

Tea Taste: Patronage and Collaboration among Tea Masters and Potters in Early Modern Japan

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Patron. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery.

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), British lexicographer, *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1775

Introduction

In almost any museum in Japan today, you can encounter objects on display or in storage that were originally made and that have survived to the present because of the patronage of tea practitioners. The institutionalized, ritualized, and performative practice of preparing and serving tea, known in Japanese as *chanoyu* 茶の湯, has served to both stimulate and preserve varied forms of cultural production, ranging from ceramics, baskets, and calligraphy to cuisine, gardens, and architecture. The early modern tea practitioner was a kind of jack-of-all-trades designer whose creativity was expressed in the selection and arrangement (*toriawase* 取り合わせ) of objects in the tea room, but whose substantive work as a patron came in the acquisition of art. Tea practitioners acquired antiques from China, Korea, and Southeast Asia, commissioned new works through the offices of local merchants or by directly patronizing artists, and in some cases even crafted objects to suit their own particular social and aesthetic needs. All of these practices enabled the tea practitioner to construct a discourse of taste or *suki* (すき or 数奇) that publicly represented his or her aesthetic sensibilities.

This essay explores examples of collecting, commissioning, and creating objects from the interactions of the Sen tea schools and the Raku ceramic workshop. I argue that tea practitioners' attempts to situate themselves aesthetically through the discourse of *suki* reveal relationships that are more complex than conventional notions

of "patronage" allow. Particularly problematic is the rather negative view common in post-Enlightenment Western thought (an example of which can be found in the epigraph) that equates political and artistic patronage with a loss of much vaunted autonomy and independence.¹ Examples of interactions between tea practitioners and artists in early modern Japan went beyond "patron and client" or "superior and inferior" to include collaborative and in some cases competitive acts of cultural production.² The varied forms of patronage described here and in other essays in this issue serve as a useful reminder of the instability of even the most innocuous assumptions about cultural context in academic analysis of early modern Japan.

Collecting Rikyū

Collecting – lovingly labeled "an unruly passion" by Werner Muensterberger – is not usually included in definitions of patronage.³ The Oxford English Dictionary, for example, provides the following definition: "The action of a patron in giving influential support, favour, encourage-

¹ I explore this issue in greater detail in Morgan Pitelka, *Handmade Culture: Raku Potters, Patrons, and Tea Practitioners in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, forthcoming in 2005), particularly in the Introduction and Chapter Six. Also useful is Larry Shiner's *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), in which he argues that the eighteenth century witnessed the unprecedented and radical bifurcation of the artist, as a maker of purely beautiful things, and the craftsman, as a maker of purely useful things. One result of this epistemic shift was the rise of the myth that real art was disconnected from market forces, social networks, and even cultural context.

² Dennis Romano, "Aspects of Patronage in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Venice," *Rennaissance Quarterly* 4:4 (Winter, 1993): 712.

³ Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

ment, or countenance, to a person, institution, work, art, etc."⁴ In certain cultural climates, however, collecting antiques and certain kinds of imported objects accomplished precisely the goal of lending support, favor, and encouragement. In the case of early modern Japanese tea culture, collecting was one of the primary means of affirming the aesthetic vision or taste of a tea master and his followers. Susan Stewart has argued that objects have the capacity to "serve as traces of authentic experience."⁵ The world of tea utensils available in early modern Japan, then, represented a set of choices about aesthetic authenticity. Choosing to collect objects associated with the taste of one tea school or another was not an arbitrary act of consumerism, but a signification of value with complex social, political, and even metaphysical overtones.

The most collected tea luminary was (and continues to be) Sen no Rikyū 千利休 (1522-91). Although he appears to have been one of many well-connected, influential tea masters in the heady cultural climate of the late sixteenth century, the diligent myth-making of his descendents and disciples transformed him into one of the key cultural martyr figures of premodern Japanese history. As competitive struggles began to occur among followers of Rikyū over access to and representation of his legacy, material culture became an important site for the negotiation of meaning and value. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, tea practitioners avidly hunted for objects associated with Rikyū, and in many cases seem to have re-identified objects to construct a Rikyū connection where previously none existed. For example, the mid-seventeenth century descendent of Rikyū, Sen Kōshin Sōsa 千江岑宗左 (1619-72), was an avid chronicler of objects that he encountered both in the tea room and as a connoisseur of tea utensils. According to his tea diaries, Rikyū-related objects were used at the majority of

tea gatherings he attended over a period of thirty years.⁶ Likewise, in one document recording the objects he encountered as a connoisseur, he names forty-two objects as having some sort of Rikyū connection. All were brought to him by Kyoto tea practitioners seeking to validate their collecting practices and to firmly establish their connection to the great tea master of the previous age.⁷ By the late seventeenth century, an age that Japanese historians call the "Rikyū revival" (*Rikyū kaiki* 利休回帰), it is almost impossible to find a tea school lacking Rikyū-related objects in its collection, or a prominent tea gathering minus Rikyū utensils on its roster of objects.

An example of a prominent collector of Rikyū-related objects is Gotō Shōsai 後藤少齋 (d. 1680), the son of the head of the Edo silver mint and a prominent metal worker and Kyoto silver mint official.⁸ He was well known in Kyoto as an avid tea practitioner, a disciple of Rikyū's grandson Sen Sōtan 千宗旦 (1578-1658), and the owner of the famous black Raku tea bowl Ōguro (Figure 1), one of the objects most often associated with Rikyū and his distinctive brand of tea in later centuries.⁹ Shōsai used this bowl for a tea gathering with Kōshin on 1647/11/16. He displayed calligraphy by Rikyū in the alcove with a cylindrical bamboo flower vase; he served tea in Ōguro, matched with a new lacquer tea caddy, an

⁴ "Patronage," *Oxford English Dictionary, Online Edition*, <<http://www.oed.com>> (September 13, 2004).

