

Murata Shuko's *Wabi-cha* was taken up by the increasingly prosperous merchant tea men of Sakai and Kyoto, Takeno Joo (1502–1555) Tsuda Sotatsu, Kitamuki Dochinmany, Rikyu's first tea teacher, brought to full manifestation by Sen no Rikyu (1522–1591). Wabi, proposed poverty surpassing riches, in accordance with Zen, is a creative self-expressive structure which gave cultural form to a Zen way of life. The Japanese verb, *konomu*; to evaluate, to choose, in accordance with a focused Zen way of an integrated awareness in everyday life, philosophy, ethics, art, manners, clothing, food, architecture, nature, and the changing seasons. The Way of Tea was neither merely an art form nor a culture, but an integrated way of life with Zen as its basis. Zen/Chan in Chinese is the transliteration of the Sanskrit, Pali, word for Dhyana, to pay attention, meditation. In Rikyu's words, "Tea in a humble room consists first and foremost in practising and attaining the truth of Buddha", to awaken the true nature of the mind. These Chanoyu men of tea made use of and held in high appreciation of the subtle qualities of objects used in the Way of Tea from China, Korea, and South Asia along with their local craft productions. Many everyday objects, not valued or even noticed in the hands and lands of their makers, were elevated to treasured tea utensils.

The Korai (Korean) rice bowls produced between the end of the Koryo dynasty (918–1392) and the beginning of the Yi (1392–1910) were highly appreciated for their fully manifest wabi, quiet taste. These are the qualities tea men of Sakai from Murata Shuko, Tsuda Sotatsu, Taken Joo, and Rikyu's first tea teacher, Kitamuki Dochin, expounded. They all record utilizing Korai bowls in their Wabi-cha. By the late 1550s, the merchant's Wabi tea had become the most popular Way of Tea. The feudal lords, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and others were engaging these tea men of Sakai to build their own collections. These tea merchants created a prosperous trade with old kilns around Pusan in southern Korea, even commissioning them to make new chawan to their design and tastes. Korean potters established new chawan kilns around Pusan ports to supply the Japanese teamen. Numerous Korean potters were brought to Japan, not always under their own choosing, to set up kilns and train Japanese apprentices. Rikyu is known to have possessed a number of Kori chawan, one named *Mishima Oke*, is believed to have been the model for the bowls he commissioned from Chojiro, the first in the Raku lineage. Chokiro had been working as a roof tile maker in the Namban Imogashira kiln in Kyoto.

It was a natural, inartificial, quiet feeling with rustic charm that Chojiro applied to Kori style chawan. Rikyu prescribed these bowl as perfect for use in the small tea room for his Wabi tea.

Many of Rikyu's students went on to commission numerous Korean and local Japanese potters to make bowls to their own particular designs and preferences. Yamonoue Soji collected, commissioned and placed in prominent collections Kori chawan along with bowls inspired by Korean styles commissioned from local Japanese potteries of Arita, Seto, Mino, Imayaki, Bizen, Shigaraki, and Kochi. Furuta Oribe (1544–1615) Rikyu's successor along with

Rikyu's sons Sotan, designed and commissioned a wide range of *preferred* styles. Kobori Enshu developed kirei-sabi; an elegant rusticity chanoyu aesthetic. It was these Zen laymen of tea who, working closely with Korean and local Japanese potters, along with metalsmiths, lacquer makers, bamboo and wood carvers, garden designers, architects and builders manifested a dynamic expression of Zen-inspired Wabi culture that was to become the mainstay of Japanese cultural expression throughout the coming centuries that carries on until the present day.

