

THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
TEA MASTER SEN RIKYŪ

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to demonstrate the political significance of the sixteenth century tea master Sen Rikyū.¹

Rikyū is known in Japan as the "Father of the Tea Ceremony". Historically speaking he was only one of a series of outstanding aestheticists who practised and taught the tea ceremony according to their individual preferences. While those before and after him are remembered by students of the tea ceremony, Rikyū's name is popularly known throughout Japan and at times he is even venerated in godlike fashion.² His artistic principles and aesthetic judgements have permeated many aspects of Japanese culture and can be traced in such diverse fields

1. The kana version of the characters 千利休 is at times given as "Sen Rikyū" (Heibon Sha, ed., Dai jimmei jiten [Tokyo: Heibon Sha, 1953-6], s.v. "Sen Rikyū"; Kuwata Tadachika, ed., Chadō jiten [Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1956], s.v. "Sen Rikyū"), or as "Sen no Rikyū" (Shimmura Izuru, ed., Kō jien [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971 ed.], s.v. "Sen Rikyū"; Haga Kōshirō, Sen no Rikyū [Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1963], title page). For convenience only "Sen Rikyū" is used here, unless the alternate reading is specifically indicated as in Haga's book. Although Rikyū was known under different names at various stages of his life, and even after he was given the name "Rikyū" was mainly referred to as "Sen Sōeki", for clarity's sake he will be referred to in this thesis as "Sen Rikyū" or "Rikyū". For his other names and characters of these names see appendix A. Similarly other people will always be referred to by the name they are commonly known by to-day; e.g. "Toyotomi Hideyoshi" and not "Hashiba Tōkichirō" during the early part of his life.

2. Kuwata Tadachika, "Kamisama ni sareta Rikyū", Bungei Shunjū, August 1959, p. 41.

as domestic architecture and mode of dress. The tradition that he established is still carried on by his descendants, and the rules he laid down for the Way of Tea, chadō,¹ are observed in minute detail to this day.

There can be no doubt that Sen Rikyū possessed exceptional artistic talent. Without wishing to slight his aesthetic achievements in any way, it is nevertheless suggested in this thesis that his fame and widespread influence are related in some measure to his close association with Oda Nobunaga and in particular Toyotomi Hideyoshi.² It will be shown that as tea master to these two rulers Rikyū occupied an important position as a political negotiator. His connection with other tea masters, for the most part influential merchants, and in particular his master-pupil relationship with daimyo and warriors was used to further the political ends of the ruler. The concept of chanoyu seidō (茶湯政道)³ will be discussed at length during the course of this thesis.

The effectiveness and success of Rikyū's role was largely due to the fact that it was played behind the scenes. Consequently historical material on the political

1. "Chadō" is at times pronounced "sadō", but the former is the preferred reading. See Kuwata Tadachika, Chadō no rekishi (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1967), p. 51.

2. For characters and glossary of people mentioned in the text see appendix A.

3. Chanoyu seidō - lit. tea ceremony politics. This term is frequently used by modern Japanese historians, e.g. Kuwata Tadachika, Chajin no meishokan (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1970), p. 80.

aspects of Rikyū's life is scarce. Obviously there would be no mention of those secret activities in documents or official diaries. Only with the beginning of this century, since the inauguration by the Historiographical Institute (Shiryō Hensanjo) attached to the University of Tokyo of an extensive research program for the monumental Dai Nihon shiryō series (still in progress to-day), has evidence - mostly in the form of private or semi-official letters - come to light.

Research on Sen Rikyū has mainly been in the hands of the scholar Kuwata Tadachika.¹ During the past forty years he has assembled and established the authenticity of over two hundred and sixty letters written by Sen Rikyū and endeavoured to place them in the framework of history by reference to other historical sources. Furthermore his extensive research on the correspondence of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi as well as their retainers has furnished some strong supporting evidence for facts contained in Rikyū's letters.

This thesis, therefore, relies greatly on the work done by Kuwata: the letters used are those which he has established as authentic; the translations are based on the manuscript readings that he gives.

A major difficulty in writing this thesis has been the lack of reliable material. Sen Rikyū's great

1. (1902-) Kuwata has over many years collected and edited material for the Dai Nihon shiryō series. He is now professor at Kokugakuin Daigaku and is the author of numerous works on the Azuchi-Momoyama period. For those with direct bearing on the subject see the bibliography.

popularity during his life time together with his tragic death made him an ideal subject for speculation, which so-called historical sources have incorporated only too readily. In many cases it is extremely difficult to lay bare the facts that gave rise to such tales in the first place.

An additional hindrance has been the fact that many of the few extant manuscripts have not been published and were not available at the time of writing.

Further, due to the personal and often secret nature of the correspondence - resulting in the frequent use of abbreviations, circumlocutions and insinuations - the interpretation of the letters by an outsider would presumably have been difficult even at the time they were written. In addition, the style of language, on which comparatively little research has been done, makes it extremely difficult to understand the letters.

On account of his wide popularity as a tea master, the majority of books that have been written about Sen Rikyū deal with his life and achievements in the field of tea and the related arts. Only recently, since the discovery and publication of material unequivocally documenting Rikyū's involvement in government affairs, have most authors included some reference to his political activities in their works. Moreover, a small number of historians, especially Kuwata in his many publications, have elaborated on Rikyū's political significance, but no

single extensive study study seems to have been made of the subject in either Japanese or in European languages. While this essay in no way claims to deal exhaustively with the subject, it hopes to throw some light on a field not yet fully explored by historians.

Sen Rikyū was born a merchant's son in the prosperous city of Sakai. Here he spent the first fifty years of his life. A look at this environment will greatly help to understand the dual role - in both politics and the aesthetics of tea - that Rikyū played in the second half of his life. To begin with, therefore, two important factors in Rikyū's life will be briefly discussed: Sakai and the tea ceremony. The main part of the thesis will follow in chronological order the rise and sudden end of his political career. In the course of this due emphasis will be given to those contemporaries who either unwittingly prepared the way for Rikyū's high office, such as the merchant tea masters Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū, or those who deliberately supported him, such as Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga. Finally his sudden death will be discussed and some suggestions offered as to why Rikyū was ordered to commit suicide at the age of sixty-nine after a successful career.

CHAPTER I: SETTING THE SCENE AND EARLY YEARS
DAIEI 2 - EIROKU 11 (1522-68)

i) Sakai

"They said quite frankly that if they could go to heaven only by losing their credit and public reputation, they would prefer not to."¹

So wrote a sixteenth century Portuguese Jesuit of the inhabitants of Sakai. This observation of an outsider rather aptly describes the mood of a city which rose to prosperity and a certain amount of independence partly as the result of the good credit of its merchant elders.

On the wave of increasing prosperity in the Japanese Middle Ages, brought about by improved farming and fishing methods and the exploitation of silver mines, Sakai rose quickly from a little salt village to an important market place. Its natural harbour and strategic position between Kyoto and Nara made it the most convenient port for shipments of taxation rice from the provinces. Here the goods could be converted into specie or even

1. Luis Frois, Die Geschichte Japans (1549-1578), trans. G. Schurhammer and E. A. Voretzsch (Leipzig: Verlag der Asia Major, 1926), p. 219 (my translation). The observer was Father Gaspar Vilela visiting Sakai in 1564.

bills of exchange, so that the cost of further inland transport was avoided. Sakai's merchants financed and organized consignments of silver and swords carried by the licensed trading ships to Ming China. The return cargo would consist of raw silk, porcelain, bronze vessels and other luxury goods much sought after in Japan.

During the protracted wars of the Northern and Southern Dynasties and later during the Unin-Bummei years the warehouses of Sakai became the centre for provisioning and outfitting ever larger armies. The devastation of Kyoto during the fighting resulted in great numbers of refugees hoping to start a new life in the prosperous and relatively peaceful merchant city. Although these new settlers did not bring many material possessions, they did carry with them the cultural wealth and skills that for so long had been confined to the capital. Not only did these people pass on their artistic talents and manual skills, but they also knew how to take good advantage of the financial opportunities the city offered, and many rich merchant houses later claimed descent from noble or warrior ancestry.

Whether these claims should be given credence or not, the new rich merchant class that emerged in Sakai after the influx of refugees, certainly associated closely with the warriors and nobles of the day. They now shared pastimes such as the Noh drama, writing poetry and the practice of tea. When Sakai's merchants travelled through

the country to sell their goods at the rapidly expanding provincial centres, they came not only as traders in valuable objets d'art, but also as teachers of polite accomplishments. Here the tea ceremony was most prominent. It was one of the favourite pastimes of the merchants of Sakai, who, as importers of the valuable Chinese and Korean utensils required for its practice, could boast the best collections in the country. Daimyo and warriors would be entertained in the tea houses of Sakai's merchants. They would gladly welcome the traders to their provincial centres to accept their guidance in questions of tea aesthetics, and would form new bonds as disciples of the same master.

However, the close link between merchants and warriors was certainly not solely due to their common aesthetic pursuits. In fact it could be said that these common pastimes were cultivated out of the realization of mutual dependence for survival. The warriors needed the support of the merchants, not only to provision and outfit their armies, but often also to finance their military campaigns. The merchants looked to the warriors for special trading concessions and, more important, for protection against fighting and plundering armies.

By steering a carefully balanced political course, the merchant elders of Sakai had already managed towards the end of the fifteenth century to obtain a certain amount of independence for their home town. The governing council

of first ten and later thirty-six influential citizens - known as egōshū (会合衆) - had enough commercial power through the trading houses they represented to bring ruin to any army they refused to supply.¹ On the other hand the council was wise enough always to bend to the wishes of the strongest parties in the field, rather than risk the destruction of their property.²

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century the most powerful parties in the area were the militant Buddhist temple Ishiyama Honganji nearby in Osaka and the Miyoshi family. The former not only threatened Sakai with a strong army of soldier-monks from its large fortress, but was also in a position to stir up its fervent rural adherents in provinces as far off as Kaga and Noto.³ The latter, under Miyoshi Chōkei⁴ had finally usurped the power of their former masters, the Hosokawa family, and were now holding sway over the Kinai, as well as Awa, Sanuki and

1. In Eiroku 9 (1566) the egōshū forced the Miyoshi army to withdraw from Sakai and conclude peace with Matsunaga Hisahide by threatening to cut off supplies. See Toyōda Takeshi, ed., Sengoku no gun'yū, in Jimbutsu, Nihon no rekishi, vol. VI (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1965), p. 155.

2. E.g. when they submitted to the threat of Oda Nobunaga. See Hayashiya Tatsusaburō, Tenka ittō, in Nihon no rekishi, vol. XII (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1966), pp. 110-2.

3. Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, pp. 44-7. The Ishiyama Honganji was the head-quarters of the Buddhist Ikkō sect, established at Osaka by the eighth patriarch Rennyo in Meiō 5 (1496). It had large numbers of often militant supporters especially in northern, northeastern and central Japan.

4. The name "Chōkei" is also pronounced "Nagayoshi" as in Nagae Shōichi, Miyoshi Nagayoshi (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1968). For characters see appendix A.

Awaji, giving them complete control of all coastal and landbound traffic within the home provinces.¹

As part of the domain of their former lord, the Miyoshi family had long standing ties with Sakai. It had served as their foothold whenever they had left their home province Awa in the service of the Hosokawa. Commercial reasons brought about close association with the city, but there were also deep sentimental ties. Surrounded by his enemies, Chōkei's² father, a fervent Buddhist, had chosen to commit suicide in one of Sakai's Hokke temples.³ When Chōkei was finally able to realize his father's dream of ruling over the area, he also continued his ardent patronage of the two currently popular Buddhist sects in the city: Hokke and Rinzai Zen. In memory of his father, Chōkei established the Nansōji and made the then famous Rinzai teacher Dairin Shūtō its first abbot. Together with many of Sakai's wealthiest merchants Chōkei and his brothers diligently practised Zen under Dairin and he conceded that he was more afraid of his spiritual teacher than of a hostile army.

1. Toyoda, Sengoku no gun'yū, p. 135.

2. Japanese historians show a tendency to refer to historical figures by their given rather than their family name when only one part of the name is used. However, so that the reader need not remember both the family and the given name in all cases, people are referred to by their family name throughout this thesis, except when (as above) several members of the same family are mentioned or when the person is popularly known by their given name (e.g. Nobunaga, Ieyasu).

3. Nagae, Miyoshi, p. 59.

4. Ibid., p. 234.

It was no coincidence that most of Dairin's disciples were also well-known tea masters, for Rinzai Zen and the tea ceremony have close historical links. One of Dairin's most outstanding pupils was the famous tea master Takeno Jōō. Jōō in turn also counted amongst his pupils many prominent members of the Miyoshi party; Chōkei's younger brothers Yukiyasu (Jikkyū)¹ and Yasunaga (Shōgan), his uncle Masanaga (Sōsan), cousin Masayasu (Chōkansai) and his senior officer Matsunaga Hisahide had all progressed under Jōō's guidance to become known as competent tea masters in their own right. As a leather merchant, on the other hand, Jōō provided the Miyoshi with military equipment. Similar complex relationships - both as pupils of the same master in tea and Zen on one side, and trading partners on the other - linked the Miyoshi clan with people such as Jōō's adopted son-in-law Imai Sōkyū,² manufacturer of weapons and at a later date ammunition, and Tsuda Sōkyū, the head of the wealthy Tennōjiya traders.

With the death of Miyoshi Chōkei in Eiroku 7 (1564) his chief vassal Matsunaga Hisahide came to power. At first he co-operated with the warriors of the Miyoshi family and with their support led a coup against the thirteenth Ashikaga Shogun Yoshiteru, forcing the latter to commit suicide. But soon a split occurred between Matsunaga and the Miyoshi clan, and in Eiroku 9 (1566) Sakai found

1. Names in brackets denote Buddhist names under which these men were known as tea masters.

2. "Imai shi nana sekihi mei narabi ni keizu" in Sakai Shiyakusho, ed., Sakai-shi shi (Tokyo: Sakai Shiyakusho, 1930), IV:366.

itself surrounded by the armies of the Miyoshi faction, with Matsunaga seeking refuge within her walls. Matsunaga was saved through the influence of two close tea companions, the merchants Notoya and Beniya, both members of the egōshū. Under their pressure the egōshū forced the Miyoshi armies to withdraw and conclude peace.¹

It was in this society, where complex political and commercial relationships were deeply entangled and made even more intricate by the bonds formed through the common practice of tea, that Sen Rikyū had to find his place. However, before examining Rikyū's family background and early career, something must be said about the origins and development of this social phenomenon so important in Sakai, the tea ceremony.

ii) The Development of the Tea Ceremony

The tea ceremony as known to-day is unique to Japan; its origins - like other parts of Japanese culture - must, however, be traced to China. Here the use of tea instead of liquor for entertainment is apparently first mentioned during the Three Kingdoms period (221-65 AD).² The eighth century Ch'a ching by Lu Wu giving information in three volumes on the cultivation, harvesting and preparation of tea as well as details of utensils and the

1. See above p. 9, n. 1.

2. A.L. Sadler, Cha-no-yu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1968 ed.), p. 4. Sadler's reference to Giles, A Chinese Biographical Dictionary, p. 870 is incorrect.

serving, shows that by the T'ang dynasty (618-907) the use of tea was popular enough to make such a work useful.¹

In Japan one of the earliest references to tea is found in the fifteenth century work, Kuji kongen, in which the statesman Ichi jō Kanera claims to know that in the first year of Tempyō (729) the Emperor Shōmu entertained monks with tea after a sutra reading.² The monk Saichō is said to have brought tea seeds from China and to have encouraged its cultivation in his native country.³ In the fourth month of Kōnin (815) the Nihon kōki relates that the Emperor Saga was entertained with tea on a visit to the Sōfukuji at Karasaki.⁴ From these references it can be concluded that the early use of tea in Japan was intimately linked with the introduction and spread of Buddhism from China. With the rupture of Sino-Japanese relations in Kamyō 7 (895) and the more indigenous development of Japanese culture during the Heian period the use of tea was discontinued.

The revival of tea drinking in Japan is linked with the introduction of Zen Buddhism towards the end of the twelfth century. After two visits to China the Zen

1. Kanda Kiichirō, "Kaidai" to Cha kyō, in Sen Sōshitsu, ed., Chadō koten zenshū (Kyoto: Dankōsha, 1971), I:119-32; (henceforth cited as CKZ). The Ch'a ching (Jap. Cha kyō) was written at the beginning of the eighth century.

2. Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, p. 13.

3. Ibid.

4. Nihon kōki, in Saeki Ariyoshi, ed., Rikkokushi, vol. V (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1940), p. 209.

Master Eisai tried to familiarize his country men with the cultivation and preparation of tea and its medicinal properties in his work Kissa yōjōki.¹ The rapid recuperation of the sick Shogun Minamoto Sanetomo after receiving a gift of tea and a copy of the work from the Zen monk went a long way to prove the medicinal qualities of the plant.² Eisai himself supervised the establishment of tea plantations and most of the famous ones in Japan still claim to originate from the seeds he carried home to his native islands. Tea continued to be used in monasteries and masters such as Dōgen found it appropriate to include rules about its usage in their instructions regulating the lives of the monks.³

With the aristocracy in Kyoto tea became popular in quite a different way. Here the so-called tō cha (闘茶) was practised. In a manner similar to the incense smelling competitions the guests were presented with a variety of different kinds of tea and asked to judge and locate the origin of the tea and water it was prepared from. The prevailing atmosphere on such occasions is well described in the Kissa ōrai, supposedly the work of the monk Genne.⁴ The report talks about rooms lavishly decorated with brocade and tiger skins, Chinese bronze vessels and valuable

1. Mori Shikazō, "Kaidai" to Kissa yōjōki, CKZ, II:125.

2. Mori Shikazō, "Hochū" to Kissa yōjōki, CKZ, II:75-6.

3. Dōgen's Eihei shingī based on the writings of the Chinese Zen master Po Chang (Jap. Hyakujō). Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, p. 28.

4. Uozumi Sōgoro, "Kaidai" to Kissa ōrai, CKZ, II:191.

scrolls. After the competition a sumptuous meal was in order.¹ All this took place on the second floor of a specially constructed tea pavilion: the Kinkakuji built by the third Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu and the Ginkakuji of his grandson Yoshimasa are examples.

Yoshimasa's highly developed sense of aesthetics was, however, not satisfied with this somewhat gaudy ritual, and under his influence the painter and poet Nōami devised new rules for the enjoyment of tea. Nōami was well versed in most forms of current artistic pursuits and the ceremony he created attested to this; elements of the Noh drama, flower arrangement and even archery were combined with regulations of the warriors' code of behaviour and remnants of the old ritual of tō cha.² This new ceremony was conducted in a style of building typical of the Zen monasteries, which was now also becoming popular in secular architecture, the shoin style, so called because the rooms featured a kind of wooden desk (shoin 書院) below the window. As a small wooden stand (daisu 台子) was used to accommodate the tea utensils, Nōami's ceremony was known as shoin daisu tea. Alternately it was also referred to as Shogunal tea or the Higashiyama style, the latter name deriving from the location of Yoshimasa's villa.

1. Kissa ōrai, CKZ, II:166-7.

2. Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, pp. 49-50. The warriors' code of behaviour referred to is the twelve volume Sanji-ittō ōzōshi of Ogasawara Nagahide.

Nōami's tradition was carried on by his pupil Shima Ukyō, better known under his Buddhist name of Kūkai.¹ After the death of his teacher, Kūkai moved to Sakai, where a new class of rich merchants, already referred to, were now able to afford and eager to learn the pastimes of the impoverished aristocracy. Here his senior pupil was Araki Kitamuki Dōchin.²

Nōami was also famous as teacher in the art of flower arrangement (rikka 立花). One of his pupils here was a Zen monk with the dubious distinction of once having been chased away from a monastery in his home town Nara. The reason is said to have been that he could not keep awake during sutra readings and meditation. As a remedy the monk, Murata Mokichi Shukō, had later learnt to drink tea, and when he became Nōami's pupil had established himself in a small hut in Kyoto. In Zen he was instructed by the famous Rinzai master Ikkyū. Upon his enlightenment, Shukō was presented by his teacher with a valuable Chinese scroll.³ This he hung in his miserable hut and there drinking tea in his own way proclaimed the unity of Zen and tea. Nōami was greatly impressed with this very simple and much more spiritual form of enjoying tea.

1. Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, p. 65.

2. Ri Ichiyō and Usami Hikoshirō Sadasuke, comp., Yuishogaki, quoted in full in Sugimoto Hayao, Sen Rikyū to sono shūhen (Kyoto: Dankōsha, 1970), p. 323; (henceforth the text of the Yuishogaki will be referred to as Yuishogaki, while references to the text of Sugimoto's work will be cited as Sugimoto, Sen Rikyū).

3. Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, pp. 52-3.

He himself tried to learn what had now through its association with Buddhism become a Way - the Way of Tea.¹

Shukō also instructed the Shogun Yoshimasa, but, rather than in court circles, this new rustic way of drinking tea became quickly popular in the growing trading centres of the provinces, especially in Sakai. Here the teachings of Ikkyū had found many adherents, and the practice of tea remained closely linked with the Rinzaï branch of Zen. Shukō's successor has already been mentioned: Takeno Jōō, a man who traced his ancestry back to the famous Takeda warriors of Wakasa. His father, however, after the head of the family had been killed in battle, had settled in Sakai to make his fortune not by fighting, but by supplying armour and weapons to others. His background was very similar to that of many tea masters in the city; his most famous pupil, Sen Rikyū, was no exception.

iii) Rikyū as a Product of his Environment and Time

The lineage of Sen Rikyū is said to go back to the Satomi branch of the Seiwa Genji clan. According to the Yuishogaki his grandfather, Tanaka Sen'ami (or Sennami) was employed as dōbō (同朋)² at the court of the Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa.³ The syllable "ami" in his name

1. For explanation of the Buddhist concept of "Way" see Horst Hammitzsch, Chadō: Der Teeweg (Munich: Otto Wilhelm Barth-Verlag, 1958), pp. 9-12.

2. An attendant of the shogun, concerned with matters of art.

3. Yuishogaki, p. 322.

indicates that - similar to Nōami - he had shaven his head, not to become a monk in the strictly religious sense, but to dedicate his life to the arts.¹ Rikyū's grandfather might well have assisted at the Shogunal tea ceremony favoured by Yoshimasa and been a witness to the teachings of the Way of Tea by Murata Shukō. When at the beginning of the Ōnin war, Hosokawa Katsumoto pressed the shogun to expel all courtiers friendly to the Yamana family, Sen'ami was one of those who fled to the safety of Sakai. After serving once more in Kyoto under the ninth Ashikaga Shogun Yoshihisa, Sen'ami again returned to Sakai and established his family there.

While there is some contemporary material which could be interpreted to substantiate the claim of Rikyū's descent made in the Yuishogaki, concrete historical evidence is lacking. Considering that very similar claims were made by other merchant families, it is easy to imagine that Rikyū's genealogy was written so as to relate to scanty points of reference found in earlier documents.² It is interesting to note in this connection that the name Tanaka, which Rikyū's father is said to have dropped in preference to Sen, and which is the vital link between the tea master and the shogunal dōbō Tanaka Sen'ami, was

1. Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, pp. 45-6. The syllable "ami" is taken from the middle of the prayer namu amida butsu. This indicates that in the dedication to the arts spoken of Buddhism still played some part. On the other hand, for commoners to be able to appear in the presence of the shogun it was necessary to improve their station in life by taking some kind of religious vows. Thus becoming an "ami" was also a formal device to qualify as attendant of the shogun.

2. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 5-9.

only used by Rikyū towards the end of his long life.¹

There is little reliable information about Sen Rikyū's early years. Contemporary diaries note that at his death in Tenshō 19 (1591) he was seventy years of age.² According to Japanese calculation this places his birth at Daiei 2 (1522). His father was known as Sen Yohei. Rikyū, born as Sen Yoshirō appears to have been his eldest son.³ The family owned a number of fish storehouses along the coast of Sakai and is generally described as fish wholesalers.⁴

There is evidence that by Temmon 4 (1535) the Sen family was a prominent member of Sakai's wealthy merchant community. In this year a collection was held to rebuild the local Akuchi temple, and the register shows that from each of the ten divisions of the city up to fifteen individuals came forth to donate one kammon each. Among famous names, such as those of the influential Tennōjiya merchants and the tea master Takeno Jōō, "Yoshirō dono Sen" from Imaichimachi is listed.⁵ This information not only shows that the Sen family must have been quite wealthy to afford a donation, but it is also

1. In the Yamanoue no Sōji ki, written during Rikyū's life time by his disciple Yamanoue no Sōji, he is called Tanaka Sōeki and his son Tanaka Shōan near the end of the work. (CKZ, VI:105).

