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On Jars and All-time Masters. *Chanoyu* as Revealed by Yamanoue Sōji

Amongst the multiple treatises and documents that a *chanoyu* history researcher has at his disposal, the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* (*Record of Yamanoue Sōji*, later the *Record*) holds a special place. First of all, written over the period from 1586 to 1590, it is a document written within the timeframe of the life of Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591) – the very person to whom the accomplished form of *wabicha* – tea in the style of the “beauty of noble poverty”, is attributed. Just this quality alone makes it priceless for the study of Rikyū’s tea. The *Record* was written by Rikyū’s close disciple who, whether himself or by the hands of those he trusted, rewrote it a number of times. For the past few decades the *Record* has been gaining interest among *chanoyu* researchers in Japan and the publications that introduce the results of its study have become more and more detailed¹. What it is providing may not be deeper, but is definitely, with all its limitations, a direct insight into tea in Rikyū’s times, which image for some time was dominated by later interpretations. It is the first tea document written with at least an attempt to record the history of *chanoyu*, even if the historical part does not spread over a number of sheets. Being mostly focused on lists of noteworthy utensils, it is also the first tea treatise that in a detailed manner describes the tearooms of Takeno Jōō (1502–1555) and Rikyū, including drawings to illustrate the descriptions, giving the reader a feeling of intimacy with the architectural spaces created by the tea men of old. The *Record* relates the teachings of Murata Shukō (1423–1502), Takeno Jōō and Rikyū. For as busy of a man of tea that Rikyū was, he left us very little written evidence of his ideas. However, thanks to one of his most endeared disciples, we today possess sources based on first-hand information concerning the style and essence of Rikyū’s tea.

¹ The first collective study of the *Record* discussing Sōji’s writings from many perspectives was a 1997 publication that followed a symposium on *Yamanoue Sōji ki* that took place in Gotō Museum in Kyoto on November 21–22, 1995. It was the third and last volume of the series introducing the *Record*. (Chanoyu Konwakai 1993–1997)

In the article I will introduce the author, Yamanoue Sōji (1544–1590), whose name seems to never be mentioned enough in *chanoyu* training, since it is thanks to Sōji, that today we can acquaint ourselves with the details of the world of *wabi* tea in the late period of its formulation. I will succinctly describe the contents of the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* and make a closer analysis of two out of many aspects of the world of tea mentioned: the status of a tea jar among the widely described must-know tea utensils, and Sōji's categories of tea men. It is my belief, that delving into the *Record* can provide a fresh insight into the nature of tea in Rikyū's times, and can turn out to be of invaluable help for today's tea practitioners in finding their approach to the essence of tea.

Yamanoue Sōji – a man of tea

A while ago I asked one of my tea students if he knew who Yamanoue Sōji was. He answered: "Of course. He wrote the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*!" Well, it does help when somebody writes a treatise that includes one's name in the title. But to be honest the figure of Rikyū's most close disciple is not usually familiar to today's tea practitioners. And his story was not an ordinary one.

Yamanoue Sōji, from the Sengoku era to Azuchi Momoyama, merchant and distinguished man of tea, was born in Tenbun 13 (1544) in Sakai. He was a man from Yamanoue, south of the Senshū region in Sakai, which even today is located in the central area of the city. The name of the place became his family name. He was also known by his trade name, Satsumaya, and used the name Hyōan (the ideograms meaning "gourd hut", which is how he was often signing his *Record*).

His father was most probably Yamanoue Sōheki, who we know was quite prominent in the world of *chanoyu*. Tsuda Sōgyū (died 1591) wrote in his diary (*Tsuda Sōgyū Chanoyu Nikki*) about Yamanoue Sōheki's *chakai* in the second year of the Eiroku era (1559), 12th day of the 8th month. Sōheki used Kidō's scroll in the *toko-noma*. We learn from the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, that this scroll later belonged to Sōji. In the *Record* we also see a *chaire* – small ceramic container for powdered tea, Sōheki Katatsuki (a famous utensil, *meibutsu*, from Jōō's times), enlisted as a utensil in the possession of Yamanoue Sōji – most likely an inheritance from his father. Since the *chaire* was described as a utensil praised by Jōō, it is likely Sōheki was Jōō's student (*monka*) like Imai Sōkyū, Tsuda Sōgyū and many merchants from Sakai, and at the same time *sukisha* – men that possessed an unusual inkling for *chanoyu* accompanied with a passion for tea utensils. Therefore Sōji was a *sukisha* after his father. The term *sukisha* at that time in the world of tea meant *chazuki* "one that likes tea". In the *Record* Sōji clarified and organized the requirements for becoming a *sukisha*.

Sōji became Rikyū's disciple in 1565 and studied with Rikyū for over twenty years. Therefore Rikyū started instructing Sōji at the age of 44, at that time Rikyū was still preserving the teachings of his teacher – Jōō, but at the same time had already started to create new trends.

The first *chaji* – formal tea gathering, hosted by Yamanoue Sōji, who was then only 24, which we can read about in the *Tsuda Sōgyū Chanoyu Nikki*², took place on the 25th day of the first month of Eiroku 11 (1568). It was a tea gathering in a very *wabi* atmosphere. The guests present were Sen Sōeki (Rikyū), Tennojiya Dōshitsu and Tsuda Sōgyū (?–1591). Sōji was using a hearth with an umbrella kettle and *teoke mizusashi* – a fresh-water container made from a bucket, which, outside *wabi* tea, was definitely seen as an unconventional demonstration for one so young, holding his first gathering for older, experienced tea men and his teacher, using tea utensils they would use.