⁵ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 135.

⁶ Kōshin's diaries are transcribed in Sen Sōsa, ed., *Kōshin Sōsa chasho* (Tokyo: Shufu no Tomosha, 1998).

⁷ For more on Kōshin Sōsa, please see Morgan Pitelka, "Sen Kōshin Sōsa (1613-72): Writing Tea History," in *Japanese Tea Culture: Art, History, and Practice* ed. Morgan Pitelka (New York: Routledge, Curzon, 2003).

⁸ Sugiyama Sakon 杉山左近, "Gotō Shōsai 後藤少齋," in *Kadokawa sadō daijiten* 角川茶道大事典, eds. Hayashiya Tatsusaburō 林屋辰三郎 et al. (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1990), 507.

⁹ *Hōgensai no sho* 逢源齋書, transcribed in Sen Sōsa 千宗左, ed., *Kōshin Sōsa chasho* 江岑宗左茶書 (Tokyo: Shufu no Tomosha, 1998) [hereafter, KSC], pp. 23 and 27.

Amida kettle, and a rough Shigaraki water jar.¹⁰ On 1654/11/28, Shōsai again served tea in Ōguro with calligraphy by Rikyū, and used a tea scoop carved by Rikyū.¹¹ In these and similar acts of acquiring, displaying, and using objects associated with Rikyū, Shōsai sought to align himself with Rikyū's tea practice and sense of aesthetics – in other words, to appropriate Rikyū *suki* or taste in the construction of his own artistic identity as a tea practitioner. Shōsai's adoption of Rikyū as an aesthetic model buttressed the hegemony of the prominent Sen tea practitioners of his day, making it a form of patronage.



Figure 1: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl named “Ōguro 大黒.” Designated Important Cultural Property. Attributed to Chōjirō (active late 16th century). Decorated with black glaze. Private Collection. 8.5 x 11.5 cm.¹²

¹⁰ *Chanoyu mairi sōrō no oboe* 茶湯参候覚, transcribed in KSC, p. 258.

¹¹ *Mi no jun rokugatsu yori chanoyu no oboe* 巳ノ閏六月よゐ茶之湯之覚, transcribed in KSC, p. 303.

¹² Image source: Raku Kichizaemon 楽吉左衛門, ed. *Raku chawan* 楽茶碗, Vol. 4, *Sadōgu no sekai* 茶道具の世界 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 2000), 30-1.

Commissioning Taste, Controlling History

The association between the Sen tea schools and the Raku workshop seems to represent a more conventional patronage relationship, with the Sen tea masters acting as patrons and the Raku potters as producers. This relationship ostensibly dates back to the age of the founders of each lineage: the aforementioned Sen no Rikyū, and Chōjirō 長次郎・長二郎 (dates unknown; active late sixteenth century), the potter credited with founding the Raku tradition. According to the shared Sen and Raku mythohistory, Rikyū stumbled upon Chōjirō, a ceramic tile maker in the employ of the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536-98), and drafted him to create the definitive rustic tea bowl. For the purposes of the present essay, the historicity of this narrative (which I have examined in detail elsewhere¹³) is not of concern. What matters is that the act of patronage itself was a key component in the imagined history of both the Sen tea schools and the Raku workshop. For Sen tea masters and tea practitioners, patronizing the Raku workshop represented a reproduction of Rikyū's ostensible patronage of Chōjirō. Both parties profited at the material and symbolic levels.

Examples of Sen patronage of the Raku workshop abound throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. Documented patronage begins with the grandson of Rikyū, Sen Sōtan, who commissioned ceramics from Nonkō のんこう (1599-1656), about whom we know little other than that he is today considered the third generation of the official Raku lineage. In one letter addressed to Nonkō, Sōtan explains that he recently saw a Chōjirō tea bowl once owned by Rikyū at a tea gathering; he made a sketch of the work and wants Nonkō to reproduce it.¹⁴ Here the circular legitimation of Sen patronage of the Raku workshop is apparent. Sōtan was eager to cement his own connection to his martyred grandfather, but

¹³ Pitelka, *Handmade Culture*.

¹⁴ In the collection of the Raku Museum. See Raku Bijutsukan 楽美術館, *Sandai Dōnyū/Nonkō* 三代道入・ノンコウ (Kyoto: Raku Bijutsukan, 1998), fig. 55, 120.

much of Rikyū's material legacy was scattered. Fortunately, the acceptance of reproductions (*utsushi* 写し) in Japanese tea culture gave Sōtan the opportunity to commission a "new" version of the Chōjirō tea bowl associated with his grandfather. This commission would in turn help Nonkō to affirm his credentials as the descendent of Chōjirō, and reify the patronal relationship with the Sen house. Everybody wins.

Sōtan inculcated the importance of Raku ceramics in his three sons, who then went on to found their own major tea schools. Each was a regular collector, commissioner, and user of Raku ceramics, which set a precedent both for their followers and for subsequent generations of tea masters. Sōtan's son Kōshin Sōsa, for example, commissioned from Nonkō a white tea bowl decorated with the crest of the Tokugawa house, which he then used to serve tea to his employer, Tokugawa Yorinobu 徳川頼宣 (1602-71).¹⁵ With the gradual growth in popularity of tea among urban commoners and the institutionalization of tea practice in the form of the *iemoto* system 家元制度 in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the form and scale of Sen patronage of the Raku workshop shifted from small-scale, personal support, to large-scale support that affected tea practice in the school as a whole.