2. E.g. in the Yamanoue no Sōji ki, CKZ, VI:116.

3. For discussion of the possibility that Rikyū had an elder brother or half-brother see Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 15-9.

4. Kuwata Tadachika, ed., Chadō taikai (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1963-5), VI:123.

5. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 16-7.

interpreted to mean that Rikyū had become the head of the household at the age of thirteen, although his father did not die until five years later.¹

There is no solid evidence to indicate when Rikyū started to learn the tea ceremony. The earliest reference is found in the diary of the rich Nara merchant and tea master Matsuya Hisamasa, who noted that in Temmon 6 (1537) he attended a tea meeting given by Sen Yoshirō - i.e. Rikyū - in Kyoto.² That Rikyū acted as host to a well-known man such as Matsuya shows that at the age of fifteen he must have been fairly accomplished in matters of tea.

Various sources give conflicting information about Rikyū's instructors in the ceremony.³ It is generally accepted, however, that Rikyū first studied the Shogunal ceremony under Araki Kitamuki Dōchin and later was instructed in the more austere practice of wabi cha⁴ by Takeno Jōō.

The second reference to Rikyū practising tea appears only seven years later, again in Matsuya's diary:

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 17-8. It seems somewhat strange that a thirteen year old boy should become the head of a household when the father is still alive, but Haga assumes that Rikyū's name appearing in the temple register must mean just that.

2. Matsuya kai ki, entry 13.9.Temmon 6, CKZ, IX:2; (the form "13.9.Temmon 6" signifies here the thirteenth day of the ninth month of Temmon 6. When the year has not been indicated on a document the assumed year is placed in brackets. Western equivalents of the year only are always placed in bracket after the Japanese date). For discussion as to when Rikyū started to practise tea see Kuwata, Chadō taikai, VI:124 and Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 67-8.

3. Kuwata, Chadō taikai, VI:124-5; Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 68-70.

4. Wabi cha could be described as tea served in a highly refined atmosphere of rustic simplicity.

in Temmon 13 (1544) Rikyū entertained the Nara merchant in Sakai. By that time he had become a Buddhist lay monk, changing his name to Sōeki.¹

No further mention of Rikyū is found until the first year of Kōji (1555), when he was thirty-three. Although reference to him depends on chance factors, such as association with the author of a diary and its survival, the sparse mention of Rikyū during the first thirty years of his life can still be taken to indicate that he was not widely known, but just one tea master amongst many.

In his thirties and forties, however, Rikyū developed his own individual style and achieved some standing as tea master. His circle of friends widened considerably and he appears frequently in the tea diaries of Imai Sōkyū and the Tennōjiya family. His choice of expensive and well-known utensils when he was host attests to his prosperity. Recognition was given to his superior artistic judgement when on one occasion he was singled out by the host to hang a valuable, newly acquired Chinese scroll in the presence of other well-known tea masters.²

Most significant during these years is Rikyū's association with the Miyoshi family. Imai Sōkyū recorded that in the first month of the first year of Eiroku (1558) he was invited by Chōkei's younger brother Jikkyū together

1. Matsuya kai ki, entry 27.2. Temmon 13, CKZ, IX:9-10.
 2. Tsuda Sōkyū, Sōkyū takai ki, entry 17.10. Eiroku 10, CKZ, VII:132-3.

with Rikyū and Kitamuki Dōchin.¹ The Miyoshi family's vital relationship with Sakai's powerful merchants, such as Imai Sōkyū, has already been referred to, and the presence of the senior tea master Kitamuki Dōchin on such an occasion can well be understood. The fact that Rikyū was invited, with no important commercial background to boast of, illustrates that by this time he must have been recognized as a tea master of above average talent.

Only in the third month of Eiroku 4 (1561), exactly one year before Jikkyū's death in battle, does Imai Sōkyū again note down a function at which both Rikyū and Jikkyū were present.² It seems likely that after the invitation in the first year of Eiroku (1558), Rikyū would have had further contact with Jikkyū, even if it were only in the form of returned hospitality. Here the one-sided evidence furnished by the tea diaries becomes very much apparent: only those meetings at which one of the limited number of authors of these diaries participated have been recorded.

Further evidence of Rikyū's relationship with the Miyoshi, however, is furnished by a number of letters written by Rikyū to Jikkyū's cousin Chōkansai. Unfortunately they are not dated. Judging from the style of writing and information contained in them, Kuwata suggests that the

1. Imai Sōkyū chanoyu nikki nukigaki, entry 5.1. Eiroku 1, CKZ, X:8.

2. Ibid., entry 15.3. Eiroku 4, CKZ, X:11.

letters, four in all, must have been written some time between the beginning of Eiroku (1558) and the early years of Tenshō (1573).¹ They confirm that during this period Rikyū was recognized as an authority on the beauty and value of tea utensils.

A short reply to what must have been a request for advice from Chōkansai whether to buy a certain piece, runs as follows:

"It is worm-eaten and also has some scorch marks. If you do not mind that it is up to you. I shall tell you all about it when I see you. If you are going to come (and see me), evening would be the best time. If I come for dinner, I will let you know."²

The tone of the letter suggests a close relationship between the two men, warm enough to allow for informal impromptu visits.

A second note refers to Rikyū's preferences in the type of kettle used at the ceremony and seems to suggest that they should go out together in search of the right one.³

1. Kuwata Tadachika, Teihon Sen Rikyū no shokan (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1971), pp. 4-10 (henceforth cited as SRS).

2. SRS, p. 4. Final greetings of letters are not translated throughout this thesis. Other omissions, however, are indicated in the usual way.

3. SRS, p. 8.

The friendly tone in these two letters is quite in contrast to the somewhat awkward excuses brought forward by Rikyū on behalf of himself and friends for not getting together with Chōkansai in a third letter:

"I passed the message on to Take Shin¹ this morning, but during this month he will be extremely busy. I think the same applies to me and also to Sōji.² It would be good if you would postpone it for the present time. They say that they truly appreciate your kindness. Honestly, this is not just an excuse.³

Takeno Shingorō was later referred to as Takeno Sōga, for the first time in Eiroku 12 (1569). This letter must therefore have been written before that year and one can readily imagine that the Sakai tea masters were uneasy about a meeting with Miyoshi Chōkansai. The Miyoshi had been defeated by Matsunaga Hisahide, who in turn was wise enough to submit to the threatening armies of Oda Nobunaga at an early date. Sakai's elders first did not recognize the power of the new ruler and, refusing to pay the demanded war tax, were still looking to the Miyoshi family for protection. When it became evident that their former allies had lost power, Sakai's merchants

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1. Takeno Shingorō.
 2. Yamanoue no Sōji.
 3. SRS, p. 6.

opened the city to Nobunaga, and shortly afterwards the diaries show the names of his high functionaries as guests at the usual tea meetings.¹

One cannot at this stage speak of Sen Rikyū being politically involved. Yet at the same time it is evident that this early association with people of political significance already harboured the seeds of his later career. To survive, Sakai's merchants had to support the military force that was most powerful. If they had made explicit their friendship with a strong political faction, such as the Miyoshi family, they were obliged to refute this same bond publicly once the enemy of their old friends came to power. Once entangled in the mesh of politics, they could only continue to play the game.

Under the date 12.11. Eiroku 11 (1568) an unexpected entry is found in a diary of Imai Sōkyū:

"This winter sōeki² is poverty stricken.³ There are no morning meetings. However, this is on account of the time when his ink paintings were being sold."⁴

1. E.g. Tsuda Sōkyū, Sōkyū jikai ki, entry 12.2. Eiroku 12, CKZ, VIII:140; Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, entry 1.4. Eiroku 13, CKZ, X:21.

2. Rikyū.

3. The word "hissoku" has a number of meanings ranging from "retired" to "under house arrest" and "poverty stricken". As Rikyū apparently was in such financial difficulties that he even had to sell his treasured ink paintings, "poverty stricken" seems appropriate.

4. Sōkyū takai ki, CKZ, VII:144.

Details about this period of hardship in Rikyū's life are not known. It was only a temporary condition, as a few months later he was again invited by his merchant friends. Just over a year later there are records of Rikyū entertaining, displaying a recently acquired and very valuable scroll of the Zen master Daitō Kokushi.¹ Strangely enough this time of reverses for Rikyū coincides with the period when Sakai was still undecided whether to chase away their former allies or further rely on them for protection. Some merchants, like Imai Sōkyū, had already taken up contact with Nobunaga at this time and one wonders whether Rikyū's financial problems were not caused by siding with the less successful party.

Rikyū's contact with Miyoshi Chōkansai did not cease abruptly when Nobunaga established his supremacy. The following letter from Rikyū to Chōkansai proves this point:

"I was very happy to receive your letter of thanks last night. I think it is a great pity. His Lordship's journey to the capital has been delayed. I am wondering whether I will go to the capital. I think it would be just right for you to go to the capital. When you have time, I will speak to you in person."²

1. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 3.2.Eiroku 13, CKZ, VII:157.
 2. SRS, p. 10.

"His Lordship" was almost certainly Nobunaga. This letter very much foreshadows Rikyū's later role: advising and urging friends and acquaintances how to approach the ruler. It is natural that Rikyū, as tea master frequently at the side of the man in power, would be in an advantageous position to do so. But more often than just advising these people, Rikyū seems to have urged and pleaded with them to approach the ruler. This can be easily understood, if one considers that Rikyū's efforts as intermediary between the ruler and his important vassals were not only made to help the latter. On the contrary, in the case of both Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi - where the ruler's supremacy often depended considerably on the successful handling of a great number of powerful and potentially dangerous subjects - his services were essential to the man trying to establish his leadership.

The important position Rikyū later occupied did not come about suddenly. Rikyū himself was a product of his time and environment. He grew up like many other merchant sons, hoping to join at an early age the artistic, religious and commercial elite, the select circle that met at numerous functions to practise the tea ceremony. His unusual artistic talent attracted the notice of his seniors and allowed him to meet people of political power and influence, with whom he would not have ordinarily associated. Rikyū's early correspondence suggests how he became entangled in the politics of the day almost without noticing it and

with little choice. The continuation and acceleration of this process with the establishment of Nobunaga's power is outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II: UNDER NOBUNAGA
EIROKU 11 - TENSHŌ 10 (1568-82)

i) Tea and Politics under Nobunaga

In Eiroku 11 (1568) Oda Nobunaga entered the capital and installed the murdered shogun's brother, Yoshiaki, as the fifteenth Ashikaga Shogun. Nobunaga's sudden fervour for tea roughly coincides with this event. A number of reasons are usually put forward to explain why he demonstrated such interest in this pastime; most probably there is some truth in all of them. Firstly, he is often said to have practised tea to hide his lack of courtly education.¹ Then it is also suggested that as ruler of the country he felt it was his right to own Japan's most valuable pieces of art, like emperors and shoguns had done before.² As Nobunaga's interest in tea seems to have focused on the possession of valuable tea utensils rather than the practice of the ceremony, this is a plausible explanation.

In the spring of Eiroku 12 (1569), very shortly after establishing himself in the Kinai, an edict was published stating that - because Nobunaga was well supplied

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 85.

2. Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, p. 111.

with gold, silver and rice - it was his order that Chinese utensils and Japan's famous (art) treasures should be given to him.¹ A similar request was made in the next year² and a number of forced sales are recorded as the result. People were compensated for their art treasures with gold and silver, but considering the importance that was attached to the possession of just one rare piece, this was little consolation indeed.

Perhaps the best example of how valuable a tea utensil could be, is the story of Matsunaga Hisahide. It has already been mentioned that Matsunaga submitted to Nobunaga at an early date (above p. 24), but what really seems to have convinced Nobunaga of Matsunaga's good will, was his presentation of the irreplaceable tea container tsukumogami.³ Only four years later Matsunaga revolted against Nobunaga,⁴ and after capitulating once more secured Nobunaga's forgiveness by offering him a valuable piece.⁵ When in Tenshō 5 (1577) Matsunaga again revolted and was defeated, he committed suicide, but before doing so, destroyed the most famous piece in his collection, the kettle hiragumo, which he knew Nobunaga was eager to own.⁶

1. Ota Gyūichi, Shinchō kō ki, in Kaitei shiseki shūran, vol. XIX (Tokyo: Kondō Keizō, 1901), entry 27.2. Eiroku 12, p. 58.

2. Ibid., entry 5.3. Genki 1, p. 61.

3. Ibid., entry 2.10. Eiroku 11, p. 53.

4. Ibid., entry 24.3. Genki 3, p. 77.

5. Ibid., first entry Genki 4, pp. 81-2.

6. Ibid., entry 10.10. Tenshō 5, p. 135; Kuwata, Chajin no meisshokan, p. 74.

Less dramatic, but illustrating the same point is the story of Takigawa Kazumasu,¹ who was made Kantō kanrei² for his success in battle, but lamented that his reward was not instead a certain tea container he had requested.³

Takigawa's story implies that it was a special honor for Nobunaga's generals to be rewarded with tea utensils. But not only did Nobunaga's followers risk their life in battle to be rewarded with perhaps a tea cup - albeit a very famous one - they were also forbidden to practise tea without his permission, which allowed Nobunaga even to hand out this permit in return for special services.⁴ The similarity to modern awards of titles, which mostly hold no income but only prestige, is striking. As to-day so it was for Nobunaga in the fifteenth century the most convenient form of expressing appreciation. The advantage over the traditional form of military reward - such as granting a fief - was that it could not easily be turned against the donor; a factor of utmost importance for a ruler like Nobunaga who had only just established himself.

The tea utensils did have a high market value, but once they had been given by Nobunaga's hand, they would have been difficult to turn into cash. An attempt

1. Kuwata uses the pronunciation "Ichimasu" (Chadō no rekishi, p. 113), but "Kazumasu" is preferred in Dai jimmei jiten.

2. Governor of the Kantō area.

3. Letter from Takigawa to a certain Tarō Gorō dated

4.4. (Tenshō 10) as quoted in Kuwata, Chadō no rekishi, p. 113.

4. See Kuwata's comments in Chajin no meishokan, pp. 80, 98.

to do so would clearly show the vassal's disloyalty besides the problem of finding a buyer who would take the risk.

ii) Nobunaga and Imai Sōkyū

Oda Nobunaga first met Imai Sōkyū at a relatively early date. The Shinchō kō ki records that already in Eiroku 11 (1568), when Nobunaga was still campaigning at Akutagawa in Settsu and had just besieged Matsunaga Hisahide, Imai Sōkyū appeared at his camp presenting him with two extremely rare tea utensils.¹ Imai Sōkyū's own diary shows this event two years later,² but as this very first encounter between the aspiring ruler and the merchant was before Sakai had submitted to Nobunaga and therefore most probably secret, this delay is understandable. In fact the diary of the head of the Tennōjiya merchant family, Tsuda Sōkyū, records that since the tenth month of Eiroku 11 (1568) trenches were being dug around the town and by the first month of the following year valuable utensils and women and children (in that order) had been evacuated to Osaka and Hirano.³ The elders Notoya and Beniya had been chosen as leaders of the egōshū and were in charge of the

1. Shinchō kō ki, entry 2.10 Eiroku 11, p. 53.

2. Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, entry 14.4. Genki 1, CKZ, X:21. Also one of the utensils differs from those listed in the Shinchō kō ki. For discussion of the reliability of Imai's diary see Kuwata Tadachika, Sen Rikyū (Tokyo: Seiji Sha, 1949 ed.), pp. 24-5.

3. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 11.1. Eiroku 12, CKZ, VII: 148.

city fortifications.¹ The peace faction, led by Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū, was finally able to win over their colleagues, and by the second month the city had submitted to Nobunaga. The period of indecision was a time of great anxiety for the city: even tea meetings were suspended during the last weeks before capitulation.²

Imai Sōkyū's early relationship with Nobunaga, at a time when his fellow citizens were still preparing to fight the conquering armies from the north, is sometimes explained as having been brought about by one of his relations, who was a retainer of the Oda family. The "Imai shi nana sekihi mei narabi ni keizu" states that Imai was a descendant of the Sasaki family of Ōmi, that on their first encounter Nobunaga reminded the merchant of his warrior ancestry, made him his retainer and enfeoffed him generously.³ In addition Imai was given the title of ōkura hōin.⁴ Moreover, by the eighth month of Eiroku 12 (1569) Imai had been made daikan⁵ of five districts formerly governed by the Miyoshi family, yielding a revenue

1. Zoku Ōnin kōki, in Kaitei shiseki shūran, Vol. III (Tokyo: Kondō Keizō, 1906), p. 192.

2. Sōkyū takai ki, CKZ, VII:148, n. 4.

3. Sakai-shi shi, IV:366. For arguments against Imai's warrior descent see Nagashima Fukutarō, "Kaidai" to Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, CKZ, X:55.

4. Hōin - title given to people outstanding in their field as doctors, painters, learned in the Confucian tradition, etc. Here Imai's abilities as financier appears to have been the reason for the title.

of 2,200 koku.¹ Also at the beginning of this month the merchant was visiting Nobunaga's home base at Gifu and together with the courtier Yamashina Tokitsugu - who recorded this event in his diary - was allowed to go sightseeing around the castle.²

It can hardly be believed that Nobunaga gave this very special treatment to the Sakai merchant merely because he was originally of warrior descent. It is much more likely that Imai Sōkyū received these favours because besides provisioning and financing military campaigns, he was in control of an ammunition factory at Abiko, close to Sakai.

The proof of the direct connection between Imai Sōkyū, as supplier of ammunition, and Nobunaga's armies is a letter addressed to Imai from Toyotomi Hideyoshi, when still one of Nobunaga's generals. This letter, dated 4.6. (Genki 1), was written when Nobunaga was fighting the combined armies of Asai Nagamasa and Asakura Yoshikage and is an order for thirty kin of gunpowder and thirty kin of niter to be delivered urgently to the front line.³ The letter also demonstrates how through these business connections the merchant was able to develop good personal contacts with Nobunaga's leading military men.

1. Nagashima, "Kaidai" to Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, CKZ, X:58; Toyoda Takeshi, Sakai (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1966), p. 83.

2. Yamashina Tokitsugu, Tokitsugu kyō ki (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1915), entry 22.7. Eiroku 12, IV:22.

3. Kuwata Tadachika, Taikō shoshin (Tokyo: Chijin Shokan, 1943), p. 16; 1 kin - 1.32 lb.

iii) Nobunaga and Tsuda Sōkyū

The Tennōjiya merchant Tsuda Sōkyū was advocating submission to Nobunaga like Imai Sōkyū. Unlike Imai Sōkyū, however, his advice was based on the realization that it was better to pay 20,000 kan, the sum Nobunaga demanded from Sakai, than have the city devastated, and not on any feelings of friendship towards Nobunaga. In fact entries in his Jikai ki show that during the first years of Nobunaga's rule he entertained a great many warriors hostile to the new overlord. Among them were members of the Miyoshi faction such as Miyoshi Shōgan¹ and Iwanari Tomomichi² and a retainer of the militant Ishiyama Honganji temple, Shimotsuma Tango Hōin.³

Nevertheless in the eleventh month of Tenshō 1 (1573) Tsuda Sōkyū was invited to meet Nobunaga at a tea ceremony held in Kyoto. Nobunaga himself took part in the ceremony and when Tsuda Sōkyū afterwards paid a courtesy call on the ruler to show his gratitude, he was given a number of presents including a famous horse.⁴ This meeting between the two men must have been satisfactory for both sides, for only two months later, in the first month of Tenshō 2 (1574), Tsuda Sōkyū left for Gifu, where he was warmly received and shown Nobunaga's most valuable tea utensils by the host himself.⁵

1. Entry 19.3. Genki 2, CKZ, VIII:160; entry 15.8. Genki 3, CKZ, VIII:176.

2. Entry 5.2. Genki 2, CKZ, VIII:160.

3. Entry 26.10. Eiroku 12, CKZ, VIII:146.

4. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 23.11. Tenshō 1, CKZ, VII:187-90.

5. Ibid., entries 24.1. and 3.2. Tenshō 2, CKZ, VII:191-3.

At first glance it would seem that the friendship between the ruler and the merchant grew out of their common interest in tea and tea utensils. But here again, the timing of Nobunaga's sudden generous treatment towards Tsuda Sōkyū points to his real motives. From the beginning Oda Nobunaga had sought to destroy the strongly fortified Ishiyama Honganji at Sakai, the seat of the Buddhist Ikkō sect. In the early months of Tenshō 1 (1573) the relationship between the temple and Nobunaga rapidly deteriorated and the latter's determination to besiege the monks hardened. The first step was to cut the temple off from its source of wealth and provisions - the Sakai merchants. It was therefore essential to win over the commercially important Tennōjiya family and especially Tsuda Sōkyū as the head of the clan. On the other hand, a good relationship with the ruler, who was by now fairly well established, was also important for Tsuda Sōkyū; he forgot his former alliances and by Tenshō 2 (1574), just before the attack on the Ishiyama Honganji, a close relationship between Nobunaga and Tsuda Sōkyū had been established.

iv) Nobunaga and Sen Rikyū

Sen Rikyū was not as important or influential in the field of commerce as either Imai Sōkyū or Tsuda Sōkyū. He was introduced to Nobunaga most probably purely on account of his spreading fame as a tea master. Once he became part of Nobunaga's entourage, however, he appears

not only to have concerned himself with matters of tea, but also acted as secretary and highly trusted middleman for the ruler.

The date of Rikyū's first encounter with Nobunaga is uncertain. Sources suggesting the fourth month of Genki 1 (1570) as earliest date are not completely reliable and the eleventh month of Tenshō 1 (1573) is the preferred alternative.¹ On this occasion Nobunaga gave a tea ceremony at the Myōkokuji in Kyoto and Rikyū was in charge of preparing the tea.²

After this date there were a number of tea ceremonies held by Nobunaga where both Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū as well as Sen Rikyū were singled out and given some special treatment by the host,³ but it is only in Tenshō 3 (1575) that there is evidence of Rikyū really acting as Nobunaga's tea master. Again at the Myōkokuji in Kyoto, Nobunaga this time invited seventeen of Sakai's most prominent tea masters to celebrate recent military victories and Sen Rikyū was in charge of the ceremony.⁴

The Yuishogaki states that Sen Rikyū, like Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū, was granted a stipend of 3,000 koku.⁵ At the same time he was appointed resident tea master at

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 93-7.
2. Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, entry 24.11. Tenshō 1, CKZ, X:24-5.
3. E.g. Sōkyū takai ki, entries 8.3. and 3.4. Tenshō 2, CKZ, VII:195-7; Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, entries 24.3. and 3.4. Tenshō 2, CKZ, X:25-6.
4. Shinchō kō ki, entry 28.10. Tenshō 3, p. 119.
5. Yuishogaki, pp. 323-4; one koku of rice equalled at that time one kan of money.

Azuchi castle. This event must therefore have taken place around Tenshō 4 (1576), the date of completion of this castle, or after.

In the light of the above evidence, the fact that Rikyū had by that time become one of Nobunaga's tea masters can be accepted as correct. Whether the Yuishogaki is correct in stating that he received the same salary and had the same status as the other two tea masters is open to doubt, especially when considering the following information contained in the historically reliable Shinchō kō ki.

