Rikyū's tea gatherings were recorded by them. The value of these records is therefore limited when it comes to a research of Rikyū's attitude towards chanoyu and his role in its development.

There are two sources that profess to give a more or less complete picture of Rikyū's ideas concerning chanoyu: the 'Nanpōroku-record' (南方録) and the Yamanoue Sōjiki-record (山上宗二記).



Nanpōroku²

The 'Nanpōroku' is the only record that claims to discuss Rikyū's tea practice in detail and for this reason is widely quoted. It was supposedly written by one Nanbō Sōkei (南坊宗啓), who according to the Nanpōroku itself was a student of Rikyū. Tachibana Jitsuzan (立花実山, 1655-1708), a counselor of the daimyō of Fukuoka claimed that he discovered parts of the Nanpōroku over a number of years after having been offered a part of it when on his way to Edo in the retinue of his lord.

Problematically, Nanbō Sōkei does not appear in any record of his time at all, which is more than surprising for someone who must have been one of Rikyū's foremost students, being able to write such an extensive work on his tea ceremony. Furthermore, there are so many inconsistencies in the format of the text that it is clear that Jitsuzan rewrote the text or even compiled it himself completely³. One example of such a historical inconsistency is the fact that this manuscript is the only text

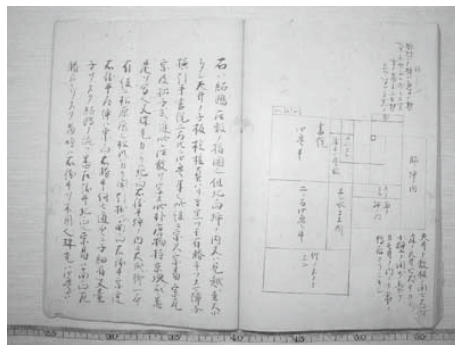
published within a hundred years of Rikyû's death that links chanoyu in detail to the Chinese Philosophy of Yin and Yang. None of the sources related to Rikyû nor any of the other remaining sources concerning chanoyu in general, including the aforementioned tea-records, makes any mention of this at all.

However, during the Edo-period, the Nanpôroku was regarded by many as a work that was wholly or at least in part written by a student of Rikyû, and it therefore has had a great influence on the interpretation of chanoyu as practiced by Rikyû. The work has become a kind of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' as tea-practitioners in the ages since it was published, have been adjusting their tea ceremony to it.

The use of the Nanpôroku as a historical source has led to a great number of misconception concerning the history of the chanoyu and is best avoided. Unfortunately, the length of this paper does not allow for a more detailed discussion of this work and this will be left for a forthcoming paper by the author.

3. Historical Sources Concerning Sen-no-Rikyû, the Record of Yamanoue Sôji

The only reliable contemporary source that gives a more or less complete picture of Rikyû's ideas concerning chanoyu and its developments in this time-period, is the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record, written by Yamanoue Sôji (山上宗二, 1544-1590)⁴. Sôji studied with Rikyû for over twenty years and his appearance alongside Rikyû at tea gatherings has been verified through a number of records of these gatherings. Unlike the alleged author of the Nanpôroku, Nanbô Sôkei (who as explained before, cannot be traced in any official record), Sôji's existence has been confirmed and so has his relationship with Rikyû.



Yamanoue Sôjiki-record⁵

Sôji, like Rikyû, was a commoner from the wealthy trade town of Sakai city. In this time-period, Japan did not yet have a system of surnames, and as he lived south of

Sakai at a place known as Yamanoue, this is how he became known. The first record of him participating in a tea gathering is an entry in the ‘Tenôjiya-kaiki’ of November 1566, when he participated in a gathering held by Rikyû⁶. The first record of a tea gathering he organized himself dates from as early as January 25 of 1568⁷. It seems that from this time on, he organized one or two ceremonies a year. The above is in accordance with his own record, in which he states that he studied for twenty years under the supervision of Rikyû⁸.

A variety of sources also show that Sôji was introduced by Rikyû to Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He was employed as one of the latter’s tea masters or ‘*o-sadô*’ 御茶頭, however in 1584 he angered Hideyoshi and lost his position as his vassal. He fled from Hideyoshi’s wrath to Odawara, where he was supported by the Hôjô (北条) family, a strong opponent of Hideyoshi rule.

In 1590, at the time of the subjugation of the Hôjô, Sôji had an audience with Hideyoshi at which Rikyû was also present. According to the Chôandôki-record (長闍堂記)⁹ written by Kubo Chôandô (久保長闍堂, 1571-1640), he there angered Hideyoshi again, who had his nose and ears cut off before having him beheaded. As Sôji wrote in his own record of 1588 that he was 46 years old, this would mean that he was 48 when he was put to death.

