

Researching the History of Women in *Chanoyu*

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At the time of writing I am living in Kyoto, conducting research for my PhD thesis on the History of Women in *chanoyu* (tea-ceremony)¹, supported by a Japan Foundation Fellowship. This research combines my academic and personal interests in Japanese history and *chanoyu*. In this paper I would like to discuss how I came to choose this subject for my doctoral research, before going on to describe this research and how I believe it will contribute to the fields of Tea history and Japanese women's history.

Research Topic

I first began studying Tea as an exchange student living in Kuroishi city in Aomori, northern Japan. At the time, I knew very little about *chanoyu*; I had seen a 'performance' of Tea in Kyoto on a trip with my Australian high school a few years prior to that. It was out of curiosity and a desire to learn more about Japan and Japanese culture that I asked my host sister if I could attend class with her at her aunt's house. This first real exposure I had to Tea was limited by my lack of Japanese language skills, yet over the course of one year, as my Japanese proficiency increased and as I attended weekly Tea classes, I slowly began to learn more about Tea. The class I attended was typical of Tea at the 'local' level, away from the centre in Kyoto. The teacher was a woman who taught Tea and Ikebana (flower arrangement) in her home to students who were all women, predominantly aged over forty. As I will discuss later, Tea in modern Japan is very much a women's activity. This was the world of Tea to which I was first introduced. At the time I was studying Tea as a hobby in Aomori, I did not realise that I would be able to continue studying once I had returned to Australia. I discovered, though, that since the 1950s the Urasenke school of Tea, which was the school to which my teacher belonged, had been promoting Tea internationally. Thus I was pleasantly surprised to find that I could continue my practice of Tea in Sydney, and have been doing so for the past six years.

As an undergraduate student at the University of Sydney, I studied Japanese history among other subjects. Women's history in particular was an area that interested me, and as I began to read more about Tea history, both as part of my Tea practice and for university study, I became intrigued by the lack of discussion about women. Knowing as I did that Tea in both modern Japan and internationally was considered to be a woman's

¹ The common English term 'tea-ceremony' is regarded by many practitioners and academics as a poor translation of the Japanese terms *chanoyu* (literally 'hot water for tea') and *chadō* (The Way of Tea) which are used to describe the various activities centered around *temae*, procedures for making and drinking *matcha* (powdered green tea). I prefer to use either the Japanese term *chanoyu* or in English 'Tea', as in Japanese *ocha* (tea) is the term most commonly used by practitioners to refer to the activity among themselves.

activity, I was surprised to find so little mention of women within its history; and to read that it was once a male activity, part of the masculine world of samurai culture in Early Modern Japan. I became interested in exploring how, when and why women came to study Tea and when and why the image of Tea became feminine. Thus, it was a combination of my academic study of Japanese history and private study of Tea that led me to undertake doctoral research on the history of women in *chanoyu*.

There are difficulties faced by a foreigner undertaking research on a topic so close to the hearts of many Japanese. Tea is regarded by many Japanese (even if they have not formally studied it) as uniquely Japanese, and is bound up in their notion of Japanese identity. Often it seems that Japanese believe Tea to be a subject which is difficult for a foreigner to grasp, let alone an area of research in which they can make a significant contribution to the field. Yet, in some senses being a foreigner and therefore an automatic 'outsider' can have its benefits. One finds, for example, that you have more freedom and leeway to critically analyse Tea discourse and established scholarship. Recently, there has been an increase in cross-cultural scholarship on Tea by foreign researchers which has taken such a critical approach.² It is changing the way we think about Tea history and culture, giving an alternative viewpoint to the dominant narrative produced and sponsored by the major Tea schools.

The history of *chanoyu* dates back at least four hundred years to the Tea master Sen no Rikyū, who is regarded as the 'founder' of Tea.³ In contemporary Japan, Tea is regarded as a feminine activity. The practice of Tea is dominated by women as both teachers and students at the local level, yet at the higher levels it remains controlled by men, with limited access for women to attain high positions within the Tea schools. Tea as a feminine activity is often associated with bridal training for young women, and as a hobby for middle-aged and older women.⁴ This is seen as being in contrast to the Early Modern Period when, it is generally said, women did not study Tea and it was a male activity, practised by both samurai and townsmen.