In Tenshō 6 (1578) Nobunaga officially visited Sakai to inspect a number of newly built ships. These had been constructed in an effort to defeat finally the Ishiyama Honganji by cutting off its maritime supply route. The ulterior motive of Nobunaga's visit was to impress the citizens of Sakai with his military strength and to secure their good will so that they too would cut their last ties with his dangerous opponent. For this purpose Nobunaga, after the inspection at the harbour, proceeded to the city in great splendour to visit personally the houses of several tea masters. The most important merchant for the success of his military venture against the Honganji was Imai Sōkyū, who was duly visited first. Then Beniya Sōyō, Tsuda Sōkyū and Tennōjiya Dōshitsu had the honour of entertaining the ruler in their own homes. According to the Shinchō kō ki the tea master Sen Rikyū did not receive this

honour.¹ The Yuishogaki, however, states that Rikyū did entertain Nobunaga on this occasion.² Sen Sōsa, the narrator of the work, would have been familiar with the above mentioned entry in the Shinchō kō ki, and it is conceivable that he thought it appropriate to add Rikyū's name to those of the other tea masters who entertained Nobunaga at this time.

Rikyū's function as secretary or even scribe to Oda Nobunaga is suggested by a short note concerning ammunition for campaigns in Echizen dated 16.9. This document bears Nobunaga's seal, but is written by Rikyū.³

His role of well-informed correspondent is illustrated by a letter assumed to have been written in Tenshō 9 (1581). It is addressed to Sueyoshi Kambei Toshikata, an influential merchant of Hirano. In a previous letter Rikyū had apparently mentioned that Nobunaga was coming to Kyoto, but now he wrote that this had been postponed for one or two days. Further he states that Hideyoshi had arrived at the capital four or five days ago and that the next day he was going to visit Azuchi castle. The previous day a spectacular Noh play had been held in Hideyoshi's honour at the Kiyomizu temple which Rikyū also seems to have attended.

1. Shinchō kō ki, entry 27.9. Tenshō 6, pp. 148-9.

2. Yuishogaki, p. 324.

3. Letter quoted in Sugimoto, Sen Rikyū, p. 21. The work Sugimoto refers to - Sen Sōsa, ed., Urasenke (Kadokawa Shoten) - was not available.

Noteworthy in the light of events to come is a line concerning Nobunaga's assassin Akechi Mitsuhide in Rikyū's letter.

"Lately¹ I have not gone to see the Lord of Hyūga.² It is sad. There will be a lot of trouble."³

Unfortunately this reference to Akechi Mitsuhide is too short to draw any conclusions from it, yet the idea that Rikyū might have anticipated his rebellion is an interesting one.

At the time of writing the above letter, Rikyū was establishing his own villa in Kyoto at the gate of the Daitokuji. Sueyoshi Kambei had just sent some thin matting for the new house and Rikyū tells him:

"More than anything, this is just what was needed at that moment."⁴

but then continues a little later that he has no rice to pay for the carpenter, that his friend should lend him some and that receiving matting without rice was not interesting at all.

The man to whom Rikyū wrote in such a joking and informal tone had been highly favoured by Nobunaga. Head of a powerful merchant family at Hirano in Settsu he was

1. Lit. "thereafter".
2. Akechi Mitsuhide.
3. SRS, pp. 62-3; letter dated 1.4. (Tenshō 9). The last sentence could also mean "There is a lot of trouble."
4. SRS, p. 62.

appointed daikan of this district in Tenshō 3 (1575)¹ and four years later was given monopoly rights for horse trading and pack-horse transportation.² There are all in all eight known letters from Rikyū to Sueyoshi. Due to their cryptic nature, the fact that the year is not included in the dating and that Sueyoshi's replies to Rikyū are not available, it is difficult to say what significance the letters had to the recipient. Sentences such as

"I have spoken to his Lordship
about you twice. He knows (it) well."³

do, however, suggest that Rikyū was acting as middleman between the ruler and the merchant.

This is seen more clearly in the letter below, quoted in full to show also how the business of the tea master was intimately linked with political issues.

"Your visit the other day from
afar made me extremely happy. As for
the yoshii kettle, I was really
surprised by how very beautiful it
is.

As promised I am forwarding you
a draft of the letter to be issued over
Nobunaga's seal addressed to Hatō⁴ as

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1. Toyoda, Sakai, p. 83.
 2. Ibid., p. 93; Sakai-shi shi, I:183.
 3. SRS, p. 67; letter dated 12.7.
 4. Abbreviation for Hashiba Tōkichirō, being Hideyoshi.

as well as the map of Tottori.

You had better return the map of the castle. (If you) keep it for three or five days, everybody should be able to have a look at it.

I have been told about the matter of Nagata by Komochi.¹ It is most appropriate.

Your recent order of bamboo and other things is not exceptional, but I note it with respect. If I am going to see you soon, I will tell you about things I intend to do.

Tōshirō dono² would like to apologize for his rudeness in not going to see you the other day.

If you send his Lordship³ a congratulatory gift, it would be most appropriate to present him with your above mentioned kettle, as Korenichi⁴ probably will desire to have it."⁵

1. Komochi was in charge of Rikyū's business at Sakai.
2. Tōshirō dono is believed to have been some relation of Sueyoshi (SRS, p. 71).
3. Oda Nobunaga.
4. Akechi Mitsuhide.
5. SRS, p. 69.

Tottori castle was captured by Hideyoshi on 25.10. Tenshō 9 (1581) and the above letter dated 21.8. is therefore likely to have been written in that year. The attack on the strongly fortified castle in Inaba formed part of Nobunaga's offensive against the powerful Mōri family in central Japan and it might appear strange that a draft of the ruler's sealed letter to the general in command as well as the map of the castle under attack is forwarded by a tea master to a merchant for perusal. This is symbolic of the dramatic changes in warfare that were introduced by Nobunaga.

The famous battle between Uesugi Kenshin and Takeda Shingen during the middle of the century were still fought against the background of a strict military code of honour. The stories of the gallant behaviour of these warriors on the battlefield are as popular to-day as ever. With Nobunaga things were different: not only did he introduce firearms to the battle ground, but he also used economic sanctions to bring about the fall of an otherwise impregnable fortress.¹ As Nobunaga's general, Hideyoshi used these same tactics during his campaigns in central Japan. Miki castle in Harima opened its gates to Hideyoshi after a siege of nearly a year long, and plans for the capture of Tottori castle were very much the same.

1. E.g. as demonstrated in his campaign against the Kitabatake family in Eiroku 12. (Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, p. 129).

In the third month of Tenshō 9 (1581) Hideyoshi issued orders to secure unmolested passage for trading vessels of his own domain Nagahama in Ōmi, along the coast of Wakasa and Tango.¹ This was a stretch of sea that lay between his home base and the castle to be captured. The next month he freed the same trading vessels of various compulsory duties for the government and then ordered the owners to proceed to Inaba and to buy up all available grain in the area, even at the result of a quick inflation of prices.² Finally in the sixth month Hideyoshi moved his armies to surround the castle, cutting off all supply routes, and with an additional scheme of flooding the fortress, forced its surrender in the tenth month of the same year. Looking at this strategy employed by Hideyoshi, it is not difficult to imagine why a merchant would be involved in the preparations for a military campaign.

Rikyū's letter to Sueyoshi Kambei unfortunately gives no details of Sueyoshi's exact function in this operation, but the fact that he was entrusted with such highly confidential information suggests that it must have been a vital one. Again, one can also conclude that Rikyū must have occupied a position of some importance to be handling such potentially dangerous material.

Furthermore the above letter indicates that in his work for Nobunaga, Rikyū associated closely with the

1. Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, p. 249.
2. Ibid., pp. 249-50.

former's most successful general Toyotomi Hideyoshi. There is evidence that this relationship between the tea master and the man who was to become the de facto ruler of the country started at a relatively early date.

v) Rikyū and Hideyoshi

As a senior retainer of Oda Nobunaga, Hideyoshi is likely to have started to practise tea soon after his lord showed such a fervour for this pastime. Most probably he was granted permission to call his own tea gatherings in Tenshō 4 (1576) when he was rewarded with a famous Chinese scroll - which was considered a valuable decoration for the tea room - for his work as sakuji bugyō (building commissioner) during the construction of Azuchi castle.¹ With Nobunaga's policy of awarding tea utensils for military prowess, Hideyoshi soon collected a number of valuable tea utensils as a reward for his successful campaigns in central Japan.²

From the documents available it is sometimes suggested that Hideyoshi studied tea during this time with Tsuda Sōkyū:³ he entertained the tea master while campaigning in the tenth month of Tenshō 6 (1578),⁴ at his base at Nagahama in the second month of Tenshō 8 (1580)⁵

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1. Shinchō kō ki, entry 1.7. Tenshō 4, p. 124.
 2. E.g. as described in his letter to Imai Sōkyū of 23.12. (Tenshō 9). (Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, pp. 49-50.)
 3. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 113.
 4. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 15.10. Tenshō 6, CKZ, VII:286.
 5. Ibid., entry 19.2. Tenshō 8, CKZ, VII:134.

and again when preparing for military action at Himeji castle in the sixth month of the next year.¹ If Tsuda Sōkyū recorded all tea functions, then the paucity of meetings - three only in four years between teacher and pupil - could hardly have allowed Hideyoshi to make rapid progress. Perhaps Hideyoshi received further guidance from Sen Rikyū. Although there is no evidence of tea functions attended by both men - most likely because neither man kept a record of tea meetings - there is proof that friendly relations already existed between Rikyū and Hideyoshi during the early days of Nobunaga's rule.

Interesting in this respect is a letter jointly signed by Rikyū and Hideyoshi, addressed to a certain Kinoshita Sukehisa, a retainer of Nobunaga and distant relation of Hideyoshi.² This short document deals with the acquisition of tea utensils, mentioning the names of two other warriors under Nobunaga's banner. In conclusion it praises the artistic judgement of the recipient. The letter does not indicate in which year it was written, but Kuwata suggests that it was composed during the early years of Tenshō (beginning in 1573).³

The advice about the quality of the utensils in question as well as the final words of praise can be attributed to Rikyū, while the recipient and the two other

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1. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 12.6. Tenshō 9, CKZ, VI:340.
 2. SRS, p. 13; letter dated 10.1.
 3. SRS, p. 14.

warriors mentioned were most likely Hideyoshi's friends.¹ This is a good example of how Hideyoshi would have sought the friendship of the tea master Rikyū to gain recognition in the world of tea, which was socially so important, and how Rikyū, on the other hand, gained in importance by establishing friendships with the leading military men of the day.

A letter from Hideyoshi to Rikyū - which Kuwata places between Tenshō 3 and 4 (1575-6) - throws light upon another aspect of the relationship between the two men. In this very brief note Hideyoshi thanks Rikyū for looking after a sum of money for some time and now acknowledges the receipt of the same.² Significant is the honorific form kō (公) used by Hideyoshi after Rikyū's name, showing clearly the exalted position that the tea master occupied in the social scale of the day.³

Evidence of the continued friendship between Hideyoshi and Rikyū is also contained in the diary of Tsuda Sōkyū: in the fourth month of Tenshō 7 (1579) the latter noted that Rikyū performed the tea ceremony with a tea container that had just arrived from Hideyoshi⁴ and two years later that Hideyoshi entertained at tea with a kettle that had been sent by Rikyū.⁵

1. If they were Rikyū's friends, there would have been no point in Hideyoshi co-signing the note.

2. SRS, p. 15; letter dated 4.11.

3. "kō" - lord, prince or duke. One cannot altogether exclude the possibility that Hideyoshi used the expression in a jocular way, but it seems unlikely.

4. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 22.4. Tenshō 7, CKZ, VII:298.

5. Ibid., entry 12.6. Tenshō 9, CKZ, VII:340.

That Rikyū, similarly to Tsuda Sōkyū, did visit Hideyoshi when campaigning is shown by a letter from Hideyoshi addressed to Imai Sōkyū during campaigns in Harima.¹ It ends with the sentence

"Because I am speaking to Sōeki²

I am not writing in detail."

Obviously Rikyū must have stayed with Hideyoshi at the time and been planning to return to Sakai, the destination of the letter. This document is also interesting in the way it again illustrates the relatively high social position of the tea masters versus a successful general such as Hideyoshi. In the letter Hideyoshi expresses his gratitude towards Imai Sōkyū for entertaining him with the tea ceremony in Sakai and the language abounds in terms of humbleness and respect.

At this time commerce was rapidly expanding and military and political issues showed an increasingly important commercial aspect. It has been shown that this was a drastic change from the concept of warfare according to strict traditional rules of ethics still upheld and practised in this period. In fact the reliance upon merchants in the chivalrous art of war must, in its initial stages, have been regarded as degrading or even immoral. The tea ceremony - popular with the new commercial elite,

1. Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p. 36; letter dated 15.5.
2. Rikyū.

but carrying connotations of court life - was used as a medium to take advantage of the services of the powerful merchants without offending the traditional order. Only as tea masters could these merchants be given recognition and a place in the military orientated social hierarchy of the day corresponding to their actual power and influence.

Summarizing one can say that during the years of Nobunaga's rule a process which had been developing for some time was starting to be consciously accepted and found expression in social behaviour through the medium of the tea ceremony. Once the tea ceremony had been established as an enviable privilege of the ruling class, then superior accomplishment in matters of tea and the position of tea master per se became prestigious. This was the case with Rikyū when he became Nobunaga's tea master; although here again not only his recognized ability to teach and practise the tea ceremony but also the fact that as a merchant he had close contacts with other merchants made him an extremely useful and consequently important man in Nobunaga's entourage.

However, under Nobunaga, Rikyū was only one of three official tea masters, and perhaps the least important of them at that. Only when Nobunaga's retainer Hideyoshi, with whom Rikyū was linked by an early friendship, came to power, did the tea master reach the peak of his political career.

CHAPTER III: INCREASING IMPORTANCE UNDER HIDEYOSHI
TENSHŌ 10 - 13 (1582-85)

i) Hideyoshi Takes over Nobunaga's Role as Patron of Tea

When Hideyoshi received news of Oda Nobunaga's death in the sixth month of Tenshō 10 (1582) he moved swiftly to attack and kill his late ruler's assassin Akechi Mitsuhide. Although Hideyoshi publicly supported Nobunaga's infant grandson, Sambōshi, as heir, it soon became evident that he himself aimed to succeed as ruler of the country. On a social level he demonstrated this by taking over Nobunaga's privileges in the field of tea.

Only a month after Nobunaga's death he exercised the latter's prerogative of appropriating two well-known tea utensils, in this case those that had been owned by the warrior Murai Sadakatsu.¹

In the eleventh month Hideyoshi invited all three of Nobunaga's tea masters to a ceremony at Yamazaki, preparing himself the first cup of tea. The utensils used on this occasion leave no doubt that he considered it now his right to entertain with the country's most valuable objets d'art.²

1. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 12.7. Tenshō 10, CKZ, VII:365; Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 118.

2. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 7.11. Tenshō 10, CKZ, VII:370.

Again, shortly after the New Year, Hideyoshi hosted a tea ceremony using many utensils that had once been cherished by Nobunaga. Present were the late ruler's three tea masters as well as three other men outstanding in the art of tea: Yamanoue no Sōji, Mozuya Sōan and Jū no Sōho.¹

A letter written by Hideyoshi to a retainer of the Oda family for Nobunaga's remaining sons Nobukatsu² and Nobutaka gives some insight into Hideyoshi's attitude towards the tea ceremony. The document was composed shortly after the famous meeting of Nobunaga's family and retainers at Kiyosu in the eleventh month of Tenshō 10 (1582) and gives reasons why the writer himself is the man most worthy to take over the leadership of the country. After mentioning a number of military successes and the praise and rewards he received for them from Nobunaga, he continues:

"Despite the fact that the tea ceremony was (for Nobunaga) part of his way of government,³ the fact that I was given permission and instructed (by Nobunaga) to practise the tea ceremony is something hard to forget in this world and the next. When I recall what great personages were licensed to

1. Imai Sōkyū ... nukigaki, entry 5.1. Tenshō 11, CKZ, X:35.

2. Also pronounced "Nobuo".

3. Lit. "the tea ceremony is the way of politics".

practise the tea ceremony, my tears
 flow day and night and my esteem
 extends even to the whole clan of
 Oda."¹

The sentiments expressed above might be exaggerated, written as they were to prove the author's high-mindedness. They are invaluable, however, in showing quite unmistakably that even at this time the political nature of the Way of Tea was openly recognized by those involved.

If the Way of Tea is connected with the Way of Politics, then, by implication, the duties of the tea master must also include matters of political nature. In the above extract, Hideyoshi clearly expresses that he attaches great importance to this political Way of Tea - in fact he tries to portray himself as a dedicated adherent - and this in itself presages his future patronage of this Way with the same ardor that Nobunaga had shown.

Consequently the dual role Rikyū played both as tea master and senior member of Hideyoshi's political staff need not be regarded as unusual. In fact, when Rikyū was entrusted with the position of principal tea master it would have implied that he would also make himself available for political duties.

1. Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p. 64.

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During the Tokugawa period the Way of Tea lost its political overtones to some extent. The men who were known as chabōzu (茶坊主) still carried on Rikyū's functions as negotiators and mediators behind the scenes and some of them enjoyed a certain amount of influence.¹ However, the office of the tea master, such as held by Rikyū's descendants, became predominantly an artistic and religious one. Consequently Rikyū's chroniclers, who received their information from these descendants, either ignored or were ignorant of his political activities and painted his portrait in line with the prevalent idea of a tea master.

ii) Sen Rikyū and Tsuda Sōkyū Gain in Favour

At the tea ceremonies held by Hideyoshi shortly after he came to power all three of Nobunaga's tea masters were present, and there is documentary evidence that at least Imai Sōkyū was confirmed in his previously granted stipend.² Nevertheless, it soon became evident that Hideyoshi favoured Sen Rikyū and Tsuda Sōkyū rather than Imai Sōkyū. After the early months of Tenshō 11 (1583) only Rikyū and Tsuda Sōkyū are present at intimate tea gatherings³ and at large scale tea ceremonies the latter two take over special

1. Itō Tasaburō, "Kenryoku to chabōzu", Nihon rekishi 301 (June 1973):44-8.

2. Imai ke monjo as quoted by Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 122.

3. Sōkyū takai ki, entries 24.5., 2.7., 13.8. Tenshō 11, CKZ, VII:390, 394, 397.

functions,¹ while Imai Sōkyū is only one of many guests. Haga attributes the decline of Imai Sōkyū's position to the fact that his services as supplier of arms and front man were no longer needed as urgently as previously: the whole-hearted support of the merchant community of Sakai was now no longer in question, and the soldier-monks of the Ishiyama Honganji had been subdued.² These factors may have had some influence,³ but primarily personal preferences would have been decisive. Especially as Hideyoshi expected his tea master to do more than preside over the ritual of tea, it is natural that he would make his own choice as to who should fill this important position and that Rikyū as long-standing friend of Hideyoshi should now be in the limelight.

Various correspondence gives a glimpse of Rikyū's life at Hideyoshi's side during the first few years after Nobunaga's death.

In the eighth month of Tenshō 10 (1582) Rikyū writes to Myōkian, an abbot from Yamazaki, that if Hideyoshi is to go to Yamazaki, he, Rikyū, might suddenly be there too.⁴ The next year he accompanied Hideyoshi to

1. Sōkyū takai ki, entry 5.3. Tenshō 13, CKZ, VII:409.

2. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 122.

3. However, Hideyoshi of course still needed large supplies of ammunition, and affiliated temples of the Ishiyama Honganji also were to cause trouble in the future. (Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, p. 326).

4. SRS, p. 89; letter dated 27.8. (Tenshō 10). Karagi assumes wrongly that Hideyoshi and Rikyū's friendship only came about on this occasion. See Karagi Junzō, Sen Rikyū (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1973), pp. 67-8.

Sakamoto and noted that the latter was in exceptionally good spirits.¹ At the end of the year he tells the abbot from Yamazaki not to call on Hideyoshi right now, as he is extremely busy, but early spring would be a better time.² Very vivid is a letter in which Rikyū thanks a friend for a barrel of food and adds that as it is so delicious, he is taking some to Osaka to let Hideyoshi taste it.³ Further there is a short message to Hideyoshi himself, a reply to a note of thanks.⁴

A letter Rikyū addressed to the Hakata merchant Shimai Sōshitsu also falls into this period. Rikyū writes that he had talked at length to Hideyoshi about the merchant and that Hideyoshi was now longing to see him.⁵ It appears that at this time Rikyū already had a great deal of influence over the de facto ruler of the country.

Historically interesting is a remark informing Shimai Sōshitsu that the famous tea utensil hatsuhana had just arrived from Tokugawa Ieyasu. As the date of the letter is the sixth month of Tenshō 11 (1583), this was most probably a gift to congratulate Hideyoshi on his victory over Shibata Katsuie in the fourth month of this year. However, friendly feelings between these two senior retainers of the late Nobunaga were not to last long. In the third

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1. SRS, p. 108; letter dated 27.7. (Tenshō 11).
 2. SRS, p. 118; letter dated 18.12.
 3. SRS, p. 113; letter dated 3.12.
 4. SRS, p. 126; letter dated 12.3. (Tenshō 12).
 5. SRS, p. 103; letter dated 20.6. (Tenshō 11).

month of the next year hostilities broke out. Rikyū's correspondence reflects these circumstances.

iii) War and Peace with Ieyasu and Oda Nobukatsu

Nobunaga's remaining two sons Nobukatsu and Nobutaka both had ambitions to succeed to the position of their murdered father. In their rivalry each of them formed alliances with one of their father's powerful retainers: Nobutaka asked Shibata Katsuie to fight his cause, while Nobukatsu relied on Hideyoshi. By the fourth month of Tenshō 11 (1583) Shibata Katsuie and Nobutaka had both been forced to commit suicide, but it now became obvious that Hideyoshi would not yield his supremacy to his protégé, Nobunaga's only remaining son Nobukatsu.

After the murder of Nobunaga, Ieyasu intended to revenge his former lord, but when he realized that this had already been accomplished by Hideyoshi, he returned to his domain without taking part in the ensuing power struggle. Instead he consolidated his position by expanding and fortifying his northeastern boundaries. It was to Ieyasu that Nobukatsu now went to seek help against Hideyoshi.

In the third month of Tenshō 12 (1584) hostilities broke out in Owari between Hideyoshi on one hand and the combined armies of Ieyasu and Nobukatsu on the other. For a long time neither army moved until finally Hideyoshi's camp suffered defeat through a rash manoeuvre led by his

nephew Hidetsugu. After this event no more decisive engagements were fought.

In the sixth month Hideyoshi laid siege to the strongly fortified castle of Takegahana.¹ Rikyū writes on 13.6.:

"... I have received your letter. Yesterday a letter arrived from Lord Hideyoshi. Takegahana castle has been handed over on the tenth. The people in the castle were put under the command of Hitotsuyanagi Ichisuke and Makimura Chōhei and he (Fuwa Genroku) has retreated to the castle of Nagashima.² Hideyoshi proceeded immediately to Iga. Although Tokoro Dembei will inform you by separate letter, I am sending you the above message."³

It appears that Rikyū had received news of the victory directly from Hideyoshi even before other people concerned had been informed. He was therefore in a position to pass on this information only three days after the event had taken place in Owari. It is intriguing to note that the tea master is among the first to be informed of military

1. Also pronounced "Takebana".

2. The above document does not specify who retreated to Nagashima, but a letter from Ieyasu to Fuwa dated 13.6. shows that it was the latter. (Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku, ed., Dai Nihon Shiryō [Tokyo: Shiryō Hensanjo, 1938], part 11, VII:376).

3. SRS, p. 130. The name of the addressee is unknown.

events and one might conclude that his duties were such that it was essential for him to be kept up to date on military and political matters.

Similarly one gains the impression that Rikyū could exercise some influence on matters of state from a letter he wrote in the seventh month of the same year. Again the name of the addressee has been lost, but the contents suggests that the recipient was a daimyo standing between the eastern army of Ieyasu and Nobukatsu and the western army of Hideyoshi. Amongst other assurances and directions Rikyū writes that he has spoken about the addressee's position to both Toku'un and Tomita Tomonobu and that he should not worry.¹ Tomita Tomonobu functioned as Hideyoshi's emissary when a final peace treaty was concluded in the eleventh month of the same year.

The above treaty is historically well documented, but what is little known is that two months before this date - in the ninth month of Tenshō 12 (1584) - negotiations were under way and agreement had practically been reached. Evidence is contained in two diary entries² and four letters, of which two were written by Hideyoshi and two by Rikyū.