4. Different Versions of the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record

It is not clear what the original name of the Yamanoue Sôji-record was. At present, there is no remaining original version of the record written by Sôji himself. There are however a number of versions of the record that were given by him to his students. There are three different names that are used for the copies that have been located at present; Chakimeibutsu-shû (茶器名物集) or ‘Collection of Famous Tea Utensils’, ‘Yamanoue Sôji-ki’ and ‘Sôji-ki’, which is basically just an abbreviation of ‘Yamanoue Sôji-ki’. Between 1588 and 1590, Sôji gave copies of this record to a number of his students and the contents of the various copies differs slightly. The Chakimeibutsu-shû for instance, does not contain the introduction to the history of chanoyu that most of the other versions do contain. The substantive differences between the copies are minor and do not concern any changes in the meaning of the text nor do the texts at any point contradict each other. There are no discrepancies in the names of the people that appear in Sôji’s text, his explanations of the meaning of chanoyu, the various utensils he describes, or Sôji’s comments.

Sôji might originally have used a master copy, but it seems he lost this copy and

consequently the contents of his writings changed slightly. In a version of 1589, Sôji explains that he has lost the copy of a work he had received from his teacher (Rikyû), together with his own notes of thirty years of instructions. He lost them in what he calls the ‘present turmoil’, which probably refers to the siege of the Hôjô by Hideyoshi, and he apologizes for the fact that because of this loss he suddenly had to write this text from memory and therefore might have mistaken some of the kanji characters he used¹⁰.

The works he gave to his students were regarded as ‘secret-teachings’, a very common phenomenon in traditional Japanese arts. To receive this kind of written instruction from a teacher was seen as a sign of the latter’s approval of the level that student had achieved.

The remaining copies of the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record are dated between 1588 and 1590, the year Sôji was killed. It is important to note that in the years Sôji gave his record to his students, Rikyû and other famous tea masters like Imai Sôkyû and Tsuda Sôgyû were still alive as this means that Sôji could not have written anything that either Rikyû or his contemporaries could have declared to be false or mistaken. The Yamanoue Sôjiki-record can for this reason be regarded as a reliable source concerning Rikyû and his thoughts on chanoyu. Moreover, Sôji states a number of times that he is just transmitting the knowledge he has in the way he received it from his teacher. As Rikyû was still alive when he stated this, it is safe to assume that this is indeed true and Rikyû had no objections to the way in which Sôji’s explained his thoughts concerning chanoyu.

For this paper the manuscript that was published in the Sadôkoten-zenshû (茶道古典全集)¹¹ will be used, as this manuscript in its printed version is the most accessible to anyone interested in further research concerning this subject. For an explanation of why this particular manuscript was used for the Sadôkoten-zenshû, the author refers to the explanation given by its compiler, Kuwata Tadachika (桑田忠親).

5. The History of ‘Wabi-cha’ in the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record

The Yamanoue Sôjiki-record starts with an introduction of the historical development of chanoyu. The introduction by Sôji is accurate and similar to the one given in the first chapter of this paper and for that reason will not be reproduced here. There are however, two points that need explanation. The first concerns the transmission of wabi-cha to the court of the Ashikaga shogun, and the second the name of Rikyû’s teacher.

Concerning the introduction of wabi-cha to the Ashikaga. Sôji writes that through an introduction of a chamberlain named Nôami (能阿弥, 1397-1471), the eighth Ashikaga shogun Yoshimasa (義政, 1436-1490) started to study tea with Shûko at the famous Silver Pavilion in Higashiyama, after which its practice spread among the members of the elite. Most history books concerning chanoyu present this as a fact. However, although the Yamanouesôji-ki can generally be regarded as a reliable source, Nôami was no longer alive when the retreat in Higashiyama was finished in 1482. As there is no other source that links Shukô directly to the Ashikaga, it is difficult to accept this source as evidence of a direct connection between Shukô and the Ashikaga. While it is very well possible that Nôami introduced Shukô at a time before the construction of the Higashiyama retreat, there is no proof of this. It does seem likely that the chamberlains took an interest in wabi-cha as a new form of entertainment for the shogun and that through them it spread among the elite¹².

Another point that needs explanation is the question of who taught chanoyu to Rikyû. Most books on the history of chanoyu mention the name of Takeno Jôô (武野紹鷗, 1502-1555). Jôô was a famous merchant, who like Rikyû came from the city of Sakai. According to Sôji he possessed no fewer than 60 meibutsu and was one of the most influential tea masters in the history of chanoyu. Interestingly, although Sôji does not at any point explain directly who Rikyû's teacher was, he himself often mentions the name of his own teacher, 'Sôeki' (宗易) as Rikyû was known by his contemporaries. This seems awkward. Sôji is obviously proud of his connection with Rikyû but for unclear reasons does not discuss his own teacher's teacher.