Sung dynasty celadon and temmoku from China have been greatly admired in chanoyu since the Kamakura period, but did not strike the responsive chords in Wabi-cha to be called *naturalized* chawan. The Sung dynasty ceramics, with in their perfected beauty, in whatever surroundings they are placed, continue to be judged on their own as the culmination of Chinese ceramics. In the setting of Wabi-cha, their polished and lofty style holds a beauty so universal and so immediately apparent that it seems to demand that the beholder maintain a respectful distance. This is in sharp contrast to the way in which the Korean bowls have been brought into the life of wabi-cha, to dwell within its rustic sense of beauty. It was the Sakai and Kyoto men of tea who discovered and elevated these daily wares into a refined art form that was capable of transmitting manifestations and awareness of Zen into the Way of Tea. Chawan, chaire; tea containers and chasen; tea scoops are perhaps the most highly successful symbols of this aesthetic of Zen of wabi, which is perhaps why they are the most appreciated, examined and discussed objects during chanoyu gatherings. Chawan while being perfected vessels for whisking and savouring powdered green tea, manage to convey a state of mind that is in harmony with one's natural surroundings.

CHAWAN 茶碗

Curated by Bryan Mulvihill & Lam Wong
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The Tea Bowl is the Lotus Flower

By Lam Wong, 2022

In the Buddhist tradition, there is a legend of how during a sermon Buddha transmitted the mysterious dharma. Keeping silent, Buddha simply raised a single stem of a lotus flower and smiled. While all the monks were puzzled by his gesture, Mahākāśyapa 摩訶迦葉, one of the Buddha's senior disciples, smiled and understood Buddha's intention and wisdom perfectly. Without words, all in silence — this has come to be known as "heart-to-heart transmission."

Along with his or her robes, a bowl is the most important of a monk's possessions. When a master has chosen a successor, he or she would pass on these two items as proof of lineage. One of mankind's earliest hand-crafted containers, a tea bowl is made of stone or clay. With care it can withstand the rigours of harsh weather and last for centuries. Just like the human spirit, a bowl withstands all the complexities of life but expresses itself in a quiet way: simple yet conveying significant meaning.

Unaffected by time and discursive thoughts, a chawan 茶碗 (tea bowl) plays the role of a silent messenger in the Zen-inspired ritualistic tea ceremony, whether in Chinese tea sage Lu Yu's 陸羽 (773-804) wilderness tea hermitage or inside Japanese Chanoyu 茶の湯 grandmaster Sen no Rikyū's 千利休 (1522-1591) asymmetrical tea room. The chawan quietly holds the sacred message of the tea maker's intention. The bowl carries all the essence of life and the tea itself as it's passed from tea maker to drinker. In virtually a religious manner, the beauty of this process is unvoiced but understood, like Buddha's raising a single lotus flower.

During the late southern Song Dynasty 宋朝 (1127-1279), tea from the Wuyi Mountain 武夷山 area in Southern China became popular among the elite and court members in the Chinese capital, Hangzhou. A new culture of stoneware tea bowls using rich dark glazes developed in the small town of Jianyang 建陽, near Wuyishan. The old Jian ware 建盞 kiln sites 建窯 and ruins showcase the history of the area's chawan craftsmanship. Mainly used in tea ceremonies, Tenmoku 天目, meaning heavenly eye, was one type of stoneware created in Jian kilns during the Song Dynasty. These dark oil-spotted glazed bowls are arguably the most highly prized chawan in the world, having achieved prominent status among tea lovers. One good example in this exhibition's collection is the Tenmoku chawan with hare's fur glaze in mottled black. When looking inside the tea bowl, one feels as if embraced by a black hole void of all form, falling back to the very beginning of our mysterious universe.

Every tea bowl has its own personality embedded within its history and holds a special secret or spirit carried down through the ages from its original owner. Even after its owner has long passed, like Buddha's relics after his Pali Nirvana 涅槃, each chawan embodies a story. The Kizaemon-Ido 喜佐衛門 tea bowl (16th Century), a Korean Ido 井戸 (Water Well) type glazed, everyday tea bowl is an example of such a rare object. This chawan was made during the Keicho era 慶長 in Japan with the most ordinary material, backyard clay and casual ash glaze. A wealthy merchant named Takeda Kizaemon from Osaka was its first owner. When Kizaemon lost his fortune, he was forced to sell all of his possessions, but he refused to part with this tea bowl. However, the bowl was believed to possess an evil spirit that cursed Kizaemon and all of the bowl's successive