On 6.9. Tenshō 12 (1584) Hideyoshi wrote to a certain Iwa, presumably a lady-in-waiting to his wife:³

1. SRS, p. 132; letter dated 18.7. (Tenshō 12). Toku'un is also known as Yakuin Zensō.

2. Eishun, Tamon'in nikki, ed. Tsuji Zennosuke (Tokyo: Sankyō Shoin, 1935-9), III:371; Uno Mondo, Uno Mondo nikki, in Uematsu Torazō, ed., Ishiyama Honganji nikki (Osaka Seibundō, 1966-8), II:522.

3. It was the practice at that time to address a letter not always directly to the person concerned, but at times to a retainer or lady-in-waiting.

"At long last I will return triumphant
and you should not worry ...

They say that they are going to
surrender five people, that is to say
hostages for Lord Sansuke¹ and Ieyasu,
hostages for Ikō Hōki and hostages for
the castellans of Inuyama and Nagashima
and so it is already more or less over."²

One of Rikyū's letters bears no date, but as it
is very similar in content it is generally assumed that
it was written during the same period.³ The name of the
addressee has been lost, but Kuwata believes that it was
addressed to Sueyoshi Kamei, who has already been
mentioned.⁴

The postscript of the letter reads:⁵

"I am glad to hear you are well.

There is no uesama on the letter written
by Hideyoshi. It has come to the point
where they have been told to surrender

1. Oda Nobukatsu.

2. Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p. 100.

3. E.g. the letter is included amongst other material to
document the conclusion of the peace treaty between Hideyoshi
and Ieyasu in Dai Nihon shiryō (part 11, VIII:446).

4. SRS, p. 142.

5. What is here referred to as "postscript" was, however,
placed at the beginning of the letter. In this thesis it
will also be indicated by the word "note", as it often appears
to be the most important part of the letter. See also
Adriana Boscaro, "An Introduction to the Private Correspondence
of Toyotomi Hideyoshi", Monumenta Nipponica 27 (1972):
417 n. 17.

hostages who are to be Lord Sansuke's daughter, Ieyasu's son and the sons of both Ikō Hōki and Sakai Saemonnojō. It will soon be over. Because this message should have been sent to you from the castle yesterday I am especially sending out someone ..."¹

Hideyoshi appears to have sent out a demand for hostages to Nobukatsu without addressing Nobunaga's son as uesama, his Lordship. This title had formerly been used for Nobunaga, and Nobukatsu, now claiming to be his rightful heir, may well have expected to be addressed with such words. Hideyoshi, of course, saw himself as Nobunaga's successor; by omitting this title in addressing Nobukatsu, he put emphasis on his claim.

Rikyū was obviously well informed about this point of contention and familiar with the text of the document in question. In addition it appears to have been his duty to see that the news of such confidential political arrangements was promptly forwarded to the people concerned.

Rikyū's second letter, dated 12.9., is addressed to the abbot of the Atagoyama temple in Kyoto, Fukujun'in by name. Here he wrote:

"... Further, news has specially come from (Hideyoshi's) encampment that peace

1. SRS, p. 141.

has been concluded in the eastern provinces according to Hideyoshi's wishes. You will certainly hear the same thing at your end ..."¹

Curiously enough the letter is dated 12.9. while in fact negotiations had already broken down five days previously. By 12.9. this news had already travelled by secret letter to Nara and is recorded under this date in the diary of the Kōfukuji.² Had Rikyū not been informed of this course of events? In the light of the information contained in the above documents, this seems hardly likely. A number of reasons may be advanced to explain why Rikyū would still have maintained that peace had been concluded, although he had been informed of the opposite. First and foremost to bolster people's morale. Rikyū expressly states that peace had been concluded "according to Hideyoshi's wishes" to indicate Hideyoshi's superior position and minimize the threat of Tokugawa Ieyasu. The failure of the negotiations was clearly secret and not for publication according to the Nara chronicle. News of peace negotiations passed on to the public to-day is no different.

Further, it is recorded in the Tamon'in nikki that the parties failed to reach agreement over a single article only and the author hopefully adds that they would surely be able to settle this matter. Rikyū must have believed the same.

1. SRS, p. 144.
 2. Tamon'in nikki, III:371.

Indeed, it was only a matter of time. By the twelfth month of Tenshō 12 (1584) Hideyoshi had concluded peace treaties with both Nobukatsu and Ieyasu.¹ On the tenth of that month Rikyū could inform the abbot Myōkian at Yamazaki that Nobukatsu was in Osaka on 7.12. and that he, Rikyū, had been visiting Nobukatsu frequently.² No doubt, the official purpose of these visits was the common enjoyment of tea. However, judging from the above evidence, one can well imagine that Hideyoshi had intentionally chosen the versatile tea master to look after his new ally and that matters other than those pertaining to the tea ceremony would have been discussed.

These were extremely busy times for the sixty-two year old Rikyū. He frequently mentions in his correspondence how pressed he is for time;³ his above mentioned letter to Myōkian even appears to be written while travelling along the Yodo river by boat on his way back to Kyoto.

iv) War against Sasa Narimasa

While Hideyoshi was fighting against Nobukatsu and Ieyasu in Owari during the spring and summer of

1. Uno Mondo nikki, II:522.

2. SRS, p. 148. Kuwata states that there is no other documentation to support the date 7.12. for Nobukatsu's visit to Osaka (SRS, p. 149). However, a letter of this very date from Nobukatsu's retainer Iida Hambeijō to Takagi Hirotsugu sent from Osaka, appears to confirm that Nobukatsu was in that city at that time. (Dai Nihon shiryō, part 11, X:166.)

3. E.g. SRS, pp. 146, 168, 210; letters dated 19.11., 13.5., 8.11. respectively.

Tenshō 12 (1584), Sasa Narimasa in Etchū was leading skirmishes against Hideyoshi's retainer Maeda Toshi'ie. Sasa Narimasa was supporting Nobukatsu's cause and - according to the Hōan Taikō ki - even after peace had been concluded at the end of that year, made a desperate trip across the Japanese Alps in that same winter in an effort to speak personally to Ieyasu and gain his support for further wars against Hideyoshi.¹ Ieyasu declined, but hostilities between Narimasa and Hideyoshi's retainers continued.

There were, however, more urgent matters for Hideyoshi to attend to. At the end of the third month of Tenshō 13 (1585) he found it necessary to move out his armies against the soldier-monks of Saiga and Negoro, and, as Hideyoshi picturesquely puts it himself "sever their heads to the last man".² Then, after pacifying Izumi and the Kii peninsula, he marshalled his forces against the rebellious Chōsokabe Motochika of Shikoku, but by 15.6. of that year, he was ready to plan his campaign against Sasa Narimasa.³

Rikyū was well informed of Hideyoshi's intentions; at the end of the sixth month he writes from Osaka to a friend in Kyoto anticipating that Hideyoshi would suddenly

1. Ōse Hōan, Taikō ki, ed. Kuwata Tadachika (Tokyo: Jimbutsu Oraisha, 1971), p. 195.

2. Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p. 110; letter dated 15.6. (Tenshō 13) to Satake Yoshinobu.

3. Ibid.

move out the army¹ and that he, Rikyū, would then be able to travel to the capital.²

Rikyū's involvement in the preparations of Hideyoshi's campaign into Etchū is hinted at in a letter to Matsui Yasuyuki, a senior retainer of the Hosokawa family. On 8.7. (Tenshō 13) (1585) he writes:

"Note:³ as there are no special arrangements for Yūsai⁴ and the Lord of Etsu⁵ I am not sending a separate letter. I would like to outline these things in this letter.

As communication from you I received the seasonal gift of one hundred potted mackerel. I know you are always doing this, but it really is extremely kind to send such a gift when you are so far away. Further, as mentioned in your letter, I can well imagine that the matter of the ships

1. This, however, could also refer to a march into Shikoku planned for 3.7. rather than the Etchū campaign envisaged for the end of the seventh month. (SRS, p. 174).

2. SRS, p. 172; letter dated 29.6. (Tenshō 13) addressed to Kawabata Dōki. There is no mention of the year in the date of this letter, but due to the fact that the title naifusama is used for Hideyoshi, this letter can safely be attributed to the year Tenshō 13. He was only naifu for four months in Tenshō 13 before he obtained the title of kampaku in the seventh month of that year.

3. See above p. 59, n. 5.

4. Hosokawa Fujitaka.

5. Fujitaka's son Hosokawa Tadaoki. "Etsu" is also pronounced "Koshi".

for the northern provinces must have brought you all sorts of confusion. Matters in Shikoku, of course, are now settled and the same applies to the northern provinces; two alternatives have been decided upon: either Ieyasu hands over hostages from amongst his elders, or, if not, Kuranosuke¹ is to surrender his territory and hand it over to the naifusama.² ... As the above mentioned matter has been concluded, Hideyoshi will also postpone his march into Shikoku, which had been planned for the third of this month. He arrived in the capital on the seventh, yesterday. We will go there to-day, the eighth."³

Hideyoshi was still wary of any link between Ieyasu and Sasa Narimasa and asked the former for further hostages. Ieyasu, however, seems to have had no intention of staking the heads of his elders on the good behaviour of his belligerent supporter. In addition, the relationship between Hideyoshi and Ieyasu again threatened to deteriorate when a disobedient vassal of Ieyasu attacked the latter's ally Hōjō Ujimasa and secured military

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1. Sasa Narimasa.
 2. Hideyoshi.
 3. SRS, p. 175.

support from Hideyoshi.¹

It hardly appears as if Hideyoshi had expected to receive these hostages, for according to the above letter he had already given orders to Hosokawa Yūsai and his son Tadaoki to move their fleet from their base of Miyazu in Tango along the North Japan coast to Etchū.² The recipient of Rikyū's letter, Matsui Yasuyuki, acting as naval commander and patrolling the coastline between Kaga and Etchū, distinguished himself by destroying several enemy ships and capturing Hashi castle.³

It took another month until Hideyoshi himself moved into Etchū. Rikyū stayed back in Osaka, in charge while Hideyoshi was away. It seems amazing that someone with an official status of tea master only should fill the important post of rusu⁴, but as much is indicated in a letter Rikyū wrote to Shibayama Gennai on 22.8.

Tenshō 14 (1586):

1. The warrior in question was Sanada Masayuki who had previously fought for Ieyasu against the Hōjō clan. When peace was concluded between the two parties in Tenshō 10, the terms specified that the area defended by Sanada, Numata in Kōzuke, was to be handed over to the Hōjō. Sanada refused. In the eighth month of Tenshō 13 matters came to a climax and Sanada asked Hideyoshi for military support. The latter designated Uesugi Kagekatsu to assist Sanada. (Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, pp. 456-7).

2. SRS, p. 177.

3. SRS, p. 188.

4. Person in charge while the lord of the castle is away. Compare use of the terminology in Hideyoshi's letter to Sugihara Ietsugu dated 17.8. (Tenshō 11) quoted in Usui Nobuyoshi, "Hideyoshi to Arima onsen", Nihon rekishi 284 (January 1972):131. Also see Kuwata's comments in SRS, p. 185.

"As I would like to hear the state of the army, I have sent word to Hososhin.¹ I am forwarding a box of irikaya.² In case you should meet Lord Shin,¹ kindly inform him of this. At the same time I should certainly be kept informed of the state of the vanguard of the army. Your letter from your lodgings arrived. My custody of the castle is going fine. Nothing has changed here. I am quite sincere in suggesting to you that if you should have some business while the Lord is away, you should let me know. I am ending this letter because you will be informed of all these things, one after the other, by the courier.³

Semi-official letters of this period, such as the one above, frequently end saying that details will be reported by the bearer of the document. Matters of strategic importance appear to have been sent by word of mouth for fear of interception by the enemy. This makes it extremely difficult to evaluate just how much Rikyū was involved in the details of military operations. However, it is obvious that he did have some say in such matters from his authoritative request for a report on "the state of the vanguard of the army" in the letter quoted above.

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1. Hosoi Shinsuke, one of Hideyoshi's generals.
 2. Kind of cake.
 3. SRS, p. 184.

Again, in a letter to Matsui Yasuyuki, dated 4. int. 8. Tenshō 13 (1585),¹ when the war was already over, Rikyū writes of certain "matters" he was handling for Hosokawa's retainer.

"I have read your note of the twenty-eighth last. I have especially looked at those matters mentioned in your letter one by one. Indeed, there is nothing more priceless than the pacification of the country. As matters stand, I will at last see you again, which makes me extremely happy.

I am very grateful to you for transmitting the gist of our note to the Lord of Etsu province.²

I have heard that Kuranosuke³ has donned monk's robes and asked for pardon. This was the right thing to do. As I am looking forward to seeing you in person, I will rest my pen."⁴

Sasa Narimasa had submitted on 29.8.⁵ and although the whole country had not been pacified as yet, Hideyoshi had come one step closer.

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1. "Int." stands here for "intercalary".
 2. Hosokawa Tadaoki.
 3. Sasa Narimasa.
 4. SRS, p. 187.
 5. Tamon'in nikki, III:440.

With the expansion of Hideyoshi's power, Rikyū's sphere of influence widened. As the number of daimyo under Hideyoshi's control grew, Rikyū's position as personal assistant and adviser, who could be trusted to pass on highly confidential messages, act in Hideyoshi's stead and make it his business to keep in touch with those people most important to the ruler, became increasingly powerful.

CHAPTER IV: AT THE HEIGHT OF POWER
TENSHŌ 13 - 14 (1585-6)

Before the latter half of Tenshō 13 (1585) there is a relative paucity of material covering Sen Rikyū. However, for the next two years the documentation is somewhat fuller and there is evidence that Rikyū was one of Hideyoshi's most influential advisers. The three major events covered in this chapter, the imperial tea ceremony, relations between Hideyoshi and Shimazu, and Ōtomo Sōrin's report on his visit to Osaka, all took place between the latter half of Tenshō 13 (1585) and the first part of Tenshō 14 (1586). These events indicate that during this period Rikyū was at the height of his power.

i) The Imperial Tea Ceremony: Sōeki Becomes Rikyū

Hideyoshi was granted the title of kampaku (regent) on 11.7. Tenshō 13 (1585). Soon after, Rikyū's official status was greatly enhanced when he received the title of koji (Buddhist layman) and the Buddhist name of "Rikyū" by imperial decree in the ninth month of Tenshō 13 (1585).

The occasion was a grand tea ceremony hosted by Hideyoshi for the reigning Emperor Ōgimachi at the imperial

palace on 7.9. Tenshō 13 (1585).¹

It was an unheard of event.² Hideyoshi's unconventional approach in glorifying his own position had already astounded people when - according to the Tamon'in nikki - he went sightseeing at the palace on 11.7. and had himself adopted by Konoe Sakihisa, who held the office of kampaku. In this way Hideyoshi acquired the office for himself.³ But when he visited the palace again, this time to take the unprecedented step of arranging a tea ceremony for the emperor, people's imagination ran wild and they wondered whether Hideyoshi might not himself become the new emperor and his half-brother Hidenaga kampaku.⁴

Befitting the occasion the tea utensils were made of gold. They had, in fact, already been ordered in the winter of the previous year, when the plan for such a

1. There is some controversy as to whether the event took place on 7.9. or 7.10. Tenshō 13. The courtier Yoshida Kanemi, who attended this ceremony, gives the date as 7.9. in his diary Kanemi kyō ki. Haga therefore opts for this date. There are, however, a number of documents in favour of the tenth month: Uno Mondo nikki (II:539); Tamon'in nikki listing the event of Hideyoshi's preliminary visit to the palace - which in Kanemi kyō ki is 6.9. - as 6.10. (III:449); Sōkyū takai ki giving the date of the ceremony as 20.10. (CKZ, VII:413); and Rikyū's record of utensils used at the ceremony dated 7.10. (SRS, p. 203). This document, however, is not an original, but an old copy. Kuwata prefers to place the ceremony in the tenth month (SRS, pp. 196-9). Unfortunately the volume in question of Kanemi kyō ki was not available at the time of writing and information concerning this document is taken from Haga, Sen no Rikyū (as specified below). There being ample evidence that this ceremony did take place, the exact date is of no importance to the subject. For convenience's sake only the ninth month chronology is adopted.

2. Uno Mondo nikki, entry 7.10. Tenshō 13, II:539.

3. Tamon'in nikki, III:431.

4. Ibid., entry 8.10. Tenshō 13, III:449.

ceremony was first conceived.¹ The postponement to the ninth month was most likely due to the various military campaigns Hideyoshi felt himself constrained to carry out.

Maeda Gen'i, the commissioner in charge of Kyoto (Kyōtō no bugyō), and Sen Rikyū were entrusted with the preparations for the imperial tea ceremony, and records show that they visited the palace for preliminary arrangements on 27. int. 8.² Hideyoshi himself went to the palace on the fourth and the sixth of the ninth month to supervise matters personally.³

At the imperial tea ceremony Hideyoshi prepared and served tea to the emperor, while it was Rikyū's duty to serve the courtiers present.

As a plain, untitled merchant, however, Rikyū would not have been allowed to appear in the presence of the emperor. To overcome this problem, he was given the priesthood rank of koji and, together with this new title, the religious name of "Rikyū" was conferred upon him. This device of allowing a commoner to enter the palace by giving him a religious title was nothing new: doctors visiting the imperial rooms received the title of hottai, while even artists and artisans surrounding the Muromachi shogun were given the name of "ami".⁴ What was unusual,

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 145.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. pp. 144-6.

4. Ibid. p. 149. See also above p. 18, n. 1.

however, was that Rikyū received his title and name by imperial decree.¹

The imperial tea ceremony, although less famous than the grandiose "Kitano Tea Party" Hideyoshi was to give two years later, was an extremely important event in Rikyū's career for a number of reasons.

First and foremost Rikyū was now no longer simply a common merchant, but held a religious name and title bestowed by the emperor himself. Originally it was apparently intended that the name should only be used temporarily on the day of the imperial tea ceremony, but finally it was decided that he should be allowed to use it permanently. The importance of this decision for Rikyū can be seen from his deep-felt expressions of gratitude contained in a letter written on this occasion, even allowing for the customary polite expressions contained in such documents.² It must indeed have been a great distinction and honour for the tea master, for his religious teacher and friend, the Abbot Kokei Sōchin, particularly recorded his great joy on hearing of the imperial decree in his diary and composed a gatha (Buddhist poem) in honour of the event.³

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 151. Naturally the emperor himself would not have chosen the name, but acted upon a recommendation from Hideyoshi. There is some controversy as to when and by whom the name was chosen. Both Kuwata and Haga agree that most likely it was Kokei, the 118th abbot of the Daitokuji, who would have been asked by Hideyoshi to recommend a suitable name, shortly before the imperial tea ceremony was held. (SRS, pp. 196-9; Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 149-56).

2. SRS, p. 195; letter addressed to a certain Ashuso dated 29.9. (Tenshō 13).

3. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 151.

Furthermore, as Rikyū was the only tea master present at the imperial palace, there could no longer be any doubt that now he was "The Tea Master of Japan". In fact the courtier Yoshida Kanemi refers to him as such,¹ but interestingly enough only when he comes to describing the events at the palace; previously he had referred to him simply as Sōeki.² It is the final proof that Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū, although senior to Rikyū in years, were now junior to him in rank.

Finally the event widely publicized Hideyoshi's great love for the tea ceremony and the importance he attached to it. If Hideyoshi had merely wished to entertain the emperor, he could have done so in a number of more conventional ways; he could have given a banquet or arranged for the performance of Noh plays. The fact that he singled out the tea ceremony to regale the emperor and took the unprecedented step of taking his own tea master and utensils to the palace, not only underlined its importance as an essential social accomplishment, but also vested this form of entertainment, and the declared master of the art, with a great amount of prestige. As the tea ceremony became the accepted form of entertainment between personages of high rank, it became more and more essential for those wishing to approach Hideyoshi to seek the instruction and good will of his first tea master.

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 148; tenka gosadō殿(天)下御茶道(頭).

2. Ibid., p. 145.

While the imperial tea ceremony itself had no political overtones for Rikyū, the social status and publicity he received on this occasion made him all the more valuable as Hideyoshi's political negotiator. The events described below demonstrate in what high esteem Rikyū was now held even by the leader of the proud Shimazu clan of Kyushu.

ii) The Admonishment of Shimazu

During the period of unification of Japan's central provinces by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi the island of Kyushu was the scene of struggle between a number of warlords who, by frequently changing alliances, hoped to broaden their influence in the island. By Tenshō 13 (1585) two families, each backed by a number of smaller warlords, were virtually in control of Kyushu: the Shimazu clan of Satsuma and the Ōtomo family of Bungo. The latter was the less powerful and being constantly threatened by the expansionist Satsuma forces, it had already in Tenshō 12 (1584) asked Hideyoshi for military support.¹ Battlefields closer to home engaged Hideyoshi's attention at that time, but there can be no doubt that the subjugation of Kyushu was one of his eventual aims.

It was only by the latter half of Tenshō 13 (1585) that Hideyoshi finally saw himself in a position to

1. Japan, Sambō Hombu, ed., Nihon no senshi (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1965-6 ed.), IV:129.

confront the powerful Shimazu clan. It is typical of Hideyoshi's political thinking that this did not take the form of blunt military confrontation, but an attempt to settle problems through diplomatic manoeuvres.

One of these was a threatening letter addressed to Shimazu Yoshihisa commanding him in the name of the emperor to make peace with his enemies.¹ In a slightly more subtle fashion he instructed Sen Rikyū and Hosokawa Yūsai to write the following letter to Ijūin Tadamune, a senior retainer of the Shimazu clan.

"We are writing you a few lines on what we have heard about the kampaku's secret intentions in connection with the clashes between your province and that of Bungo.

In recent years he has pacified revolts in the capital and provinces and most of the country has adhered to peace. On this account the imperial court also venerates him. Accordingly he was appointed naidaijin² and entrusted with this office. Therefore he has been quite firmly instructed

1. Letter dated 2.10. quoted in Uwai Kakken, Uwai Kakken nikki, in Dai Nihon kokiroku (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957), III:89.

2. Minister (lord keeper of the privy seal). Hideyoshi held this title for four months in Tenshō 13 before becoming kampaku in the seventh month of that year.

according to the terms of the imperial wish to issue commands to the north, south, east and west.

As to Kyushu we have heard that mutual enmity has not ceased and that there have recently been disputes. Thus it should be that first of all they (the parties concerned) abandon everything and follow the imperial order so that a state of peace and friendship may prevail. He has been good enough to inform every party in writing that at such a time the borders of the provinces will be judged according to the merits of each case. If they (the parties concerned) do not comply, his secret intention is that they will certainly be dealt with. Needless to say, would it not be better if they used their better judgement this time?¹ As the taishū² was ordered to come to the capital in recent years we are notifying you secretly by letter first. When we receive your answer, we will inform you further."³

1. This sentence is not too clear. The interpretation adopted is that of Okada Akio, Nobunaga to Hideyoshi, Jimbutsu, Nihon no rekishi, vol. VII (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1965), p. 131.

2. Lord of the province, i.e. Shimazu Yoshihisa.

3. SRS, p. 200.

Both the above and Hideyoshi's letter are dated 2.10. (Tenshō 13) (1585). They are in fact so similar in content that one can well imagine that both documents were drawn up by the same group of people at the same time, the version of Rikyū and Hosokawa being longer and more polite, which would suit the relationship between the authors and the addressee. For Ijūin Tadamune is said to have been the disciple of both Hosokawa Yūsai and Rikyū, being instructed by the one in poetry and the other in the tea ceremony. Hideyoshi exploited this master disciple relationship: as kampaku he issued commands, but through the medium of the tea master and instructor in verse he could be persuasive, conciliatory.¹ And this is indeed the effect the two letters had on the Shimazu clan. Hideyoshi's orders were spurned: they came from a mere upstart, at whom the Shimazu family with ancestors going back to the twelfth century Shogun Minamoto Yoritomo, could only laugh.² The other, the letter of Rikyū and Hosokawa Yūsai, however, deserved the courtesy of a reply, even from the head of the Satsuma clan, Shimazu Yoshihisa himself.