A person Sôji does mention is a certain Tsuji Gensai (辻玄哉, ?-?), who according to Sôji was the only student of Jôô to receive the secret instruction of '*kotsubo-no-daiji*' (小壺ノ大事) concerning the usages of certain tea-containers¹³ and it was also through this Gensai that Rikyû and finally Sôji received the manuscript from Shukô that forms the major part of his own record¹⁴. Contrary to what might be expected Sôji does not praise Gensai but describes him as someone with no ability for tea at all, calling him the worst tea practitioner in the land¹⁵.

It seems very unlikely that someone of such low ability would be the only student to receive important secret instructions and a manuscript that even someone as famous for his talent as Rikyû did not receive from the teacher they both shared. The only logical explanation would be that Rikyû was a student of Gensai or at least received instructions from him as senior student after their teacher passed away and later received the manuscript that was given to Gensai by Jôô. For some unclear reason Sôji

disliked him enough not to want to write this in his manuscript, or perhaps he did not want to mention that his own teacher had not received full instruction from Jôô. Although Gensai appears in a number of entries in the tea-records of his time, he did not manage to make a name for himself and even the date of his death is unknown.

6. The Role of Meibutsu in Wabi-cha

The Yamanoue Sôjiki-record consists in large part of a record known as the ‘Shukô-ishi-mokuroku-catalogue’ (珠光一紙目録). This manuscript is a list of 23 categories containing 212 meibutsu utensils that were used for chanoyu, from tea-cups to incense containers. According to tradition, this manuscript was originally written by Murata Shukô. There is no direct proof that this manuscript was actually written by Shukô himself, but it has been handed down from generation to generation of tea-masters.

The version in Sôji’s manuscript has been adjusted by Jôô and in many places Sôji has added the present value of the various utensils, their history and where he does not agree with the contents he either gives his own opinion concerning the utensil, such as ‘this might not be appropriate at present,’ or quotes Rikyû, who obviously also used this list as he passed it on to Sôji as a part of his teachings.

This focus on famous utensils seems to contradict the image of ‘wabi-cha’ as a simple and rustic form of tea appreciation. However, in this context simplicity should be understood as simple in comparison to the lavish form of tea appreciation that was popular at the court of the Ashikaga.

In the case of wabi-cha, Japanese-made utensils were used next to the more exclusive karamono that were popular at the court of the Ashikaga. In time these Japanese utensils became meibutsu in their own right and they can be found on Shuko’s list together with karamono pieces that were included in the Higashiyama Collection. It is however clear that some of the utensils were contemporary pieces and those are probably part of the additions that were made by Jôô.

We know from other sources that Rikyû initiated the use of Raku-ware (楽焼) pottery for chanoyu, but Sôji’s record does not state anything about utensils that might have been specifically used and designed by Rikyû. This shift in the usage of utensils from Chinese karamono to utensils made in Japan was a significant development, however not one that Rikyû can be credited with.

In wabi-cha, meibutsu utensils were not displayed to the same extent as was the custom at the shogun’s court. Sôji states for instance that in the case of serving meals, young people can use meibutsu three or four out of ten times, but he does not find this

appropriate for older people, who should use them even less¹⁶.

Wabi-cha combines a simple kind of room and atmosphere, with a moderate display of meibutsu, a style Sôji explains with a quotation from part of a poem that means something like ‘a valued horse tied to a simple hut’¹⁷. One should also realize that what is seen as just a simple tea-room was a room built for the sole purpose of performing the tea ceremony, something that could only be afforded by the very rich. It calls to mind the ‘simple’ countryside cottages that Marie Antoinette had built for her entertainment next to the Palace of Versailles.



one of Marie Antoinettes's 'simple' cottages at Versailles¹⁸

The importance of the knowledge and possession of tea utensils can also be seen in the way contemporary tea practitioners were divided in three categories; the chanoyu practitioners (茶湯者), the ‘wabi-sûki’ practitioners (侘び数寄), and the masters (名人). Connoisseurs of the artifacts used for tea who were also proficient at the performance of the ceremony and taught chanoyu to others belonged to the first group. Tea practitioners that didn’t possess any meibutsu utensils at all were known as ‘wabi-sûki’ on the condition that they had the right mental attitude, could design utensils by themselves, and were people of distinguished achievements. People who met all of the above conditions and possessed karamono utensils were known as masters¹⁹.

