

OCHA NO WA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CHADO URASENKE
TANKOKAI WASHINGTON DC ASSOCIATION

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CHANOYU, FROM JAPAN TO WASHINGTON

My Introduction to Tea

One night in 1980, I found myself walking down a very narrow street between old Japanese houses that had been there many, many years. I had only been in the Kurihama area of Japan for a few weeks and my Japanese neighbor asked if I would like to go to a tea ceremony. Having little knowledge of living in Japan at that time, I agreed eagerly thinking that this would be a wonderful opportunity to meet lots of people and join in conversation although limited due to the English and Japanese language. In the United States, I went to many teas and hosted them myself for my friends.

Usually a tea would be held in the afternoon for a special occasion. Friends would stand around chatting and eating platters of sandwiches, cake, and cookies. Coffee and English tea would be served with cream, sugar, and lemon. As I came to the Japanese house, I began thinking that I must be early because I did not hear nor see lots of other people.

Little did I know that on that night, I would be introduced to a totally different concept of "tea." The phrase, "drinking from a cup of tea," would evolve into an experience that would change my perceptions, my thoughts, and in many ways, the way I approach life.

As I entered into the house and took off my shoes, I was greeted in English by Ohishi Sensei, a petite woman dressed in a kimono who seemed to glide across the floor in small, quick steps compared to my not as graceful walk. Three other ladies had gathered and quietly greeted me with nods and smiles. I was led to a room in the rear of the small house and was guided to a *tatami* room that emitted an inviting scent of incense. I remember thinking at this moment, "I wonder what I have gotten myself into."

Sensei welcomed me and told me that tonight I would be watching a traditional Japanese tea ceremony and introduced me to her students. They provided a very small, low stool-like pedestal on which they told

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Ohishi Sensei and students; Mary Repass's first class in Japan

OCHA NO WA

The name of our newsletter means "The Wa of Tea," where wa can refer to harmony or peace (as 和), story or talk (as 話), or circle or link (as 輪).

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Chakai

Sunday, 10 October 2010
Members' Private Session at 11:00 a.m.

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens
4155 Linnean Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20008

RSVP to aikoichimura@erols.com by 3 October



CHABANA SAIJIKI 茶花歳時記 ❀ ODAMAKI 苧環

When I was a freshman in high school, my biology teacher gave us the summer project of collecting one hundred species of wild plants, then drying them by pressing them between the sheets of old newspapers, and finally preserving them by gluing each plant onto a heavy paper. We then had to neatly label each wildflower with the Japanese name, the Latin or scientific name, date, and the place where we found it, as if this were being done by a researcher of an Arboretum. It was a challenging task for sixteen-year-old urban girls, but each student somehow managed to present the teacher one hundred specimens, hoping to receive compliments and good grade for their monumental achievement. Instead, we had to be examined by the teacher and to take a quiz to prove we had indeed collected those one hundred plants ourselves by demonstrating knowledge of the name and characteristics of each plant. *Makino's Illustrated Flora of Japan*, an encyclopedic reference book, became my bible for finding the names of the plants. I memorized at least one hundred names of wild plants in my collection at that time.

This exercise of looking for wildflowers and researching their names, ironically, became habitual even after the project was long over and turned into my hobby later. Especially for my study of *chanoyu* and also my hobby of Haiku writing, the knowledge of wild plants and flowers proved to be very handy and important. I tend to focus my attention more on the ground than on the scenery around me when I stroll; during weekly photo excursions sponsored by the Smithsonian covering the Potomac River and the Great Falls vicinity, I find myself often searching for wildflowers on the ground. I have encountered many species of wild flowers that were very familiar to me and found in Japan and also some species not found in Japan and accumulated a body of wildflowers photo collection in my digital album.

