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The Oneness of Zen and the Way of Tea in the *Zen Tea Record* (*Zencharoku*)

The *Zen Tea Record* was published in Edo (today's Tokyo) in 1832 based on previously existing versions. It is difficult therefore to determine the time it was written. The authorship is attributed to the Zen monk Jakuan Sōtaku. The author proves to be a rather mysterious person. There is no record of him in either the Daitokuji or Tōkaiji Zen temples' documents even though Tōkaiji was founded in Edo by the Zen master Takuan (1573–1645) and Jakuan Sōtaku did refer to Takuan's teachings on multiple occasions. The text itself was written most likely no earlier than the beginning of the 17th century. It is valuable since it also contains critical notes on the *Nampōroku* (*Southern Records*) written by Sen Rikyū's (1522–1591) student, Nambō Sōkei, who was writing down his master's teachings. Some researchers state that at least part of the *Zen Tea Record* teachings must be attributed to Rikyū's grandson, Sōtan (1578–1658) who was an advocate of the "Tea and Zen – One Flavor" (*cha-zen ichimi*) theory¹. Sōtan practiced with Zen master Shun'oku Sōen from Daitokuji temple². Sōtan's father was Rikyū's wife, Sōon's, son from her first marriage. Sōtan who contributed greatly to the spread of tea in the 'noble poverty' (*wabi*) style did not care about fame and riches³. He criticized the lavishness of feudal lords' tea and was himself scorned for not caring about social status⁴. Itō Kokan agrees with the opinion that Sōtaku, who often quotes Takuan, was Takuan's student. According to Itō, in his writings Sōtaku also refers to Sōtan's teachings.

According to Sōtaku, the spirit of tea (*cha'i*) is the spirit of Zen (*zen'i*) – there is no spirit of tea outside of Zen⁵. With the admonition though, not to draw a contrary conclusion, that the Way of Tea is in itself Zen enlightenment – not every tea ceremony expresses the spirit of Zen. Sōtaku criticizes those who only superficially relate to the Zen teachings about the inexplicability of the essence of Zen

¹ Sen 1985: 61.

² Haga 1997: 38.

³ Furuta 1997: 85–86.

⁴ Tanaka 1998: 74.

⁵ Jakuan 1980: 246.

in words or to the concept of “Transmission beyond Teachings” (*kyōge betsuden*)⁶. Such people abide by their haughtiness, rely on their own taste, and criticize others though they have no recognition of the essence of Zen. The tea ceremony they practice is not “Zen tea” (*zencha*), but “secular tea” (*zokucha*)⁷. It is Sōtaku’s belief, that it is those people that the following verse of the *Lotus Sutra* refers to: “They suffer unceasingly, since in their blindness they entertain a predilection for fulfilling their yearnings and desires”⁸. Sōtaku is not alone in his belief. Haga Kōshirō also stresses that the person who wishes to fully plumb the spirit of tea ceremony should endeavor to religious practice under the guidance of a Zen master⁹. Only the Way of Tea that is inextricably interlinked with Zen is worthy of the name of the “True Way of Tea” (*shinsadō*)¹⁰.

This article is aimed at the analysis of Sōtaku’s *Zen Tea Record* from the perspective of the teachings of the Zen masters included within it. In my book entitled *Estetyka zen* (Aesthetics of Zen)¹¹, in relation to the ideas of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), a philosopher who was also a Zen practitioner, I explained how in Zen art there must be conveyed certain aspects of reality grasped in the act of enlightenment. Nishida called this reality the “absolutely contradictory self-identity” (*zettaimujunteki jikodōitsu*), meaning such a paradox unity of all that does not exclude the distinctiveness of singular elements. The aspects mentioned above are: surpassing the dualism of the subject and object of cognition (“one is all and all is one”, *ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*)¹², affirmation of the common perspective of perception of reality (“form is emptiness and emptiness is form”, *shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki*)¹³, internally contradictory unity of oppositions (like motion–motionlessness, sacred–profane), “eternal now” as paradox unity of past and future, state of “no-self” (*mushin*) as the creative act and absolute freedom of the enlightened person (for example braking the rules and canons of artistic creation). In the article I want to show that Sōtaku in his treatise included most of those aspects.

⁶ Ibidem. *Zokucha* can also be interpreted as “unmannerly, common tea”.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem: 247.

⁹ Haga 1997: 45.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 47.

¹¹ Kozyra 2010.

¹² The vision of reality grasped in the act of enlightenment as the state in which „All is One and One is All” was included in the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Jap. *Kegongyō*) in the description of the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha. The transmission “from Mind to Mind” (*ishin denshin*) starts precisely with Gautama Buddha.

¹³ Teachings included in the *Heart Sutra* (Jap. *Hannya shingyō*).

Tea ceremony as meditation

Sōtaku starts his deliberations on the relationship of tea and Zen with the strong statement that it was Zen master Ikkyū Sōjun who considered tea ceremony to be a kind of Zen practice¹⁴. Ikkyū reinstated the Way of Tea as one of the “expedient means”, so that all sentient beings can discover their true nature that is one with “Buddha nature”¹⁵. Following tradition, Sōtaku considers Murata Shukō to be Ikkyū’s disciple.

According to Sōtaku all the actions of the tea ceremony have a tight relation to Zen. He recalls the verse of Zen master Dairin Sōtō inscribed on the portrait of Takeno Jōō: “It can be said that our goal is to know the taste of tea and the taste of Zen” (*chami to zemmi o chiryō suru mune ieru*)¹⁶.

The goal of the Way of Tea is getting to know one’s own nature (*jishō o ryōge suru*), an important Buddhist truth meaning “there is no dharma outside of mind [nothing exists outside of mind – A.K.] (*shingai muhō nari*)”¹⁷. The above words in the context of Zen masters’ teachings relate to the truth about “absolutely contradictory self-identity” of subject (singular mind) and objects of cognition, therefore the internally contradictory oneness of the human being and the world.