This division in categories and in particular the importance that is given to the knowledge of utensils and the possession of karamono seems to contradict the image of wabi-cha, but Sôji discusses this extensively. He explained that from the past, there was no tradition of using written works for the instruction and transmission of chanoyu. Therefore, to master chanoyu and fully understand its meaning, it was important to study the old meibutsu as this could help to reach an understanding of the way of thinking of the masters of the past. He continued by saying that next to this study of utensils, one should take part in gatherings together with people who had already mastered chanoyu and through these experiences develop one’s own style²⁰. The study of utensils is therefore not regarded as merely an understanding of these

utensils, but as a way to understand the deeper meaning behind chanoyu and as a way to further develop one's own mastery of it. As he states in his record, his manuscript was merely a list of the most famous meibutsu²¹ and his text was just an introduction for beginners with no value for anyone who had already achieved a full mastery of chanoyu²².

To Sôji the study of meibutsu was, more than anything, a way to understand chanoyu as it had been transmitted from generation to generation, and he used the term meibutsu in particular in connection to the artistic value utensils had, not so much their economic value. Sôji also states that although one has to study the ways of the past, the concept of chanoyu should be adjusted to the changing times²³. This again shows that to him the knowledge of meibutsu was a tool to reach a deeper understanding of chanoyu, and also a way to achieve its further development.

Chanoyu is centered on the entertainment of guests and guests are best entertained with utensils that are rare or of great quality. However, the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record makes clear that this entertainment should not be overdone.

7. The Philosophical Background of Chanoyu

After the explanation of meibutsu utensils, the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record continues with two sets of rules that tea practitioners should keep in mind and a series of answers by Rikyû to questions of Sôji. The two sets of rules are not a part of the document by Shukô, but were added by Jôô and Shôji.

Sôji states that chanoyu developed from Zen Buddhism and that tea practitioners should therefore behave as Zen priests²⁴. The connection that is usually assumed between Zen Buddhism and chanoyu is largely based upon this statement by Sôji, although interestingly enough there are no Buddhist proverbs used anywhere in the text nor does Sôji use language or terminology that is connected to Buddhist philosophy.

Sôji also explains that when Noami told eighth Ashikaga shogun Yoshimasa about Shukô, he told him that he studied the way of Confucius²⁵. The combination of Confucianism and Buddhism was obviously not seen as problematic as he continues to explain that Shukô used a Buddhist scroll he had received from the renowned Zen priest Ikkyû Sôjun (一休宗純, 1394-1481), and that in his chanoyu, next to the way of Confucius, the way of Buddhism could be found as well. There is, however, no explanation in the text about what makes chanoyu compatible with either Buddhist or Confucian philosophy and obviously it is assumed that this is understood by the

reader. In the same way, no practical examples are given, only general remarks are made, like those stating that tea practitioners should be ‘pure of heart’, ‘be moderate with alcohol’, ‘become friendly with people who are more proficient at the way of chanoyu’ and that the mental state and determination of the practitioners are important²⁶, statements that it seems were assumed to be understood by the members of the elite who were educated in both Buddhism and Confucianism.

Concerning religion he also states that next to politics, financial matters and private matters, one’s religion should not be used as a topic for conversation during a ceremony. He obviously did not regard the practice of chanoyu as a religious act in itself. The only topics he found suitable for conversation were those topics that concerned chanoyu²⁷.

More than Buddhist or Confucian terminology, Sôji used Renga-poems to explain chanoyu. This, however is also not explained in detail, and the significance of the meaning of these poems to chanoyu depends solely on the interpretation of these poems by the reader.

Although it is said that chanoyu is based upon Buddhism, to some extent upon Confucianism, and in some cases explained through the images of renga-poetry, Sôji does not explain in any detail what the practical consequences of these connections are for the performance of chanoyu.

8. Technical Developments in Chanoyu

When discussing the tea ceremony it seems natural that the way the ceremony itself was performed would be a part of the discussion, however, there are no sources from the late sixteenth century that can be consulted. As mentioned before, the records of tea gatherings did not contain such detailed information, and chanoyu had a tradition of oral, not written, transmission. There are a great number of schools of tea ceremony at present that are related to Rikyû, but most of them show such differences in their explanation of the tea ceremony that it is impossible to determine what Rikyû’s chanoyu might have looked like. This can also be concluded from the comparison of 44 different schools of tea by Hirota Yoshitaka (広田吉崇)²⁸.