Of particular interest here is one peculiar form of this patronage: the series. Beginning in the early eighteenth century, Sen tea masters commissioned large groups of tea bowls from Raku potters to mark various kinds of historical and personal anniversaries. An example of this serial patronage and production occurs in 1713, when the head of the Omotesenke school, Sen Sōsa VI, Kakukakusai Gensō 覚々斎原叟 (1678-1730), commissioned 200 black tea bowls from the Raku workshop to mark the fiftieth birthday of its head potter, Raku Sōnyū 楽宗入 (1664-1716).¹⁶ This

was a particularly profitable endeavor for the potter, an adopted son who possessed great technical facility at imitating the attributed-style of Chōjirō and a savvy ability to forge links with the *iemoto*. Not only did Sōnyū receive a major commission from the most influential tea master of the day, but he also had his own position as an influential potter reaffirmed by Kakukakusai's attention to his birth anniversary. Kakukakusai, likewise, took the project quite seriously. In addition to commissioning the ceramics, he directly participated in production by writing a box inscription for each tea bowl, including a name for the work, a statement identifying the potter, and his personal cipher (*kaō* 花押). Writing box inscriptions was a



Figure 2: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl named "Iwakuni 岩クニ." Attributed to Raku Sanyū (1685-1739). One of "Sanyū's 200." Decorated with black glaze. Northern Mitsui family collection. 8 x 11 cm.¹⁷

means of exercising control over the value of tea utensils and additionally may have served as a source of revenue, but the practice of serializing this practice was without precedent. It is likely

¹⁵ See the box inscription for the bowl, which is the collection of Omotesenke. Raku Bijutsukan, *Sandai Dōnyū/Nonkō*, fig. 38, 100.

¹⁶ Raku Kichizaemon (Seinyū) 楽吉左衛門 (惺入), "Rakuyaki 楽焼," in *chadō zenshū* 茶道

全集, eds. Sen Sōshitsu 千宗室 et al., Vol. 14. (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1936), 80.

¹⁷ Image source: Sen Sōsa 千宗左, ed., *Mitsuie denrai Omotesenke no chadōgu* 三井家伝来表千家の茶道具 (Tokyo: Gakken, 1994), fig. 131.

that the tea bowls were distributed to school disciples. Many similar examples are mentioned in documents from the eighteenth century. In 1733, to mark the 50th birthday of Raku Sanyū 楽左入 (1685-1739), Omotesenke *iemoto* Sen Sōsa VII, Joshinsai Tennen 如心齋天然 (1705-1751), commissioned 200 tea bowls (Figure 2) and wrote a box inscription for each piece.¹⁸ Each tea bowl in the series was different, displaying an impressive variety of shapes and styles. Again, in 1789, Joshinsai's successor, Sen Sōsa VIII, Sottakusai 啐啄齋 (1744-1808) commissioned Raku Ryōnyū 楽了入 (1756-1834) to make 200 tea bowls, and wrote the box inscriptions.

A more complexly nuanced example occurred in 1738, when Joshinsai commissioned Raku Chōnyū 楽長入 (1714-70) to make 150 red tea bowls to mark the 150th memorial anniversary of Chōjirō's death. Here the date and the number of commissioned bowls create a parallel set of relationships: the 150 bowls signify the 150th anniversary much as the collaborative, patronal relationship between Joshinsai and Chōnyū signifies the foundational bond between Rikyū and Chōjirō. The series of commissioned bowls acts as a synecdoche, with the bowls standing in for the whole edifice of the Sen and Raku originatory mythohistory. As the literary scholar Philip Fisher has noted in the context of modern art, the series gives the power of sequencing and historicization to the maker, or in this case, the patron.¹⁹ A tea bowl produced as part of a series can only be fully understood in the context of that series. This seems to imply that the work of the Sen tea master and Raku potter must be considered in the context of the histories of their lineages. The artistic production of each is dependent upon constant referral to the past in order to legitimate practices in the present.

¹⁸ See, for example, four tea bowls attributed to Raku Sanyū with box inscriptions by Joshinsai: in Raku Kichizaemon 楽吉左衛門, *Raku chawan* 楽茶碗 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 2000), 82-9.

¹⁹ Philip Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art: Modern American Art in a Culture of Museums* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 97.

A letter to Sanyū from a tea master in the Mushanokōji Senke lineage, Sen Sōshu III, Seiseisai Shimpaku 静々齋真伯 (1693-1745) illustrates a more familiar variant of this kind of patronage.²⁰ In the letter, Shimpaku draws a sketch of a tea bowl and a tea caddy that he wants Sanyū to reproduce, including exact measurements for the finished, fired vessels. He asks for two reproductions of the tea caddy in red, and two reproductions in black, "as before," an indication that this is not the first time he has placed such an order. He also asks for the tea bowl to be on the large side, in red with green markings. Here the taste of an *iemoto* leader, inscribed as a sketch of his own vision of two ideal tea utensils, becomes the model for a professional potter's ceramic production, ostensibly a reenactment of Rikyū's original patronage of Chōjirō.

Crafting an Aesthetic Self

In addition to collecting and commissioning objects, some elite tea practitioners engaged in the creation of original (and unoriginal) objects in certain accessible fields of craft production. Carving tea scoops (*chashaku* 茶杓) and creating flower containers (*hanaire* 花入) from bamboo, for example, became a particularly popular practice among tea practitioners beginning in the late sixteenth century. Making tea scoops and flower containers provided tea practitioners with a rare opportunity to make tangible objects to suit their own tastes and to then circulate these objects within the tea community. Bamboo was a logical medium because it was widely available, relatively easy to work with, and correlated well with the aesthetic principles popular at the time.