Sōtaku states that the Way of Tea is one of the “expedient means” (*hōben*) leading to enlightenment. That is why the “Zen tea” (*zencha*) is a religious practice, expressing the “Great Way, subtle and deep, that existed before anything emerged, before one could talk about the beginning of all things”¹⁸. This kind of practice is a completely spontaneous expression of human nature.

The Way of Tea has to be the way of the true tea, therefore “Zen tea”¹⁹. Hence the Way of Tea has to be a form of meditation.

Sōtaku explains the meaning of the word *sammai*. The word is mostly interpreted in texts about Buddhism as meditation or contemplation, but according to Sōtaku it means the “right perception” (*shōju*). The right perception means concentrating the whole mind on a certain object. For Sōtaku, the Way of Tea is a “practice that consists of entering into meditation by the means of tea utensils and seeing one’s own original nature (*chaki o atsukau sammai ni irite honshō o kanzuru shugyō nari*)”²⁰. Sōtaku recites here Zen master Huineng, who taught,

¹⁴ Jakuan 1980: 243.

¹⁵ Ibidem. Verbatim: „so that they could see their own mind dharma” (*jiko no shinbō o kan-zeshimuru*)

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem: 244.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

“*sammai* is thinking only about the aspect of tranquility (*jakusō*)”²¹. Sōtaku states, however, that the mind during meditation constitutes a unity in which there is no duality (of subject and object of cognition), and the aspect of tranquility relates to the empty and unblemished state in which the highest wisdom can freely enlighten all. Meditation perceived in such a way is the “right perception”, not limited by time or space. Sōtaku compares the person who conducts tea ceremony in the state of “right perception” to the meditation lasting an inconceivably long period of time described in the *Lotus Sutra*²². This kind of “right perception” should be preserved during any activity, also during walking or sleeping²³.

The most important is the state of mind of the person who prepares tea during tea ceremony – the host should be completely focused on the utensils and immersed in each movement. He cannot think about anything else and nothing should break his concentration. The focus is intensified by the fact that all movements should be performed according to a decided pattern²⁴. Full focus on the utensil suggests a state in which the subject is absent, as if it was absorbed by the object. Hence the “right perception” can be considered surpassing the duality of subject and object that happens effortlessly. Concentrating fully on performed gestures, the practitioner forgets about himself. This forgetting about oneself is experiencing the state of “no-self” (*mushin*).

Therefore the most important is not proficiency gained in the course of years of practice, but rather to gain a strong volition (*kokorozashi*)²⁵. Volition yearns for concentration and upholds it. When the will is strong, the practitioner can devote himself to practice with full determination.

Sōtaku describes “right perception” during tea ceremony as “practice in the sitting position” (*ichiza*)²⁶. He clearly relates to meditation in the sitting position (*zazen*), with admonition against wrong meditation called “silent illumination Zen” (*mokushō zen*), that entitles dampening cognitive functions and attachment to motionlessness. To convey “tranquility” here he uses the word *seimoku*, stressing that attachment to stillness is wrong – “right perception” has to be upheld also in motion²⁷. Sōtaku enlists the advantages of active meditation and he places tea ceremony under this category. Sitting still during Zen meditation that is not related

²¹ Ibidem: 245.

²² Ibidem. The long meditation mentioned is that which lasts for 84 thousand calps, with one calp (Jap. *kō*) equal to the metaphorical time needed to clean a city covered with poppy seeds by removing one poppy seed every three years.

²³ Ibidem. Sōtaku cites here the words of master Youtan (Jap. Udon, died 1330), who wrote about the contemplation of Amida Buddha in his work *Renshū Hōkan* (Precious mirror of Lotus Sutra teachings).

²⁴ Ibidem: 244.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem: 245.

²⁷ Ibidem.

to subjected contemplation, the practitioner encounters difficulty in avoiding the flow of thoughts that disturbs his focus. Such thoughts do not appear during tea ceremony, a kind of active meditation, since the practitioner is fully immersed in performing gestures according to certain patterns. Sōtaku states that Zen master Ikkyū noticed precisely this aspect of tea ceremony and that is why he considered it to be an effective Zen practice²⁸.

Haga Kōshirō in his deliberations on tea ceremony as meditation aimed at enlightenment clearly relates to Sōtaku's ideas²⁹. He uses the term "right perception" (*shōju*), a focal concept for Sōtaku, which he interprets according to the logic of paradox as the "right perception that is non-perception" (*fujū*). For Haga, meditation during tea ceremony has to be the state of non-duality of subject and object of cognition³⁰.

The Way of Tea and moral discipline

Sōtaku's opinions on ethics and etiquette should be examined from the perspective of the teachings of Zen masters who rendered individual attempts of moral self-improvement to lead to even deeper entanglement in discrimination, the base for the dualism of the subject and object of cognition. We have to remember that discrimination is an obstacle in the course of Zen training since it forces the practitioner to stray away from enlightenment seen as the state of "non-discriminatory discrimination". It is also the case with the discrimination of good and evil. Sōtaku stresses that there is no true good in the world of men who are mostly intent on satisfying their own desires. "The so-called evil and good deeds of people submerged in ignorance are evil" (*Bompu no okonau tokoro wa zenaku tomo ni aku nari*)³¹. Sōtaku cites here the following phrase by the Daoist wise-man Laozi: "Everybody knows that good is good, but it is not good for real"³².

Zen masters stressed that one has to surpass the duality of all oppositions; including the opposition of good and evil, since it is only then that one can attain enlightenment that is a source of great compassion. The great compassion (*daihi*) embraces all, good and evil – according to the rule of non-duality. The great compassion, the ethical ideal of Buddhism, is indeed the "spirit of law", not the "letter of law", therefore the one who achieved enlightenment can evince great compassion in any form. He helps others on their way to enlightenment using any "expedient means" that fit the circumstances. That is why a practitioner should first of all focus

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Haga 1997: 39.

³⁰ Ibidem: 40.

³¹ Jakuan 1980: 245.

³² Ibidem: 248.

on achieving enlightenment, not on abiding by ethical rules at all costs. The ultimate ethical ideal of Buddhism, the great compassion, is an outcome of enlightenment, although the way to achieve this ideal is not through moral self-improvement.