"Kizaemon" (Choson dynasty, 16th century), an O-Ido tea bowl designated as a national treasure. | Kohonan, Daitokuji, Kyoto, Japan



Tenmoku chawan with hare's fur glaze in mottled black



Photo by Lam Wong

owners. Each successive owner contracted boils, a troubling skin disease. This Korean ldo tea-bowl was eventually housed at Daitoku-ji 大徳寺 in Kyoto, a temple associated with Japan’s most influential tea master, Senno Rikyū, and the great artist Kobori Enshū 小堀遠州 . Now the Kisaemon-ldo has become likely the single most valuable chawan in the world and a designated National Treasure of Japan.

Yanagi Sōetsu 柳 宗悦 (1889–1961) explained in his book The Unknown Craftsman, translated by the prominent British potter Bernard Leach:

All beautiful tea-bowls are those obedient to nature. Natural things are healthy things. There are many kinds of art, but none is better than this. Nature produces still more startling results than artifice. The most detailed human knowledge is puerile before the wisdom of nature. Why should beauty emerge from the world of the ordinary? The answer is because that world is natural. In Zen there is a saying that at the far end of the road lies effortless peace. What more can be desired? So, too, peaceful beauty. The beauty of the Kizaemon Ido bowl is that of strifeless peace, and it is fitting that it should rest in that chapel, the Koho-an 孤蓬庵, for in that quiet place it offers its silent answer to the seeker.

Fine chawan often communicate and express the Wabi-Sabi 侘寂 philosophy, an aesthetic that values the beauty of life’s imperfection and impermanence. This concept is epitomized in the art of Kintsugi 金継ぎ , an ancient Japanese technique of mending broken ceramic. Kintsugi is a metaphor for acceptance, self-discovery and healing. It sees suffering or the brokenness of traumatic events as part of life. Kintsugi teaches us to be patient and calm, and to remain positive. It helps us learn from our mistakes and appreciate the flaws of life, allowing healing to transform something broken into something more beautiful over time. Here in this exhibition a broken chawan with zigzag golden lines holds this sacred message of embracing our flaws and imperfections. There is no Nirvana without Samsara, no liberation without suffering.

After water, tea is the most popular drink in the world. The art of tea is a vital and meaningful practice. Sharing tea brings harmony and peace to people from different backgrounds. Though apparently simple, preparing and serving tea requires lifelong

CHAWAN Historical Developments

by Bryan Mulvihill, 2022

As the habit of *taking tea* developed over the millennium, so did the necessary utensils for the processing and preparing of this rapidly popular social beverage. As the old Chinese idiom goes, “It is necessary to have effective tools to do good work.” This is true for daily labour as well as creative activities. With the evolutions of *tea culture*, the taking of tea developed as a spiritual and artistic practice. The utensils used for partaking of tea are not just convenient to use but also reflect the aesthetic and symbolic mindsets of those coming together to engage through the arts of tea. The Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 CE) connoisseur of all things tea, Lu Yu, in his 760 CE, *Cha-ching; Book of Tea*, designated 24 vessels and related objects necessary for the art of tea. It may be hard to understand that so many complicated implements were required to prepare and drink tea, however, in the early days it was a from a home-grown tea bush to tea bowl procedure. Starting with selecting the choicest young tea leaves just before dawn. The leaves need further grading, cleaning, fermenting, drying, and storing for optimal times to bring out the flavours and medicinal properties, before grinding them into tea powders. They are then prepared with high-quality waters brought to the perfect temperatures for each style of tea to bring out there most subtle qualities.

During the Tang Dynasty, brewing methods evolved from boiling shaved off powder from dried tea bricks along with a pinch of salt, at times even with onion, dried fruit peels, or flower petals. A version of this method still survives along the Western tea trade routes

learning of the tradition and its various forms, and a deeper knowledge of how tea itself comes into being. The art of tea is deeply rooted in and has long been associated with the Eastern philosophies of Taoism, Buddhism and Zen. Tea art cultivates positivity and improves life in many ways. Each bowl of tea is a treasure, and no single tea encounter can be repeated. As the ancient Zen saying puts it: One Time, One Meeting 一期一會 .