Rikyū's tea instruction had to be intertwined with Zen practice, and so Sōji, most likely following his tea teacher, started joining *zazen* sessions at Nanshūji temple in Sakai from 1575, where his Zen teacher was the successor of Dairin Sōtō (1480–1568), the second generation abbot of the temple, Shōrei Sōkin (1505–1583). The members of his practice group were fourteen Zen monks including Shunoku Sōen (1529–1611) and Sengaku Sōtō (1545–1595), whose literary work allows us to trace those events today³. Apart from the monks, the group consisted of seven laymen including Rikyū, Tsuda Sōgyū and Sōji, who seemed to be given high praise for the depth of insight in his lay Zen study⁴.

Sōji, just like Rikyū, became a tea adviser to Oda Nobunaga. Together with Rikyū he was assisting Oda Nobunaga during the Ranjatai cutting ceremony.

Just as his teacher, Rikyū, he became Hideyoshi's *osadō* – person in charge of *chanoyu* related events and ceremonies. In 1584, however, he angered Hideyoshi with his capricious comments, and was banished.

Sōji did not leave Hideyoshi's circles just yet. He started to serve Maeda Toshiie (1538–1599), who, although against Hideyoshi after Nobunaga's assassination at Honnō-ji, and the subsequent attack by Hideyoshi on Akechi Mitsuhide, after being defeated started to work for Hideyoshi and became one of his leading generals. At this time Sōji was pardoned by Hideyoshi and returned to his *sadō* office. The last time we know he was performing *osadō* duties (organizing a tea gathering in Nara for Toyotomi Hidenaga) was in the tenth month of 1586.

In 1586 he again angered Hideyoshi and retreated to Kōyasan, a spiritual center for the Shingon school of Buddhism in Wakayama prefecture, where he started writing his secret transmission, the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*. Sōji started to distribute

² The chanoyu diary of Tsuda Sōgyū. (Sen Sōshitsu (ed.) 1977, vol 7: 139)

³ Konnichian (ed.) 2014: 69.

⁴ Ibidem: 70.

copies of the text among his worthy tea students from 1588. He spent one year at Mount Kōya, teaching *chanoyu* to monks from Annyōin and Jōjūin. In 1588 he traveled to Odawara, where he became tea teacher to the Hōjō clan.

This was the beginning of the tragic end. It was 1590, during the Siege of Odawara – Hideyoshi’s campaign to eliminate the Hōjō as a threat to his rise to power. Hideyoshi’s army camp was seen as having “the most unconventional siege lines in samurai history” – concubines, prostitutes, musicians, acrobats, fire-eaters and jugglers entertained the samurai. Tradition states that it was there, after Rikyū’s intervention, that Sōji was granted another chance to talk to Hideyoshi. In fact Hideyoshi was ready to hire him back, but Sōji – faithful to his new masters in the Hōjō clan, again evoked Hideyoshi’s wrath.

It is widely known that Sōji died a horrible death, before execution first his ears and nose were cut off at Hideyoshi’s command, all this at only 47 years of age. However there is no proof of this event in the documents of the time. We learn about Sōji’s final moments in a record from 1640 included in *Chōandōki* written by Kubo Godayu (1571–1640), a priest from Kasuga Taisha in Nara and a man of tea. In *Chōandōki* we are introduced to Sōji as providing a rather extraverted and unpleasant first impression: “In Sakai, as a person skillful in *chanoyu* and well versed, he was someone who could not be ignored; but he had a bad manner and was evil-tongued, and thus was disliked by others.”⁵ During the Siege of Odawara it was most likely his overly sincere and uncompromising words that hurt Hideyoshi’s ears and got him killed⁶ on the 11th day of the fourth month of Tenshō 18 (1590). In Hakoneyumoto (now Kanagawa Pref.) in Sōunji (a Rinzai school temple belonging to the Daitokuji line) where Hideyoshi was staying during his campaign against the Hōjō, there is a gravestone, only erected in the 1950’s, that marks the most likely place of Sōji’s tragic death. Sōji left a son, Dōshichi, who was in possession of a copy of the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* and continued his father’s line of work serving as *chanoyu* professional to Tokugawa Ieyasu. Although, as Kubo Godayu relates, the short temper of the father must have transmitted to the son, and he was sent away from Ieyasu’s court after showing his discontent with a charcoal form done by Ieyasu in a brazier and fixing it with impunity before he was even asked to do so.⁷

Yamanoue Sōji’s life became the inspiration for Saitō Fumiko to write her novel *Sōan ni hikari sasu: Yamanoue Sōji ibun* (Shining light into the thatched roof hut:

⁵ For the original Japanese text see: Sen Sōshitsu (ed.) 1977, vol. 3: 365. Translation from: Varley, Paul [&] Kumakura Isao 1989: 42.