²⁰ Sen Sō'oku 千宗屋 and Kizu Sōzen 木津宗詮, "Mushanokōji Senke 武者小路千家," in *Sadō no genryū* 茶道の源流, eds. Sen Sōsa 千宗左 et al., vol. 6 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1983), 88. See also Morgan Pitelka, "Kinsei ni okeru Raku-yaki dentō no kōzō 近世における楽焼伝統の構造," in *Nomura Bijutsukan kiyō* 野村美術館紀要 9 (2000): 15-16.

Ceramics, by contrast, were largely beyond the reach of tea practitioners desiring to make their own utensils. The technical expertise necessary to make high temperature glazed ceramics required extensive training and access to specialized facilities. Using a potters' wheel required considerable experience and a well-equipped workshop. High temperature kilns were quite large and needed to be filled with quantities of ceramics before they could be profitably fired. Instead, late sixteenth and early seventeenth century tea practitioners placed orders for new designs with local merchants who dealt in ceramics. These merchants then commissioned large orders of ceramics from kilns located outside of Kyoto.²¹ Raku ceramics, however, were an exception because they were relatively simple to make. The aspiring Raku potter needed only clay, a metal carving tool, and some basic instruction. Finished pots could be brought to a workshop in Kyoto to be glazed and fired in the indoor kiln.

The most influential amateur maker of Raku ceramics was Hon'ami Kōetsu 本阿弥光悦 (1558-1637), who today is considered one of the most important artists of early modern Japan.²² He was from an elite Kyoto family of artisans who had extensive contact with the military elite through their business as sword polishers and connoisseurs. Kōetsu made ample use of his education, background, and connections in his diverse artistic activities, which included not only a historicist interest in canonical tales and calligraphy, but a decidedly contemporary interest in lacquer design and ceramic dilettantism. Many of Kōetsu's letters contain references to making low temperature, lead-glazed ceramics in collaboration with the Raku workshop, run at the time by a certain Kichizaemon 吉左衛門 (also

Jōkei 常慶; d. 1635?). In one letter, for example, Kōetsu writes: "Please send me enough white and red clay for four tea bowls. Come quickly! Sincerely, Kōetsu, 1/26. To the tea bowl maker Kichiza." ²³ This request shows that Kōetsu hand-carved tea bowls on his own. In another letter, Kōetsu writes: "Please apply glaze to the tea bowl. Kōsa's tea bowl should also be done. Kōetsu. To Kichiza," indicating that he left the difficult work of glazing to the professionals.²⁴



Figure 3: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl named "Otogoze." Attributed to Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558-1637). Decorated with translucent glaze over a red slip. The foot is impacted into the base. Private collection. 9 x 10.8 cm.²⁵

²³ In the collection of the Raku Museum. See also Fischer, *The Arts of Hon'ami Kōetsu*, fig. 100; Osaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan 大阪市立美術館, *Kōetsu no sho* 光悦の書 (Osaka: Osaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan, 1990), fig. 64.

²⁴ Collection of the Raku Museum. Fischer, *The Arts of Hon'ami Kōetsu*, fig. 102. Osaka Shiritsu Bijutsukan, *Kōetsu no sho*, fig. 92. In another letter, Kōetsu simply writes that the tea bowls are finished, implying that someone from Jōkei's workshop should come and pick them up for glazing and firing. Collection of the Kyoto National Museum. Fischer, *The Arts of Hon'ami Kōetsu*, fig. 104.

²⁵ Image source: Suntory Bijutsukan サントリー美術館, *Kōetsu to Sōtatsu* 光悦と宗達 (Tokyo: Suntory Bijutsukan, 2000), fig. 12.

²¹ The excavations of ceramic dealer sites along Sanjō avenue in Kyoto support this hypothesis. See Louise Allison Cort, "Shopping for Pots in Momoyama Japan," in *Japanese Tea Culture: Art, History, and Practice*, ed. Morgan Pitelka (New York: Routledge, Curzon, 2003), for more information.

²² Felice Fischer, ed., *The Arts of Hon'ami Kōetsu, Japanese Renaissance Master* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2000).

In another letter, he demonstrates his impatient desire to see the fruits of his labor: “Are the tea bowls finished? I’m waiting at Kōsa’s place ordering a tea caddy lid. Sincerely, Kōetsu. 6/16. To the tea bowl maker Kichizaemon.”²⁶ Many of these letters demonstrate a degree of friendly intimacy, such as Kōetsu’s comment that a recent visit by Kichizaemon was “most satisfying.”²⁷

Why would Kōetsu, an accomplished sword-connoisseur, calligrapher, lacquer designer, and tea practitioner, go to the trouble to make his own Raku ceramics (Figure 3)? One motivation, perhaps, was to produce objects to his own taste for his own use, though this is not well documented; at the very least his prodigious artistic activities indicate his passion for creative experimentation. Another possible motivation was the potential value of hand-made ceramics in gift exchanges. His letters show that he did make ceramics at the request of acquaintances and accordingly gave away pieces as gifts. In a letter to a certain Katō Akinari, for example, he writes that the commissioned bowl is almost finished, and that another of his bowls would soon be sent to Edo.²⁸ In another example, a letter to a senior retainer of the Maeda daimyo, Kōetsu writes that he would send the warrior leader a ceramic water container he had made.²⁹ The objects were surely valued by the recipients for their quirky aesthetic qualities and as mementos of an influential figure in Kyoto culture. Perhaps more importantly, the act of using hand-made ceramics in gift exchanges established an important precedent in the tea community.