According to the standard accounts of Tea history, women began to practise Tea after the Meiji Restoration⁵, the political and social upheavals which ushered in a period of modernisation and westernisation in Japan from 1868. It is said that in the Meiji Period, the major schools of Tea opened up the study of Tea to women through incorporating it into the curriculum of girls' schools.⁶ Certainly this exposure to Tea at school would have had an impact on the number of female Tea practitioners. Though it is difficult to

² See, for example, Pitelka (ed), *Japanese Tea Culture*.

³ On the history of Tea see Kumakura and Varley (eds), *Tea in Japan* and Sen Sōshitsu XV, *The Japanese Way of Tea*.

⁴ For a discussion of women's Tea practice in contemporary Japan see Kato, *The Tea Ceremony and Women's Empowerment in Modern Japan*.

⁵ See for example Sen Sōshitsu, 'Autobiographical Essay-3: The Diffusion of the Way of Tea', p. 6. International Division, Chadō Urasenke Tankōkai, Inc., *The Urasenke Tradition of Tea*, p. 15. Varley, Foreword, to Sōshitsu, Sen XV, *The Japanese Way of Tea*, p. x. s.

⁶ Kumakura, 'josei to chanoyu', p. 246. Yokota, 'Josei to chadō kyōiku', pp. 84–85. For detailed studies of the relationship between tea and girls' higher schools in this period see Kobayashi 'kōtō jogakkō ni okeru 'hana/cha' no juyō', pp. 45–59. Kobayashi 'meiji sho/chūki, joshi chūtō kyōiku ni okeru 'hana/cha' no juyō', pp. 12–22.

know the exact number of Tea practitioners and their gender at any given time, due to the lack of information provided by Tea schools, it is generally accepted that in the Meiji and Taishō periods (1868–1912 and 1912–1926) there was a dramatic increase in the number of female practitioners. However, historian of Tea Kumakura Isao notes, ‘it is not likely that this degree of sudden popularisation of *chanoyu* was due merely to its incorporation into women’s education.’⁷ Kumakura proposes other background reasons for this, such as the codification of *chanoyu* as ‘tradition’ and the acceptance *chanoyu* gained among intellectuals.⁸ I would also argue that we cannot simply attribute the contemporary popularity of Tea among women and its feminine image to the promotion of Tea through girls’ education in the Meiji Period. I originally began my doctoral research with this in mind, aiming to investigate this transitory period, and examine how Tea changed from a male-dominated world to a female-dominated one in the Meiji and Taishō periods.

However, my research took an unexpected turn when, as part of background research to the changes of the Meiji Period, I began examining Tea in the preceding Edo Period, or Early Modern Period (1600–1868) more closely. I very quickly found that it was not difficult to find evidence that showed that women were practising Tea prior to the Meiji Period. This led me to rethink my earlier assumptions about the history of women’s Tea practice, based on the standard historical accounts of Tea. My research therefore became focused on finding evidence for women’s Tea practice in the Early Modern Period, and examining this in order to understand women’s Tea practice at that time. Further, I have been considering how this relates to the increase in female Tea practitioners in the Modern Period and the current feminine image of Tea. This research also requires a critical examination of Tea historiography, as produced by both the Tea schools and academics, raising questions such as why the major schools of Tea in modern Japan and academic historians have written a history of Tea in which it is said women did not begin to participate until the Meiji period, when there is ample evidence to suggest otherwise.

Furthermore, it raises questions about our image of the Early Modern Japanese woman as ‘cloistered’ inside the home. As Yutaka Yabuta has suggested, there has been the view among scholars of Japan that ‘the Edo Period was the darkest of times for women.’⁹ This is based on a view that women in this period were severely restricted in their ability to participate in social and public activities due to the influence of Confucianism. Yabuta, however, in his own research on Early Modern women’s literacy and describing the research of others in areas such as art, travel, and marriage and divorce practices, has argued that we need to re-evaluate Early Modern women’s lives and recognise women’s participation in and contribution to Edo Period culture. My research on Early Modern women’s Tea practice also suggests that women had a more significant role to play in cultural production and practices in the Edo Period than current

⁷ Kumakura, ‘The History of Chanoyu in Early-Modern Japan’, p. 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Yutaka, *Rediscovering Women in Tokugawa Japan*, p. 17.

scholarship would suggest.