⁶ After Kubo Godayu: *Odawara gojin no toki, Hideyoshi-kō ni sae, omimi ni ataru koto mōshite, sono tsumi ni, mimi hana sogase tamaishi* – *During the Odawara siege, he spoke words that hurt the ears of the very lord Hideyoshi and for this crime he got his ears and nose cut off.* (Sen Sōshitsu (ed.) 1977, vol. 3: 365)

⁷ Konnichian (ed.) 2014: 22.

another story of Yamanoue Sōji), published in 2002. In the world of motion pictures the character of Yamanoue Sōji was depicted multiple times. When the life of Rikyū becomes the inspiration for a movie-maker, Rikyū's beloved young disciple always appears. The actors who have taken on the role of Yamanoue Sōji were Nakamura Atsuo (born 1940) in the movie *Ogin-sama* (1978) directed by Kumai Kei, Igawa Hisashi (born 1936) in *Rikyū* (1989), the famous screen adaptation by Teshigahara Hiroshi, and Kamijō Tsunehiko (born 1940), as a partner of Mifune Toshirō who was playing Rikyū this time, in *Sen no Rikyū: Honkakubō Ibun* (*Death of a Tea Master*, 1989) – film adaptation of Inoue Yasushi's award winning novel *Honkakubō Ibun* (Literary remains of Honkakubō, 1981) directed by Kumai Kei. In the latest years, the life of Rikyū has again become a widely discussed topic with the release of the movie *Rikyū ni tazuneyō* (Ask this of Rikyū, 2013) based on the 2010 novel by Yamamoto Ken'ichi of the same title. The director Tanaka Mitsutoshi had Kawano Naoki (born 1982) play the role of Sōji. The interesting feature of this movie, which is otherwise quite immersed in a romantic side of the story, is the usage of many genuine tea utensils from the era – a great point of interest for a viewer who happens to be a tea practitioner.

Recent years also brought into being a manga character of Yamanoue Sōji introduced in the series *Hyōge mono* (*Jocular Fellow*, 2009), written and illustrated by Yamada Yoshihiro, who depicted Sōji as a worthy opponent of the main character based on the historical figure of Furuta Oribe, another disciple of Rikyū.

***Yamanoue Sōji ki* and its contents**

Yamanoue Sōji ki is undisputedly the best source on the tea of Sakai merchants in the Tenshō era (1573–92). It can be seen as the historical record of *chanoyu*, and as the first recorded secret transmission (*hidensho*) of *chanoyu* teachings; the only *hidensho* that transmitted tea from Shukō to Rikyū's times.

The *Record* was preserved in both handwritten scroll form (*kansubon*), believed to be the original handwriting of Yamanoue Sōji, and bound copies. Tanihata Akio, a renowned historian of *chanoyu*, counted up to sixty preserved copies of the *Record*, although those believed to be originally written by Sōji himself are extremely rare. Discrepancies between the copies do appear – in arrangement of contents, and also in the style of writing and wording.

The multiple versions of *Yamanoue Sōji ki* are mainly well represented by three of several versions that have been published:

1. *Chaki meibutsu shū* 茶器名物集

Included in *Zoku gunsho ruiju*. This version is addressed to Kuwayama Shuri Taifu, dated the 27th day of the second month of Tenshō 16 (1588).

2. *Yamanoue Sōji ki* 山上宗二記

Included in *Chadō koten zenshū*. This version is addressed to Kōsetsusai, dated the second month of Tenshō 17 (1589).

3. *Yamanoue Sōji ki* 山上宗二記

Included in *Chadō koten zenshū taikōhon*. This version is addressed to Minakawa Yamashiro no kami, dated the third month of Tenshō 18 (1590).

It is this latest discovered version that led to the conclusion that the second date of Sōji's death, not the 27th of the second month, but the 11th of the fourth month of Tenshō 18, is correct.

The most recent publication of the preserved versions of the *Record* is the compilation by Konnichian, *Chadō Bunka Kenkyū* 6 from the year 2014, introducing three versions in the possession of the Konnichian Library. The oldest handwritten version is dated the 27th of the second month of Tenshō 16 (1588). It is a scroll consisting of 37 sheets of paper differentiated in length. Unfortunately it lacks the 1st volume, so we do not know the person it was addressed to. Multiple records have markings in red ink suggesting they were either check signs for the author himself, or they were checked by Sōji himself after the text was written by somebody from his surroundings he entrusted with the task.

Amongst the multiple versions there are the ones addressed (given) to Sōji's son Dōshichi and Kuwayama Shigeharu (later handed down to Katagiri Sekishū), a few addressed to monks, and those addressed to either Hōjō clan members or their vassals: Hōjō Ujinori, Itabeoka Sukenari (Kōsetsusai), and Minakawa Yamashiro no kami, showing that Rikyū's tea penetrated the Hōjō clan through Sōji.

The contents of the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* differ in multiple versions as the text was rewritten for different addressees; however, comparing the versions we can sketch a draft of the basic contents.