For my research nowadays, in addition to the reliable *Makino's Illustrated Flora of Japan*, I use *Ochajin no Tameno Chabana Yaso Daizukan お茶人のための茶花野草大図鑑* published in 2008 by Sekai Bunkasha, for plants names, characteristics, and the usages in Chabana 茶花 flower arrangements for *chanoyu*. Most of species I found in this area are pleasantly found in both encyclopedias. In the new series of Chabana Saijiki articles for this newsletter, I am going to share my findings and the general information and Chabana related information.

In this first article, I will start with **Odamaki 苧環** commonly known as Columbines. There are more than eighty species of Columbines known all over the world. They were found beside rivers, in the woods, in the rough terrain of the Rocky Mountains and in many home gardens. The National Forest Service reports "recent scientific evidence has determined that the genus *Aquilegia* originated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. DNA analyses have determined that two European species and one Asian species form the ancestral group from which all other species of *Aquilegia* evolved. One species of columbine expanded its range across the Bering land bridge connecting Asia and North America during the glacial period 10,000 to 40,000 years ago. These DNA analyses demonstrate that the Asian species *Aquilegia viridiflora* separates out with the North American species and thus may share an ancestral species with the North American columbines."



Yama-Odamaki



Miyama-Odamaki

The most common species found in Japan are Yama-Odamaki (*Aquilegia buergeriana*) and Miyama-Odamaki (*Aquilegia flavellata* var. *pumila*) which grows in mountain meadows. A large community of Yama-Odamaki (*A. buergeriana*) is found on the meadow around Ochudou お中道 at north and west slope of Mt. Fuji.

Origin of names

The Japanese name Odamaki 苧環 is attributed to the shape of the flower that resembles a spool of linen thread. The scientific name, *Aquilegia* derives from the Latin word for eagle, *Aquila*. Their spur-like appendages can remind one of the outstretched talons of an eagle. Contrary to the scientific name *Aquilegia*, the com-

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mon name "columbine" (from the Latin, *columba*), which refers to doves is much milder and peaceful. A resemblance in the inverted columbine flower to five doves nestled together was thought to be the rational to its name.

Characteristics

The Columbines are of the Ranunculaceae キンポウゲ科 family. Columbine flowers come in a number of colors: blue, pink, purple, yellow, white and other colors. The exquisite shape of columbine flowers are highly prized and admired by botanists and gardeners throughout the world. Besides their trademark "spurs", their often showy stamens protrude like a golden tassel.

This perennial wildflower is a native to most temperate areas of the world. Columbines do best when they are grown in moist, rich, well- drained soil in light shade. One to three foot high plants generally begin blooming in early to mid-May and will often continue through June if the flowers are removed as they fade. Columbines are a favorite flower for hummingbirds, and are excellent additions to the rock garden, or as native woodland planting.

Planting and Caring for Columbines

Plants should be set out the garden in spring or late summer. Plant them one to two feet apart with the crown (*where the roots and tops meet*) at soil level. Once established, they should be fed them monthly with a soluble all-purpose (5-10-5) fertilizer and kept well watered during growing season. In colder regions (Zones 4-5), it is a good idea to provide a good mulch of hay, straw, etc. in late fall to protect from alternating freezing and thawing temperatures. They tend to cross-pollinate, hybridize, and self-seed freely, creating new strains and colors. However, the formation of seeds will shorten the productive lifespan of the plant, so it is best to remove the spent flowers promptly. Columbines tend to lose vitality after three to four years, and are best replaced at that time. Potted Columbines are relatively easy to obtain from most of the local nursery such as Benkes or the Merrifield Nursery in the metropolitan DC area. The prices range from \$5.00 to \$8.00 a pot.



White Columbine

Growing Columbines from Seed

Seed may be sown directly in the garden in early spring or up until mid-summer. The seeds should be left uncovered, because they germinate faster in light. These seeds will produce flowering size plants the following spring.

This species is herbaceous perennial, mainly distributed on the border of forest of mountainous zones.