In the same polite vein as the letter addressed to Ijūin Tadamune had been, Shimazu wrote to Rikyū on 13.12. (Tenshō 13 (1585):

1. There is in fact some doubt whether Rikyū's relationship with Ijūin Tadamune did not perhaps only start with the above letter. (SRS, p. 202). In this case Hideyoshi would merely have played on the tea adherent Ijūin's veneration for the foremost tea master of the country.

2. Uwai Kakken nikki, p. 89.

"It really is extremely impolite that due to the distance of Sakai we have as yet not been in touch with you, although we hear about you daily. As I am therefore sending a messenger to offer our congratulations to the kampaku, I would be most obliged if at times you could look after him. Henceforth as in the past our conversations should be without ulterior thoughts. I am sending ten catties of raw silk. This is just an indication of my good wishes, irrespective of the small amount."¹

It might seem quite extraordinary that Shimazu, who laughed at the upstart Hideyoshi, did not feel it to be below his dignity to write to the merchant Rikyū, apologizing for his lack of courtesy towards the new kampaku and in polite terms entrusting his messenger to Rikyū's care.

Two significant conclusions can be drawn from this. Firstly, Hideyoshi was absolutely right in his calculation that the prestige of Sen Rikyū, now distinguished as the foremost tea master of Japan, would be great enough to elicit a polite reply from the Shimazu clan. Secondly, it shows that Shimazu Yoshihisa gratefully accepted the

1. Letter quoted in Ogino Minahiko, Nihon chūsei komonjo no kenkyū (Tokyo: Ogino Minahiko Hakushi Kanreki Kinen Ronbunshū Kankōkai, 1964), p. 215.

chance of courteously apologizing for not congratulating Hideyoshi on his appointment without losing face. It is extremely interesting to note that Uwai Kakken, a senior retainer of Shimazu, in an entry in his diary of 23.1. Tenshō 14 (1586) quotes Hideyoshi's letter to Shimazu verbatim, mentions the receipt of Hosokawa and Rikyū's letter and then goes on to report how the clan despised the upstart Hideyoshi, without ever mentioning that an apologetic reply had already been sent to Sen Rikyū the previous month.¹ This is a curious omission, for the writer of the diary, in an entry dated 2.2. Tenshō 14 (1586) does not fail to quote Shimazu's letter to Hosokawa,² which is stronger in content, asserting that any wars had merely been in self-defense. It appears as if Shimazu, realizing the necessity of accepting the de facto ruler of the greater part of Japan, had done so quietly without even mentioning the fact to his own kinsmen.

In this case Rikyū provided Hideyoshi with a second, unofficial channel of communication. Outwardly both Hideyoshi and Shimazu owed it to their respective positions to take a tough line, while on the other hand both would have preferred conciliation to all out warfare. Just as the letter of Hosokawa and Rikyū, although addressed to Ijūin Tadamune, was in fact answered by Shimazu Yoshihisa himself,

1. Uwai Kakken nikki, p. 89 ff.
 2. Ibid., pp. 89-90; letter dated 11.1.

there can be no doubt that the latter's letter was destined for Hideyoshi.

iii) Otomo Sōrin's Visit to Osaka

In spite of both Hideyoshi's and Shimazu's apparent preference for a negotiated peace in Kyushu, hostilities continued. Otomo's faction was losing further ground and as repeated requests for military assistance had so far not brought any concrete results, Otomo Sōrin¹ felt it necessary to visit Hideyoshi in Osaka and press his point himself.

Sōrin's visit to Osaka castle on 5.4. Tenshō 14 (1586) is extremely well documented by an unusually long letter written to his senior retainers in Bungo the day after his audience with Hideyoshi. Here then is a detailed report of how and by whom a major daimyo such as Otomo was received at Osaka castle, and even more important, who was in charge of handling urgent requests for military assistance.

First there is what could be described as the formal part of the reception by Hideyoshi and nine of his most trusted advisers, officials and generals such as his half-brother Hidenaga, Ukita Hideie, Maeda Toshi'ie,

1. Otomo Sōrin is also referred to by his religious name Kyūan Sōteki. Although in the document quoted below he refers to himself as Sōteki, the name Sōrin is used in line with most Japanese historians. (E.g. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 184; Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, p. 371 etc.).

Matsui Yūkan and Hosokawa Yūsai. Rikyū was one of them.¹ Within Hideyoshi's entourage Rikyū was apparently accepted as somebody important enough to be included in such an exclusive circle of men with high governmental positions even on an official occasion. Moreover, Rikyū was not attending this formal part of the reception in his capacity as tea master, for only later, when these first ceremonies were finished, was Sōrin taken to Hideyoshi's golden tea room to be shown his valuable utensils, to be offered tea - first by Rikyū and then by Hideyoshi - and to meet other tea masters such as Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū. Ōtomo also had the honour of being shown Hideyoshi's private quarters, which he describes with great admiration and in some detail as he does the golden tea room.²

It is somewhat surprising that while Ōtomo reports how Hideyoshi personally offered him tea and showed him around the castle there is no mention of any discussion with the latter of matters concerning military operations in Kyushu, nor any other political questions, for which after all Ōtomo undertook the long journey to Osaka. This subject was apparently only raised later, after the audience with Hideyoshi had been concluded, when Ōtomo visited the villa of the Lord of Mino, Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga.

1. Takita Manabu, ed., Hennen Ōtomo shiryō (Ōita: Takita Yuki, 1968), XXVII:74.
 2. Ibid., XXVII:74-7.

Here he was entertained "beyond expectation" with sake and, when Ōtomo was about to leave at six o'clock in the evening, Hidenaga in front of a great crowd of people took the former's hand and assured him of his assistance with words which must have been so important to Ōtomo that he quotes them verbatim to his retainers:

"As everything is like this with the Lord of Mino, do not worry. Confidential matters are known by Sōeki¹ and public matters by the saishō.² Therefore nothing bad will happen to you and we will keep you informed fully."³

Ōtomo continued to instruct his retainers:

"Since we are in a position of always having to rely on the saishō you should understand this well. I cannot fully describe in words the way this time Master Rikyū gave advice and exerted himself on our behalf. Never will I be able to forget it. As it looks here I observe that there is no one other than Sōeki who can say even a word to the kampaku. In general it seems to be something extraordinary. At

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1. Rikyū.
 2. Counsellor, being Hidenaga, whose words Ōtomo quotes.
 3. Hennen Ōtomo shiryō, XXVII:77.

any rate it is absolutely essential that now and in the future we have deep-felt, unreserved and intimate relations with Hidenaga and Sōeki."¹

The fact that Ōtomo quotes Hidenaga's words indicates that there had been no discussion of political matters with Hideyoshi; for otherwise he would surely have cited the much more authoritative words of the latter instead. The kampaku apparently only attended the official ceremony, while the real work, that of finding out about the situation in Kyushu and negotiating with Ōtomo was left to the Counsellor Hidenaga. Perhaps it was not an easy task, for while Hideyoshi would certainly have seen the need of sending military assistance to Bungo as soon as possible, and indeed did order the Mōri clan to prepare for military action, he himself was not as yet in a position to take his troops far west. Although peace had been concluded with the powerful Ieyasu, the latter had so far not ventured to the capital and still had to be regarded as a potential threat from the east. While some of Hideyoshi's generals moved their troops to Kyushu in the eighth month of that year, it was only in the third month of Tenshō 15 (1587) that Hideyoshi himself set out to chastise Shimazu.²

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1. Hennen Ōtomo shiryō, XXVII:77
 2. Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, pp. 373-4.

In the fourth month of Tenshō 14 (1586) Hidenaga and Sen Rikyū, therefore, had the difficult task of assuring the Lord of Bungo of Hideyoshi's military assistance without being able to make any specific promises. Judging from Ōtomo's report, they succeeded exceptionally well. As before, it was Rikyū's ability to establish human contact with Hideyoshi's important retainers and convince them of the kampaku's best intentions that made him invaluable on such occasions. Ōtomo's report speaks for itself: he is overwhelmed by the cordial treatment he received.

The letter to Bungo states quite clearly: private and confidential matters were handled by Rikyū, while Hidenaga attended the official business. The two men formed a perfect team. Hidenaga, an experienced general, was well qualified to supervise Hideyoshi's military operations. As Hideyoshi's half-brother and counsellor he had enough authority to issue commands and speak for the kampaku.

Rikyū, on the other hand, was in a good position to handle confidential matters. In his capacity as tea master he would spend a great amount of time in Hideyoshi's presence and overhear many discussions to which people of official standing had no access. Further he himself had ample opportunity to negotiate secret matters in the privacy of the tea room.

It is a token of Rikyū's behind the scenes role that Ōtomo was invited to Hidenaga's villa and not to

Rikyū's, and that it was also Hidenaga who made the promise of Hideyoshi's assistance in front of a great number of people. This does not necessarily mean that Hidenaga had more authority to make such promises. On the contrary, Ōtomo explicitly states that Rikyū is the man with the greatest influence on the kampaku. However, he cannot fail to express his surprise over this state of affairs. Indeed, Rikyū's role behind the scenes was so well played that rumours of it had not reached Hideyoshi's senior vassal in Bungo.

Hidenaga and Rikyū complemented each other in their functions and were able to take charge of most of the matters that Hideyoshi had to deal with. It is not surprising, therefore, that other officials would sooner or later object to this monopoly of power, and work for its destruction. These events, culminating in Rikyū's tragic death, can be traced in the following years.

CHAPTER V: OPPOSING FORCES
TENSHŌ 15 - 18 (1587-90)

From this period onwards various signs of factionalism appear in Hideyoshi's entourage. At times there seems to be some direct antagonism towards Rikyū and his closest friends as in the case of the Kitano Tea Party and Kokei Sōchin's exile. Later there is evidence of a historically much more significant split amongst Hideyoshi's retainers, which resulted in the destruction of the Toyotomi line after his death. Rikyū's position in the latter case is somewhat obscure. However, as both these forms of factionalism made up the background of his last years, they will receive due consideration in this chapter.

i) The Kitano Tea Party

The first sign that matters were not going quite smoothly for Sen Rikyū came with the so-called Kitano Tea Party, which took place in the tenth month of Tenshō 15 (1587).

In the previous month Hideyoshi had issued a proclamation saying that for ten days, from the first to the tenth of the tenth month, a giant tea party would be held in the pine forests of the Kitano shrine. Everyone,

from nobility to farmers and people of even lower status was invited to take part and bring their best utensils; those who could not afford tea would be allowed to use parched flour as substitute. People from as far as China were expected to take part, and to those who were well versed in the art of wabi cha,¹ Hideyoshi would serve tea himself.²

Although at first, due to the expense involved, the response to the kampaku's order was not altogether enthusiastic, eventually tea houses started to be erected at the place designated,³ and the Tamon'in nikki states that on the opening day of this grandiose fête as many as one thousand five hundred tea arbours had been constructed.⁴

As he had promised, Hideyoshi himself, together with Sen Rikyū, Tsuda Sōkyū and Imai Sōkyū served tea to a long line of guests.⁵ But great was the surprise of all participants when - after having gone to great expense and trouble to journey from afar to the shrine of Kitano and to erect their tea houses - the meeting was declared closed on the second day.⁶

1. See above p. 20 n. 4.

2. Hayashiya Tatsusaburō, ed., Kitano ōchanoyu no ki, CKZ, VI:3.

3. Kanemi kyō ki in Murai Yasuhiko, Sen Rikyū: sono shōgai to chanoyu no imi (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1971), p. 198. The Kanemi kyō ki is one of the main sources covering this event. Again, the portion of the diary referring to this event has not been available and various secondary material has been used to obtain the pertinent information.

4. Tamon'in nikki, entry 8.10. Tenshō 15, IV:95.

5. Kanemi kyō ki in Murai Yasuhiko and Hayashiya Tatsusaburō, "Kaidai" to Kitano ōchanoyu no ki, CKZ, VI:12-3.

6. Ibid.

The reason for this peremptory cancellation is difficult to determine. No official explanation or apology was given, although one might have been expected after such an enormous number of people had been formally requested to attend. Perhaps the real cause of the sudden break-up would not have sounded convincing enough to the great number of disappointed guests and was therefore not made public.

Three days later the curious news had reached Nara and the author of the Tamon-in nikki recorded:

"The tea party in Kyoto was cancelled on the first of this month. That is to say everybody left on their separate ways home and so on. People are wondering whether something untoward might have happened - that Sasa Kuranosuke might have lost his domain in West Japan and so on. But it may not be true."¹

Sasa Narimasa, whom Hideyoshi had defeated only two years previously in Etchū, had mismanaged his new domain in Kyushu and through sudden uprisings had been driven from his castle. As the Kitano Tea Party was apparently held to celebrate the successful Kyushu campaign, this incident was rumoured to have been the reason for its

1. Tamon'in nikki, entry 4.10. Tenshō 15, IV:94.

cancellation. Yet if this grand gathering was arranged to fête a victory, that is to say to publicize the kampaku's greatness, then its inconvenient termination could only demonstrate the ruler's vulnerability. As the whole matter was eventually settled in Kyushu without Hideyoshi despatching his army, the affair could have been dealt with, without attracting public attention by calling off this grand gathering.

It is sometimes suggested that Hideyoshi resented Rikyū and other Sakai tea masters playing too prominent a part in this function, while by now his favourites were the merchants of Hakata, whose support he required for his planned Korean campaign.¹ However, the strong presence of Sakai merchants at such a gathering was predictable with the three tea masters, Rikyū, Imai Sōkyū and Tsuda Sōkyū he had selected to assist him in serving tea, all being natives of this city. Moreover, the news of the celebration had reached Kyushu much too late, and the single tea master able to attend the function, Kamiya Sōtan, arrived in Kyoto on 8.10., only to find that everyone had already returned home.²

Haga suggests that Hideyoshi got physically tired of serving tea;³ but even if that were so, there was no need to stop everybody else from continuing the party.

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1. "Kaidai" to Kitano ōchanoyu no ki, CKZ, VI:14-5.
 2. Kamiya Sōtan, Sōtan nikki, entry 1.10. Tenshō 15, CKZ, VI:232-3.
 3. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 215-6.

With some imagination a great number of reasons could be conjured up; perhaps it was a display of arbitrary despotism on Hideyoshi's part, or had there been rumours of poison mixed with the bitter tea? Did the astrologer discover some unlucky omen?

Pending the discovery of new evidence it is quite impossible to-day to say why the gigantic tea party was cancelled. What can be said, however, is that the unexpected cancellation of the remaining nine days of the ceremony would have been a great blow to Rikyū. As "The Tea Master of Japan"¹ he had been in charge of organizing this impressive gathering of tea adherents. It is not difficult to imagine how much effort was needed to arrange for the construction of over a thousand tea houses and to co-ordinate the movements and assure the well-being of an even greater number of guests. In addition to Hideyoshi's public invitation, Rikyū had personally urged people to attend;² to assure the successful performance of this gigantic gathering he had offered his prayers at the Kitano shrine.³ Also Rikyū's son Dōan was involved in the preparations for the tea party, for Yoshida Kanemi, who was in charge of the nobles, recorded that on 2.10. he sent a gift of one hundred copper cash to express his gratitude.

1. See above p. 74.

2. Kuwata, Sen Rikyū, pp. 108-9; letter from the Abbot Shun'oku Shūen (Sōen) to Honkakubō, presumed to have been written 10.9. Tenshō 15.

3. SRS, p. 378; letter dated 25.9. (Tenshō 15), addressee unknown.

4. Kanemi kyō ki in Murai, Sen Rikyū, p. 203.

The early cancellation of the Kitano Tea Party, for whatever obscure reason, would have amounted to a great personal blow and setback for Rikyū: the advice Hideyoshi accepted on this occasion would hardly have come from the tea master.

Perhaps it is significant to note that Rikyū's friend and supporter, the Counsellor Hidenaga, was the only one who continued to perform the tea ceremony for some of the visitors after the meeting had been officially cancelled.¹ Although it is argued that this had nothing to do with the official tea party,² it could be interpreted as a kind gesture towards Rikyū, who was faced with the personal dilemma of an enormous number of visiting disciples, admirers and friends and no way to entertain them.

ii) Kokei's Exile

A year after the Kitano Tea party, in the ninth month of Tenshō 16 (1588) another incident demonstrated that the position of Rikyū and his friends was being challenged.

This time Kokei Sōchin, the 117th abbot of the Daitokuji received orders from the kampaku to leave Kyoto for exile in Kyushu. Kokei had previously been well

1. Matsuya kaiki, entry 2.10. Tenshō 15, CKZ, IX:135.
 2. "Kaidai" to Kitano Ōchanoyu no ki, CKZ, VI:14.

favoured by Hideyoshi;¹ as Rikyū's religious teacher and disciple in the art of tea, he was closely associated with the latter.

Rikyū defiantly showed his disapproval of the censure of Kokei by hosting a tea ceremony to say farewell to the unfortunate abbot. But not only did he have the audacity of entertaining a persona non grata, he did so under Hideyoshi's very nose, in the tea room allocated to him in the Jurakudai;² and to aggravate matters further, used a prized scroll of Hideyoshi to decorate the tea room on this occasion.³

If Rikyū had been powerless to prevent Kokei from being sent into exile, he still did have enough influence to soothe the kampaku's anger eventually and after one year have the abbot recalled to Kyoto. Not only did Rikyū manage to have Kokei reinstalled at the Daitokuji, he was so successful in pleading Kokei's case that Hideyoshi was persuaded to build a temple especially, of which Kokei was to take charge.

This is documented by two letters. The first one, written by Hideyoshi's senior retainer Kobayakawa Takakage, dated 18.7., bears neither the name of the

1. E.g. on Hideyoshi's request he had built and had become the founder of one of the auxiliary temples of the Daitokuji, the Sōken'in. See Kuwata Tadachika, Kōsō no meishokan (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1972), p. 95.

2. Hideyoshi's palace in Kyoto, (also "Jurakutei").

3. Kuwata, Sen Rikyū, pp. 126-31. Kuwata refers to a document entitled Tenshō jūrokunen kugatsu yokka Jurakudai ni oite Rikyū koji daisu no chanoyu which as not been available in the original.

addressee nor any indication of the year. However, judging from the contents, the month the letter was composed and the fact that Kobayakawa was at that time in charge of Chikuzen, the province to which Kokei had been banished, it is safe to conclude that the document was addressed to the abbot, and that the year was Tenshō 17 (1589), that of Kokei's return to Kyoto.¹

Kobayakawa writes as follows:

"... As a result of Sōeki's secret efforts on your behalf the kampaku issued an order the day before yesterday that you will return to your temple. Therefore I am sending at once a boat to fetch you. I am not sending any details as you will be informed of particulars by the Daitokuji and Sōeki."²

The second document, dated 5.9. is composed by Rikyū and addressed to two of his disciples, the Hakata merchants Shimai Sōshitsu and Kamiya Sōtan.

"Mimbō,³ Yakuin⁴ and I have all three been informed of the fact that at this time Abbot Kokei is returning

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1. SRS, pp. 514-5.
 2. SRS, p. 514. (Sōeki being Rikyū).
 3. Abbreviation for the title mimbukyō hōin (official in charge of civil affairs), here Maeda Gen'i.
 4. Yakuin Zensō.

to the capital. His Lordship¹ is highly pleased. That is to say he has given orders for a new temple to be established, of which he (Kokei) will be in charge, and for a special celebration to be held. It looks as though everything will be fine, so please set your mind at rest ..."²

The diary of Kamiya Sōtan indicates that on several occasions during Kokei's banishment in Kyushu he and others had met the abbot to celebrate the tea ceremony.³ The common bond between Kamiya Sōtan, Shimai Sōshitsu and Kokei was, of course, that they all three studied the tea ceremony under the same master, Sen Rikyū. But furthermore Kokei had performed the ordination rites for Kamiya Sōtan when he had entered the priesthood a number of years previously.⁴ Similarly Kobayakawa Takakage was connected with the Daitokuji on the one hand,⁵ while on the other he is recorded to have met Kamiya frequently to perform the tea ceremony.⁶

The picture of a closely interrelated group emerges, of people with very different status in the

1. Hideyoshi.

2. SRS, p. 513. Again there is no indication of year, but judging from the contents it can be concluded that this letter was written in Tenshō 17 (SRS, p. 515).

3. Sōtan nikki, entries 12.11. and 21.11. Tenshō 16; 2.8. Tenshō 17, CKZ, VI:248-9, 253.

4. Tanaka Takeo, Shimai Sōshitsu (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1967 ed.), p. 134.

5. Ibid., pp. 135-6.

6. Sōtan nikki, e.g. entries 27.3. and 10.11. Tenshō 16; 2.1. Tenshō 17, CKZ, VI:248-9.

society they lived in, able to associate with and help each other through their common interest in tea.¹ Rikyū appears as the key figure of this group, both the master of the art of tea and the man closest to the central authority.

Kokei's case of alternatively receiving favours and falling into disgrace appears to exemplify a tug of war between this group of Rikyū's and his opponents. It is not surprising, therefore, that the reasons given for Kokei's banishment cannot altogether be clearly established and moreover, when possible answers are given, they seem to be insufficient to warrant the punishment of an old-time favourite of the ruler; all indications point to a trumped up charge. The parallel with Rikyū's eventual downfall is striking. All the more so when one considers that the assumed reason for Kokei's punishment was connected with the building of a temple,² which like Rikyū's alleged crime - his fatal statue on a temple gate³ - fell under the authority of Maeda Gen'i. The latter is sometimes considered to have supported an anti-Rikyū faction in Hideyoshi's entourage.⁴

1. For a description of how the tea ceremony overcame social barriers of rank and title see João Rodrigues, This Island of Japon, trans. and ed. Michael Cooper (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1973), p. 263.

2. The Tenshōji. For details see Murai, Sen Rikyū, pp. 217-8.

3. See below chapter VI, section ii).

4. Kuwata Tadachika "Rikyū shobatsu no gen'in", Nihon Rekishi 248 (January 1969):93-4.

iii) Date Masamune's First Submission

There is evidence that until two months before his death Rikyū was actively involved in politics. However, direct information on this political activity is scarce, and to interpret the little material there is, it will help to take a closer look at the background against which he operated.

After the subjugation of Kyushu only the north-eastern part of Japan had not submitted to Hideyoshi's rule. By Tenshō 16 (1588) a number of smaller daimyo of this area had become Hideyoshi's vassals. The two most important families of the area, Date and Hōjō, however, had so far stubbornly resisted all Hideyoshi's efforts to coax them into submission. Moreover, their aggressive expansionist policies posed a continuous threat to the smaller daimyo, who had already placed themselves under Hideyoshi's protection.¹ Two alternative policies were open to him at this stage: military action or further attempts at negotiations.

In his efforts to conquer the country, Hideyoshi had always shown a marked preference for negotiations over military conquest. During the early days of his rule he had been more or less forced to adopt such a policy as he had neither the armies nor the financial resources to subdue the country through outright warfare. Hideyoshi was,

1. Hayashiya, Tenka ittō, pp. 408-13.

moreover, well aware of the economic advantages of settling disputes by negotiation rather than battle, and also later in his career, when he had the armies to decide disputes in his favour on the battlefield, he avoided doing so, when possible. Even when a break-down of communication had led to open hostilities he preferred a negotiated peace to total annihilation or unconditional surrender. Thus daimyo such as Mōri, Chōsokabe, Tokugawa and Shimazu had all been allowed to retain most of their territories and a fair amount of independence after formally recognizing Hideyoshi's authority and assuring him of their allegiance by sending hostages to the capital. It has been shown that Rikyū, as negotiator behind the scenes, had played a significant part in this policy of appeasement. There is evidence to suggest that also in the conflict of northeastern Japan he helped bring about a peaceful settlement with Date Masamune.

Hideyoshi's efforts to force Date and Hōjō into submission without any military engagement were strongly supported by Tokugawa Ieyasu.¹ Only some years previously Ieyasu had signed a peace treaty with the Hōjō and given his daughter in marriage to this family.² Naturally he was now interested in avoiding military action against his in-laws. Moreover, although Ieyasu had formally submitted to

1. Evidence of Ieyasu's efforts to conciliate Hideyoshi with Date and Hōjō are a number of letters written to the latter two families. E.g. Nakamura Kōya, Tokugawa Ieyasu monjo no kenkyū (Tokyo: Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, 1959), I:721, 724, 728; Hanso Date Masamune Kō Kenshōkai, ed., Date Masamune kō denki shiryō (Sendai: Hanso Date Masamune Kō Kenshōkai, 1938), pp. 203, 207, 373.

2. Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, I:385-6.

Hideyoshi, he had taken great care to guard his independence. To strengthen his own position it was in his interest that the other powerful daimyo of the area came to similar arrangements with Hideyoshi, so that with their backing he could exercise some pressure on the central government. Alternatively, if Date and Hōjō were defeated, their domains would be divided up amongst Hideyoshi's retainers, and by way of his land survey come completely under central control. A number of Hideyoshi's long-time retainers were supporting Ieyasu in his aims: the senior bugyō (commissioner) Asano Nagamasa and Maeda Toshi'ie, as well as Tomita Tomonobu and Yakuin Zensō, the two men who had conducted negotiations with Ieyasu,¹ and also apparently Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga.²

On the other side stood Ishida Mitsunari, a favourite of Hideyoshi who had been named one of his five bugyō in spite of his relatively young age and who was ambitiously trying to outdo the senior member of this group of commissioners, Asano Nagamasa.³ During the conflict in northeastern Japan he pressed for stricter measures towards the recalcitrant and powerful families of the area. He strongly distrusted Ieyasu and his efforts to bring about

1. Cf. letters to Date in Date ... denki shiryō, pp. 140, 149, 204-5, 235, 281, 288-9, 298-9, 316.

2. This conclusion can be drawn from a letter to Hōjō Ujinao from Ieyasu of 15.11. Tenshō 16 in Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, I:728.

3. Imai Rintarō, Ishida Mitsunari (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1963 ed.), pp. 15, 17.

a peaceful solution to the problem.¹ Further, Ishida was in close personal contact with those daimyo who had already submitted to Hideyoshi and who were now counting on the kampaku to take military action against their aggressive neighbours. While Hideyoshi did not yet agree to engage in direct military action against the large armies of Date and Hōjō, he did, however, on various occasions ask his strongest vassal in the area, Uesugi Kagekatsu, to pacify one territory or the other and assist the weaker daimyo in their fight against the Hōjō.² Moreover, Ishida Mitsunari was able to support the smaller daimyo with provisions and military equipment against the aggression of Date.³

A study of Hideyoshi's correspondence indicates that both Ieyasu's and Ishida's factions acted with his approval; the resulting contradictions if not absurdities in his policy, however, demonstrate the competitive struggle between these two groups. This was well demonstrated in Tenshō 17 (1589).

While Ieyasu and his supporters - and on occasions even Hideyoshi himself - exchanged polite correspondence and presents with Date with unending patience, assuring him that the kampaku did not even bear the slightest

1. Ishida even warned Hideyoshi that it was dangerous for him to accept the hospitality of Ieyasu. (Imai, Ishida, p. 30-1).

2. Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku, ed., Uesugi kemonjo, part XII in Dai Nihon komonjo, Iewake (Tokyo: Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku, 1935), II:200, 206, 208, 209, etc.

3. Asao Naohiro, "Toyotomi seikenron" in Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi, Vol. IX (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1971 ed.), p. 199.

grudge against him,¹ Date continued to expand his territory at the expense of his weaker neighbours, who were being assisted by Ishida Mitsunari. This paradoxical situation reached its climax when in the sixth month of Tenshō 17 (1589), even while Hideyoshi was writing to Date himself² honouring him with the gift of a long sword, the latter was fighting Hideyoshi's vassal Ashina Yoshihiro, and by the time the kampaku's letter and gift had reached Date, the latter had taken possession of Ashina's castle. Date thought it appropriate to convey this news to the kampaku through his personal contacts, such as Tomita Tomonobu, Maeda Toshi'ie and Yakuin Zensō³ - but a report of the unfortunate incident had already reached Hideyoshi from quite a different quarter: through Uesugi and the Ishida group.⁴

Ieyasu was no more successful in trying to persuade the Hōjō to submit. Neither promises nor threats could move his in-laws to journey to Kyoto to acknowledge formally the suzerainty of Hideyoshi.⁵ To the contrary - in spite of the fact that Hideyoshi showed his good will by deciding a long standing territorial dispute with one of his own vassals in favour of the Hōjō, the latter

1. Date ... denki shiryō, pp. 139-40, 149, 200, 203-7, 234.

2. *Ibid.*, letter dated 9.6., p. 281.

3. Hanzo Date Masamune Kō Kenshōkai, ed., Date ke chike kiroku (Sendai: Hanzo Date Masamune Kō Kenshōkai, 1938), entry 16.6. Tenshō 17, p. 264.

4. Kobayashi Sei ji, Date Masamune (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1963 ed.), p. 56.

5. Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, I:721-2.

consequently acquired the remaining territory in question by military action, and thus destroyed any hope for peaceful settlement with the central government.¹

Hideyoshi immediately declared war on the Hōjō and Ieyasu demonstrated his solidarity with him by journeying at once to the capital to work out military arrangements.²

This proved to be a wise move. Others who had been in direct personal contact with the Hōjō such as Tomita Tomonobu and Tsuda Nobukatsu were blamed for "incompetence" and put under house arrest. The monk Myōon-in, who had elicited some promises from the Hōjō which were never kept, was even crucified for his unsuccessful attempts at conciliation.³ After this obvious failure the distrust Ishida harboured towards the aims of Ieyasu apparently had some influence on Hideyoshi and affected those more vulnerable than the powerful Ieyasu himself.

Similarly - in spite of great efforts by Ieyasu and his supporters - Date Masamune for a long time made no attempt to submit to Hideyoshi. Only in the fifth month of Tenshō 18 (1590), when Hideyoshi's victory over the Hōjō seemed certain, did Date decide to set out for

1. The dispute existed between the Hōjō and Sanada Masayuki, who had submitted to Hideyoshi some years previously. See also Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, I:750-1 and p.66 above.

2. Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, I:751-3.

3. Asao, "Toyotomi seikenron", p. 200.

Odawara to pay his respects to the kampaku. By the time Date arrived, however, Hideyoshi refused to see him.¹

Ieyasu's retainer Naitō Kiyoshige reports in his diary that Ieyasu and his son secretly met Date and then accompanied him to a meeting with Hideyoshi.² This encounter took place several days before the officially recorded meeting between Date and Hideyoshi.³

The following letter, written by Rikyū after Date's official audience with Hideyoshi had taken place, is generally regarded as evidence of Rikyū's part in these secret negotiations for a last minute conciliation. The addressee, Kimura Yoshikiyo, was the man in charge of arrangements for Date.

"Lord Masamune's visit to me just now has been a great honour for which I am very grateful. Moreover he bestowed on me a long sword and the sum of ten golden ryō, the price of a horse.⁴ All this was too generous. However, just now when I was about to call on him to express my gratitude, his Lordship the kampaku ordered that while I am recovering I am not even to go out when his Lordship does.

1. Date ke chike kiroku, p. 335.

2. Naitō Kiyoshige, Tenshō nikki, in Zoku zoku gunsho rui jū, Vol. V (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1909), entries 1.6.; 2.6. and 4.6. Tenshō 18, pp. 470-1.

3. Date ke chike kiroku, entry 9.6. Tenshō 18, p. 337.

4. "The price of a horse" (badai) was a gift in cash in lieu of the traditional gift of a horse.

Therefore, unfortunately, I am not allowed to come and express my gratitude. I would be extremely grateful if you could present the things you know of from your place to Lord Masamune. I am very embarrassed about this impolite behaviour."¹

Although this letter is dated 10.6. Tenshō 18 (1590), the day Date Masamune attended a tea ceremony given by Hideyoshi, it is rather unlikely that the gifts presented by Date to Rikyū were merely in gratitude for being served tea. Rikyū's many extant letters of thanks furnish detailed information of the great number of presents he received during his career. However, they usually consisted of some kind of food or perhaps a robe² and are never as generous as ten golden ryō. Date's generous sum of ten golden ryō suggests that Rikyū, perhaps after some secret discussions with Date on his part, helped to restore Hideyoshi's faith in the latter. Moreover, Rikyū's reference to "things you know of" which should be taken by Kimura to Date, sounds extremely suspicious and suggests that this was no ordinary letter of thanks.

In this connection some further material, although perhaps not furnishing concrete historical evidence, deserves mention all the same. This is an entry in the

1. SRS, p. 552.

2. E.g. SRS, pp. 113, 157, 230, 255, 336.

official history of the Date family, the Date ke chike kiroku. This document states that after Hideyoshi initially refused to grant Date an audience, a party of five retainers - including Asano Nagamasa, Maeda Toshi'ie and Yakuin Zensō (who were all supporting Ieyasu's quest for conciliation) - were sent to question Date about his misdeeds. This interrogation having been completed, the following incident is reported to have taken place:

"He (Masamune) said to the messengers:¹

'I have heard that this time Rikyū is accompanying his Lordship (Hideyoshi) and I would like him (Rikyū) to speak to me about the tea ceremony and am longing to receive the favour of being treated by him as guest (at the tea ceremony).' When this reached Hideyoshi's ears his Lordship said to the people who inquired of him: 'This is praiseworthy for someone like Masamune living in the provinces. One can guess his fine personality from him saying such a thing especially at a time when he is in a very dangerous position. Such a person could hardly harbour treacherous thoughts.'²

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1. I.e. the above mentioned party of five retainers.
 2. Date ke chike kiroku, entry 7.6. Tenshō 18, p. 337.

Although the document reporting the incident, the Date ke chike kiroku, is the official history of the Date family, it is difficult to take this story at face value. The sudden appearance of Rikyū's name in a work generally not concerned with matters such as the tea ceremony does indicate that there is some basis for the story. One can hardly imagine, however, that a seasoned and realistic soldier such as Hideyoshi - in spite of his high regard for the tea ceremony - would put his trust in a potential enemy merely because he asks to see the tea master Rikyū. Hideyoshi was apt to use men's sentiments and gullibility to his advantage, without falling for such things himself. For example, although after Nobunaga's death he assured the latter's sons of his life-long gratitude to Nobunaga for giving him permission to practise the tea ceremony (which gratitude apparently extended to the whole of the Oda clan),¹ he did not hesitate to use military force to seize the position of Nobunaga's successor from this clan for himself.

In the episode of the Date ke chike kiroku, recorded by someone who did not suspect or could not mention the political activity of the tea master, it seems likely that a vital part, which would not have been made public even at the time, has been omitted. This would be the fact that Date did not merely wish to meet Rikyū to be

1. Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p. 64 and above pp. 51-2.

instructed in the tea ceremony, but, perhaps offering some concessions, wished to ask him to take up his cause with the kampaku. These secret negotiations having been concluded, Hideyoshi may have well given the reasons quoted above for the unexpected pardon. It would have been the tea master's pleading with the kampaku and his assurance that Date was trustworthy and not merely Date's request to see Rikyū that helped to bring about the conciliation.

On the face of it Ieyasu - apparently with Rikyū's help - had succeeded in his aim of avoiding military conflict between Hideyoshi and Date and thus the almost certain destruction of the latter. Although Ishida Mitsunari's plan of "severing Date's head"¹ had been foiled, Ieyasu's success was only partial. Firstly part of Date's domain was confiscated and the greater part of northeastern Japan was brought under closer control of the central government by the severe rules of Hideyoshi's land survey.² Secondly the harmonious relationship between Date and Hideyoshi was not to last long. When only several months after Date's submission revolts occurred in areas subjected to the land survey - in Ōzaki and Kasai - Date came under strong suspicion of supporting the rebels' cause.

The last evidence of Rikyū's political involvement before his death is in connection with this incident.

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1. Imai, Ishida, p. 37.
 2. Kobayashi, Date, pp. 63, 69.

iv) Suspicion of Date's Disloyalty and Second Submission

Sen Rikyū was ordered to commit suicide by disembowelment in Kyoto on the 28.2. Tenshō 19 (1591).¹ By the first month of that year² there was as yet no indication that any significant change had taken place in his close relationship with Hideyoshi. On the contrary, a long letter to Hosokawa's senior retainer Matsui Yasuyuki dated 2.1.³ shows that Rikyū was well informed not only of the current political situation, but also of Hideyoshi's plans of how to deal with it.

"... I saw your letter of the tenth of the twelfth month of last year on the twenty-eighth of that month. I have received your congratulatory gift of a wadded silk robe of brown twill. This was indeed extremely kind of you. I was deeply touched by your excellent gift.

Your unexpected stay and the fact that you are sharing encampment with Asadan⁴ at Nihonmatsu is also excellent and will be to your honour. It has come to the ears of his Lordship and he is deeply impressed.

Similarly it has come to the ears of

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1. Yuishogaki, p. 325.
 2. I.e. two months earlier as there was an intercalary first month that year.
 3. The letter does not indicate the year, but the contents makes it clear that it was Tenshō 19 (1591).
 4. Asano Nagamasa.

his Lordship that the uprising in Ōshū was unmistakably solely a matter of Masamune's rebellion.

He thinks that Hachū¹ was neglectful in not considering Masamune's obvious determination to attack. Therefore he has sent messengers to Lord Chū² and Lord Ieyasu respectively. The same will certainly be the case with Lord Dan.³

I agree entirely with your report that during the snow you cannot manoeuvre forward here and there. His Lordship also realizes that.

Masamune moved camp to Kurokawa on the fourth last and the fact that he cut the route between Aizu and Nihonmatsu leaves no doubt that he is rebelling. If Hachū does not return to his castle at Aizu, then, whatever Masamune says, everybody will call him treacherous.

I can imagine what unexpected hardship is facing you.

I have heard about Sōdai's⁴ answer (to Hideyoshi) regarding Masamune. His Lordship's thoughts are very much in agreement with that.

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1. Gamō Ujisato.
 2. Toyotomi Hidetsugu.
 3. Asano Nagamasa.
 4. Asano Nagamasa.

Whatever Masamune says (to excuse himself) nothing is more indicative (of his rebellion) than cutting the route to Aizu.

It has been decided that his Lordship will move into battle on the first of the third month.

At this end nothing has changed and there is no cause for concern."¹

The situation Rikyū refers to in his letter was a most confused one. Uprisings had occurred in Ōshū and Kasai, the northeastern most part of the territory that had newly come under Hideyoshi's control after the siege of Odawara. When Gamō Ujisato, Hideyoshi's general in charge of the area, had requested that Date Masamune quell the revolts, the latter unduly delayed in moving out his army. This fact, together with rumours that Date was planning to assassinate Gamō,² prompted the latter to report that Date was rebelling. Hideyoshi at once ordered his generals stationed in the Kantō, such as Tokugawa Ieyasu and his nephew Hidetsugu to go to Gamō's help.³ Soon after, however, a second despatch informed Hideyoshi that Date was not revolting after all and was now co-operating

1. SRS, pp. 580-1.

2. Date ... denki shiryō, entry 15.11. Tenshō 18, pp. 412-3. The Ujisato ki reports that Date actually did try to poison Gamō, but the latter saved himself by vomiting the poison. (Ujisato ki in Kaitei shiseki shūran, Vol. XL, entry 17.11. Tenshō 18, p. 694.

3. Date ... denki shiryō, entry 15.12. Tenshō 18, pp. 422-4; entry 26.12. Tenshō 18, pp. 429-30.

in subduing the uprisings.¹ After ordering the Kantō troops to return to their camps,² Hideyoshi once more found it necessary to order them to stand by in case Gamō needed their aid, but again the alert had been given in vain.³ By the end of these manoeuvres, Hideyoshi justifiably referred to the despatches he had received as if coming from "people drunk on sake" and he is reported to have been extremely angry with Gamō.⁴

Rikyū's letter conveys the fact that Date's guilt had been fairly well established. He does not mention any personal doubts whether in fact Date was rebelling. Moreover, his firm statement that Hideyoshi will move into battle in March, indicates that apparently neither Hideyoshi nor he, Rikyū, anticipated any change in the situation which would make it unnecessary for Hideyoshi to do so.

Rikyū's report of the situation stands in direct contrast to that contained in several letters from the capital to Date. Both Hideyoshi's scribe Waku Sōze and Tomita Tomonobu as well as a retainer looking after Date's wife repeatedly assure Date that Hideyoshi does not believe reports of Masamune's rebellion and is not angry with him. To the contrary, Waku tries to convince Date that Hideyoshi's wrath has been turned against Gamō Ujisato.⁵

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1. Date ... denki shiryō, pp. 427-8.
 2. Ibid., p. 430.
 3. Ibid., entry 28.12. Tenshō 18, pp. 433-4.
 4. Ibid., pp. 430, 433.
 5. Ibid., pp. 423-4, 427-33.

Naturally, these letters were tailored to induce Date to come to the capital and therefore cannot be taken completely at face value. All the same, Rikyū's description of the events in northeastern Japan and the reaction to them at the capital reveals that he sees the situation from Gamō's rather than Date's side; in spite of the fact that he mentions that Hideyoshi thought Gamō had been neglectful. This is somewhat surprising when one considers that only a few months previously he appears to have been interceding for Date with Hideyoshi. On the other hand, Gamō Ujisato is known to have been one of Rikyū's favourite disciples¹ and it is likely that his loyalties were torn in this case.

Here again, Ieyasu and his supporters such as Asano Nagamasa, Tomita Tomonobu as well as Waku Sōze spared no effort to bring about a second conciliation between Date and Hideyoshi.² Ieyasu even corresponded with concern with the Counsellor Hidenaga (at this time practically on his death-bed) about the situation.³ But here too, they were not without opposition. An unnamed group in Kyoto was apparently slandering Date saying that the rebelling castles were flying the latter's flag, that the woman sent to the capital as hostage was not his wife and that he was certainly rebelling.⁴

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1. Kuwata, Chadō jiten, s.v. "Gamō Ujisato".
 2. Cf. numerous letters to Date written by this group. E.g. Date ... denki shiryō, pp. 423-31, 433-7, 440-1.
 3. Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, letter dated 29.12. (Tenshō 18), II:36.
 4. Date ... denki shiryō, entry 26.12. Tenshō 18, p. 429.

Finally Date was persuaded by Ieyasu and his supporters to make the conciliatory move of journeying to the capital. However, he did not have to go as far as Kyoto to meet Hideyoshi. "By chance" the latter was hunting in Owari and through Date's friends in Hideyoshi's entourage - this time Maeda Toshi'ie and again Tomita Tomonobu - a meeting was arranged. Consequently the second conciliation between Date and Hideyoshi took place at the end of the intercalary first month of Tenshō 19 (1591).¹

Date finally entered the capital on 4.2. Tenshō 19 (1591), clad in death robes and carrying a cross to show that he was ready to die, should Hideyoshi so decide.² Yet this would have been no more than a gesture to demonstrate his repentance of the difficulties he had caused in the past and a sign of total submission to Hideyoshi. The latter in turn showed his total forgiveness by enfeoffing Date with the domains in which the uprisings had taken place and had court ranks bestowed on him at the palace.³

Rikyū's position in Date's second conciliation with Hideyoshi is obscure. He certainly did not profit from the successful conclusion of the event. By the time Date was honoured at the palace with higher ranks, Rikyū

1. Date ... denki shiryō, entry 23.int. 1. Tenshō 19, p. 442; Date ke chike kiroku, entry 27. int. 1. Tenshō 19, p. 395.

2. Ujisato ki, p. 703.

3. Date ... denki shiryō, entry 9.2. Tenshō 19, pp. 446-7. Although part of Date's former domain was confiscated, the areas he received on this occasion outweighed his losses.

had been banished to his ancestral home in Sakai and was awaiting Hideyoshi's verdict.

CHAPTER VI: DEATH
TENSHŌ 19 (1591)

i) Events Leading to Rikyū's Death

In the preamble to Rikyū's previously quoted letter to Matsui Yasuyuki, Rikyū had expressed his joy at the approach of spring.¹ At that time he was obviously completely unaware of the fact that he was not to live through that spring. Only towards the end of the intercalary first month of Tenshō 19 (1591) were there indications that Rikyū was facing some serious personal problems. Two letters he wrote to his close friend and disciple Hosokawa Tadaoki on the twenty-second of this month give some information.

After lamenting the fleeting character of life in a short poem and thanking Hosokawa for his correspondence and mentioning other matters Rikyū writes:

"... Yesterday I went to the Daitokuji for some minor business. To-day I felt sad at home and (went to) talk to Mochiya Dōki etc. When evening comes, at sunset, I will call on you as I would like to talk to you about something."²

1. SRS, p. 580.
2. SRS, p. 591.

The second letter appears to be written later in the day, when Rikyū apparently returned home too late for his proposed visit to Hosokawa.¹

"I have just returned home from the Daitokuji. Because of my terrible worries I went to bed. However, as it got too late, I have decided to send you the hikiqi no saya.² When I see you, I will thank you for all the things you did for me."³

The above lines leave no doubt that Rikyū was confronted with serious problems and Hosokawa Tadaoki appears to have played some part in trying to resolve these difficulties. The fact that Rikyū would only call on him after dark suggests that he does not want to implicate his friend publicly in this very grave matter.

1. Kuwata believes that the two letters were written in the reverse order of that quoted here. The reason seems to be that the letter quoted here first starts off thanking Hosokawa for his correspondence, which Kuwata assumes is a letter of thanks for the gift mentioned in the letter quoted here second. However, it is conceivable that there was previous correspondence which Rikyū is acknowledging. Further Kuwata believes that Rikyū returned to his home in Sakai, while his visit to Mochiya Dōki, a Kyoto resident, indicates that the home referred to is his villa in Kyoto. Finally the order preferred here, that Rikyū sent Hosokawa the gift after he found he was too late to keep his appointment, due to a second unscheduled visit to the Daitokuji, seems to make more sense. (SRS, p. 592).

2. Lit. "sheath of a handle of a tea grinder", the name of a tea bowl.

3. SRS, p. 589. Unfortunately Kuwata does not quote this letter in the original.

Rikyū's present to Hosokawa - the hikiqi no saya - further suggests that something unusual had taken place. The hikiqi no saya was an extremely valuable tea bowl, which had received its strange name due to its unusual shape. It was one of Rikyū's most prized possessions. Rikyū must have felt very much indebted to Hosokawa to give him such a treasured utensil, or - as Kuwata puts forward - he was already dividing up his belongings in anticipation of his death.¹

Rikyū's frequent trips to the Daitokuji suggest that his problems were somehow connected with the statue on one of the temple gates, which later was to be published as one of the reasons for his death sentence. There is no doubt that the matter of this effigy of himself, apparently erected by the temple in gratitude for a donation, was brought against him as one of the charges. Yet the fact that this became an issue months after the actual incident occurred, leads one to believe that it was no more than an excuse for the death of the tea master.² However, the fact that he, "The Tea Master of Japan", could have been reprimanded so severely over such a relatively minor case, must have indicated to Rikyū already at that time that he had fallen from grace with Hideyoshi and that worse things were to come. His great dispondency after having been to the temple twice is understandable in these terms.

1. SRS, p. 589.

2. For further discussion of this point see the next section of this chapter.

On the fourteenth of the second month Rikyū wrote to Matsui Yasuyuki:

"I was overcome by the fact that you sent a courier especially. Since it was (his Lordship's) order that Lord Tomi¹ and Lord Tsusa² should go as far as Sakai as messengers, we suddenly left the capital yesterday night. However, I was greatly surprised when I discovered at the pier Lord Hayo³ and Lord Furuori,⁴ who had come to the Yodo to see me off. I am indeed extremely grateful."⁵

The previous day Rikyū had received Hideyoshi's order to leave the capital at once for his ancestral home at Sakai. The fact that Rikyū had to go into exile suddenly and moreover leave the capital at night, suggests what secrecy surrounded this event. Only three of his closest friends and disciples seem to have known of his sudden and secret departure and two of them, Hosokawa Tadaoki and Furuta Oribe came to the pier at the Yodo river from where Rikyū was to travel by boat to Sakai. Matsui Yasuyuki apparently had been held up by some business, but his

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1. Tomita Tomonobu.
 2. Tsuge Sakyōnosuke.
 3. Hosokawa Tadaoki.
 4. Furuta Oribe.
 5. SRS, p. 600.

specially delivered farewell message was nevertheless much appreciated by the tea master in his predicament. How little actually was known at the time about Rikyū's sudden disappearance can be gathered from the fact that two contemporary diaries state that Rikyū had fled the capital in fear of Hideyoshi.¹ Another report relates that Rikyū had been chased away to an "unknown destination."² That neither of the above accounts were true is documented by the letter cited above.