The criticism of collecting precious utensils

Sōtaku stresses that collecting rare and valuable tea utensils has absolutely nothing in common with Zen³³. Those who accumulate great collections prove that they did not understand the important Buddhist teaching about the impermanence of all things. Instead of freeing themselves from all attachment, they indulge in amassing goods that are no more than an obstacle on the way to enlightenment³⁴.

Sōtaku proposes his own interpretation of *suki*³⁵ that was first written with a Chinese character in the context of tea ceremony, meaning mastering one's taste in the choice of utensils. To differentiate this sort of predilection for desiring material objects, with time, the word *suki* started to be written with characters that bring to mind the odd number³⁶. Such notation appears in the word *sukiya* meaning teahouse, where asymmetry and dissonance between certain elements was introduced on purpose. The pinewood support pillars preserve the natural, irregular shape of their trunk and branches³⁷.

The character *ki* can be interpreted as “strange, uncommon”, it then suggests something incomplete or irregular, hence it represents fully the spirit of tea ceremony. The person who evinces *suki* in tea ceremony does not place more value on the things that are perfect, complete and commonly considered to implement good taste³⁸. Tea utensils in *suki* style should not be selected so that they uphold one style – the objects, both light and heavy, old and new, wide and slim should be brought together. Utensils once broken can be fixed and still used. Even and symmetrical elements should be matched with the odd and asymmetrical (*kigū ichidō*)³⁹.

³³ Ibidem: 243.

³⁴ Ibidem: 246–247.

³⁵ In the Heian period the word *suki*, used mostly in poetry composed by noblemen, related to passions in amorous relationships. In the Kamakura period it stopped having erotic connotations since it started to signify an uncanny predilection for art. According to Izutsu Toshihiko, *suki* in the context of the Way of Tea signifies a unique subjective attitude of a man who through his lifestyle shows that he values aesthetic impressions and sensitivity much higher than the pragmatic sense of usefulness. Such a trend could evolve towards either “aesthetic luxury in abundance and totality of external expression” or “aesthetic idealism in its nature in accordance with the metaphysical and ethical austerity of a hermit”. Izutsu Toshihiko 2005: 190.

³⁶ In this word the order of characters is rearranged – odd number in Japanese is *kisū*. See: notation of *suki* in Appendix 2.

³⁷ Jakuan 1980: 251.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ Ibidem.

Sōtaku regrets that the true meaning of *suki* has been lost and contemporarily it is being treated the same as the word *konomu* that signified predilection towards utensils commonly considered valuable – such an attitude is moving away from the spirit of the “thatched roof hut” (*sōan*)⁴⁰. Sōtaku stresses that *suki* implies the lack of will to express individual preferences (therefore the lack of attachment to earthy life), that shows in freely matching various styles. It could be said that Sōtaku’s definition of *suki* preserves the meaning given to the word by Kamo Chōmei, who chose the life of a hermit away from the capital. Karaki Junzō rightfully points out that *suki* initially meant individual aesthetic inclinations, but with time it stopped to be associated with indulging one’s own desires and started to be used to mean the renunciation of earthy delights and gains⁴¹.

Sōtaku criticizes tea gatherings (*chakai*) during which the guests indulge in splendid dishes and drinks. He regrets that so many teahouse or garden owners go out their way to impress the guests⁴². They spend a great deal of money for that purpose and the tea ceremony they perform becomes a mere form of past time and an occasion to boast of one’s riches. Sōtaku claims that the most valuable utensil in Zen tea ceremony is the “vessel of Buddha mind” (*busshin*), and not the antiques, the precious porcelain imported from China or utensils made in rare shapes⁴³.

Sōtaku strictly criticizes traditional tea families for paying too much attention to defined sizes and forms of utensils and for preferring utensils of certain styles, like pieces in the style of Rikyū (*Rikyū gonomi*) or in the style of Sōtan (*Sōtan gonomi*)⁴⁴. He deplores that there are new types of utensils constantly being created, so that “one has not enough time to even count them all”⁴⁵, while initially, it was mostly the everyday utensils that were used during tea ceremony. The standardization of measurements and manners of producing tea utensils has gone so far, that it applies to the least important objects used in the teahouse or the tea garden. It is commonly acknowledged that the host has to be a connoisseur of tea utensils. Kobori Enshū⁴⁶ was considered to be an ideal connoisseur. Sōtaku did not share this belief – for him predilection towards valuable utensils and attachment to them is not in accordance with the spirit of *suki*⁴⁷. The spirit of *suki* should be an expression of freedom from all attachment, should manifest in accep-

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Karaki 1983: nr 35: 34.

⁴² Jakuan 1980: 243.

⁴³ Ibidem: 249.

⁴⁴ Ibidem: 252.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Also, in modern times, during the ceremony guests examine and admire the utensils. The connoisseurs exhibit vast knowledge of their poetic names and can recognize makers of valuable utensils. The host should not only master the order and manner of the performed movements during various kinds of ceremony, but also gain a near encyclopedic knowledge about the utensils.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

tance of all forms, also those irregular, incomplete, austere and plain, unfitted to the common perception of canons of beauty. The tea practitioner has to remember that the mania of collecting precious utensils comes from the vanity of human nature, a nature that knows no appeasement. Acquiring one precious utensil does not bring peace. It only arouses the appetite for more. One is ready to lose one's health trying to satisfy one's unquenchable desires. Only once brought down by sickness and exhaustion one discovers what is important in life – but by then it is already too late⁴⁸.

Collecting precious utensils takes the practitioner away from enlightenment and brings forth suffering. “On the brink of death, has no regrets he who acted according to the rules of *suki*, devoted himself fully to Zen tea and discovered his own nature attaining the state in which ‘nothing is born and nothing dies’ (*fushō fumetsu*)⁴⁹ [meaning a state of nirvana, identical to enlightenment]”.

Sōtaku was not the only one who criticized collecting precious utensils. Zen master Takuan was against it and Sōtaku invoked his opinion. Takuan was a disciple of Kobori Enshū and was himself a tea utensil connoisseur, but did not collect them. Takuan deplored the degeneration of the Way of Tea that once again became a kind of past-time and an occasion to boast of precious collections⁵⁰.