Despite the contemporary dominance of women in the world of Tea practice, within the history of Tea, as told by academics and the Tea schools, there is very little mention of women, particularly prior to the Modern Period. The few women who are regularly cited as having studied Tea in the Early Modern Period are regarded as exceptions due to their high status, for example the Empress Tōfukumonin.¹⁰ That is, Early Modern women's Tea practice either goes unnoticed, or when it is discussed it follows what feminist historians have called the 'compensatory' and 'contributory' model.¹¹ In this model 'exceptional' women are held up as examples to compensate for the lack of women in previous historical accounts of the subject. It has been recognised that such scholarship examined women's contributions and achievements 'according to the standards of the male, public world, and appending women to history as it has been defined, left unchallenged the existing paradigm.'¹²

The only book to date specifically dealing with women in Tea history, Kagotani Machiko's *Josei to chanoyu* (Women and Tea), is an example of such 'compensatory' and 'contributory' scholarship. The book presents biographical information about a number of famous female Tea practitioners, both from the Early Modern and Modern periods. There is no attempt made to analyse the Tea practice of these women outside of the paradigms established by male centred Tea scholarship; rather, these women are held up as 'exceptional' examples to compensate for the lack of women in other Tea histories. Interestingly, male scholars often point out that there is already a book on female Tea practitioners, namely *Josei to chanoyu*. Though this book is now more than twenty years old, they see no need for a revision of the history of women and Tea. However, it is necessary for a history of Tea to be written which focuses specifically on women, and does not merely contribute some discussion of women to male-centred Tea history. By shifting our focus to women we can gain a more complete understanding of Tea history itself, as well as the history of women in Japan. That is, this new focus on women, rather than male Tea practitioners, necessarily moves us away from 'elite' – for there were very few elite female Tea practitioners – and towards 'ordinary' Tea practitioners. Understanding women's role in Tea history gives us a new perspective on Tea history as a whole. Moreover, through an understanding of Early Modern women's Tea practice, we have a better basis for understanding Modern women's Tea practice and the developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which saw Tea become regarded as a *feminine* activity.

¹⁰ For example see the biographical information about famous female Tea practitioners in Kagotani, *Josei to chanoyu*.

¹¹ Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges', pp. 145–159.

¹² Greene and Kahn, 'Feminist scholarship and the social construction of women', p. 13

Sources

Historians have generally taken a top-down approach to Tea history, using the writings of Tea masters as their main source. This may be one reason why there is little discussion of women in the Early Modern history of Tea, for if they were not mentioned in official school documents then women may have escaped historians' attention. By using a variety of more popular sources, it becomes clear that women from a wide range of social classes studied tea in the Edo Period. I will now outline the types of sources which I have been using, and give examples of how each one offers a picture of the different types of women who were practising Tea in the Edo Period, and the differing ways in which they practised it. I aim to show not only that women were Tea practitioners prior to the Meiji Period, but also the variations in Early Modern women's Tea practice. Through these sources we can see what role Tea played in the lives of the women who practised it, and even what it may have meant to them. There was not one 'type' of woman who practised Tea, but many; and there were equally many reasons and motivations for their practice.

Saiken and Yūjō Hyōbanki

In *saiken*, (guide books) and *yūjō hyōbanki* ('who's who' books of the pleasure quarters), the top ranking courtesans (*tayū* in the early Edo Period, and later known as *oiran*), had their accomplishments listed next to their name. Tea is commonly listed among these accomplishments, for it was one of the necessary skills for a courtesan.¹³ The following description of the *oiran* Segawa III of the Matsubaya by her contemporary, the writer Baba Bunko, says that 'she learned all of the arts desirable for a high-ranking courtesan, such as *shamisen*, singing, tea ceremony, *haiku*, go, backgammon, kickball, flute, extremely well'.¹⁴ Many other courtesans are described as 'experts' or 'masters' in *chanoyu* in such texts. Learning Tea and performing *temae* for customers was one of the courtesan's many accomplishments, and among historians of the pleasure quarters the practice of Tea by courtesans is freely discussed.¹⁵ It could be suggested that Tea historians have ignored or dismissed this type of Early Modern women's Tea practice because they wish to shun any association with the 'disrespectable' world of the pleasure quarters.

¹³ For a discussion of the world of courtesans in Early-Modern Japan see de Sabato Swinton, 'Reflections on the Floating World', pp. 13–45. and Seigle, *Yoshiwara*.