Chabana Treatment: Can be used as *Nejime* 根締め - add short branches and flowers at the root [base] of an arrangement or as a soe (supporting) branch. For a *koma* 小間, a small tatami room, a single sprig of Columbine in a *Tsurukubi* 鶴首 or a bamboo vase would be appropriate. For a larger basket vase, Columbine along with an assortment of wild flowers such as Pink Meadowsweet 京鹿子 (*Filipendula purpurea*), Black Bugbane 晒菜升麻 (*Cimicifuga simplex*), Noazami or Japanese thistle 野薊 (*Cirsium japonicum*) and Gooseneck 岡虎の尾 would be a tasteful combination.

Information source: *Ochajin no Tameno Chabana Yaso Daizukan* published by Sekai Bunkasya. お茶人のための茶花野草大図鑑 世界文化社

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquilegia>

<http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/beauty/columbines/naturalhistory.shtml>

Photos: taken by Aiko Ichimura

- Aiko Ichimura

CHANOYU, FROM JAPAN TO WASHINGTON (CONTINUED)

me to sit which I attempted awkwardly. *Sensei* and the students assumed positions on their knees and I soon became fascinated with what I would observe for the rest of the evening.

One of the students soon entered the room and began a ritual-like process of bringing in utensils, cleaning them, and preparing a bowl of tea. She presented it to the first guest and proceeded to go through movements of continued cleansing and tea preparation. *Sensei* quietly explained to me many of the elements of the ceremony that was being done and the meaning behind the movements and gestures. She also emphasized the sincerity of preparing a cup of tea for someone and the genuine exchange of feelings toward one another. I found the philosophy most beautiful and as the night progressed, I began to want to know more. I wanted to learn more, find out more about the ceremony, participate in the lessons, and hopefully - someday - perhaps be able to perform the art of making tea, the *chanoyu* way.

At the end of the evening, I was given a small, red handkerchief, a *fukusa*, with limited instructions on how to fold it. I could not wait until my first real tea ceremony lesson.

The Study of Tea

During the next two years of living in Japan, I continued my weekly study of tea under Ohishi *Sensei*. When she first told me that tea cannot be learned from a book, I did not totally understand. Eventually, I began to realize that the academic way of learning could not, and should not, be applied to this learning process. The slow, methodical knowledge of *chanoyu* that is shared between teacher and students comes from inside oneself, a living tradition. There are basic steps in the performance of making a bowl of tea, but the phase, "*ichigo ichie*," meaning one time, one meeting, became more evident as I continued to study and each meeting had a meaning within its own that, interestingly, can and could not be repeated. The four concepts, harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility became more evident.

During a trip to Kyoto, I was able to visit the Urasenke Foundation and some of the tea rooms of Konnichian. This was an experience that I will always cherish and that only added to my foundation of tea. Leaving Japan and my tea teacher and friends was difficult. Through my study, I had learned not only about tea ceremony, but many of the rich Japanese traditions, history, language, and background of Japan. I also learned that tea ceremony was not something that you could learn in "five easy lessons." The study of tea was life-long - never truly with an end.

Unexpected Surprise upon My Return

Upon returning to the United States in 1982, I was afraid that I would not be able to continue my tea study. Before moving to Japan, I had never heard of tea ceremony and had never known anyone who studied tea ceremony. Surprisingly I found out that there was a teacher in McLean, Miyakawa *Sensei*. I immediately contacted her and went to visit. She was a beautiful lady who had a deep and long history in the study and teaching of the tea ceremony. With both Japanese and American students, she blended the cultures and provided a wonderful atmosphere for *chanoyu*.

Over the next several years, I continued my study and found that it continued to provide a mental and spiritual opportunity. With the other students, we often gave demonstrations to schools, assisted living homes, festivals, Cherry Blossom events, and the Japanese embassy. Miyakawa *Sensei* would work for days with preparation for each occasion, making sure that the theme and background was appropriate for the season or gathering. I remember that one time when we were doing an outside garden demonstration there was one small limb on a tree that was not quite exposing the sunlight as she wished. She pulled out her handy little clippers and trimmed the tree branch to provide the setting she wished.



Miyakawa *Sensei* performing tea ceremony; Mary Repass, interpreter; Carol Hayashida and Kathleen Santillo, guests

Urasenke in D.C.