The metaphor of Zen tea utensils (*zenchaki*)

Tea ceremony utensils are not beautiful objects that can be considered unique or valuable. Aesthetic discrimination also belongs to the sphere of discriminatory knowledge that takes one away from enlightenment.

According to Sōtaku the true Zen tea utensil is “one mind” – ultimate, empty and unsullied (*enkyō shōjō no isshin*). Only when such a mind is the vessel there can exist Zen tea⁵¹. The vessel of “one mind” is the vessel of the universe, including all that exists. It is the “Buddha nature” (*busshō*) that can be compared to the clear moon shining bright in the sky⁵². The metaphor of “mind-vessel” containing all existence expresses the Buddhist truth that “one is all”.

Sōtaku stresses that “Buddha nature” is empty⁵³, which brings forth the concept of *mubusshō* (verbatim “not Buddha nature”), therefore the paradox negation of “Buddha nature” in the Zen masters’ teachings. Using the term *mubusshō*, they tried to make their disciples realize that “Buddha nature” is “emptiness” and not

⁴⁸ Ibidem: 252–253.

⁴⁹ Ibidem: 253.

⁵⁰ Nishibe 1981: 41.

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem.

some yet unknown marvelous feature that can be obtained through diligent religious practice. Sōtaku recalls the imagery of the full moon symbolizing enlightenment, stressing that everybody has “Buddha nature” although most people are not aware of that. This situation can be compared to the moon covered with clouds. A person who never saw the moon, gazing upon the cloudy night sky would never believe the stories of travelers who had their path illuminated by the moonlight. The ones that lose their way, suffering from the three poisons (*sandoku*): greed, anger and ignorance; cannot see their true “Buddha nature”⁵⁴.

Sōtaku strongly stated that a person who practiced tea ceremony according to Zen spirit, would become an “originally unblemished vessel” (*honrai shōjō no utsuwa*), meaning the vessel of “one mind”⁵⁵. It is also true about practitioners who do not show any talent for this art. They should fully concentrate on Zen practice and not be influenced by the ones who treat the Way of Tea as past-time or an occasion to entertain one’s pride.

Sōtaku therefore does not consider the “technical” aspects of tea ceremony, like the order and manner of performed movements, important. However it is what matters for various tea schools’ traditions in Japan. The practitioner for many years attains consecutive stages of initiation allowing him to study various ways of conducting the ceremony, depending on the placement of the brazier or the season of the year.

Sōtaku associated such concepts with “the posture, constituting the base” (*tai*) and “activity that arises from the base” (*yō*)⁵⁶. He criticizes the interpretation in which *tai* are the objects that are still during the tea ceremony (for example the kettle with hot water), and *yō* are the utensils that are in motion (for example a bamboo tea scoop). For Sōtaku the true “base constituting the essence” is the spirit of Zen, and a manifestation of this essence – Zen tea. One could also compare this base to motionlessness and tranquility, and the activity to movement and all forms of human activity⁵⁷. It is worth noting that Sōtaku points out two different aspects of “absolutely contradictory self-identity” – motion and motionlessness. He recalls the concepts from the *Doctrine of the Mean* saying that there is no dualism in the relation between *tai* and *yō*, as well as the *Lotus Sutra* teachings explaining that “base constituting the essence” is identical to enlightenment, and the “activity arising from the base” could be interpreted as the strife to free all sentient beings⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ *Tai* (verbatim “body”) can be interpreted as “substance”, and *yō* as “function”.

⁵⁷ Jakuan 1980: 254.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

Symbolic meaning of the tea garden

Sōtaku points out that many have forgotten the true symbolism of the tea garden (*roji*). The garden is divided into outer and inner. According to Sōtaku, *ro* signifies “manifestation, disclosure” and *ji* – the ground, foundation, base, in this context identified as “mind” (*shin*). Therefore *roji* is the manifestation of one’s mind, one’s true nature (*jishō o arawasu*)⁵⁹. In this sense *roji* refers not only to the garden alone but the whole space of the teahouse where the initial nature of man (*honshō*) should manifest. The term *hakuroji* also ushers thought in the same direction – manifestation of an unblemished mind, since the teahouse should be a place of practice leading to enlightenment, where one is freed from all lusts and desires. In this place one should attain enlightenment and manifest the true nature of the mind, the true nature of Thusness as the reality in itself (*shinnyo jissō*)⁶⁰.

The concept of *roji* is most often tied to the untainted sphere of enlightenment that is described in the *Lotus Sutra*. The children who ran out of the burning house expecting to be rewarded with toys came to the “dewy ground”. To ultimately absorb the essence of enlightenment is compared to coming out to the open ground after being lost in the thicket. However Sōtaku points out that even though the teahouse is believed to belong to the sphere of enlightenment, entering the *roji* should not be seen as forsaking the sphere of the profane. Here Sōtaku cites the following words from the *Diamond Sutra* that clearly show the logic of paradox, meaning the logic of the “absolutely contradictory self-identity” of sacred and profane: “[Our] world is not the world and that is why it is the world”. The essence of Zen practice is “awakening the mind that has no abode” (*ōmushojū nishōgoshin*)⁶¹. Those words, from the *Diamond Sutra* (Jap. *Kongōkyō*), became the catalyst for the enlightenment of Huineng, the sixth patriarch of Zen in China. An enlightened mind is not detached from the earthly, sullied world. According to the rule that “one is all and all is one” it resides everywhere and nowhere – in that sense it does not possess its own fixed place, and yet it is present.

Because of “absolutely contradictory self-identity” that which is unsullied is also that which is sullied; therefore, Sōtaku does not give much attention to the purification rites undertaken before entering the tea garden, seemingly so important to Sen no Rikyū. There is no need to purify oneself from the “dust of this world”, since all things, including those things that we consider impure, have “Buddha nature”.