²⁶ Hayashiya Seizō 林屋晴三, *Kōetsu / Tamamizu / Ōhi* 光悦 · 玉水 · 大樋, *Nihon tōji zenshū* 日本陶磁全集, vol. 22 (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1977), 53.

²⁷ Private Collection. See Akanuma Taka 赤沼多佳, *Kōetsu, Dōnyū* 光悦 · 道入, Vol. 18, *Tōji Taikei* 陶磁大系 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977), 76-77 and fig. 9.

²⁸ See Fischer, *The Arts of Hon’ami Kōetsu*, fig. 90.

²⁹ See Kumakura, “Kōetsu and the History of Tea Culture,” Fischer, *The Arts of Hon’ami Kōetsu*, 142.

Above and beyond their formal aesthetic properties, ceramics made by amateur potters such as Kōetsu became precious because they amalgamated two different notions of value in tea culture. Tea practitioners judged tea utensils both in terms of when and where they were made and in terms of the pedigree of ownership. A tea caddy might be valuable both because it was made in the Seto kilns and because it was once owned by the tea master Kobori Enshū 小堀遠州 (1579-1647). Kōetsu’s hand-made ceramics were both made and owned by the same person, at least until they were passed on to another owner. This conflation of maker and owner lent a singular layer of personality to a tea utensil. It also invested the object with the aura of the person, so that tea ceramics made by famous tea practitioners took on totemic significance as embodiments of taste among later generations. Kōetsu’s experiments with clay also represent a ceramic patron reinventing himself as a ceramic producer, a switch that was only possible through collaboration with a professional studio such as the Raku workshop.

Practice as Patronage

The leaders of the large *iemoto* tea schools in early modern Japan were enthusiastic patrons of the Raku workshop. They also followed the lead of Hon’ami Kōetsu by engaging in their own amateur production of Raku ceramics beginning in the late seventeenth century. Kakukakusai of Omotesenke was one of the first to realize the social and symbolic value of hand-making his own Raku ceramics, and he utilized his ceramics as gifts and rewards for his disciples. He also created ceramics to commemorate important anniversaries in the Sen tea tradition, which served to anchor the history of the Sen lineage in new objects. This precedent was followed by numerous succeeding *iemoto*, as we will see below.

One of the best known tea bowls attributed to Kakukakusai is named Dontarō (Figure 4).³⁰ This tea bowl consists of a roughly carved body

³⁰ The name of the bowl comes from a Kyōgen play of the same title.

with a rounded hip and impacted foot. The piece is covered with the standard thick, glossy black glaze of the Raku workshop. The large chip in the side appears to be a result of the firing or post-firing cooling process. This flaw has become a point of great attraction for tea practitioners. Though we have no record of the details of the production of this piece, presumably it was carved by Kakukakusai and glazed and fired by one of the Raku workshop potters. Such flaws are not found among extant ceramics attributed to Raku potters, which implies that professional potters either constructed their pieces so as to avoid trapped pockets of air or water, or that flawed pieces were discarded. It seems safe to assume that the flaw in “Dontarō” appealed to Kakukakusai, and that he insisted that it not be discarded.



Figure 4: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl named "Dontarō." Attributed to Sen Sōsa VI, Kakukakusai (1678-1730), 1721. Decorated with a black glaze. A large chip is missing from the side of one wall, perhaps a firing effect. 9.4 x 12.1 cm. Private collection.³¹

The manner in which Kakukakusai dispensed with this bowl demonstrates his particular interest in Raku ceramics as gifts. The year 1716 marked the 50th anniversary of the death of the founder

³¹ Image source: Aichiken Tōji Shiryōkan 愛知県陶磁資料館, *Chanoyu to yakimono: Owari, Mikawa no chajintachi o megutte* 茶の湯とやきもの：尾張・三河の茶人たちをめぐって (Seto: Aichiken Tōji Shiryōkan, 1999), fig. 40.

of Omotesenke, Kōshin Sōsa, and the school sponsored several events to commemorate the occasion. On 10/27, for example, Kakukakusai held a tea gathering for his highest disciples with the explicit intent of honoring Kōshin.³² Kakukakusai selected objects associated with Kōshin from the family collection, such as a calligraphy scroll bearing the characters of Kōshin's name written by his father Sōtan. Kakukakusai also chose several of his own hand-made tea utensils. One of these was the tea bowl Dontarō, which was so admired by those present that lots were drawn to determine who would receive the bowl as a gift. The winner was a townsman from Nagoya, Owari (present-day Aichi prefecture) named Takada Saburōzaemon 高田三郎左衛門 (1683-1763). After receiving this gift from Kakukakusai, Saburōzaemon took the tea name Tarōan 太郎庵 from the last two characters of the tea bowl name of Dontarō 鈍太郎, and constructed a Tarōan tea room at his residence.³³ The taste of the *iemoto*, in this case, became programmatic in the construction of his disciple's identity as a tea practitioner, on the one hand, and in the physical construction of the site of his performance as a tea disciple on the other.

The *iemoto* engaged in this type of amateur Raku production on many occasions, and the spread of his tea bowls represents the dissemination of a kind of aesthetic curriculum embedded in objects.³⁴ Dontarō was only one of 50 bowls

³² This event is recorded in an unpublished tea diary in the Omotesenke collection. A partial transcription can be found in Senke Dōmonkai 千家同門会, *Kakukakusai 覚々齋* (Kyoto: Omotesenke, 1978), 14-5.

³³ Aichiken Tōji Shiryōkan 愛知県陶磁資料館, *Chanoyu to yakimono: Owari, Mikawa no chajintachi o megutte* 茶の湯とやきもの：尾張・三河の茶人たちをめぐって (Seto: Aichiken Tōji Shiryōkan, 1999), 50-1.