¹⁴ Baba Bunkō, *Buya Zokudan*, p. 382. Translated in Seigle, *Yoshiwara*, p. 123.

¹⁵ See, for example, Yasutaka, 'The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture', pp. 3–32.

Ukiyoe Prints and Paintings

As tea was part of the world of entertainment and pleasure at places like Yoshiwara in Edo (present day Tokyo) and Shimabara in Kyoto, it is not unsurprising to find numerous visual representations which show the connections between the women of the pleasure quarters and *chanoyu*. The style of Tea practised by courtesans in these pictures can be said to be luxurious and extravagant, in keeping with their image. It contrasts with the more demure, humble style of Tea associated with women in modern Japan.

In *ukiyo*e paintings and prints ranging from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century, we see courtesans performing *temae* as part of the leisurely entertainments on offer in areas such as Higashiyama and the Shijo riverside in Kyoto.¹⁶ We also find pictures of courtesans practising Tea amongst themselves, thus it was perhaps something they enjoyed as a leisure activity, as well as a means of entertaining customers.¹⁷ In some of the pictures, the utensils for Tea are in the room with the courtesans, whilst they are engaged in other leisurely pursuits, again suggesting that Tea could simply be a form of entertainment amongst women and not always a ‘public’ performance.¹⁸ Historians and anthropologists, however, have tended to focus on women’s participation in Tea in ‘official’ or ‘public’ settings and, finding little evidence for this in the Early Modern Period, therefore come to the conclusion that women did not practise Tea.¹⁹ In contrast to this approach, I am using Etsuko Kato’s definition of a Tea practitioner as anyone who practises *temae* (the procedures for making Tea).²⁰ Once we accept this definition, it is clear that there were indeed many women who were Tea practitioners in Early Modern Japan, though their Tea practice may not always have been ‘public’ or ‘official’.

Paintings and prints of the Edo Period show that women were not only practising Tea amongst themselves, it was also one social activity undertaken at what might be termed ‘social artistic gatherings’. Such gatherings were focused on both literature and the arts and were popular among well-to-do, educated commoners and elite alike.²¹ Thus, we find screens which depict men and women together enjoying various entertainment such as music, dancing and Tea in relaxed gatherings at villas.²² We can see that women were also engaging in Tea as a form of social interaction with other women and with men in semi-public settings.

¹⁶ ‘Pleasure at Higashiyama’, 17th century, (Kyoto: Kōzu Kobunka Museum), in Akai (ed), *Chanoyu kaiga shiryō shūsei*, pp. 112–113. ‘Genre Painting Scroll of Shijō Riverside’, second half of the 17th century (Tokyo: Suntory Museum of Art), in *Chanoyu kaiga shiryō shūsei*, pp. 172–173.

¹⁷ Suzuki Harunobu, ‘Chanoyu and Flowers’, 18th century, in *Chanoyu kaiga shiryō shūsei*, p. 195. Isoda Koryūsei, ‘Tea-Room’, 18th century, in *Chanoyu kaiga shiryō shūsei*, p. 196. Torii Kiyonaga,

¹⁸ Katsukawa Shunshō, ‘Twelve Months of Ladies: Opening of the Fireplace in October’, 1783 (Shizuoka: MOA Museum of Art), in Kobayashi (ed), *Nikuhiitsu ukiyoe taikan*, print 57-1 and detail 57-2.

¹⁹ This is even the case in studies of women and Tea, such as Rowland Mori (1991), ‘The Tea Ceremony: A Transformed Japanese Ritual’, p. 87. and Kato, *The Tea Ceremony and Women’s Empowerment in Modern Japan*, p. 62.

²⁰ Kato, *The Tea Ceremony and Women’s Empowerment*, pp. 25–26.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of such ‘aesthetic networks’ see Ikegami, *Bonds of Civility*.

²² ‘Men and Women Enjoying Pastimes’, mid–17th century, in *Nikuhiitsu ukiyoe taikan*, prints 6-1, 6-2 and 6-3. ‘Men and Women Enjoying Pastimes’, 17th century, in *Nikuhiitsu ukiyoe taikan*, prints 5-1, 5-2 and detail pp. 158–161.