The same as Sōtaku, Hisamatsu Shin’ichi also states that *roji* does not signify “dewy ground”, but a “disclosed / manifested” nature of reality⁶². The garden sho-

⁵⁹ Ibidem: 253.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ *Masa ni jū suru tokoro nakushite shikamo sono shin o shō subeshi.*

⁶² Hisamatsu 1987: 107.

uld look natural; as if it was not touched by a human hand, and at the same time evoke an atmosphere of calm.

According to Rikyū, the teahouse as a “pure and unsullied world of Buddha” is a place where the host as well as the guest should shake off the “dust” of earthly life⁶³. Recalling these words of Rikyū, Hisamatsu compares the teahouse to a Buddhist temple⁶⁴. But such an attitude does not take into account the Zen masters’ teachings about the “everyday mind being the Way”. Entering the Zen garden is a symbolic entering into the sphere of enlightenment that is no different from profane. Upon realizing the paradox Hisamatsu strives to show that Rikyū created a new, lay form of Zen, inextricably tied to the earthly sphere of culture and art⁶⁵.

Freedom from form in Zen tea ceremony

In *Zencharoku*, Sōtaku states that to express the spirit of Zen during tea ceremony is much more important than the etiquette. Etiquette in comparison to the mysterious dharma of the Buddha (*myōhō*) is a mere “lonely island in the universe”⁶⁶. The proper behavior is not the most important – etiquette can be compared to “branches and leaves” with the root and trunk being the Way of the Buddha⁶⁷. Etiquette cannot be something ultimate and indisputable in the Way of Tea since it is only a form that cannot overshadow the spirit of Zen. It does not mean treating lightly the ways of conduct in society. Sōtaku states that the one who preserves “right perception” in a natural and spontaneous way will uphold the etiquette and excel in fulfilling his social obligations⁶⁸. Sōtaku quotes the *Diamond Sutra* to prove, that paying too much attention to etiquette can be an outcome of attachment to form, therefore misunderstanding of the essence of “emptiness”⁶⁹. He also quotes an admonition by Laozi, not to deviate from the Way because of the rules designed by men.

Sōtaku pays little attention to such elements of the tea ceremony as the guests appreciating the value of the utensils used by the host or adjusting the course of the ceremony to specified conditions (like the time of day or time of year)⁷⁰.

The most controversial fragment of *Zencharoku* is Sōtaku’s criticism of some of Rikyū’s recommendations as recorded by his disciple, Nambō Sōkei, in the *Nampōroku*. Sōtaku points out the following teachings of Rikyū:

⁶³ Hisamatsu 1993: 19.

⁶⁴ Ibidem: 23.

⁶⁵ Ibidem: 24.

⁶⁶ Jakuan 1980: 244.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Ibidem: 245.

⁶⁹ Ibidem: 244.

⁷⁰ Ibidem.

The teachings of masters considering the placement of utensils during tea ceremony and the manner of performing specific movements are full of detailed descriptions and it cannot be avoided. However when the practitioner internalizes them thoroughly, when he masters the basic rules, taking into account the mysterious balance between *yin* and *yang*, he will be absolutely free, although there will be ceaseless changes⁷¹.

Rikyū believed that only a true master could allow himself to go beyond the decided canons – usually treated as absolutely binding, and new practitioners would put significant effort into interiorizing them. Sōtaku has objections to this statement, since he does not agree that only those who mastered all the techniques can introduce changes.

It is due to be noted that it is not about a dispute between following the two statements: whether to change the canon after mastering all techniques, or to change it before one masters them all. This is not the problem. The changes in the canon cannot be a conscious act performed in some previously planned time. Sōtaku clearly stresses that this is not how Zen tea works. There cannot be any conscious introduction of change, since Zen tea demands surpassing the duality of subject and object of cognition, going beyond cognitive, conscious action. All changes have to be absolutely spontaneous and there can be no trace of intention of the subjective or cognitive argumentation. Sōtaku cites the following verses by Takuan Sōhō:

Tea ceremony initially has no form.
According to Heavens' teachings
it is one mind, disturbed by nothing.
There are rules, and at the same time there are no rules –
change signifies the self-identity of specific reaction
and a mysterious functioning [of Buddha nature – A.K.]⁷².

Sōtaku continuously underlines the need to surpass the epistemological dualism of subject and object (surpassing the cognitive thinking). A condition necessary for Zen practice aimed at enlightenment. If a practitioner decides that he became a master and is now fit to bring about a change in the canon, or waits for another master to confirm his mastership and allow him to introduce changes, he is proving he did not surpass the dualism of subject and object just yet. He does not enter the state of “no-self” understood as “absolutely contradictory self-identity” of subject and object. Here there is no “right perception” of Zen tea, the source of spontaneous creation coming from the experience of unity with the universe. The moment of attaining enlightenment cannot be planned, so the moment the

⁷¹ Ibidem: 250.

⁷² Ibidem. „Self-identity of specific reaction of mind and mysterious functioning [of Buddha nature – A.K.]” (*tōi soku myōyō*).

freedom coming from enlightenment will manifest cannot be planned either. That is why Sōtaku writes about “ultimate trust in the creativity of the Heavens, final rejection of one’s knowledge, so that the ‘emptiness’ can manifest in a human”⁷³. Negation of the independent “self”, understanding the “emptiness of individual nature” (*jishōkū*), is essential for Zen practice.

Sōtaku, relating to his own experience of enlightenment, even criticizes the statements of respected figures if they are not in accordance with the spirit of Zen. I do not believe though that he is criticizing the essence of Riktū’s teachings, rather one statement that could be wrongly understood by practitioners. In his statement, Rikyū tries to warn beginning tea practitioners not to imitate the “true freedom” of accomplished masters. Traditional manners of performing certain gestures during the ceremony are usually the most efficient, precise movements of high aesthetic value. Sōtaku appreciates this aspect since it is indispensable for active meditation, like tea ceremony. A practitioner can forget about himself, being fully immersed in the actions performed according to decided patterns. Sōtaku does not agree however with the conclusion that being spontaneous comes with mastering all techniques, since spontaneous creativity is linked with the state of “no-self” that can manifest at any time, even if the practitioner in question is a beginner. Sōtaku did not suggest that anybody should change the canons of tea ceremony whenever feeling like it. He wanted to point out, that everywhere where “no-self” manifests there is ultimate freedom evincing itself through spontaneous creativity. “No-self” does not manifest itself as a result of mastering all techniques, so it can manifest even in a beginner. From the point of view of Zen teachings it is obvious that any change in the canon has to be introduced as a spontaneous expression of enlightenment, not as an objectified strategy.