Although I am unfamiliar with Urasenke in D.C. prior to 1982, Miyakawa Sensei provided a base for the study and gatherings from time to time of students and others with interest in the tea ceremony. She married Arthur Miyakawa of the State Department after the War and they had made their home in D.C. and later in McLean. Throughout those years she began her teaching of the tea ceremony since the 1950s and was instrumental in creating an official chapter for study through the Urasenke Foundation in Kyoto in 1979.

On the 15th Anniversary of the Washington Urasenke organization, a reception was held on April 6, 1994, at the Willard Hotel to honor Somi Miyakawa for her many years of teaching tea and contributions. The reception also commemorated the presence of the Urasenke Chapter and organization in the Washington, D.C. community. Tea Master, Norio Kurakazu, from Konnichian Urasenke, Kyoto, and Bruce Hamana, representative from the Urasenke Foundation in Kyoto, presented a gift of support and address of honor to the

Washington chapter and Somi Miyakawa. Honorary Advisors were Ambassador and Mrs. Kuriyama, Somi Miyakawa, and George Packard. Officers were: President Takashi Chiba; Vice-President Mary Repass; Secretaries Louise Cort, Eric Stem, Carol Hayashida, Steve di Girolamo; Treasurer, Keiko Nishimoto; Konosuke Sugiura, Supporter; and Counselor and Appointed Teacher, Soki Nozoe.

Therefore, for over a long number of years, the teaching of the tea ceremony and Urasenke organization has been in the Washington area and provided instruction for many students.



Dr. Soshitsu Sen and Miyakawa Sensei, Kyoto



Tea Master Norio Kurakazu and Mary Repass at 15th Anniversary of Washington Urasenke

Paradox of Today's Technological World and Chanoyu

In today's society, the technological revolution of communication and relationships have changed drastically over the past few years. Cell phones, Facebook, My Space, computers, and more have definitely provided a small, small world, but I often wonder if it is causing a wider gap of communication between individuals on a one-to-one basis. So many of our relationships depend on distant communication. Interchanging conversation is largely through texting or emails. It is now being questioned as to how this new wave will affect our relationships and communication with one another.

I often think of the study of tea and how, if kept to the traditional ways of teaching, it provides quite the opposite resource of communication between teacher and student and among those who study Chanoyu. It is one way that people do need to communicate through observing, sensing the feelings of others, and close communication that cannot be duplicated technologically.

From writings under Soshitu Sen, Urasenke Grand Tea Master, XV:

In my own hands I hold a bowl of tea; I see all of nature represented in its green color. Closing my eyes I find green mountains and pure water within my own heart. Silently, sitting alone, drinking tea, I feel these become part of me. Sharing this bowl of tea with others, they, too, become one with it and nature. That we can find a lasting tranquility in our own selves in company with each other is the paradox that is the Way of Tea.



Attendees of 15th Anniversary of Washington Urasenke at Willard Hotel

- Mary Repass

Note about author:

Dr. Mary Eva Repass lives in Fredericksburg, Virginia, with her husband. She has worked in the international business community for many years in the areas of communication, education, and human relations. Presently, she teaches at the University of Virginia in the Life Span and Human Development department. She also is a partner at Blue Shark Antiques and Collectibles in Fredericksburg and does antique appraising. Dr. Repass and her family including two sons lived in Japan in 1980 to 1982 and she has spent several years in Japan since then.

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

Chanoyu Introduction

At Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA Library Conference Room

In cooperation with the Japan-America Society of Washington DC

One of our grass-roots activities, “Chanoyu Introduction”, was held from 12:30 pm to 2:00 pm, Wednesday, July 28, in downtown D.C., at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. It was attended by 25 people. Many were students and office workers who enjoyed their lunch break observing our Chanoyu demonstration. Some were obviously familiar with Chanoyu. The venue was a perfect setting for an audience of this size.