While Rikyū was at Sakai awaiting the outcome of his case, Maeda Toshi'ie with the help of Hideyoshi's mother Ōmandokoro and his wife Kitamandokoro was trying to intercede for the unfortunate tea master. It seems that this pleading met with some success and - if one is to believe the Yuishogaki - Rikyū could have saved his life had he apologized; yet apparently he proudly refused this offer.³

On 26.2. Rikyū was called back to Kyoto. Two days later he finally committed suicide by disembowelment. The Yuishogaki reports that on this day his villa was surrounded by three thousand men of Uesugi Kagekatsu.

1. Kajūji Harutoyo (Haretoyo), Harutoyo ki (Haretoyo ki) in Zoku shiryō taisei (Tokyo: Rinsen Shoten, 1967), p. 331 (p. 182 of section); Nishinotōin Tokiyoshi, Tokiyoshi kō ki as quoted by Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 265.

2. Date ... denki shiryō, letter from Suzuki Shimbei to Ishimoda Kageyori, dated 29.2. (Tenshō 19), pp. 448-9.

3. Yuishogaki, p. 325. This entry in the Yuishogaki is supported to some extent by an entry in the Shōbaiin Zenshō nikki, stating that Ōmandokoro and this time Hidenaga's widow were also pleading for three senior members of the Daitokuji, who were supposed to be crucified in connection with Rikyū's statue on one of the temple gates. They thus were pardoned. (Haga, Sen no Rikyū, p. 266).

ii) Various Explanations

"We have heard that early this morning the tea master Sōeki committed suicide by disembowelment. Possibly on the grounds that in recent years he had prepared new fashioned (tea) utensils and sold them at high prices - the height of venality - the kampaku's anger was suddenly kindled and he (Hideyoshi) immediately ordered that he (Rikyū) be crucified. As he apologized profusely a statue that had been made and placed at Shibano (Daitokuji) was crucified."¹

Less than five years after Rikyū had been described as the closest and most powerful adviser to Hideyoshi "the kampaku's anger was suddenly kindled" and Rikyū received the order to commit suicide. The unexpected and violent death of Sen Rikyū has always been a favourite source of speculation. The quotation above shows that even Rikyū's contemporaries were not quite sure why the sixty-nine year old tea master, who for so long had enjoyed the kampaku's favours, was suddenly condemned to die.

A letter from a visitor to Kyoto at the time explains further that

1. Tamon'in nikki, entry 28.2. Tenshō 19, IV:287-8.

"... the foremost tea master of the realm, Sōeki, has been chased away to an unknown destination because over many years and months he has engaged in trading in an unreasonable manner."¹

Now, as then, one may well wonder why an issue was suddenly made of events that had taken place over a long period of time; there is evidence that right throughout his career Rikyū had not only been valuing and playing the middleman in the sale of tea utensils, but also performed such tasks as mounting valuable scrolls, supervising and planning the construction of tea houses and making and repairing utensils.² There was nothing unusual about Rikyū engaging in such work. The missionary Luis d'Almeida describing a tea ceremony writes in 1565:

"And they have experts who appraise these utensils, and who act as brokers in selling or buying them."³

1. Date ... denki shiryō, letter from Suzuki Shimbei to Ishimoda Kageyori, dated 29.2. (Tenshō 19), pp. 448-9. This refers to Rikyū's banishment to Sakai shortly before his death. The charge of trading in an unreasonable manner appears to have been listed on a tablet placed beside his crucified statue together with the second accusation, that of placing his statue on a temple gate, which is mentioned in the same letter.

2. This is evidenced in Rikyū's correspondence; e.g. SRS, pp. 4, 34, 47, 78, 97, 110, 135, 166, 172, etc.

3. C.R. Boxer, The Christian Century in Japan (London: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 53.

One may presume that the many presents Rikyū received were in gratitude for performing such tasks. These gifts, however, were never of great value and usually consisted of no more than some special food or perhaps a garment.¹ Nor is there any mention in Rikyū's letters that, for instance, repairs to a certain utensil or mounting a scroll would cost such and such an amount. Only once does he write that he would have liked some cash with his presents.² Unless the matter of Rikyū's "fees" was never mentioned on paper - which seems unlikely - he appears to have received no other compensation for carrying out the above mentioned work than the gifts frequently spoken of in his letters. This would hardly justify an accusation of "trading in an unreasonable manner".

Moreover, if somehow Rikyū had been able to make large profits by trading tea utensils, there was certainly no evidence of any great personal riches at the time of his death. His will shows that besides some real estate, which was part of the family business and which he would have inherited from his father, he left little else of value.³

Similarly the second charge against Rikyū concerned an incident that had taken place earlier: a statue of Rikyū had been included amongst those of Buddhist saints on a temple gate of the Daitokuji. Only

1. See above p. 104.

2. SRS, p. 141. The date of the letter and the name of the addressee is not known.

3. SRS, p. 603.

a large donation from Rikyū had made it possible to complete the upper storey of the gate, and the statue was an acknowledgement of his generosity on behalf of the temple. However, as the imperial messenger and at times even Hideyoshi himself had to pass through this gate - that is to say underneath the feet of Rikyū's likeness - this was considered the height of insolence. Yet although the matter had already come to Hideyoshi's notice the previous year,¹ Rikyū's position remained unchanged until Hideyoshi's sudden outburst of anger in the second month of Tenshō 19 (1591). If this statue in fact had offended Hideyoshi to such an extent, it is surprising that it had not been taken down and quietly disposed of when the matter had been first raised. Yet apparently the statue was still at hand at the time of Rikyū's death and exposed to the public.

Besides the dubious fact that Hideyoshi suddenly decided to punish his tea master for actions of the past, it is fairly obvious that the two charges alone were not serious enough to warrant the death sentence of an otherwise faithful member of his closest entourage. Later tea adherents, historians and even the contemporary public - who knew Sen Rikyū only as a master of the gentle art of tea and follower of Zen Buddhism - have, therefore, understandably always been baffled by his violent death and at

1. Yuishogaki, pp. 324-5.

pains to find some romantic explanation for it. A favourite one, contained in a number of documents of the Tokugawa period, is that Rikyū incurred the kampaku's wrath by refusing his widowed daughter to become Hideyoshi's concubine.¹ Besides the fact that there is no contemporary material supporting this thesis, none of Rikyū's daughters appears to have been widowed at the time. Although Rikyū's great-grandson, Hōgensai Kōshin Sōsa pointed out this fact,² this popular story still survives.

Other explanations, e.g. that Rikyū attempted to poison Hideyoshi³ and that he was removed because he opposed the Korean campaign,⁴ similarly lack reliable documentation.

It is sometimes suggested that Rikyū was punished because he had become a Christian, like many of his closest disciples.⁵ However, Rikyū's friendship with the Abbot Kokei, his donations to the Daitokuji to secure a peaceful

1. E.g. Okada Gyokuzan, Ehon taikō ki (Tokyo: Yūhōdō, 1927), III:95-6, Hosokawa ke ki, Heika chawa, Buhen banashi kikiqaki as quoted by Kuwata, Sen Rikyū, p. 173.

2. Yuishogaki, p. 325. For detailed discussion see Sugimoto, Sen Rikyū, pp. 47-52 and Kuwata, Sen Rikyū, pp. 173-7.

3. Okakura, K., The Book of Tea (Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 1962), pp. 101-2.

4. This opinion is adopted by Nogami Yaeko in her historical novel Hideyoshi to Rikyū, in Nihon no bungaku, vol. XLIV (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1965).

5. Nishimura, T., Kirishitan to chadō (Osaka: Zenkoku Shobō, 1966), pp. 178, 191-203; Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 289-90; Kuwata, Sen Rikyū, p. 177.

after-life for himself and his family¹ as well as the deeply felt Buddhist sentiments expressed in his death poems² make this proposition highly unlikely. The fact that he committed suicide rules out this possibility completely.

Some historians believe that Rikyū was handed the death sentence by Hideyoshi because the two men antagonized each other by their diametrically opposed tastes, especially in matters concerning tea; Hideyoshi's preferences lying with the pompous and showy, Rikyū's with the quiet and refined.³ However, this was not always so: it has been seen above that in his announcement of the Kitano Tea Party, Hideyoshi promised that he would personally serve those people versed in the art of wabi cha, while only just over a year after Rikyū's death Hideyoshi was advocating and practising the tea ceremony according to Rikyū's style.⁴ Moreover, it is difficult to believe that it took Hideyoshi and Rikyū over ten years of close association to find out that they were unable to tolerate their divergence of tastes.

Only a few theories take Rikyū's important position as Hideyoshi's personal adviser as point of departure.

1. SRS, p. 488.

2. SRS, p. 611. The first poem is in the form of a Chinese poem, the second in Japanese construction. Both abound in references to Zen and particularly the Rinzai scriptures.

3. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 302-5; Karagi, Sen Rikyū, pp. 192-8.

4. Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p. 195; Sōtan nikki, CKZ, VI:271.

Kuwata initially argued (1946) that people jealous of Rikyū's powerful position, such as Maeda Gen'i and Ishida Mitsunari, took the incident of the Daitokuji statue as an opportunity to bring about the downfall of the tea master.¹ Later, however, he concluded that Rikyū's relatively humble origin was the reason for the death sentence; as the merchant's son in a high government position he had become an eyesore in Hideyoshi's system of strictly classified society and consequently had to be removed.²

The fact that in the government of a military dictator Rikyū was not of the warrior class, would have certainly given him disadvantages and might have contributed to his downfall. However, it could hardly have been the sole reason for his death. Why did Rikyū have to be silenced in such a dramatic way and moreover at the age of sixty-nine, when his retirement would have been imminent?

The historian Asao sees Rikyū's death as the direct outcome of a power struggle between Tokugawa Ieyasu and Ishida Mitsunari and their respective supporters. Although the material available at present does not suffice to draw any historically sound conclusions, this theory is nevertheless interesting enough to merit some further discussion.

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1. Kuwata, Sen Rikyū, pp. 186, 191.
 2. Kuwata, "Rikyū shobatsu no gen'in", pp. 95-6.

iii) The Centralist-Decentralist Theory

Asao Naohiro in his article "Toyotomi seiken ron" suggests that Sen Rikyū, after the death of his protector Hidenaga, fell victim to a power struggle between the so-called centralists, represented by Ishida Mitsunari, and the decentralists, led by Tokugawa Ieyasu.¹ As has been outlined in the previous chapter, Ieyasu and his supporters tried to bring about a conciliation between Hideyoshi and the two powerful daimyo in north-eastern Japan, Date and Hōjō, while Ishida urged their annihilation and strict government control over their domains. The rivalry between the two factions intensified as Hideyoshi encountered various problems in his efforts to subdue the area.

There is a considerable amount of material testifying that this early split between Ishida and Ieyasu was a real one. However, the evidence that Rikyū was associated with one of these factions is interesting, but not sufficient to be conclusive. Similarly, Asao's suggestion that Rikyū died because of Ishida's displeasure over Date's second conciliation with Hideyoshi requires too much speculation to bridge the gaps in the scanty evidence to call it a historically sound theory. Nevertheless, the material, although not altogether reliable, is interesting enough to merit a closer look.

1. Asao, "Toyotomi seiken ron", section 2: "Seiken tōsō", pp. 196-210. Centralists (chūken ha 中権派) and decentralists (bunken ha 分権派) are also referred to as hardline party (kyōko ha 強硬派) and appeasement party (yūwa ha 宥和派).

As evidence that Rikyū was associated with Ieyasu's faction the following material can be cited.

Firstly Rikyū's letter to Kimura Yoshikiyo on the occasion of Date's first conciliation with Hideyoshi at Odawara indicates that at this time the tea master was helping Ieyasu to fulfill his aims. (Above p. 103).

On a more general basis one may point out that a study of Rikyū's correspondence indicates that he was associated on a personal level with Ieyasu's supporters such as Asano Nagamasa, Maeda Toshi'ie, Tomita Tomonobu and Yakuin Zensō.¹ Although the number of times Rikyū either corresponded with these men or mentioned their names in letters to other people spread over the ten years he formed part of Hideyoshi's entourage might not appear remarkable, it is significant that amongst the two hundred and sixty-three extant letters, the above group of people is amongst those most frequently mentioned. Although the surviving letters may not necessarily be a representative sample of the whole of his correspondence, it nevertheless seems reasonable to infer that Rikyū had some special relationship with these people.

Moreover correspondence between Ieyasu and Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga seems to indicate that

1. For Asano cf. SRS, pp. 286, 291, 433, 443, 455, 504, 517, 580. For Tomita cf. SRS, pp. 132, 168, 175, 213, 253, 368, 397, 441, 574, 600. For Yakuin cf. SRS, pp. 118, 132, 148, 277, 342, 513. For Maeda cf. SRS, pp. 286, 472, 481, 504, 598. The exception is Tokugawa Ieyasu, who only concluded peace with Hideyoshi and joined his staff in Tenshō 14. He is only mentioned in two documents neither of which can be taken as evidence of a cordial relationship.

until his death the latter supported the policies of the former. (Above pp. 99 n.2, 112, n. 3). Rikyū's close relationship with Hidenaga, especially with regard to handling political matters, has previously been described. (Above pp. 83-6).

Further, following the events of Rikyū's death and those of Date's second submission, it becomes evident that the same people were involved in both events. Rikyū's close friend Matsui Yasuyuki was reporting from Kyoto to Date, when the latter journeyed towards the capital in an attempt to reach a second reconciliation with Hideyoshi.¹ Moreover Maeda Toshi'ie, who had previously interceded with Hideyoshi for Date, was very shortly afterwards trying to obtain a pardon for Rikyū. (Above pp. 113, 119). Also Hideyoshi's wife Kitamandokoro, who was assisting Maeda in his plea (above p. 119), had shown great kindness to Date's wife, when she was in the unfortunate position of being a hostage for someone suspected of treachery.²

On the other hand, there seems to be some evidence that Rikyū, just like Ieyasu and his faction, was opposed by Ishida and his supporters. The man who brought Rikyū back from Sakai to Kyoto to face his death sentence was Mashita Nagamori,³ a close associate of Ishida. On the day of Rikyū's death, three thousand men of Uesugi Kagekatsu

1. Date ke chike kiroku, entry 17. int. 1. Tenshō 19, p. 394.

2. Ibid., entry 28.12. Tenshō 18, p. 390.

3. Harutoyo ki, p. 331.

surrounded Rikyū's villa.¹ Uesugi has previously been mentioned as one of Ishida's supporters in the conflict of northeastern Japan. (Above p. 100). The report of this army surrounding Rikyū's villa on the day of his death is contained in the Yuishogaki, and may therefore be termed not completely reliable. However, the main fault of the Yuishogaki is its hagiographical tendencies. Thus the story that Rikyū had been pardoned but preferred to die rather than to apologize² could be doubted, as it demonstrates the very high-mindedness of the tea master. Yet the fact that three thousand men had to guard Rikyū to prevent his friends from preparing a route of escape, shows the opposite. It infers that Rikyū might have consented to such a plan by his friends, rather than quietly accept the judgement of the ruler - albeit an unjust one - as would have been expected from a man of his spirituality. This latter incident, in fact, contradicts the former, where Rikyū had thought it below his dignity to apologize. How much more cowardly it would have been to escape! Moreover, if the story of the large guard around Rikyū's villa were invented, it seems unlikely that the informant or the compilers of the Yuishogaki would have gone as far as picking out the name of a certain daimyo, in this case Uesugi Kagekatsu, who moreover just happened to be at the capital rather than in his domain.

1. Yuishogaki, p. 325

2. Ibid.

The Kanemi kyōki reports that not long after Rikyū's death there were rumours that Ishida Mitsunari was cruelly torturing the tea master's wife and daughters.¹ Although it is impossible to judge whether these rumours represented the truth, the fact that they did exist seems to indicate that other people were aware of some deep animosity between Rikyū and Ishida. Finally there is evidence that several years after Rikyū's death, it was Ishida and not Rikyū who was described as the closest adviser to the kampaku (below, section v), and one may wonder whether already during Rikyū's lifetime Ishida might not have had plans to oust Rikyū from this position.

Lastly, a strange coincidence of timing between Date's final submission and Rikyū's death should be pointed out. Rikyū's difficulties started at the same time as news of Date's journey of conciliation towards Kyoto had reached the capital. When Date was enfeoffed with new domains and honoured with court ranks, Rikyū was banished to Sakai.

If Rikyū had actively supported Ieyasu's faction, one would have expected that after their success in persuading Date to submit, Rikyū would have received praise rather than be handed the death sentence. To answer this contradiction Asao points out, that there was a great amount of political intrigue in connection with Date's

1. Haga, Sen no Rikyū, pp. 271-2

submission. In fact there is evidence that Hideyoshi's scribe Waku Sōze was spying for Date.

In a letter of 26.12. Tenshō 18 (1590) Waku writes that he is enclosing a copy of a despatch from the fortress Ōzaki¹ and continues:

"However, if by any chance people should find out that I am sending you such a copy, if it should leak (to people) here, that would be the end of me. Also at your end take the greatest care not to talk to Asadanshō² (about this). The utmost secrecy is essential."³

Waku was not punished and so one may perhaps assume that nothing leaked to Kyoto about his spying activities for Date. Asao, however, suggests that Ishida Mitsunari did find out about such dealings, and saw to it that the much more influential Rikyū was punished instead.⁴ Alternatively, Rikyū himself might have engaged in such activities.

There seems to be one contradiction in Asao's theory. Rikyū's letter to Matsui Yasuyuki describing the conflict between Gamō Ujisato and Date Masamune (above pp 108-10).

1. Ōzaki was occupied by Gamō Ujisato for some time during the period in question.

2. Asano Nagamasa.

3. Date ... denki shiryō, p. 429.

4. Asao, "Toyotomi seiken ron", pp. 203-4.

gives indication that in this case Rikyū was on Gamō's rather than Date's side.

Twice in his letter Waku refers to "people who are especially friendly with Chūsan"¹ in Hideyoshi's entourage;² people who were concerned with what would happen to Gamō, if Date really were rebelling. It can be assumed that it was the latter group of people who would have been in favour of moving out the army twice when the situation looked critical in the northeast.

Without any further reference it is impossible to identify this group of people. However, Gamō Ujisato was one of Rikyū's favourite disciples, and the tea master would certainly qualify to be included among his special friends. Moreover, it is conceivable that Rikyū - in spite of the fact that basically he did support the policies of Ieyasu's group - would have made an emotional plea for Gamō, when he thought the friend in danger.

If Rikyū indeed had been the person who had persuaded Hideyoshi twice to alert his troops, there would have been reason to punish him for this bad advice; not only did the unnecessary manoeuvres demonstrate uninformed and bad judgement on the part of Hideyoshi, it also wasted considerable resources and manpower. Moreover, a rash attack on Date could have resulted in a full scale war in the northeast.

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1. Gamō Ujisato.
 2. Date ... denki shiryō, p. 430.

Of those people actively engaged in the incident the only one punished was Kimura Yoshikiyo.¹ He had been a minor vassal, but after the Odawara siege he had been entrusted, together with his father, with the areas of Ōshū and Kasai. It is supposed to have been his mismanagement of that domain that brought about the revolts in the first place.² However, neither Gamō Ujisato nor Date Masamune were chastised for bringing about a situation that caused Hideyoshi considerable anxiety. The reason for Hideyoshi's magnanimity in this respect can easily be imagined: Gamō was too brilliant a general to lose the services of and any punishment of Date might have provoked further wars from his supporters in northeastern Japan. If there was pressure on Hideyoshi - perhaps from Ishida's group - to punish someone for this incident, then Rikyū, since Hidenaga's death, without protection, was an easy victim.

With the material available at the present time, however, one can do no more than speculate about the role Sen Rikyū played in the conflict of northeastern Japan and the circumstances leading to his punishment. One factor that did not directly cause Rikyū's death, but made it possible for those who opposed him to bring about his fall, was the death of his long-time protector and friend,

1. Date ... denki shiryō, entry 9.2. Tenshō 19, p. 446.
 2. Matsudaira Toshikazu and Takayanagi Mitsutoshi, ed., Sengoku jimmei jiten (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1962), s.v. "Kimura Yoshikiyo".

Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga. The effects of this event on Rikyū's position are discussed below.

iv) Hideyoshi's Succession

For a long time it appeared as if Hideyoshi would have no offspring of his own to succeed him: neither his wife nor any of his many concubines had been able to bear him a child.

In Tenshō 14 (1586) Hideyoshi therefore indicated that he wished his half-brother, the Counsellor Hidenaga, to succeed him as soon as the country was pacified, while he himself would concentrate his efforts solely on the planned Korean campaign.¹ As Hidenaga was apparently already in charge of most matters of state, Hideyoshi's retirement would have meant little change in the existing power structure: Rikyū, the close associate of Hidenaga, would have maintained his position.

However, even before Hideyoshi was able to complete the subjugation of the country by bringing northeastern Japan under his sway two significant events happened: in the fifth month of Tenshō 17 (1589) Hideyoshi's favourite concubine Yodogimi gave birth to his first son, Tsurumatsu,² and in the eleventh month of that same year Hidenaga fell

1. Letter of Luis Frois quoted by Tanaka Takeo, Shimai Sōshitsu (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1967 ed.), p. 100.

2. Tamon'in nikki, entry last day of the fifth month Tenshō 17, IV: 182. The name "Yodogimi" was only used later, but is preferred here, as it is the one commonly used by Japanese historians to-day. For other names see appendix A.

ill.¹ These events introduced an element of instability into the established structure of authority: Hidenaga was no longer the heir and his declining health made it doubtful whether he could even act as regent to the infant.

On the other hand Yodogimi now became the focus of attention. Although Hideyoshi's wife, Kitamandokoro, officially still maintained her senior position and while he took great care not to offend her in this respect,² Hideyoshi now showered favours upon Yodogimi far above her formal standing as concubine. The castle specially erected for her while she was expecting her first child is an example of this. However, in spite of Hideyoshi's efforts to pay due respect to his wife, Yodogimi's sudden ascent seems to have encouraged many misgivings amongst the women of his entourage. Kitamandokoro, Hideyoshi's mother Omandokoro and concubines such as Kagadono are said to have opposed Yodogimi and her friends.³ It is interesting to note here that the three former women were all closely related to Ieyasu and his supporters⁴ while Yodogimi is believed to have been associated with Ishida Mitsunari,⁵

1. Nakamura, Ieyasu monjo, I:749.

2. In sixteenth century Japan this respect was demonstrated for instance by a letter from Hideyoshi to his wife (the actual name of the addressee is that of one of her attendants) asking her to send Yodogimi to his encampment at Odawara. (Letter dated 13.4. [Tenshō 18], Kuwata, Taikō shoshin, p.174).

3. Kuwata Tadachika, Yodogimi, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1967 ed.), p. 91.

4. Omandokoro was Hidenaga's mother and Ieyasu's mother-in-law. Kitamandokoro and Asano Nagamasa's wife had been brought up as sisters in the same house (Imai, Ishida, p. 11) and Kagadono was the daughter of Maeda Toshi'ie

5. Kuwata, Yodogimi, p. 96. Unfortunately Kuwata does not mention the primary sources. The main evidence of Ishida's and Yodogimi's association comes, of course, only after Hideyoshi's death with the open clash between Ieyasu and Ishida.

who would thus have profited by her new status. In fact the split amongst Hideyoshi's women mirrors the factionalism between Ieyasu and Ishida described earlier.

The antagonism brought about by the birth of Hideyoshi's first son must be considered from yet another angle of which contemporary sources would naturally not speak: the question of whether Yodogimi's son Tsurumatsu was in fact Hideyoshi's off-spring.