Yamanoue Sōji ki composition:

- I. A brief history of *chanoyu*
- II. *Shukō isshi mokuroku*
- III. A record of famous utensils – *meibutsu*. [The order of utensils listed differs in different versions]
 - Leaf tea storage jars (*hachatsubo*)
 - Miniature stone gardens displayed on a tray (*bonseki*)
 - Stands for *tenmoku* bowls (*tenmoku dai*)
 - Tenmoku* teabowls (*tenmoku chawan*)
 - Teabowls (*chawan*)
 - Tea scoops (*chashaku*)
 - Ink stones (*suzuri*)
 - Kettles (*kama*)
 - Fresh water jars (*mizusashi*)

- Chains for hanging kettles (*kusari*)
 - Examples of Fujiwara Teika's calligraphy (*Teika shikishi*)
 - Charcoal scuttles (*sumitori*)
 - Kettle hangers (*jizai*)
 - Incense burners (*kōro*), incense containers (*kōgō*), famous incense (*meikō*), ash used for burning incense (*kōbai*)
 - Calligraphy and paintings (*bokuseki, e*)
 - Flower containers (*hanaire*)
 - Ceramic thick-tea caddies (*chaire*)
 - Arrangements of tea utensils on a *daisu* stand (*daisu kazari*)
 - Wabi* style flower containers (*wabi hanaire*)
 - Flowers
- IV.
- Ten Points of Attention for the Man of Tea (*Chanoyusha kakugo jittai*)
 - Ten Further Points (*Mata jittai*)
- V.
- Tea men and tearooms
 - Lumber used in tearooms
 - Tea men in the service of Toyotomi Hideyoshi
 - Legends on the eight picture scrolls of Yu-chien

The *Record* is the first attempt to write down the history of *chanoyu*, even though the opening part is very short. Sōji portrayed *chanoyu* history as starting with collecting utensils during the Higashiyama Bunka period, the time of activity of *dōbōshū*. While on the topic of Murata Shukō's tea, Sōji recalls its Confucianism, Zen, the art of Poetry and Noh theater influences, stating that the art of tea is enriched through inspiration from all the above.

The following lists of utensils show how intertwined and inseparable in Rikyū's times were the two concurrent trends of *chanoyu*: the utensil connoisseurship-based *daisu* tea (*daimyō* style of tea) and that focused on the state of mind and heart, *wabi-cha*. Sōji had seen a large part of the utensils he described, and for his knowledge and eye, he was known as a person that could not be ignored in the world of tea. He compiled the lists of famous utensils that the practitioner of tea should strive to acquaint himself with – this was an important part of the *Record* as a *hidensho* for the art of *chanoyu*. It was a crib sheet for new practitioners, enabling them to work easier on their connoisseurship skills, but at the same time it was also a way to create trends, assign value to certain utensils, a power Sakai merchants did possess at the time. And so, by the end of the long lists of famous utensils, many-a-time of Chinese origin, Sōji enlists a *wabi hanaire*, a simple bamboo flower container, carved by Rikyū – giving it a very high standing in the world of tea, in the same row with *meibutsu*. But the *Record* is not only a list of famous utensils.

When the *Record* was written, the core of the Japanese Way of Tea was already in place, with the concept of *wabi* at its center. The word ‘*wabi*’ appears in the title of the chapter dedicated to *wabi* hanaire. Tea in a small two mat room (*nijō*) is further called a *wabi chanoyu*. From Sōji we also learn that Shukō, using Engo Kokugon’s (1063–1135) scroll, inaugurated the practice of using calligraphy at tea gatherings. In the part where Sōji described important men of tea, we can find an assessment of Rikyū’s tea by his close disciple, who did not withhold his opinions – which makes it an all the more interesting description: “Sōeki’s tea is like a deciduous tree in early winter. It is not for the ordinary person”⁸. Referring to Rikyū being the first person to design a one-and-a-half mat tearoom Sōji wrote:

“Although unusual for the time, it was useless for the ordinary person. It is interesting that Sōeki, as a *meijin* (master), freely transformed mountains into valleys, changed west to east, and broke the rules of *chanoyu*. But if the ordinary person were simply to imitate him, there would be no *chanoyu*.”⁹

The *Record* provides us with descriptions of tearooms designed by famous men of tea, like Takeno Jōō and Rikyū, which are accompanied by drawings – invaluable sources for the study of historical tearoom architecture. But even though the tearoom drawings are very precise, in the parts that refer to given technical skills necessary for advancement in the art of *chanoyu*, just as should be expected from a secret teaching, Sōji does not go into detail, but after giving a first rough draft he points out: the rest is in the oral transmission (*kuden ni ari*).

***Hachatsubo* – leaf tea storage jars**

The most extensive part of the *Record*, the lists of famous utensils, consists of chapters, each one dedicated to a different utensil. Usually the first chapter deals with leaf-tea storage jars – *hachatsubo*, followed by *tenmoku*, teabowls (*chawan*), tea scoops (*chashaku*) etc., all the way to *chaire* – thick-tea containers, ending with *wabi* flower containers.

The part dedicated to tea jars, a utensil without which one could not do tea at the time, enlists twenty two examples of famous leaf-tea jars (*meibutsu hachatsubo*) starting with Mikazuki (the Crescent Moon) and ending with Miyama (the Deep Mountain). The famous jars, so highly praised by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, were most often Luzon pieces. It does not mean they were fired in the Philippines. Their origin was of Fukien or Canton in southern China and northern Vietnam,

⁸ Varley, Paul [&] Kumakura Isao 1989: 42. Original Japanese text see: Sen Sōhitsu (ed.) 1977, vol. 6: 102.

⁹ Ibidem.

but they made their way to Japan (originally probably not as containers for leaf-tea but for wine or spices) with the Europeans through Luzon.

