



THE EVOLUTION OF THE JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY AFTER SEN NO RIKYŪ AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IEMOTO SYSTEM

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Annotation: *This paper explores the development of the Japanese tea ceremony (chanoyu) after the death of Sen no Rikyū, focusing on the contributions of key figures such as Furuta Oribe and Kobori Enshū, as well as the institutionalization of the practice through the iemoto system. It investigates how the wabi-cha tradition transformed in response to changing political and social conditions during the Edo period, and how the tea ceremony evolved from a personal spiritual discipline into a formalized cultural heritage passed down through hereditary lines. The study demonstrates that, despite criticisms of the iemoto system's rigidity, its role in preserving the aesthetics and philosophies of chanoyu has been crucial to the tradition's survival.*

Keywords: *Japanese tea ceremony, Sen no Rikyū, Furuta Oribe, Kobori Enshū, Iemoto system, wabi-cha, Edo period, Japanese aesthetics, cultural heritage*

Essay Summary

Sen no Rikyū laid the foundation of wabi-cha, a form of tea ceremony emphasizing simplicity and spiritual depth. After his death, Furuta Oribe, a samurai and tea master, introduced a more expressive and bold style, while Kobori Enshū refined the aesthetic by integrating aristocratic tastes and courtly elegance. Their efforts helped broaden tea culture beyond religious and meditative practice into the political and cultural life of the Edo period.

The formalization of the iemoto system, especially within the three schools (Omotesenke, Urasenke, and Mushakōji-senke), created a structured method for transmitting tea knowledge and practice. While it ensured continuity and standardization, it also attracted criticism for its exclusivity and hereditary nature.

Nonetheless, the tea ceremony continued to flourish under this system and has maintained its cultural significance in modern Japan. The evolution of chanoyu reflects broader trends in Japanese society regarding tradition, hierarchy, and the transmission of intangible cultural assets.

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