³⁴ This interpretation is based on the comments of Kumakura Isao 熊倉功夫 in “Iemoto seika ni okeru geidō no tokushitsu: 18 seiki ni okeru chanoyu o chūshin ni 家元制下における芸道の特質 - 十八世紀における茶の

Kakukakusai carved to commemorate Kōshin's 50th memorial in 1716. Twelve years later in 1728, Kakukakusai is said to have carved another 50 tea bowls to mark his own 50th birthday, and had them fired by Sanyū.³⁵ Joshinsai followed this example in the 1730s when he carved a small series of seven tea bowls, and again in 1746 when he carved a larger series of 50 tea bowls that were fired by Sanyū's successor Chōnyū. Both men also carved single bowls with some regularity. Through this particular form of participatory and collaborative patronage, Raku ceramic production became an integral part of tea practice for the heads of the Sen tea schools. Because the pedagogy of the tea schools was based on the taste of the *iemoto*, Raku collecting and production became model practices for school members as well, creating an unprecedented demand for Raku with the spread of the *iemoto* system.

Patronage and Appropriation

The publishing boom of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries resulted in the widespread dissemination of information about tea and ceramics (among many other "arts of play") outside of traditional centers of practice such as Kyoto and Edo.³⁶ With the publication and diffusion of books such as *Complete Writings on the Way of Tea* [*Chadō zensho* 茶道全書] in 1693, *Diverse Domestic and Foreign Utensils* [*Wakan shodōgu* 和漢諸道具] in 1694, and *A Collection of Tea Commentary* [*Chanoyū hyōrin taisei* 茶之湯評林大成] in 1697, information about tea history and practice was widely available for the first time in Japanese history. As a result, the *suki* or taste of tea luminaries such as Rikyū and Kōetsu became well known among a broad and diverse population of tea practitioners.

湯を中心に—," *Geinōshi kenkyū* 芸能史研究 136 (1998): 1-14.

³⁵ Sasaki Sanmi 佐々木三味, *Raku jawan* 楽茶碗 (Kyoto: Kawara Shoten, 1985 [1946]), 145-7.

³⁶ See Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

Technical manuals of every sort, too, spread across the archipelago, including a remarkably specialized text on Raku ceramic production: a two volume, blockprinted book known as *Collected Raku Ceramic Secrets* [*Rakuyaki hinō* 楽焼秘囊]. Numerous editions of this book survive in libraries across Japan as well as at least two editions in Europe.³⁷ The original book, printed in 1736 by Kashiwaraya Sahei 柏原屋佐兵衛 of Osaka, and subsequent editions were published for more than 150 years. According to the printed colophon (Figure 5), the author was "Nakata Senryūshi of Naniwa [Osaka] 浪速田中潜龍子." Because this name does not appear in other extant eighteenth century sources, it may have been a pen name, implying that the publication of Raku technical secrets was controversial enough to merit some caution. After the first successful run, the blocks were sold to Kawachiya Kihei 河内屋 of Osaka Shorin 大阪書林, a well known publisher, who reprinted the book using the original blocks.³⁸ Eventually, at an unknown date, the

³⁷ One copy is in the collection of the British Library, London. The second is in the collection of the Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, 21.A.1. The latter is marked with the ownership stamp "Watanabe of Shimotsuke province" (Tochigi prefecture). I am grateful to Peter Kornicki of Cambridge University for this reference.

³⁸ This second printing is born out by the existence of several editions that are identical to those of the first run, but that have small breaks in the border lines and text. See the editions in the collections of the Kokuritsu Komonjokan Naikaku Bunkō and the Kanazawa City Library. On the Kawachiya, see Sakai Hajime 酒井一, "Osaka Shorin Kawachiya no koto nado 大坂書林河内屋のことなど," *Itan shigaku* 伊丹史学 2 (1975): 7-11; Tajihiko Ikuo 多治比郁夫, "Shoshi shidai 書肆四題," *Konton* 混沌 5 (September, 1978): 42-6; Hamada Keisuke 濱田啓介, "Kinsei kōki ni okeru Osaka Shorin no sūkō: shorin Kawachi o megutte 近世後期に於ける大坂書林の趨向 — 書林河内をめぐって —," *Kinsei bungei* 近世文芸 3 (May, 1956): 15-28.