The leaf-tea storage jars were called *hachatsubo* to differentiate them from thick-tea containers (*chaire*), that were called *hikichatsubo* – powdered tea jars, or *hikichaire*. Leaf storage tea jars were also called *matsubo* – the ‘real’ jars. Depending on their size they could be *ōtsubo* – big jars, or *kotsubo* – small jars. During Rikyū’s time the leaf-tea jar was considered the first, most important utensil (*chaki chū daiichi no dōgu*). The crucial problem was to preserve the fragrance and taste of the tea. In modern times they are mostly used once a year in November (tea New Year), for a special *kuchikiri* tea gathering, during which the mouth of the jar filled with this year’s tea is cut open for the first time to serve carefully chosen guests the first tea of this year’s crop. To preserve the old ways, today they can still be, like in Rikyū’s times, presented in their silk garments, nets and knotted silk cords in the *tokonoma* during tea gatherings. In Rikyū’s times, the *chatsubo* was a very familiar utensil. Nowadays this familiarity is transmitted to the much smaller and more common *chaire*.

Sōji’s description of leaf-tea jars always starts with giving their poetic name. He organized the information about each piece in the same way: size, appearance, who owned it, what was its story. The most emphasis is given to appearance, since a famous piece in Sōji’s time had to first of all be aesthetically appropriate for the subdued feel of *chanoyu*.

As far as the size is concerned leaf-tea jars start around 3–4 *kin*, and get up to 7–8 *kin*.¹⁰ It was the size that was comfortable for usage and for presenting tea jars in the *tokonoma*.

The description of the first jar, Mikazuki, is very detailed, but the *tsubo* itself has been lost so instead I would like to describe in more detail one from the end of the list – Chigusa. The jar was recently purchased by the Smithsonian’s Freer Gallery and a detailed online workshop was given on the topic.¹¹

In the *Record* we only see the poetic name and the information that it was currently owned by Kondaya Tokurin from Sakai, but that it had also belonged to Insetsu before. Kamiya Sōtan, in 1587, was invited alone by Kondaya Tokurin to a tea gathering and Chigusa was displayed in the *tokonoma*. Kamiya Sōtan wrote about it in detail in his *Sōtan nikki*:

“The clay is coarse and red, the lower part swells, on the bottom are blisters (*kobu*), there are four ciphers. [The graph *shō* 祥 is above one cipher.] The glaze is thick, and there are many downward flows (*nadare*). Below that [the glaze] appears

¹⁰ *Kin* being a measurement of weight. Usually 1 *kin* was considered to be 160 *monme* (one *monme* being 3.75g) hence one *kin* was around 600g. In different periods though, depending on the products being weighed, *kin* could differ anywhere from 350g to 250 *monme*, so nearly 1kg.

¹¹ <http://smithsonianconference.org/teajar/> (access date: 12.10.2015)

to divide. Three potting lines. From the neck, between two lugs (*chi*) and above, there are small lines in three areas; one in the area in the place between the lugs they cannot be seen. The [mouth] cover is red-colored [-ground], old, gold brocade, and the reverse is light blue.¹²

This was a very detailed description. At the time, the ability to look and see, to understand where the aesthetic mastery came from was of utmost importance for the man of tea. The skill they were striving to attain was *mekiki* – the eyes that ‘work’, not only to look, but to actually see. The Japanese word for appreciation of beauty, *kanshō*, can be written in two ways: 鑑賞 and 観賞. The first word brings on the meaning of ‘to think deep based on one’s knowledge and to be able to distinguish between good and bad’ (*kantei* 鑑定, *kanbetsu* 鑑別) + ‘take pleasure in watching’ (賞). The second word means ‘to gaze intensively with one’s eyes’ + ‘take pleasure in watching’ (賞). It was the first *kanshō* that constituted the meaning of *mekiki* – a virtue sought after by the men of tea of old, but also nowadays. The importance that is still placed on appreciating the utensils during a tea gathering (*dōgu haiken*) is reminiscent of this longing for connoisseurship but it is also a great occasion to exercise one’s eyes to be more sensitive to the beauty of *wabi* aesthetics, and in *wabicha* that brings with itself a desired mental composition.

Categories of tea masters in *Yamanoue Sōji ki*

Arranging practitioners of an art, whether it was *renga*, the linked verse, or tea, into categories has a long tradition. Already in the 14th and 15th centuries it was not unusual for the same person to be accomplished in both arts. Tea was recalled in works that explained the theory of poetry as an analogy¹³; poets were matched in ranks copying ranks of tea men already existing in high society¹⁴.

The division of accomplished practitioners of *chanoyu* in the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* consists of three main categories:

1. *chanoyusha* – man of tea
2. *wabi sukisha* – practitioner of *chanoyu* in the spirit of *wabi*
3. *meijin* – master

¹² <http://www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/current/chigusa-diary-translation.asp> (access date: 12.10.2015)

¹³ For example the poet Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–1388) is credited with one of the first mentions in literature of the *honcha/hicha* differentiation. In his *Jūmon Saihishō* (Ten questions: the most secret commentary, 1383) he is comparing an unskilled way of indulging the beauty of sakura blossoms to *honcha*, real tea, unmatched in its fragrance, but destroyed by unprofessional preparation. See: Sen Soshitsu 1998:134.

¹⁴ Ibidem. Such a literary motif is used for example by the Reizei clan style *waka* poet Shōtetsu (1381–1459) in the second volume entitled *Seigan chawa* (Tea talks of Seigan) of his theoretical treatise on poetry, *Shōtetsu monogatari* (Shōtetsu’s tale, two volumes, 1448–50).