Diaries

Evidence from diaries and life histories of women from samurai, merchant/artisan and wealthy peasant families shows that women outside of the pleasure quarters were also practising Tea. This was particularly the case in the late Edo Period, as part of an overall increase in women's education.²³ As class boundaries were becoming blurred, women of various social classes could receive an education, as long as their family had the wealth and inclination to provide for this. Part of such an education could be studying Tea.

For example, it is recorded in the journals of Ito Yoshida, the daughter of a provincial artisan family, that she was sent to study with the national learning scholar Tachibana Moribe in the 1830s when she was fifteen. There, as part of a moral self-cultivation program, she studied calligraphy, *koto*, *shamisen* (musical instruments), *ikebana* (flower arrangement) and *chanoyu* (Tea).²⁴ In this instance, we see that even a woman of relatively low social standing was able to have an education which consisted of learning the 'polite arts'. Ito's education was both similar in content to that which a samurai-status woman may receive, and to the accomplishments required of a courtesan.

It is difficult to quantify how many women may have learnt Tea as part of their education, in the home, at *terakoya* (temple schools) or at private teachers' homes, due to the scarcity of sources dealing with such detailed aspects of women's lives. Yet, Ito Yoshida's example shows that it was possible for an *ordinary* woman in Early Modern Japan to study Tea. In her case, as it was part of a moral self-cultivation programme, we can assume that the motives behind Ito's Tea study were to learn etiquette and manners.

Instructional Manuals

Further evidence for the study of Tea by women of both samurai and commoner status, in order to cultivate 'feminine' skills and etiquette, is found in instructional manuals for women. These could be either specific Tea manuals or general instructional guides for women, *oraimono*. An example of the first type is a handbook for ladies studying tea, *tōji no tamoto*, written by the renowned tea master Oguchi Shōō, of the Sekishu school of Tea in the 1720s.²⁵ The book contains advice or instructions for its female readers, on various aspects of *chanoyu*, such as how to hold the utensils, how to wipe the lip of the tea-bowl after having drunk from it, and so on. Oguchi indicates that women should always sit behind their husbands in the tearoom. This was a book aimed at instructing wealthy or upper-class women in the etiquette and manners of Tea. We can see that this was clearly a different world of female tea practice to that of the pleasure quarters. This more demure

²³ See Tocco, 'Norms and Texts for Women's Education in Tokugawa Japan', pp. 193–218.

²⁴ Takai, *Tenpōki shonen shōjō kyōyo keisei katei no kenkyū*, pp. 9–101. Hayashi, 'Edoki no jōsei gunzō', pp. 208–246.

²⁵ Oguchi, *tōji no tamoto*.

style of women's tea, with its focus on etiquette in particular, can be seen as a precursor to the development of the 'feminine' tea of modern Japan.

In addition to the original version of *tōji no tamoto*, there is a copy with notes produced by the famous politician and tea master Ii Naosuke.²⁶ In it, he indicates that he disagrees with Oguchi's instructions that women should be seated behind their husbands; and he added further instructions such as what clothes were suitable for women to wear in the tearoom. He also removed several paragraphs of heavy Confucian writings concerning women's behaviour from the text. Ii put his writings into practice, having female guests attend his tea gatherings, including his mother, wife, mistress, daughter and maids.²⁷ Records of Ii's tea gatherings indicate that women were not only guests but also served as hosts at his gatherings.

An example of such a gathering held by Ii at his domain residence in Hikone, on the nineteenth day of the second month of 1853, saw his daughter Yachiyo act as host; with men as the first and second guests, and women – Tatsuo, Maki and Makio (most likely maids or serving women of the Ii household) – acting as the last three guests.²⁸ Thus we know that Ii held Tea gatherings in which men and women sat side by side and shared tea from the same bowl, thereby flouting Confucian moral codes which stated that men and women who were unrelated should not have close interaction. Yet, Ii followed Confucian thinking about women in his choice of hanging scrolls for these Tea gatherings. Rather than using scrolls with philosophical Zen phrases, which he commonly used for Tea gatherings involving only male guests, when women were present Ii favoured more simple scrolls, featuring a picture or seasonal poem, which worked on an emotional level rather than a philosophical one²⁹; thereby following Confucian ideas about what was appropriate for women and what they could understand.

While Ii Naosuke may have been an exceptional Tea Master for his time, the existence of both his copy and the original of *tōji no tamoto* indicate that there was not only female Tea practice during the Edo Period within the formal world of Tea schools, but a discourse which developed around that which was centred on using Tea as a means to teach women etiquette and manners, as in modern Japan.