Tea bowls are made with many natural elements – earth, stone, clay, glaze, ash, wood, fire, and kiln – brought together through the craftsmanship of a chawan maker. From this perspective, a chawan embraces the whole of nature. When we hold a chawan in our palms, we hold the spirit of nature, a force and source of our very own being. A rustic bowl with myriad colours, textures and expressions is derived from a long history of experiments and techniques of firing and glazing. Whether in the tradition of Tenmoku 天目 , Raku 楽 , Hagi 萩 , Karatsu 唐津 or its two dozen forms of design, each creation pays tribute to the forbearers of master chawan makers in the long evolution of this art form. Each chawan embodies a deep respect for its materials and, most importantly, for nature, as tea and tea bowl are equally wondrous creations. Nature, our best teacher, is the true master. The chawan, in all its simple understated form, carries this message, just like the single lotus flower in Buddha’s hand.

Footnotes:
- Tenmoku (天目) is a type of Japanese pottery and porcelain that originates in imitating Chinese stoneware Jian ware (建盞) of the southern Song dynasty (1127–1279).
- Tenmoku chawan with hare’s fur glaze in mottled black, Jian ware, from Jianyang in Song China.
- Chawan with oil spot glaze, Jian ware.



Teabowls in the exhibition



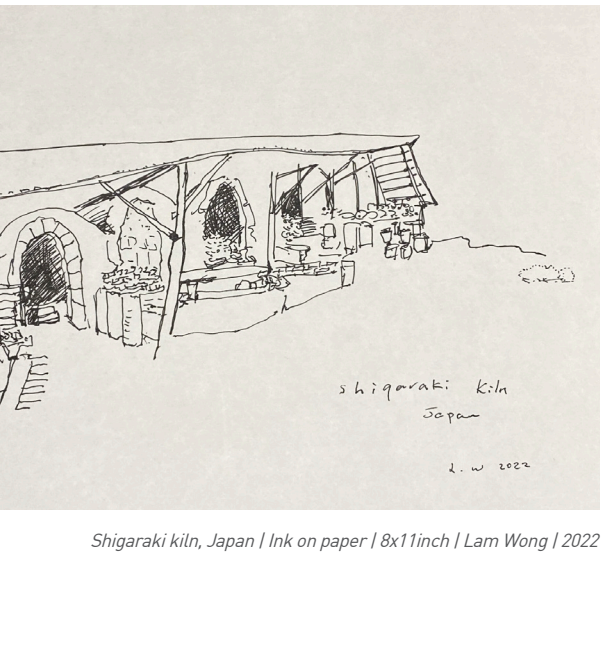
Shigaraki kiln, Japan | Ink on paper | 8x11inch | Lam Wong | 2022

through Tibet and Mongolia where butter is also added to support health in high altitude regions.

In later Tang dynasty, a *dripping* method became popular and spread wildly during both Northern and Southern Sung dynasties, especially in the Buddhist, Taoist, hermitages and monasteries. The finest early spring green– two leaves and a bud– are dried, stored in sealed jars for six months then ground in stone mortars to a fine powder and whisked into a frothy foam directly in tea bowls with a bamboo whisk. Monks and nuns carried small dark brown-black Temmoku bowls in their robe pouches. During breaks in long meditation sessions, a tea caddy of finely powdered tea, matcha, was passed along the rows of meditators, with a thin bamboo tea scoop; chashaku. Each adept would take two heaping scoops of tea powder, considered the correct medicinal douse for one bowl of tea. A ceramic hot water ewer with a bamboo whisk, or chasen, attached follows the tea caddy. Each adept would add a small quantity of water and whisk their own tea before passing the water jug down the line. Whisked tea quickly became popular in court circles and the proliferation of public teahouses during Sung dynasties. Fine celadon and porcelain tea utensils were replacing the small temmoku bowls along with the spreading popularity leaf green and oolong style teas brewed in pots.