CHANOYUSHA

「目利ニテ茶湯モ上手、数寄ノ師匠ヲシテ世ヲ渡ルハ、茶湯者ト云」

Mekiki nite chanoyu mo jōzu, suki no shishō o shite yo o wataru wa, chanoyusha to iu.

Therefore *chanoyusha*, a man of tea, is “a person who is a connoisseur of utensils, who is skilled in tea manner and etiquette, and who leads a life of a teacher of tea”. Connoisseurship (*mekiki*) is listed first, considered the most important, indispensable requirement. It was no longer necessarily the ability to judge the authenticity of the utensils, but the ability to judge whether or not the utensil was suitable for *chanoyu*.¹⁵ One still, and this was very much so in Sōji’s time, had to be acquainted with the utensils then revered as *meibutsu* – the famous pieces. It was their experience, familiarity with famous utensils through attending the tea gatherings where they were used, and owning precious utensils due to their financial facility that gave the tea men of Sakai great authority in the world of tea. The *Yamanoue Sōji ki* is to a great extent a list of famous pieces that a tea practitioner is expected to know and recognize. Those are both old and new utensils, of Chinese origin, but next to them are listed the ones Rikyū himself created. It was strong proof that the new aesthetics were gaining in status, not by cancelling the old, but by joining with it.

This connoisseurship, calling for earmarking substantial sums for utensil purchases, ushering one towards a great deal of dedication in order to gain experience in artistic appreciation through looking for occasions to be in the vicinity of famous utensils, was later often criticized by the inheritors of Rikyū’s ideology, the advocates of *wabicha*, seen as the core of Rikyū’s teachings, tea designed foremost to aid one’s spiritual development in accordance with Zen philosophy.¹⁶ Through

¹⁵ The idea of connoisseurship in tea developed earlier, especially during Higashiyama culture. During the rule of Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490, in office 1449–73), the golden age for various arts: Noh theater, linked verse poetry, tea, flower arrangement or garden design to name the most flourishing, the skill to detect the true masterpieces amongst the shipments from China, distinguish them from forgeries, was held in high praise. This cherished connoisseurship, reared and developed, contributed greatly to consolidating the later undisputed merit of the Higashiyama treasures (*gomotsu*). A good eye and unmatched taste could bring a man of even low social standing a high position and esteem amongst noble circles, as it was the case with *dōbōshū* – ‘companions’, etiquette and artistic advisers of the Ashikaga shoguns.

¹⁶ This line, where tea practice is seen as first of all a kind of spiritual, religious practice, starts with the *Nanpōroku* (*The Southern Records*), a text attributed to Nanbō Sōkei, who identifies himself as a disciple of Rikyū stationed at Nanshūji, a temple of the Rinzai school of Zen in Sakai. *Nanpōroku*, even though in its seven chapters there are very specific technical passages, calls the Way of Tea being in its essence no other than the Way of the Buddha. Since the oldest preserved version of this text comes from a hundred years after Rikyū, some of the Japanese *chanoyu* researchers, like Kumakura Isao, call *Nanpōroku* the first paper in a long line of study of Rikyū’s tea rather than source material depicting tea in Rikyū’s time. For more on *Nanpōroku* read: Nanbō Sōkei 2004; 2005. The *Zencharoku* (*Zen Tea Record*, most likely first half of the 17th century) attributed

study of the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* however we learn that in Rikyū's time this was not the case, and cultivating the vast knowledge of classic masterpieces, having great aesthetic taste and the power to create new aesthetic trends was an indispensable part of tea training, just as was its spiritual background. Like it is stated in two of the short poems, *tanka*, explaining some details of *chanoyu* from the collection of the *Rikyū hyakushu* (*One hundred poems of Rikyū*)¹⁷:

釜一つあれば茶の湯はなるものを数の道具をもつは愚な
Kama hitotsu areba chanoyu wa naru mono o kazu no dōgu o motsu wa orokana

In that with one kettle chanoyu is possible, possessing numerous utensils is foolishness.

かず多くある道具をも押しかくし無きがまねする人も愚な
Kazu ōku aru dōgu o mo oshikakushi naki ga mane suru hito mo orokana

Having many utensils but hiding them away and pretending not to, those people are also foolish.

On one hand it is wrong for the tea practitioner to be attached to owning numerous precious utensils; regardless of whether it means cherished famous masterpieces of old times, *meibutsu*, or just utensils of high value. If one does not have many utensils, he can do tea with a metaphorical “one kettle”. But those who own many precious pieces should not try to hide them, worrying that this abundance would sully their *wabi* tea. *Wabicha* takes root in the heart. Physical, material insufficiency could help one's spiritual practice and development, but is not a necessary condition for gaining an understanding of and then putting into practice the essence of *wabi* tea. In Rikyū's time, those two lines of tea practice seem to advance simultaneously: studying the procedures and utensils and acquiring deeper insight into the nature of the universe, through introducing spiritual, quasi religious elements into tea practice. For *chanoyusha* rank of tea men, *mekiki* – again strongly stressed in the beginning of the *Record's* section on “the further ten commandments [for tea practitioners]” (*Mata juttai*), dealing with the more spiritual aspects of the practice – seems to be of vital importance, accompanied by their proficiency in tea etiquette and procedures, and the ability to make a living as a tea teacher.

As was customary in such rank juxtapositions, Sōji gives the names of real people in order to illustrate the character of a given category of tea men. For *chanoyusha* he names Matsumoto Shuhō and Shino Sōshin.

to Zen monk Jakuan Sōtaku takes this interpretation even further, describing the true tea as the Zen tea. See: Kozyra, Agnieszka: article in this publication.