The only clear difference between Rikyû’s chanoyu and that of his contemporaries to be found in the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record is the fact that Sôji and Rikyû regarded the thin usu-cha (薄茶) tea as the more official kind of tea, and not the thicker koicha-tea (濃茶) that according to Sôji, his contemporaries mistakenly took for the more official of the two²⁹. At present koi-cha is still served in the more official part of the ceremony

and it seems that concerning this particular aspect, Rikyû's opinion did not prevail.

The Yamanoue Sôjiki-record does not explain which utensils were used by Rikyû and if there were any utensils he designed. The records of tea gatherings could be used as a source for further research but are not a part of the present discussion. It is also important to realize that although these record may give a general impression of the time period when they were written, they are merely records of the gatherings their writers happened to take part in. Private gatherings like those between Rikyû and Hideyoshi were obviously not recorded and therefore it cannot be said that these records give a complete picture of the world of chanoyu.

One subject that is discussed in the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record is the development of the usage of different sizes of tea-rooms³⁰. Sôji explains that according to Rikyû, Jôô preferred four-and-a-half tatami rooms for the usage of karamono utensils, the same size as Shukô had used, and two-and-a-half tatami rooms for wabi-cha. According to Rikyû this four-and-a-half tatami sized room was used by all tea masters of standing who owned karamono, including Rikyû himself. Jôô also designed an even smaller room of two-and-a-half tatami for one of his students.

Rikyû himself designed a three-tatami room that was also liked by Sôji and went as far as to design a one-and-a-half tatami room in Kyoto that was the only one of its kind. According to Sôji, Rikyû was a master of such a level that he could turn 'mountain into valley and East into West', freely breaking all the rules of chanoyu³¹. However, he also warns that this kind of thing could only be done by a master of Rikyû's level and not a mere beginner.

Rikyû also explained that at first, rooms smaller than four-and-a-half tatami were regarded as rooms only suitable for the practice of wabi-cha, however, during the reign of Hideyoshi, the use of smaller rooms also became accepted for ceremonies with karamono³². A feature of the usage of these smaller rooms was that attention was no longer paid to the differences in the social status of the participants. Here Rikyû describes a significant change in the practice of chanoyu, but it is not a change that he initiated or can be credited with.

Rikyû was not the first to design tea rooms smaller than the four-and-a-half tatami rooms that were used by Shukô and Jôô, but he was the first to design a tea room of the extremely small size of just one-and-a-half tatami. At present rooms of such small size are rare, possibly because they are difficult to use unless one has reached a very high level of understanding of chanoyu. Rikyû can therefore be credited with establishing the extreme boundaries of chanoyu.

9. Conclusion

The goal of this research has been to discuss the facts concerning the role Rikyû played in the historical development of chanoyu seen through the eyes of one of his foremost students, Yamanoue Sôji.

The discussion of the contents of the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record has shown that it holds hardly any specific information concerning Rikyû himself and what influence he might have had on this development. The record describes Rikyû as a master of the highest possible level, who could turn ‘mountain into valley and East into West’, but except for the one-and-a-half-tatami room Rikyû designed, no specific examples are given of Rikyû’s innovations. If Rikyû was indeed responsible for certain important new developments one would expect Sôji to have recorded those. However, the only examples of Rikyû showing a diverging opinion from his contemporaries are the fact that he regards usu-cha as the most formal kind of tea and not koi-cha as seems to have been the consensus in his time, and the fact that he regarded the one-and-a-half tatami room as the zenith of wabi-cha. His first opinion concerning usu-cha seems to have been ignored by his contemporaries and the usage of one-and-a-half tatami rooms has never become widespread.

Rikyû was not the only tea-master of status and ability of his time and it seems likely that other tea masters also played a role in the development of chanoyu. He was possibly the most influential of the three great masters of Hideyoshi, but from what Sôji explains it can be concluded that his chanoyu was based on the rules that were handed down from the times of Shukô and Jôd and except for the above-mentioned two points did not diverge from the consensus of his time.

Sôji handed copies of his explanation of chanoyu to his students when Rikyû and the other great tea masters of his time were still alive and any kind of exaggeration would have been noticed immediately. This might explain why there are no specific examples given of Rikyû’s greatness.

While the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record can be regarded as a reliable source concerning chanoyu at the end of the sixteenth century, it does, however, not support the image of Rikyû as a ‘tea saint’. Rikyû, as tea master and advisor to Hideyoshi, must have been a man of great influence and power. It is possible that he played an influential role in the popularization of chanoyu and through that its development, but the only proof the Yamanoue Sôjiki-record gives of that is the veneration Sôji showed for his teacher.

It seems likely that many of the ideas concerning the image of Rikyû are based upon the Nanpôroku. The role the Nanpôroku played in the development of this image

will be investigated and discussed in a forthcoming paper by the author.

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