The program started with a six-minute DVD showing authentic *Chashitsu, Roji*, and a full course *Chaji*. We demonstrated Chanoyu followed by the sweet and tea service to all guests. In a portable alcove, a *Shikishi “Wa, Kei, Sei, Jyaku”* was hung.



Demonstration using Misonodana

We used the *Misonodana* which Dr. Sachiko Ueno of S & R Foundation presented us just a month ago. For the occasion, introducing Chanoyu in a *ryurei* style appeared to be very natural and comfortable. The setting on the *Misonodana* (black lacquered table decorated with orange-red tassels on the sides) - a dark iron *kama*, a beautifully intricate *Kochi 交趾 mizusashi*, and a *hishaku* resting on a blue ceramic *futaoki* - created a soothing focal point for the guests coming into the room after walking outside under the hot sun.

- Mioko Miller

Washington DC Association Members visit a Freer Gallery vault

On the morning of July 9th, 2010, several of the Washington DC Association members had the privilege of visiting one of the rooms in the basement of Freer Gallery. The focus of the visit was to see the collaborative work of the two great artists of the Momoyama and early Edo periods, Hon'ami Koetsu 本阿弥光悦 and Tawaraya Sotatsu 俵屋宗達. Those names are very familiar but strangely confusing, for both of them were masters of multiple art forms such as painting, woodblock design, calligraphy, pottery, and lacquerware design. When those geniuses collaborate, they definitely go beyond their own talents and beyond ordinary time and space.



Viewing Koetsu & Sotatsu scroll

Kokinshu Imperial Anthology 古今集 was done only in black ink, but thick or thin calligraphy strokes, light or dark ink in the background painting of cranes and bamboo plants seemed just as dynamic as those done in bright colors. In a seemingly unaffected shikishi with rocks, waves, and mountains illustrated for a poem by Mibu no Tadamine 壬生の忠岑, one of Thirty-six Immortal Poets, we began to see more and more beyond the surface as we discussed and pondered in front of it for some twenty minutes. Koetsu's shikishi was a window into the heart of the poem of lamenting old age.

The most dramatic of all was a pair of folding screens 扇面散図屏風 that can comfortably cover the walls of a twelve-mat room. “Although the painters of these fans are unidentified, the designs resemble those created by the atelier of Sotatsu,” explained an expert. A collabo-

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Koetsu – Kokinsyu

rative work of many fans falling into a river and Soetu's calligraphy draws our attention to the originally silver river that has darkened to a nearly black tone. Onto the river a prince's fan and his attendants' fall at different timing. Their excitement could be felt in the vault of Freer Gallery in Washington, DC in the 21st century. The deliberate omission of people takes the viewers back to the Heian Period, down into the great river of human history, and reminds us of the immutable nature.

- Takako Dickinson

MEMBERSHIP

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2010 or officially joined Chado Urasenke Tankokai Washington DC Association, we invite you to do so. Also, please let us know of any changes in your address, phone number, or e-mail address.

Membership categories are: Individual \$30.00, Family \$50.00, Student \$20.00, and Corporate or Institution \$75.00. Please make your check payable to Urasenke Tankokai Washington DC Association, and send it to:

Chado Urasenke Tankokai Washington D.C. Association
P.O. Box 138
McLean, VA 22101

If you have questions and or would like further information, including the address to send your membership dues payment, please e-mail me at membership@tankokaidc.org. If any of your friends are interested in joining us, I will send them our brochure with information about us. Just let me know their names and mailing addresses. Thank you for your interest in our association.

- Katie Bechtold, Membership Secretary

2009-10 OFFICERS

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YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear Members,

Have you ever been urged to write something about the Way of Tea? Did you discover something new while attending a tea affair? Have you experienced a eureka moment about a Zen phrase? We would like to invite you to write for Ocha no Wa about anything to do with the Way of Tea or any related cultural aspects of it. We are sorry that the space is limited only to a page or two including photos. Contact Katie Bechtold and Takako Dickinson at ochanowa@tankokaidc.org for more details or questions.

-- Editors