¹⁷ Iguchi Kaisen 2006: 206–209. Translation by Urszula Mach-Bryson.

WABI SUKISHA

「一物モ不持、胸ノ覚悟一、作分一、手柄一、此三箇条ノ調タルヲ佗数寄ト云フ」

Ichibutsu mo motazu, mune no kakugo hitotsu, sakubun hitotsu, tegara hitotsu, kono sankajō no totonoitaru o wabisuki to iu.

The next, therefore higher, rank of tea practitioner was the “one that does not possess a single *meibutsu*, but possesses three qualities: inner awareness, creativity, and distinguished achievements”. In Rikyū’s circles it was seen as an impressive thing to live a life that emphasized ascetic elements, not to follow the trends of the day. The difference between *wabi sukisha* and recognized masters was the lifestyle. The first ones had no connection to the political power structure, no need to make their mark on history, instead they remained faithful to what they believed was the essence of the practice of tea. At first they appeared as people who simply did not have the financial funds to become tea men owning famous utensils. With time their practice took a turn towards tea that put the matters of the heart and *wabi* spirituality in the center. They were recluse-like *wabi* tea men. Sōji gives the example of Awataguchi no Zenpō – a man of one kettle, as a *wabi sukisha*. Similar figures in the history of *chanoyu* are Hechikan or Dōtei, whose story shows how the provenience creates a tea utensil.

Ishiguro Dōtei, a samurai, was also known as Senbon Dōtei – since he lived near Senbon Street in Kyoto when he retired. He served one of the three highest officials of the Muromachi shogunate, Hatakeyama Masanaga (1442?-1493). After retirement he lived on the income from rural land that produced forty *koku* of rice per year. But he did not own a *hachatsubo* – a utensil every man of tea of the period was expected to own. He therefore exchanged his land for the *hachatsubo* he desired. Latter this leaf tea storage jar became a part of the Ashikaga Yoshimasa collection and was named Yonjukkoku (Forty *Koku*) in honor of Dōtei.

Other characteristics of *wabi sukisha* are creativity and achievements in the field of *chanoyu*. Yamanoue Sōji being accredited with the discovery of the Korean *ido chawan* – a well style teabowl, for *chanoyu* could be seen as one example of such creative sensitivity.¹⁸ The *ido* style teabowls today are considered classic, but it must have called for an independent and developed aesthetic taste to first use them in a *chanoyu* setting.

MEIJIN

「唐物所持、目利モ茶湯モ上手、此三箇モ調ヒ、一道ニ志深キハ名人ト云也」

Karamono shoji, mekiki mo chanoyu mo jōzu, kono sanko mo totonoi, ichidō ni kokorozashi fukaki wa meijin to iu nari.

¹⁸ Kuwata Tadachika 1957: 91.

The master was the “one that possesses *meibutsu* and is accomplished in both connoisseurship and in tea manner, and further, possesses a profound aspiration in this single way of tea”. The coinciding two trends of *chanoyu*: tea of the form and tea of the heart, prominent during Rikyū’s time can be seen here quite vividly. To be a tea master one could not forget the origins of tea, that was the *shoin daisu* tea, tea of the utensils and connoisseurship. Owning at least one utensil (here of Chinese origin) that would make tea practitioners flock to see it was a requirement. At the same time the aspiration in the single way of tea would suggest not only following the form oriented tea, but also deepening the spiritual aspect of the way. In Rikyū’s time, the two lines of tea practice seem to be inseparably connected. One was required to know the classics, understand the aesthetic of *shoin daisu* tea, and then proceed to *wabi* tea, that was seen as an advanced, more profound development of the tea practice. Therefore to even further emphasize the expectations towards a tea master, Sōji enhances the rank of *meijin* – master, to the master of times, old and new – *kokon no meijin*.

KOKON NO MEIJIN

「茶湯者ノ数寄者ハ古今ノ名人ト云」

Chanoyusha no sukisha wa kokon no meijin to iu.

The one who is “a *chanoyusha*, and a *sukisha*” should be called “*kokon no meijin*” – the master of all times, both old and new. To give an example of such a figure in *chanoyu*, Sōji enlists three indisputably great personalities in *wabi* tea history: Murata Shukō (who was the person that first put into words the concept of tea focused on spiritual practice), Torii Insetsu (a great authority as far as *mekiki* was concerned) and Takeno Jōō (responsible for bringing into tea the sensibility of Japanese poetry).

Based on Sōji’s description of a *chanoyusha* and a *sukisha*, to summarize the requirements a *kokon no meijin* had to meet we could form the following list:

1. Connoisseur of utensils
2. Skilled in tea manners
3. Leading the life of a teacher of *chanoyu*
4. Possessing inner awareness
5. Exhibiting creativity
6. Having distinguished achievements
7. Owning *meibutsu*
8. Profound aspiration solely in *chanoyu*

To the list of Sōji’s conditions to become a *chanoyusha* and a *wabi sukisha* I added the last two requirements for becoming a master – since a master of all times should probably be first considered a master. With all the emphasis on the classics of tea

– tea of the utensils and connoisseurship, and not denying it its importance, in the *Record* it is ultimately the *wabi* style of tea that is seen as the highest ideal towards which one should strive. Referring to the rank of tea masters, quoting the masters of old Sōji writes, that after becoming a *meijin* (therefore after acquiring recognition as a person skillful in both formal and spiritual tea), one should devote oneself solely to the *wabi* style of tea. And then again, showing the inseparable nature of the two trends of tea the statement follows: “...that is if one owns at least a single famous tea utensil”.¹⁹ Sōji added though, that tea practice would change with the times.