The above deliberations of Sōtaku became the cause for which *Zencharoku* was rendered a work not in accordance with Rikyū’s tea spirit. For me, however, it seems it was rather his other conclusions that were more upsetting for the majority of his contemporary Way of Tea advocates than the issue of the interpretation of Rikyū’s words. Sōtaku writes:

In Zen tea there are few names (*meimoku*), also there are no secret procedures. If you get caught up in names [learning the procedures – A.K.] and you study written instructions, you will go astray from the true Way of Zen tea⁷⁴.

One has to remember about the whole system of teaching that was created by various schools of tea ceremony (originating in the need to learn multiple procedures and utensil names) and about the existence of a secret transmission addressed to chosen disciples. This system solidifies the organizational stability of tea cere-

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ Ibidem: 250–251.

mony schools and this foundation Sōtaku undermines directly, saying that joining the system equals drifting away from the true Zen tea.

It is my opinion that Sōtaku is right, from the perspective of Zen teachings on freedom of enlightenment. In such freedom there is no place for activity of some subjective intentional “self”. Sōtaku’s conclusions are the natural following of his previous deliberations relating to tea ceremony as active meditation during which a practitioner is in a state of “no-self” since he forgets about himself fully engulfed by the utensils. “Zen tea” does not mean breaking it off with the *chanoyu* schools’ canons. It is only important not to treat those canons as specific knowledge and skills, something like a magician’s tricks that, as they become more complicated and diverse, the more they entertain the viewer. On the other hand there is nothing more misguided than the arrogant attitude of a beginning practitioner who decides he can lightly treat all the rules of tea ceremony because it is not those rules that express the Zen spirit. As is common with Zen, again we deal with a specific equilibristic procedure necessary for preserving the unity of oppositions – the tea ceremony canon cannot be accepted and it cannot be negated.

We have to also remember that Rikyū himself taught about the state of “no-self” during tea ceremony:

During a formal ritual in the *shoin daisu*⁷⁵ style, everything has to be arranged in the most precise order. [...] But finally the host puts aside all rules, forgets all the techniques and it all comes down to thinking without thinking⁷⁶.

Rikyū clearly stresses that the tea ceremony has to be performed in the state of “no-thought” (*munen*), meaning “thinking without thinking” that is indeed surpassing the duality of subject and object of cognition. In this sense tea ceremony has no set laws or rules. It is clear if we take the example of Rikyū’s deliberations on tea ceremony organized outdoors, the “tea in the field”:

As for the actions while preparing tea or for the multiple kinds of utensils – there are no set laws. But precisely because there are no set laws, the great law is the law. It means that one has to pursue the way with his whole heart, and since it is an art that goes beyond the boundaries of form, somebody who does not inquire deeply, should not go into it⁷⁷.

Rikyū warns practitioners not to allow the harmony between the participants of the ceremony to be the result of conscious effort.

⁷⁵ *Shoin daisu* – a highly formal style of preparing tea using Chinese utensils and a specific shelf for the utensils (*daisu*).

⁷⁶ Sen XV 1998: 171.

⁷⁷ Nambō 2005: nr 3: 44.

It is the most proper for their hearts to be in accord. But it is not right for them to desire to attain agreement. When both the host and the guest are people who attained the Way, a good feeling between them appears naturally. If immature people only strive to attain this state of harmony, if one of them deviates they will both be led astray. Hence it is right for them to be in harmony, not right to aspire to attain it⁷⁸.

Just as one cannot achieve enlightenment as an objective goal, true harmony cannot be achieved in this way. True harmony only appears in the state of „no-self”.

Tea ceremony of no host, no guest (*muhinshu no cha*)

Sōtaku is critical towards the deliberations recorded in *Nampōroku* regarding the secret teaching of Rikyū about the “tea ceremony of no host, no guest”⁷⁹. In the quoted paragraph Rikyū explains that the space of the teahouse and the tea garden (*hakuroji*) is Thusness (the essence of reality) that is empty and free from all disturbance (*buji anshin*).

Then follows the ultimate liberation from all: mountains and rivers, trees and grasses, thatched roof hut, host and guest, tea utensils, all rules and canons. Such is the Great Way transmitted by master Rikyū⁸⁰.

Sōtaku does not agree with such interpretation of the “tea ceremony of no host, no guest” in which the master who gained all secrets of the tea ceremony no longer has to concentrate on the movements he performs⁸¹. He stresses that such ceremony is not a secret teaching and should not be studied after mastering all its techniques. He points out that the concept of the “tea ceremony of no host, no guest” comes from Zen teachings, but he does not offer the source⁸². Rikyū most likely was quoting famous verses by Daitō Kokushi that were supposed to express his enlightenment:

By the twilight I rest, by the dawn I wander,
there is no host, there is no guest –
with every step
I feel the refreshing breeze⁸³.

⁷⁸ Nambō 2004: nr 2: 25.

⁷⁹ Jakuan 1980: 243.

⁸⁰ Ibidem: 255.

⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁸² Jakuan 1980: 255.

⁸³ Kobori 1988: 8.

It is worth remembering, that in Zen tradition the juxtaposition of host and guests, or master and vassal, is a metaphor to express the relationship between subject and object. The lack of “host and guest” points at going beyond the dualism of the subject and object of cognition, a necessary condition for enlightenment.