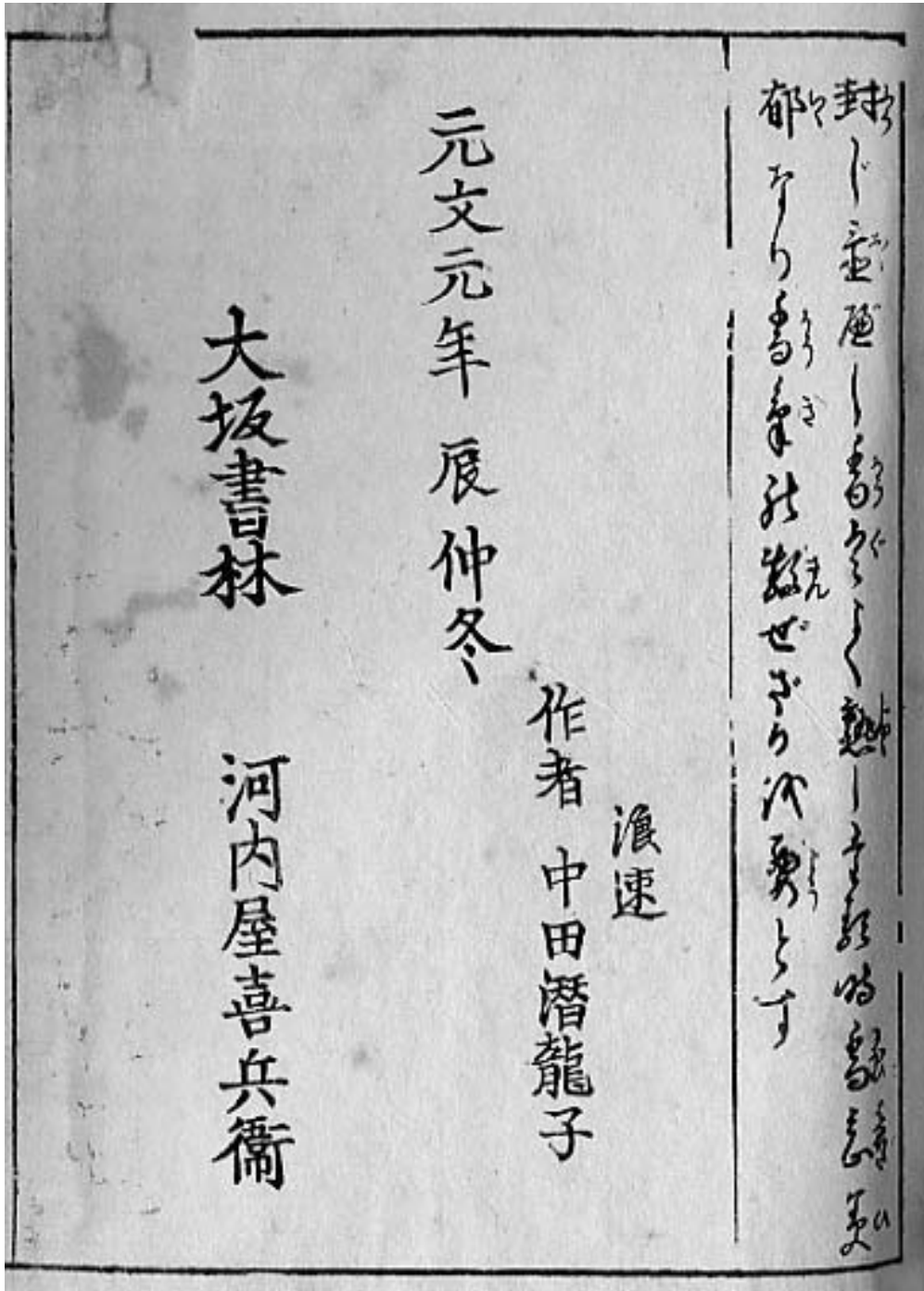


Figure 5: Colophon, *Collected Raku Ceramic Secrets* [*Rakuyaki hinō*]. “Authored by Tanaka Senryūshi of Naniwa, Genbun 1 (1736) Osaka Shorin, Kawachiya Kihei.” The breaks in the border line indicate that this is a later edition. (The largest break at the top left of the page is a tear in the paper.) Private collection.

were sold to other publishers, who issued further reprints with altered colophons. In the Meiji period, two Tokyo publishers issued yet another reprint, indicating enough demand for the book in the late nineteenth century to warrant using the now significantly worn original blocks.³⁹

Though printed in multiple editions, *Collected Raku Ceramic Secrets* stayed in the same form for its entire history: two bound volumes, each with its own title slip. The calligraphy of the title slip consisted of clear, cursive characters on volume one, and a decorative seal script on volume two. The text is divided into several sections. First is a prologue dated 1733 that explains that the person listed as the author (*sakusha* 作者) in the colophon, Nakata Senryūshi, compiled (*henzuru* 編ずる) the book, a process that is described as “fishing for the secrets of the way of pottery” (*tōdō no hiyō o tsuri* 陶道の秘用を釣).⁴⁰ A detailed table of contents lists thirty-eight subheadings, including “Constructing and firing the kiln,” “Making red Raku,” “Making the clay,” and “Making black Raku glaze.”⁴¹ The main text is speckled with drawings of tools and kiln components. The second volume includes a discussion of tea bowl shapes supplemented by several diagrams. The next section is a genealogy of Raku potters, written in classical Chinese, that begins with Chōjirō and ends with Sanyū’s son, Kichizaemon (1714-70; Chōnyū).⁴²

³⁹ Collection of the Tokyo University Library. Printed in 1899 by Bun’eidō and Shōeidō. The text appears to match that of the first edition, indicating that the Meiji editions were printed with the original blocks rather than newly carved blocks. The colophon is printed with movable type.

⁴⁰ The text reads “mizunoto 18 癸十八,” [calendar sign 10, year 18] which can only be Kyōhō 18, or 1733.

⁴¹ For a complete transcription of the table of contents, see Pitelka, “Kinsei ni okeru Rakuyaki dentō,” 23-4.

⁴² Certain parts of the genealogy are factually dubious, such as the claim that Chōjirō, a Korean, was guided on the path of clay by Rikyū, yet died in 1625, more than 33 years after Rikyū. Other



Figure 6: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl. Isshi ware, early 19th c. Decorated with translucent glaze over red slip.⁴³

The publication of *Collected Raku Ceramic Secrets* indicates the continuous demand in early modern Japan for a technical manual on Raku ceramic production. Publishers such as Kawachiya Kihei would not have invested in publication and republication if there was not significant profit to be made. The use of *furigana* to indicate the pronunciation of difficult Chinese characters, though relatively standard in eighteenth-century publications, speaks to the diverse potential readership of *Collected Raku Ceramic Secrets*, including not only elite warriors, professional tea practitioners, and wealthy merchants, but potters and other artisans as well. When we consider the rapid expansion of the tea schools throughout the archipelago, particularly the primacy of Raku ceramics as model tea utensils in the Sen schools, we can assume that the demand for Raku ceramics had expanded well beyond Kyoto and its environs by the early eighteenth century.⁴⁴ And in the

details are accurate, however, such as the notes that Sōnyū and Sanyū were both adopted.