This style of whisked powdered tea was brought by Buddhist adepts to Korea and Japan along with high regard for temmoku tea bowls. There are records of Emperor Shomu from 729 CE, holding *Gyocha* readings of Buddhist sutras in the Palace where tea was served. However it was not until the Kamakura Period (1185–1333), after Zen Priest Eisai, founded Kenninji Temple in Kyoto in 1168 CE and sowed tea seeds brought back from Sung China, that tea drinking gained wide acceptance. Temples with tea gardens became common in numerous areas of Japan. Zen soon found wide acceptance in the samurai, merchant and working classes as well. As Zen took hold in Japan so did the cultivation and popularity of tea.

To trace chronologically the transitions of tea bowls’ from an art form into a symbol of Zen understanding and appreciation, begin with the span from Kamakura to the mid-Muromachi period, ie the late twelfth to the end of the fifteenth century. During this time refined Sung dynasty tea wares imported from China formed the vast majority. Chief amongst them was the temmoku, Chinese Jian ware, along with some celadon and porcelain bowls. During the Kamakura period, powdered tea was an expensive luxury, confined to monks and the upper classes, who were connoisseurs of imported Chinese wares. By the 14th C. in the Muromachi Period (1333–1568), tea became more popular as an elegant amusement with the middle classes; ritualized tea gatherings attempting to identifying the origins and qualities of specific tea growers became popular. Chinese tea utensils were hard to come by and increasingly expensive, thus Japanese kilns like Seto and Mino began to produce local versions of Temmoku bowls. With an expanding tea culture in the Muromachi period came great appreciation and demand for fine tea utensils, tea bowls and caddies in particular became highly prized possessions and symbols of



prestige. The Ashikaga shoguns Yoshimitsu (1358–1408) and Yoshimasa (1436–1490) record Chinese tea utensils amongst their most prized treasures, with graded ranks of quality, provenance and importance.

By the mid-1400 tea ware, aesthetics based on perfection and formal grandeur began to wane. Merchant tea men like Murata Shuko (1421?–1502) developed accord with an atmosphere described as “chilled and withered” (hiekaruru) – an expression of the “Wabi”; a noun form of the verb *wabu*, to feel forlorn, which has connotations enjoying the retired life, astringency, sobriety. In chanoyu, the ideals of *wabi-suki*, indicates a realm of seasoned simplicity, rustic tranquillity, preparing tea without grand tea utensils. Shuko states, “I do not care for the moon without clouds”, referring to the use of Chinese tea ceramics, which were resplendent without blemish, he preferred utensils which were practical, earthy, with a candid quality, symbolized by the moon among the clouds. Shuko expounded on the beauty of asymmetry, austerity, a lofty dryness, and naturalness preferred over Sung ware perfection. Shuko began using local country pottery, Bizen water jars, Seto temmoku tea bowls and even when using Chinese pieces, he preferred rough celadon which came to be known as Shuko Celadon.

Although there is a history of many great Zen laymen in China; P’ang Yun in 8th C. P’ei Hsiu, Po Chu-i, Su Tung-p’o, the principal tendency there was toward monastic Zen. The Zen established in Japan in monasteries became formalized koan Zen practice using old recorded cases of Awakening as models of practice, or Taza Zen; *sitting* practice, carrying on the lineages from Chinese formal monastic training. However in Japan, Zen practice and influence flourished amongst the laymen and masses, many of whom having taken formal training in monasteries, returned to their family trades as Samurai, merchant traders, craft people and farmers. Zen began to manifest in Japan through material culture produced by laymen. Zen inspired No performance, music, haiku poetry, swordsmanship and *Chanoyu* the Way of Tea in particular. Chanoyu became above all the cultural expression of Zen, the like of which was not to be found in China. Chanoyu was inspired by and preserved much of previous Zen culture, especially in calligraphy and ink painting, while giving rise to a new type of integrated, Zen expression of wabi.