According to Sōtaku the paragraph from *Nampōroku* relating to the “tea ceremony without host nor guest” does not convey the true meaning of “nothingness” (*mu*). Sōtaku uses the term “nothingness”, not “emptiness”, although in this context both terms are synonyms⁸⁴. In Rikyū’s deliberations on the “tea ceremony of no host nor guest” Sōtaku sees “silent illumination Zen” (*mokushō zen*), criticized by many masters as the manifestation of “one-sided emptiness” (*henkū*), seen as negation of existence. Meanwhile the “true emptiness” (*shinkū*), as experienced in the act of enlightenment, is an internally contradictory oneness of negation and affirmation. It is in the context of “silent Zen” that Sōtaku states that rejecting all forms is not a true “ceremony of no host nor guest”. Quite similarly dampening all consciousness functions in meditation is not “true emptiness”. What is the purpose of tea ceremony if host and guest are no more?

It is my opinion that the “tea ceremony of no host nor guest” corresponds with the third category of Zen master Linji, meaning, “taking away the man and the environment” (Jap. *ninkyō gudatsu*), so negating the subject and object of cognition (“form is emptiness”). However this category describes only one out of two important aspects of enlightenment, the second aspect being the fourth category, which is “leaving the man and the environment” (Jap. *ninkyō gufudatsu*) – “emptiness is form”. Hence the third category of Linji expresses that “form (including subject and object) is emptiness”, while the fourth category states that “emptiness is form”.

Does Sōtaku attack Rikyū or is he merely pointing out a wrong interpretation of his words by posterity? The answer is not easy, but we should pay attention to a wider context of Zen masters’ polemics. There are discussions in which one master does not recognize the enlightenment of the other and accuses him of heresy (so called “heretic Zen”, Jap. *jazen*). Many of those discussions though concentrate on faulty interpretation of certain verses, taken out of their wider context in Zen teachings. It is often the case that some Zen master in a given statement was referring to just one aspect of enlightenment. For example Dōgen, the same as Rikyū, wanting to stress that “form is emptiness”, would state that during meditation one must “be liberated of his body and mind” (*shinshin datsuraku*). His other statements, however, contain the truth that “emptiness is form”. It is most likely that Sōtaku was reprimanding Rikyū for not expressing the essence of “nothingness

⁸⁴ More about the Daoist concept of „nothingness” (*mu*) and the Buddhist concept of “emptiness” (*kū*) in: Kozyra 2004: 223–224.

/ emptiness” for in his interpretation of the “tea ceremony of no host nor guest” there is no mention of the inseparability of emptiness and form.

Sōtaku believed that tea ceremony has nothing in common with Zen unless it expresses “nothingness”. Without it tea merely becomes an exclusive past time that can easily evoke pride and arrogance and lead a household to ruin⁸⁵. One must practice ceaselessly and then the “right perception” will appear, his state of “one mind”⁸⁶.

Haga Kōshirō seems to be convinced by Sōtaku’s arguments. He states that Zen tea is not the “tea ceremony of no host nor guest”, but the “direct residing of the mind in the state of Thusness, so a mind in which there is no duality of host and guest (subject and object)” (*shukaku no funi ichinyo no jikishin no majiwari*)⁸⁷.

Characteristics of Zen art in *Zencharoku*

The first characteristic feature of Zen art that we find in Sōtaku’s treatise is the statement, that in the state of “no-self” an individual experiences such unity with the world when “one is all and all is one”. Sōtaku refers to this Buddhist teaching when he writes that nothing exists except mind – “there exists no dharma except mind”⁸⁸. Pure, perfect and empty “one mind” is a vessel that contains the whole universe. Sōtaku quotes a famous passage from the *Diamond Sutra* (Jap. *Kongōkyō*) about awakening the mind that has no abode, meaning a mind that is everywhere and nowhere, precisely because “one is all and all is one” (*ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*).

An important feature is also affirmation of the everyday mind (*byōjōshin*) from the point of view of an inconceivable oneness of the relative sphere (samsara) and absolute sphere (nirvana). It is worth noting that tea appears in Zen koan as an affirmation of the everyday, common perspective. Zen practitioners might ask questions concerning the essence of enlightenment and hear an answer like: “drink a bowl of tea”. The underlying message of this koan is a reminder not to look for the sacred separately from the profane – realizing “Buddha nature” can happen with any given daily activity – also while drinking tea.

The next characteristic is the oneness of oppositions coming from the fact that in enlightenment one experiences the essence of reality in which “one is all and all is one”. In tea ceremony, the absolutely contradictory self-identity of movement and motionlessness has to be experienced. Sōtaku stressed that it is wrong to consider the calmness during tea ceremony to be motionlessness / stillness – the “right perception” also has to be kept in action⁸⁹. To describe tranquility during tea ceremony the

⁸⁵ Jakuan 1980: 255.

⁸⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁷ See: Haga 1997: 53.

⁸⁸ Jakuan 1980: 243.

⁸⁹ Ibidem: 245.

word *jaku* is used. This word in the context of Buddhist teachings describes nirvana as the fading of urges and desires – that is only possible after passing beyond the world of “birth and death”⁹⁰. Tranquility in such an interpretation is not just the mere antithesis, the lack of motion. Suzuki Daisetsu wrote, that tranquility in Zen means “calmness in the midst of boiling oil, amongst raging waves, in the fire’s blaze”⁹¹.

The oneness of oppositions excludes favoring only one side of the pair. In the architecture of the teahouse, symmetry is not common but irregular elements are often used – crooked poles instead of neat and straight ones. The stones in the tea garden (*tobiishi*) are never put in symmetrically and they differ in size and shape. As Daisetsu rightfully points out, symmetry draws attention, is connected to grace, dignity. Asymmetry disturbs balance and that is why its usage is crucial for discovering a new dimension of reality⁹². It is worth notice that Sōtaku does not prefer asymmetry. According to the logic of paradox he does not choose one of the pair of oppositions. He writes about using both regular and irregular elements simultaneously (*kigū ichidō*)⁹³.

In Zen art it is also necessary to express surpassing the linear perception of time flowing from the past to the future and showing the unity of both those times in the “eternal now”. Disturbing the time continuum that comes from the “eternal now” as seen in the tea ceremony is also described in the *Zencharoku*. Sōtaku compares a tea ceremony performed by a person in the state of “right perception” to meditation lasting an inconceivably long period of time described in the *Lotus Sutra*⁹⁴. It could be concluded that for the person in the state of “no-self”, a person who experiences that “One is All and All is One”, every moment is eternity, and eternity is just a moment.