In conclusion

So what does a modern day reader gain from taking time to comb through the contents of the *Yamanoue Sōji ki*? Murai Yasuhoko states, that the *Record* is a great source for tea practitioners who would like to do some kind-of background check on many quasi-facts or legends that became part of the *chanoyu* tradition, but might not have a rooting in reality.²⁰ Like the often perpetuated story of Rikyū’s grandfather being one of the *dōbōshū* named Sen’ami – hence the later family name Sen. Even though a few *dōbōshū* names are mentioned in the *Record*, Sen’ami, especially being Rikyū’s relative, does not appear. It seems very unlikely that Sōji, as close of a disciple of Rikyū’s as he was, would not mention a fact of such importance. Sōji, known for his eccentricity, does not refrain from recording that Rikyū did not always agree with his teacher, Takeno Jōō. Especially the concept of *ichiza konryū* – building the unity of one sitting (here the tea gathering), and many teachings that should be transmitted referring to techniques on how to build such unity, seemed to be something Rikyū did not agree with. Murai Yasuhoko concludes that Rikyū did not indulge in elaborate techniques on how to make a gathering work, even for the price of bending one’s personality. It would seem that Rikyū was an advocate of not forgetting one’s individuality and striving toward a natural unity during a tea gathering that intrinsically comes from mutual respect and the profound spiritual practice of all the participants.

At the time *wabicha* was developing, utensils possessed a great power, bestowed upon them by Nobunaga’s *chanoyu goseidō* – the *chanoyu* reign system. Sakai merchants, very much intrigued by the idea of such power that could be bought with money, perpetuated the existence and propagated *meibutsu*. Multiple lists were created. The *Yamanoue Sōji ki* is one example of such a list, including Shukō’s, Jōō’s, Rikyū’s, and also Sōji’s choice of *meibutsu*. In this list we clearly see that the image of what constituted a famous utensil was changing. The *wabi* quality was valued

¹⁹ Hayashiya Tatsusaburō [&] Yokoi Kiyoshi [&] Narabayashi Tadao (eds) 1994: 249.

²⁰ Chanoyu Konwakai (ed.) 1997: 26.

so highly, that, although in the end of the list, we encounter a humble bamboo *hanaire* carved by Rikyū. The *Record* was written for new practitioners of tea (*sho-shinsha*), to help them learn about famous utensils and work on their *mekiki*. This *mekiki* though did not mean to be able to properly recognize the value of utensils of proper provenience, but it included the skill to judge whether the utensil was appropriate for *chanoyu*. Whether it had the *chanoyu* spirit, the *wabi* quality.

Even though modern tea practice has continued to evolve from Sōji's time, the era of the *chatsubo* changed into the era of the *chaire*, the impact of *wabi* tea from Rikyū's time can be seen in the *haiken* of the utensils during a tea procedure – we value the overall form, ownership, the story of the utensil. The practitioner of *wabi* tea today is forced to deal with the paradox: the *wabi* philosophy and at the same time praising utensils, placing great value on them. Reading the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* we see that *wabi* tea, already in Rikyū's time – from its beginnings, was a fusion of rich and lavish formal tea and tea done by recluses. The practitioners find themselves mired down in the world of the material but simultaneously aspiring to a higher, nearly opposite ideal. The *Record* shines some light on the origins of *wabicha* and helps avoid confusion. It gives a base for building contemporary solid practice, built on historical awareness.

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English Summary of the Article

Urszula Mach-Bryson

On Jars and All-time Masters. *Chanoyu* as Revealed by Yamanoue Sōji

Amongst the multiple treatises and documents that a *chanoyu* history researcher has at their disposal, the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* (*Record of Yamanoue Sōji*) holds a special place. First of all, written over the period from 1586 to 1590, it is a document written within the time-frame of the life of Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591) – the very person to whom the accomplished form of *wabicha* – tea in the style of the “beauty of noble poverty”, is attributed. It is the first tea document written with at least an attempt to record the history of *chanoyu*. Mostly focused on lists of noteworthy utensils, it is also a tea treatise that in a detailed manner describes the tearooms of Takeno Jōō (1502–1555) and Rikyū, including drawings to illustrate the descriptions. The *Record* relates the teachings of Murata Shukō (1423–1502), Takeno Jōō and Rikyū. Sōji became Rikyū’s disciple in 1565 and studied with Rikyū for over twenty years, therefore the *Record* is a source concerning the style and essence of Rikyū’s tea based on first-hand information.

The article describes the contents of the *Yamanoue Sōji ki* and includes a closer analysis of two out of many aspects of the world of tea mentioned: the status of a tea jar among the widely described must-know tea utensils, and Sōji’s categories of tea men. It is the author’s belief, that study of the *Record* can provide a fresh insight into the nature of tea in Rikyū’s times, and can turn out to be of invaluable help for today’s tea practitioners in finding their approach to the essence of tea.

Key-words: the Way of Tea, *chanoyu*, *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, Yamanoue Sōji, Sen no Rikyū, *chatsubo*, *wabicha*