Up to the age of fifty-three neither his wife nor any of his great number of concubines had been able to fulfill his ardent wish for an heir. It appears extremely strange, therefore, that after so many years of childlessness just one concubine should have been pregnant with his child. Although it is impossible altogether to rule out the possibility that Tsurumatsu was Hideyoshi's own son, his entourage would have harboured the same doubts as anybody would these days in similar circumstances. This scepticism would have been strongest amongst Hideyoshi's wife and earlier concubines who had failed him in this respect, as well as those who might have regarded the appearance of Tsurumatsu as a trick of the opposition to tip the balance of power in their favour. However, with Hideyoshi's ardent love for the infant, far exceeding normal parental affection, it would have been extremely dangerous for anyone to even hint that the child was not his own. Merely the slightest suggestion that certain

people had misgivings about Tsurumatsu might have proved dangerous.¹

The sudden shift of power in Hideyoshi's entourage greatly affected Rikyū's status. His position had depended to a large extent on the authority Hidenaga had commanded. Without this powerful mentor to intercede for him when some incident had provoked Hideyoshi's anger, he was in an extremely vulnerable position.²

This new situation presented an ideal opportunity for any enemies Rikyū might have had to finally remove him from Hideyoshi's side and bring him to fall. To find out why some retainers of Hideyoshi would have opposed him, and who these people might have been, Rikyū's position in the Toyotomi power structure must be examined.

v) Rikyū's Place in the Toyotomi Power Structure

Sen Rikyū joined Hideyoshi's staff soon after Hideyoshi came to power. Rikyū played an important part in what at the time was no more than a field government. He cemented Hideyoshi's relationship with the merchant

1. In spite of this danger, however, the missionary Luis Frois reports that in the case of Hideyoshi and Yodogimi's second son, Hideyori, such rumours did exist. (Diego Pacheco, "The Europeans in Japan", in Michael Cooper, ed., The Southern Barbarians [Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1971], p. 60).

2. In addition, Hideyoshi's wife and mother, whose sympathy for Rikyū has been mentioned previously, had lost some of their influence to Yodogimi. There is no sound evidence to document any animosity between Rikyū and Yodogimi. Only the historically unreliable Ehon Taikōki (III:95) reports that Yodogimi especially disliked Rikyū.

community, assuring him of the necessary supplies of military provisions. Moreover, Hideyoshi - himself not exceedingly gifted with artistic talent - was nevertheless able to continue Nobunaga's policy of chanoyu seidō with Rikyū as an authority on tea in the background. The tea ceremony itself lent some dignity and formality to receptions at Hideyoshi's improvised and often changing seat of authority.

Most important, however, was that during the early years of his rule, Hideyoshi's existence depended on successful negotiations with his enemies; he did not have the strength to subdue the country in outright warfare. Rikyū played an important role in such matters. As tea master he was able to make contact with warlords without compromising the position Hideyoshi had assumed for himself, nor arousing the suspicion of others. In addition, those few warriors who had the competence to conduct such negotiations and whom Hideyoshi could trust completely were urgently needed on the battlefield, while Rikyū had both the time and the ability to attend to such matters. During these early years there could have been no doubt amongst Hideyoshi's staff that the tea master performed a most useful function, one on which, to some degree, the well-being of every single one of Hideyoshi's men depended. Moreover, at a time when warfare was the rule rather than the exception, Rikyū, not actively involved in military operations, was available to keep an

eye on the small amount of internal personnel administration that had to be attended to. In the days when Hideyoshi's generals were winning their laurels on the battleground, no one would have been jealous of the tea master, who aspired neither to obtain court ranks nor to possess domains.

Thus with the protection of Hideyoshi's half-brother Hidenaga, Rikyū's position grew in proportion to the expansion of Hideyoshi's authority, until in Tenshō 14 (1586) the tea master apparently was the most influential adviser to the ruler of the greater part of Japan.

By this time, however, the picture had considerably changed. The administrative side of Hideyoshi's government had by necessity expanded a great deal and become more formalized. A greatly increased number of retainers were now competing for prestigious posts in the administration. Hideyoshi was no longer in a position to attend to most things of some importance himself, nor could he keep himself informed and investigate in person the problems of his retainers. He became more and more dependent upon the advice of others when called upon to make some decision or judgement. According to Ōtomo's report cited previously the two men Hideyoshi relied upon to advise him on such occasions were Sen Rikyū and Hidenaga. Furthermore it appears that they were left to deal independently with a great many matters Hideyoshi would have previously attended to himself, such as Ōtomo's petition for the despatch of troops.

When Ōtomo found out that Rikyū and Hidenaga were Hideyoshi's most powerful and influential assistants, he accepted the fact and saw to it that he was on good terms with the two men. As an outsider it was, after all, easier for him to deal directly with people who could take the decisions, than to make contact with a number of government officials and have some answer finally handed down to him.

Not all of Hideyoshi's vassals, however, would have reacted in the same way. Those who were most likely to have protested first at this monopoly of power would have been people involved in the central government, who, according to their rank and title, would have considered Rikyū's position as adviser to the ruler to be rightfully theirs. While Hidenaga as brother of the kampaku and successful general was acceptable as being in charge of the army and similar "public matters", Rikyū in charge of "internal matters" was a thorn in the flesh. It would have been surprising, if in a military government, which used court ranks to strengthen its hierarchical structure even more, opposition to a mere tea master holding a position above successful military men, had not appeared at one point or another.

Hideyoshi's older vassals, like Asano Nagamasa, would not perhaps have been excessively concerned about Hidenaga's and Rikyū's domination in government affairs. For one thing they had found their place in Hideyoshi's

entourage; they were powerful retainers, not still fighting to make a career. But more important, as old associates of the two men in power, they could only gain by the authority which they wielded.

Those people, however, who were eager to increase their sphere of influence and climb the ladder of promotion, would have seen their ambitions frustrated by the established set of people who would let nobody enter their closed ranks. One of those ambitious and relatively junior men was Ishida Mitsunari. He too had joined Hideyoshi's staff at an early date, but was considerably younger than the rest of Hideyoshi's other long-time retainers.¹ Being one of Hideyoshi's favourites, however, he had been appointed as one of his five commissioners (bugyō) together with Asano Nagamasa, Maeda Gen'i, Mashita Nagamori and Natsuka Masaie.² Although Ishida was the most junior of the five men, he ambitiously strove to surpass the authority of even Asano Nagamasa, who was not only respected as the senior of the group, but also closely linked to Hideyoshi by family ties.³

Ishida finally succeeded in his ambitious plans.

"... he is the taikō's⁴ right hand,
his authority is beyond comparison with

1. Imai, Ishida, p. 11.

2. Taikō ki, p. 177. While the appointments of the commissioners were only formalized in Bunroku 4 (1595), they were in fact made when Hideyoshi received the title of kampaku in Tenshō 13 (1585).

3. Imai, Ishida, pp. 11, 17.

4. Hideyoshi.

that of any other man ..."¹

These words - very much resembling those written about Sen Rikyū in Tenshō 14 (1586) - were in fact describing Ishida's position some years after Rikyū's death. To reach this position, Ishida had to weaken Asano's authority. What was even more important, however, was to remove Sen Rikyū. The tea master had the great advantage of being constantly at Hideyoshi's side, when other contestants for his favour, such as Ishida, were absent for long periods of time on military campaigns. Besides furthering his own personal ends, Rikyū was in an ideal position to influence Hideyoshi in favour of Ishida's opponents, and thus become the main obstacle in Ishida's struggle against people like Asano.

Rikyū's successful political career under Hideyoshi had only become possible due to his special status of tea master. In this capacity Rikyū - only a common merchant by birth - was greatly respected and able to associate on equal terms with people of highest rank. Unlike the military men in Hideyoshi's service, he did not have to prove himself in battle nor climb the ladder of court ranks before he was able to wield the authority he did. Tea and politics were intimately related and the prestige he enjoyed in one field helped him to be respectfully heard in the other.

1. Shimazu Yoshihiro, Ishinkō gojiki, in Shimazu shiryō shū, 2nd series, Sengoku shiryō sōsho, Vol. VI (Tokyo: Jimbutsu Oraisha, 1966), p. 107.

Yet these same attributes which made the tea master's rise to power possible, constituted at the same time a great danger to his position. When military retainers fell out of grace with Hideyoshi, such as Maeda Toshi'ie in Tenshō 18 (1590), they were able to prove their loyalty on the battlefield.¹ Moreover, severe punishment, such as the death sentence, would have provoked unrest in their domains and possible opposition from other daimyo, who saw their existence threatened in a similar way. Rikyū did have many powerful friends and the fact that Hideyoshi feared some opposition is demonstrated by his stationing three thousand men outside Rikyū's villa on the day the tea master had to commit suicide. But then, after all, Rikyū was only a tea master, of no value to anybody once he had lost the protection of Hidenaga and the goodwill of Hideyoshi. He could be brought to fall as quickly as he had risen to power.

Rikyū's downfall was inherent in his precarious position at the top. However, a number of other factors determined the timing of the collapse of his authority.

Firstly the death of Hidenaga in the first month of Tenshō 19 (1591) eroded Rikyū's position to such an extent that the ground was prepared for any further attacks on him. The illness of Hideyoshi's first son, Tsurumatsu, which is first reported at the beginning of the intercalary

1. Iwasawa Yoshihiko, Maeda Toshi'ie (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966), p. 161.

first month that year,¹ might also have been a contributing factor. If Hideyoshi had sensed any animosity against his adored heir from those people who opposed Yodogimi, and with whom Rikyū associated, he might consciously or subconsciously have held them responsible for the baby's illness.² If Rikyū was perhaps already in a difficult position for other reasons, then Hideyoshi's concern for his child could only have worsened his plight.

Finally there was the rather obscure affair of Date's suspected revolt and consequent submission which intensified the struggle between the two groups of people - Ieyasu's and Ishida's respective supporters - competing for Hideyoshi's favours. If Rikyū somehow did fall victim to this factionalism, he would not have been the only one. The destruction of Hideyoshi's nephew Hidetsugu and his entire family only a few years later is similarly believed to have been brought about by Ishida in his quest for authority.³

"That fellow Rikyū

What great fortune!

To think he will turn out to be

A second Michizane."⁴

1. Tamon'in nikki, entry 3. int. 1. Tenshō 19, VI:281.
2. The fact that Hideyoshi did believe in the power of the supernatural and human influence upon it is shown by the fact that he immediately sent contributions to temples such as the Kōfukuji at Nara for special prayers for the sick child. (Tamon'in nikki, VI:281).
3. Asao, "Toyotomi seiken ron", pp. 206-7.
4. SRS, p. 615.

These lines were written by Rikyū to his daughter when leaving Sakai for his last journey to Kyoto. He saw himself as a statesman who - like Michizane - was unjustly brought to fall by the intrigues of those who envied the trust he received from the ruler. Just like Michizane, Rikyū unflinchingly accepted unjust punishment from the man he had served faithfully. He anticipated that like the Heian statesman his innocence would soon be recognized and people would start to venerate him for his steadfast character and artistic achievements.

Rikyū's contribution to Japanese aesthetics and culture as a whole in some ways overshadows that of Michizane. His profound influence on the arts and everyday life made it easy for later generations to imagine that he could never have occupied himself with anything but the aesthetics of tea. Yet had it not been for his political career that made him such a prominent and important member of Hideyoshi's entourage and for his tragic death, he might have been remembered as no more than a gifted tea master and not the "Father of the Tea Ceremony" he is venerated as still to-day.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF NAMES

The names people are listed under are those under which they are referred to in this thesis. Additional names are only given if they are of relevance to the thesis or help to identify the person in question. Similarly information after a person's name is only added on a very selective basis and is not given when generally known. People mentioned in the thesis as authors of contemporary works only, are listed in the bibliography.

The information for this appendix has been taken from books listed in the bibliography, but especially from Kuwata, Chadō jiten, Matsudaira and Takayanagi, Sengoku jimmei jiten and Shimmura, Kōjien.

- Akechi Mitsuhide 明智光秀 (1528-82), Nobunaga's assassin.
- Asai Nagamasa 浅井長政 (1545-73), father of Yodogimi.
- Asakura Yoshikage 朝倉義景 (1533-73).
- Asano Nagamasa 浅野長政 (1548-1611), Nagayoshi 長吉, one of Hideyoshi's five bugyō.
- Ashikaga Yoshiaki 足利義昭 (1538-97), 15th Ashikaga Shogun.
- Ashikaga Yoshihisa 足利義尚 (1465-89), 9th Ashikaga Shogun.
- Ashikaga Yoshimasa 足利義政 (1435-90), 8th Ashikaga Shogun.
- Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358-1408), 3rd Ashikaga Shogun.
- Ashikaga Yoshi teru 足利義輝 (1536-65), 13th Ashikaga Shogun.

Ashina Yoshihiro 蘆名義広 (1576-1631).

Ashuso 阿首座, unknown, perhaps a monk from the Osaka area.

Araki Kitamuki Dōchin 荒木北向道陳 (1504-62), instructed
Rikyū in the tea ceremony.

Beniya Sōyō 紅屋宗陽, Sakai merchant and member of the
egōshū of that city.

Chōsokabe Motochika 長宗我部元親 (1540-99).

Dairin Shūtō (Sōtō) 大林宗套 (1480-1568), 91st abbot of
the Daitokuji.

Daitō Kokushi 大燈国師 (1282-1337), Myōchō 妙超, Rinzai
priest, founder of the Daitokuji.

Date Masamune 伊達政宗 (1567-1636).

Dōgen 道元 (1200-53), founder of the Sōtō sect of Zen.

Eisai 栄西 (1141-1215), founder of the Rinzai sect of Zen.

Fukujun'in 福寿院, abbot of the Atagoyama temple in Kyoto.

Furuta Oribe 古田織部 (1544-1615), one of Rikyū's seven
favourite disciples.

Fuwa Genroku 不破源六 (-1600), Hirotsuna 広綱, first, retainer
of Oda Nobukatsu, later, of Maeda Toshi'ie.

Gamō Ujisato 蒲生氏郷 (1556-95), Chūzaburō 忠三郎.

Genne (Gen'e) 玄恵 (玄慧) (1269-1350), monk of the Tendai sect.

Hitotsuyanagi Ichisuke 一柳一介 (市介) (-1590), Naosue
直末, Hideyoshi's retainer.

Hōjō Ujimasa 北条氏政 (1538-90) father of Ujinao.

Hōjō Ujinao 北条氏直 (1562-92), Ieyasu's son-in-law.

Honkakubō 本覚坊, perhaps identical with Honkakubō Shakō
本覚坊 暹好, abbot of Miidera.

Hosoi Shinsuke 細井新助, one of Hideyoshi's generals.

Hosokawa Katsumoto 細川勝元 (1430-73).

Hosokawa Tadaoki 細川忠興 (1564-1645), Sansai 三斎 , Etchū no kami 越中守 , son of Yūsai, one of Rikyū's seven favourite disciples.

Hosokawa Yūsai 細川幽齋 (1535-1610), Fujitaka 藤孝 , Genshin 玄旨 .

Ichi jō Kanera (Kaneyoshi) 一条兼良 (1402-81), statesman and scholar.

Iida Hambei jō 飯田半兵衛尉 , retainer of Oda Nobukatsu.

Ijūin Tadamune 伊集院忠棟 (-1602), retainer of Shimazu Yoshihiro.

Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394-1481), Kyōun 狂雲 , 46th abbot of the Daitokuji.

Ikō Hōki no kami Kazumasa 石河伯 守数正 (-1593), also Ishikawa 石川 . First Ieyasu's, later Hideyoshi's retainer.

Imai Sōkyū 今井宗久 (1520-93), merchant of Sakai and tea master. Son-in-law and disciple of Takeno Jōō.

Ishida Mitsunari 石田三成 (三也) (1560-1600), one of Hideyoshi's five bugyō.

Ishimoda Kageyori 石母田景頼 , retainer of Date Masamune.

Iwa いわ , presumably lady-in-waiting to Kitamandokoro.

Iwanari Tomomichi 岩成友通 (-1573), retainer of Miyoshi.

Jū no Sōho 重宗甫 , Sakai tea master, instructed by Rikyū, served Hideyoshi as tea master.

Kamiya Sōtan 神谷宗湛 (1551-1635), merchant and tea master from Hakata, instructed by Rikyū.

- Kawabata Dōki 川端道喜 (-1592), also referred to as Mochiya Dōki 餅屋道喜 , tea master, instructed by Rikyū.
- Kimura Yoshiakiyo 木村吉清 , Kiyohisa 清久 , Ise no kami 伊勢守 . First, retainer of Akechi Mitsuhide, later, of Hideyoshi.
- Kinoshita Sukehisa 木下祐久 (-1584), retainer of Nobunaga and later of Hideyoshi. Distant relation of Hideyoshi.
- Kitamandokoro (Kitanomandokoro) 北政所 (1542-1624), title of wife of kampaku, here Hideyoshi's wife O-Ne.
- Kobayakawa Takakage 小早川隆景 (1532[3]-97).
- Kokei Sōchin 古奚宗陳 (1532-97), Hoan 蒲庵 , 118th abbot of the Daitokuji. Instructed Rikyū in Zen and studied tea under Rikyū.
- Komochi Zembei 子持善兵衛 , in charge of Rikyū's business at Sakai.
- Konoe Sakihisa 近衛前久 (1536-1612), held the office of kampaku before Hideyoshi.
- Lu Wu (Jap. Riku'u) 陸羽 , eighth century Chinese monk.
- Maeda Gen'i 前田玄以 (1540-1602), mimbukyō hōin 民部卿法印 , Tokuzen'in 德善院 , one of Hideyoshi's five bugyō.
- Maeda Toshi'ie 前田利家 (1539-99), Hashiba Chikuzen no kami 羽柴筑前守 , Kaga dainagon 加賀大納言 .
- Makimura Chōbei 牧村長兵衛 (-1615), hyōbu no taiho 兵部大輔 , Toshisada 利貞 , one of Rikyū's seven favourite disciples.

Mashita Nagamori 増田 (真下) 長盛 (-1615), one of Hideyoshi's
five bugyō.

Matsui Yasuyuki 松井康之 (1551-1612), Sado no kami 佐渡守 ,
retainer of the Hosokawa family.

Matsui Yūkan 松井友閑 , governor of Sakai.

Matsunaga Hisahide 松永久秀 (-1577), first, retainer of
the Miyoshi family, later opposed the same. Killed
the 13th Ashikaga Shogun Yoshiteru.

Matsuya Hisamasa 松屋久政 (-1598), Nara merchant and tea
master.

Minamoto Sanetomo 源実朝 (1192-1219), 3rd Shogun of the
Kamakura Bakufu.

Minamoto Yoritomo 源頼朝 (1147-99).

Miyoshi Chōkei (Nagayoshi) 三好長慶 (1523[2]-64), head of
the Miyoshi family. First, follower of Hosokawa
Harumoto, later opposed the same.

Miyoshi Masanaga 三好政長 (1508-49), Sōsan 宗三 , Chōkei's
uncle, instructed in the tea ceremony by Takeno
Jōō.

Miyoshi Masayasu 三好政康 (1528-1615), Masaiku 政生 ,
Chōkansai 釣竿斎 , Chōkei's cousin, instructed in
the tea ceremony by Takeno Jōō.

Miyoshi Yasunaga 三好康長 (1524-81), Shōgan 笑岩 , Chōkei's
younger brother, instructed in the tea ceremony
by Takeno Jōō.

Miyoshi Yukiyasu 三好之康 (1526-62), Jikkyū 実休 , Chōkei's
younger brother.

- Mozuya Sōan 万代屋宗安 , Rikyū's son-in-law, tea master,
instructed by Rikyū, served Hideyoshi as tea master.
- Murai Sadakatsu 村井貞勝 (-1582), retainer of Nobunaga.
- Murata Mokichi Shukō 村田茂吉珠光 (1423-1502), founder of
the Nara School of Tea.
- Myōkian Kōshuku 妙喜庵功叔 (-1594), abbot of the Myōkian
temple at Yamazaki, instructed in the tea
ceremony by Rikyū.
- Myōon-in 妙音院 , monk, unknown.
- Nōami 能阿弥 (1397-1471), founder of the Higashiyama School
of Tea.
- Notoya Hyōgo 能登屋兵庫 , Sakai merchant and member of the
egōshū of that city.
- Oda Nobukatsu (Nobuo) 織田信雄 (1558-1630), Sansuke三介 ,
second son of Nobunaga.
- Oda Nobunaga 織田信長 (1534-82).
- Oda Nobutaka 織田信孝 (1562-83), third son of Nobunaga.
- Ōgimachi Tennō 正親町天皇 (1517-93).
- Ōmandokoro 大政所 (-1592), title given to mother of kampaku,
here Hideyoshi's mother.
- Ōtomo Sōrin 大友宗麟 (1530-87), Yoshi shige 義鎮 , Kyūan
Sōteki 休庵宗滴 .
- Po Chang (Jap. Hyakujō) 百丈 (724-814), Chinese monk.
- Rennyō 蓮如 (1415-99), eighth patriarch of the Ikkō sect.
- Saga Tennō 嵯峨天皇 (786-842).
- Saichō 最澄 (767-822), Dengyō Daishi 伝教大師 .
- Sakai Saemonnojō 酒井左衛門尉 (1528-96), Tadatsugu 忠次 ,
retainer of Ieyasu.

- Suzuki Shimbei 鈴木新兵衛 , retainer of Date Masamune.
- Takagi Hirotsugu 高木広次 , unknown, perhaps a retainer of
Oda Nobukatsu.
- Takeda Shingen 武田信玄 (1521-73), Harunobu 晴信 .
- Takeno Jōō 武野紹鷗 (1502-55), famous tea master, instructed
Rikyū.
- Takeno Sōga 武野宗互 (1550-1614), Shingorō 新五郎 , tea
master, Jōō's eldest son.
- Takigawa Kazumasa (Ichimasu) 滝川一益 (1525-86), retainer
of Nobunaga, later of Hideyoshi.
- Tanaka Sen'ami (Sennami) 田中千阿弥 , allegedly Rikyū's
grandfather.
- Tarō Gorō 太郎五郎 , unknown.
- Tennōjiya Dōshitsu 天王寺屋道叱 , Sakai tea master and
merchant, Tsuda Sōkyū's uncle.
- Tokoro Dembei 所伝兵 , unknown.
- Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542-1616).
- Tomita Tomonobu 富田知信 (-1599), Ippaku 一白 , retainer of
Hideyoshi.
- Tōshirō 藤四郎 , probably a relation of Sueyoshi Kambei.
- Toyotomi Hidenaga 豊臣秀長 (-1591), Yamato dainagon
大和大納言 , counsellor (saishō) 宰相 , councillor
(sangi) 参議 , Mino no kami 美濃守 , Hideyoshi's
half-brother.
- Toyotomi Hidetsugu 豊臣秀次 (1568-95), chūnagon 中納言 ,
Hideyoshi's nephew and adopted son, later kampaku.
- Toyotomi Hideyori 豊臣秀頼 (1593-1615), O-Hiroi お拾い ,
Hideyoshi and Yodogimi's second and only surviving
son.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537-98).

Tsuda Nobukatsu 津田信勝 (-1593), Seigetsu 盛月 , first, retainer of Nobunaga, then temporarily of Ieyasu and later of Hideyoshi.

Tsuda Sōkyū 津田宗及 (-1591), head of the Tennōjiya family, merchant and tea master of Sakai.

Tsuge Sakyōnosuke 柘植左京亮 (1541-1609), Yoichi 与一 , first Nobunaga's, then Hideyoshi's retainer.

Tsurumatsu 鶴松 (1589-91), Hideyoshi and Yodogimi's first son.

Uesugi Kagekatsu 上杉景勝 (1555-1623).

Uesugi Kenshin 上杉謙信 (1530-78), Terutora 輝虎 .

Ukita Hideie 宇喜多秀家 (1572-1655).

Waku Sōze 和久宗是 (1536-1615), Hideyoshi's retainer and scribe.

Yakuin Zensō 施薬院全宗 (1529-96), Toku'unken 徳雲軒 , after being appointed yakuin (seyakuin) retained this title as family name. Rebuilt Hieiizan in 1582.

Yamanoue no Sōji 山上宗二 (1540-90). Disciple of Rikyū.

Yamashina Tokitsugu 山科言繼 (1507-79).

Yodogimi 淀君 (-1615), Yodo dono 淀殿 , Chacha 茶々 , Nishinomaru 西の丸 , Ninomaru 二の丸 , mother of Tsurumatsu and Hideyori.

APPENDIX B

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