⁴³ Image source: Mitsuoka Tadanari 満岡忠成 et al., eds. *Kinki I 近畿 I*, vol. 6, *Nihon yakimono shūsei* 日本やきもの集成, 12 vols. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980-2), fig. 313.

⁴⁴ The Kaitokudō merchant academy in Osaka had a total of six ceramic-related books in the holdings of its library, one of which was *Collected Raku Ceramic Secrets*. It was also the oldest book on Japanese ceramics of the group,

heterogeneous ceramic production of provincial and urban Raku kilns such as the Akahada kiln in Nara, the Fūya kiln in the Matsumoto domain, the Isshi kiln in Ueno city (Figure 6), the Sasashima kiln in Nagoya, the Takahara kiln in Osaka, and more than thirty others, we see the appropriation of the practices of collecting, commissioning, and creating Raku ceramics by tea practitioners not privileged enough to enjoy direct contact with the Raku kiln and the Sen tea masters in Kyoto.

The collaborative patronal relationship between the Sen tea schools and the Raku workshop came to function in the seventeenth century as an iconic marker of Rikyū's taste. It seems logical to assume that the singular authenticity of this relationship was key to the authority of both the Sen *iemoto* and the Raku workshop. However, the Raku and Sen leaders seem neither to have responded with hostility to the spread of a technical manual explaining the "secrets" of Raku ceramic production nor to the resulting emergence of amateur and professional Raku kilns across the archipelago. Rather, the appropriation of the Sen-Raku patronal relationship was not understood as an attempt to usurp *iemoto* authority but rather a reverential effort to reproduce Rikyū's taste. Because Rikyū's imagined aesthetic vision determined not only the form but the social relations of Raku manufacture, provincial and amateur reproduction of Raku ceramics did not diminish the "aura" of the work of art, but increased it by reifying its connection to the source of legitimacy, Rikyū. Not until the irruption of modernity and the importation of Hegelian notions of cultural value would the early modern culture of reproductions and the transferability of the Raku-Sen patronal relationship be obfuscated behind nationalistic narratives of individualistic genius and Momoyama avant gardism.

which included two Chinese texts, and three Meiji period reprints of *bakumatsu* ceramic connoisseurship guides. Osaka Daigaku Bungakubu 大阪大学文学部, *Kaitokudō bunkō tosho mokuroku* 懐徳堂文庫図書目録 (Osaka: Osaka Daigaku Bungakubu, 1976), 49.

Conclusion: Nebulous Boundaries

These and other examples of collaborative patronage point to the flexibility built into seemingly rigid social and cultural structures in early modern Japan. In general, tea practices were carefully positioned in the normative context of school orthodoxy. However, room was available for innovation within highly planned and limited settings such as tea gatherings. Reproducing the taste (*suki*) of apotheosized cultural luminaries such as Rikyū enabled tea practitioners to situate their aesthetic identities in a lineage stretching back to the sixteenth century. (Recent ethnographies of tea practice in Japan, such as James-Henry Holland's 2003 essay and Etsuko Kato's 2004 monograph, indicate that opportunities to appropriate *iemoto* norms continue to sustain and entertain tea practitioners.)⁴⁵ Patronage and collaboration were two ways for actors in a conservative system that resisted open innovation to create new works under the guise of historical precedent.

Amateur involvement in ceramic production was one of the defining characteristics of both Raku ceramic and Sen tea culture from at least the seventeenth century. The innovative ceramics of Hon'ami Kōetsu opened the door to radical ceramic experimentation not only by potters operating outside of the tea school system, but by the leaders of the tea schools themselves. The sculptural ceramics of tea masters such as Ryōryōsai (Figure 7) and potters such as Ryōnyū (Figure 8), for example, definitively reveal the danger of assuming that the discourse of the reproduction of tradition in premodern Japanese culture actually equated to stagnation or sedimentation in cultural production. The nebulous boundaries between patron and client, or in this

⁴⁵ James-Henry Holland, "Tea Records: *Kaiki* and *Oboegaki* in Contemporary Japanese Tea Practice," *Japanese Tea Culture: Art, History, and Practice*, ed. Morgan Pitelka (New York: Routledge, Curzon, 2003); and Etsuko Kato, *The Tea Ceremony and Women's Empowerment in Modern Japan: Bodies Representing the Past* (New York: Routledge, Curzon, 2004).

case between potter and customer, allowed tea practitioners to transgress rigid institutional barriers in the process of constructing distinct identities as men of taste.



Figure 7: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl named “Nagahakama,” attributed to Sen Sōsa IX, Ryōryōsai 了々齋 (1775-1825). Decorated with black glaze.⁴⁶



Figure 8: Low temperature, lead-glazed tea bowl. Attributed to Raku Ryōnyū (1756-1834). Decorated with translucent glaze over red slip, and deep diagonally carved grooves. Raku Museum. 7.8 x 9.5 cm.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Image source: Kyoto Bunka Hakubutsukan 京都文化博物館, eds., *Chanoyu: Nihon no kokoro* 茶の湯 — 日本の心 (Kyoto: Kyoto Shimbunsha, 1999), fig. 40.

⁴⁷ Image source: Raku Kichizaemon, *Raku chawan*, 94.