It is extremely important to treat the state of “no-self” (*mushin*) as a creative act. Sōtaku considered tea ceremony to be a kind of active meditation designed to discover the “true self”. According to him the “right perception” should be upheld during any activity – also during walking or even sleep. It is in accordance with Zen masters’ teachings explaining that one should meditate during any activity.

Zen master Yongjiajiao (Yōka Genkaku, 665-713) taught:

*Walking is Zen, sitting is Zen.
Whether you speak or remain silent
Whether you move or remain motionless –
The essence in itself remains undisturbed.*⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Suzuki 1959: 309.

⁹¹ Ibidem: 356.

⁹² Ibidem: 27.

⁹³ Jakuan 1980: 251.

⁹⁴ Ibidem: 245.

⁹⁵ Suzuki 1960: 94.

A person fully submerged in the actions performed, for example during tea ceremony, is “engulfed” by the utensils and then stays in the state of “no-self” (*mushin*), understood as surpassing the dualism of the subject and object of perception. The state of “no-self” is a source of spontaneous creativity and that is why a tea master who performs tea ceremony in this state has no equal.

The last characteristic feature of Zen art that can be observed in Sōtaku’s treatise is absolute freedom, also freedom from rules and canons. Tanikawa Tetsuzō rightfully points out a substantial difference in attitudes towards the formal laws of tea of Sōtaku and Rikyū – an undisputed authority in the field of tea ceremony. Sōtaku does not recognize “mastering the techniques according to set canon as a prerequisite for entering the sphere of freedom”.⁹⁶ Sōtaku stresses that everybody who is in the state of “no-self” reaches the source of spontaneous creativity, regardless of whether or not he mastered tea ceremony canon. Sōtaku quotes the words of Takuan Sōhō that remain in accordance with the logic of paradox: “there are rules, and at the same time there are no rules”⁹⁷. In the state of “no-self” there is a complete reliance on the “creativity of Heavens”⁹⁸, since the source of true creativity is a feeling of oneness with the universe. Sōtaku believed that a practitioner of the Way of Tea, just as a practitioner of Zen, could not fall back on any set of written rules or strive to realize any objective goal, even if it were the Zen ideal he aimed at. Everyone who consciously (objectively) practices the “Way of Zen” practices a heresy (*jahō*)⁹⁹. A practitioner has to ceaselessly strive toward surpassing the dualism of the subject and object of perception and not set it anew over and over again while subjectively exerting himself to obtain an objective goal.

Only one who has experienced the ultimate freedom of enlightenment can express beauty in any form. In this day and age many utensils of crude, irregular shapes¹⁰⁰ are indeed considered to be classic masterpieces and it is easy to oversee how shocking their first usage must have been. Where elaborate Chinese porcelain once reigned, irregular tea bowls of porous texture started to take precedence. Takeno Jōō using a simple well bucket or a bamboo lid rest during a tea ceremony must have been seen as the peak of extravagance.

Sōtaku’s treatise, the *Zencharoku*, differs greatly from other works in which Zen is only sporadically mentioned and the main topic is to describe the flow of tea ceremony or the most important rules related to its conduct. Sōtaku’s discourse can be seen as polemical, since the author does not only describe tea ceremony as a kind of Zen meditation, but also tries to discern those of its elements that have nothing to do with Zen. The differences between Sōtaku and Rikyū’s ideas that are

⁹⁶ Ibidem: 13.

⁹⁷ Jakuan 1980: 250.

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ Ibidem: 246.

¹⁰⁰ Utensils in the *wabi* style – more about *wabi* in chapter seven.

evidenced in the *Zencharoku* could also be explained by the fact that Rikyū – in contrast to his successor Sōtan – did not put so much stress on *chanoyu sammai*, meaning meditation during tea ceremony, and did not consider the ceremony to be solely a form of religious practice¹⁰¹.

Tea ceremony often has nothing in common with Zen and still provides aesthetic experiences, teaches discipline and concentration. It allows a practitioner to enjoy many aspects of Japanese tradition – architecture, artisans’ works, painting, and flower arrangement. Still it does not change the fact that it is Zen that provides the spiritual depth of the Way of Tea. To express this depth Zen practice is necessary, since only then tea becomes “no-tea”, and “everyday mind” – the Way. It was Sōtaku, in his *Zencharoku* treatise that expressed this truth most thoroughly.

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¹⁰¹ Horiguchi Sutemi 1951: 217–218.

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English Summary of the Article

Agnieszka Kozyra

THE ONENESS OF ZEN AND THE WAY OF TEA IN THE *ZEN TEA RECORD* (*ZENCHAROKU*)

This article is aimed at the analysis of Jakuan Sōtaku's *Zen Tea Record* from the perspective of the teachings of the Zen masters included within it. In my book entitled *Estetyka zen* (Aesthetics of Zen), in relation to the ideas of Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), a philosopher who was also a Zen practitioner, I explained how in Zen art there must be conveyed certain aspects of reality grasped in the act of enlightenment. Nishida called this reality the “absolutely contradictory self-identity” (*zettaimujunteki jikodōitsu*), meaning such a paradox unity of all that does not exclude the distinctiveness of singular elements. The aspects mentioned above are: surpassing the dualism of the subject and object of cognition (“one is all and all is one”, *ichi soku issai, issai soku ichi*), affirmation of the common perspective of perception of reality (“form is emptiness and emptiness is form”, *shiki soku ze kū, kū soku ze shiki*), internally contradictory unity of oppositions (like motion–motionlessness, sacred–profane), “eternal now” as paradox unity of past and future, state of “no-self” (*mushin*) as the creative act and absolute freedom of the enlightened person (for example braking the rules and canons of artistic creation). In the article I want to show that Sōtaku in his treatise included most of those aspects.

Key-words: *Nishida Kitarō, Jakuan Sōtaku, tea ceremony, Zen art, Zen aesthetics, Sōtan*