Popular Literature

So far I have indicated that there were different groups of women who practised tea in the Edo Period: women of the pleasure quarters and wealthy women of samurai, artisan and peasant status. That 'respectable' women and women of the pleasure quarters should

²⁶ Ii, *tōji no tamoto*.

²⁷ See the records of Ii Naosuke's Tea gatherings in Tanihata, 'Ii Naosuke no chakaiki', pp. 81–183.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²⁹ The utensils, including hanging scrolls, used for each Tea gathering are listed in the records of Ii's Tea gatherings, Tanihata, *Ibid.*, pp. 81–183.

have been engaging in the same cultural activities should not be surprising, for it was to the courtesans that ordinary women looked for inspiration in fashion, etiquette and manners; courtesans being regarded as the epitome of femininity.³⁰

We find further evidence for the practice of Tea by both groups of women in the popular literature of the day. There are several features of popular literature making it an ideal historical source. In particular, we can say that in order for a work of popular fiction, such as a novel by Ihara Saikaku or a puppet play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, to be successful and appeal to its audience, it must reflect reality to a certain extent. Literature provides us with a mirror through which to view the social and cultural history of the Edo Period. There was strong a connection between the popular literature of the time and popular arts such as *chanoyu*.

In Ihara Saikaku's novel *The Life of an Amorous Man* (late seventeenth century), there is a scene in which the *tayū* Takahashi decides on a whim to hold a Tea gathering to celebrate opening the first jar of tea for the year, with the playboy Yonosuke as the main guest. Her choice of utensils bearing her family crest, which were to be used for this one occasion then thrown away, evokes the extravagant, luxurious style of Tea which I suggested before characterises the style of Tea practised by women of the pleasure quarters. The final sentence describing the scene compares Takahashi to the 'founder' of tea, Sen no Rikyu; clearly courtesans could be regarded as adept tea practitioners.³¹

We find a literary representation of an upper-class female Tea practitioner in the play *Gonza the Lancer* by Chikamatsu.³² Based on actual events that happened the year the play was written (1717), this play features a female character, Osai, who is the wife of a Tea master. While her husband is away on business in Edo, Osai has the responsibility of managing the household affairs. When it becomes necessary for one of his students to perform a high level *temae* for which he has not yet received the secret instructions, it is entrusted to Osai to decide whether he can perform the *temae* and to hand over the scrolls of instruction to him. She seems to take on the role of Tea master to some extent. While the play does not feature scenes of Osai performing *temae*, it is clear from her actions and the respect accorded to her by the student that she is familiar with all aspects of Tea. There are also indications that Osai is instructing the young son in Tea while his father is away, and also that the elder daughter has already learned *temae*. We can see in this play that women of the samurai class, particularly those from a tea family, may well have engaged in the study of Tea.

³⁰ See de Sabato Swinton, 'Reflections on the Floating World', pp. 36–37.

³¹ For an English language translation of the whole book see Ihara Saikaku, *The Life of an Amorous Man*, trans. Kenji Hamada (Rutland, Vt; Tokyo: C.E. Tuttle, 1964). However for this particular section of the book I have used the translation in Edamatsu Campbell, 'A Portrait of a New Woman – in a Cage', pp. 135–138.

³² Chikamatsu Monzaemon, *Gonza the Lancer*, pp. 270–312.

Conclusion

What this research shows is that there are still many gaps in our understanding of Early Modern women's history and Tea history, which need to be filled. The emergence of a feminine image of Tea and the contemporary dominance of women within the Tea population need closer examination, and cannot simply be attributed to the incorporation of Tea into women's education from the Meiji Period, though this was a certainly an important factor. Looking at women's participation in Tea during the Edo Period reveals that, rather than the smooth, seamless transition from a male-dominated world of Tea practice to a female-dominated one in the Meiji Period portrayed in Tea histories, women's participation in Tea has a much longer and more varied history than it is given credit for. This has implications not only for our understanding of Tea history, but for the history of women in Early Modern Japan more broadly; showing as it does that there were women, commoner and elite alike, who played an active role in cultural practices and production. Furthermore, women add a new dimension to the history of Tea in Early Modern Japan, highlighting the role that Tea played in the everyday lives of people from all backgrounds.

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