

研究論文

The Development of Uses of Incense in Japan: *an Overview*

日本における香の用途の展開；
概説の試み

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このモノグラフは、先ず、日本における古代以来の精神的用法と世俗的応用の双方に用いられてきた様々の素材を列挙してから、そういった用法の必要性と歴史的発展・展開、およびその発展・展開にみられる、私たちが今〈日本の伝統的文化〉と見做している文化的遺産を形成してきている多くの当時の文化の特色を成す傾向との密接な関係に焦点を当てながら解明し、そして、香との直接接触に精神における貴重な効力を見出す形而上論の手短な説明を括りとします。

キー・ワード

- ①香の素材 ②日本における香の精神的用途 ③日本における香の世俗的用途
④香の鑑賞 ⑤香と日本の伝統芸能の関連

1. *Materials*

Incense-wood [沈水香木, *chinsui kōboku*] is gained from certain tropical trees indigenous to South-East Asia, the roots of which have at some point lost their grip on the soil of the banks to areas of flowing or still water, and which happen then to have lain submerged during a period of time sufficient for their wood to have carbonized (just as in the case of bog-oak), and for their sap, in at least certain areas of their trunks and branches, to have as a result crystallized.

The praxis of incense-appreciation, which originally evolved in Japan alone, has long conventionally distinguished six primary species of incense-wood, which are known as ‘the Six [Provenances of] Species [木所六国, *kidokoro rikoku*]’ (evidently because at least some of the nomenclature that in Japan still designates these species derives from South-East Asian place-names).

- ① *kyara* [伽羅] (apparently deriving from *kālāguru*, the Sanskrit noun one of the meanings of which is ‘black aloes-wood’); eagle-wood; agalloch;
- ② *rakoku* [羅国] (so named because, in pre-modern Japan, it was believed to come from Thailand, then denoted with *shamuro* [暹羅] (cf. ‘Siam’));
- ③ *manaban* [真南蛮; 真南班; 真南盤] (a name thought to derive from the pre-modern term *namban* [南蛮] (meaning ‘[imported by] barbarians from the south’), affixed with the Okinawan prefix *ma~* possibly meaning (of a botanical species) ‘representatively’;
- ④ *manaka* [真那賀; 真南伽] (a name thought to derive from ‘Malacca’, meaning present-day Melaka, a port, and former capital, in the Malay peninsula);
- ⑤ *sasora* [佐曾羅; 左尊羅; 採蘇羅] (etymology not yet clarified);
- ⑥ *sumotara* [寸門陀羅] (believed in pre-modern Japan to originate in ‘Sumatra’, a term that then was often employed vaguely to denote the whole of Indonesia).

Since exact and therefore potentially-reverent attention to the aroma that a given incense-sample is actually offering one – let alone competitively distinguishing one aroma from another that differs from the former only subtly – requires a means of identifying the composition of something so complex as is each of those aromas, then – as in the case of wine, or infusions of leaf-tea – one needs a set of sense-memory-organizing concepts from which to work. Therefore, for such applications, the praxis of incense has long borrowed the following (originally-Buddhist) set of five criteria by which to identify flavor [五味, *gomi*], in order to aid in distinguishing the characteristics of a particular incense-aroma (though quite how either ‘saltiness/brininess’ or ‘hotness’ could apply to the *scent* emitted by an incense-wood is perhaps not entirely clear), which success in an incense-variety distinguishing-contest requires the participant to manage to commit to memory.

sourness; acidity [酸味, *sammi*; 酸っぱさ, *supposa*]

bitterness; acridity [苦味, *kumi*; 苦さ, *nigasa*]

sweetness [甘味, *kammi*; 甘さ, *amasa*]

hotness [辛味, *shimmi*; 辛さ, *karasa*]

saltiness; brininess [鹹味, *kammi*; 塩辛さ, *shio-karasa*]

2. History

2. 1. Origins

As above, not being situated in a tropical zone, Japan produces no incense-*wood* of its own; and indigenous religious rituals (since the mid-19th century a-historically termed ‘Shinto’), have never incorporated, and still do not require, use of incense; such employment seems to have begun to be imported piecemeal from the continental mainland, along with the teachings of the Buddha, and Chinese versions of Indian Buddhist ritual-practices, during the third century C.E.

The incorporation of both incense and cut flowers into continental Buddhist ritual can be traced back to the use, on the tropical and semi-tropical Indian sub-continent, of sweet-smelling substances that might to some extent disguise the odour of putrefaction swiftly exuded by a corpse that, in so torrid an environment, was yet to receive its last rites.

Originally Hindu, these rites were, for Buddhist adherents, taken over by Buddhism, which endowed the once chiefly-deodorant function of fragrant flowers and powerful incense with more metaphysically-cleansing properties; and, when Buddhism was imported into Japan, with it was brought a ritual use of incense no longer solely required in dealing with the dead.

2. 2. History in outline

The stages constituting the history of Japan's employment of incense can be conveniently if broadly identified through the form of incense-use that most prevalently characterized each such stage, and the purpose[s] for which that form was employed – as organized in Figure 1, following [This figure is a considerable-supplemented translation of a figure to be found on the admirably informative and reliable website of the Kigusuri company.¹⁾]. The indices refer to the explanatory definitions that follow the figure.

2. 3. Relevant historical periods

[All of the following datings are arguable.]

Yamato Period^a (mid-4th century[?]-710 C.E.): The unifying politics of this 'archaic' period centered upon a powerful clan based in what is now Nara Prefecture, from which, with the cooperation of similar clans, extended its control first south-west down to Kyūshū, and later into the Kantō and Tōhoku districts, and even the Korean Peninsula. Already, news of Buddhist teachings and ritual practices was entering Japan from the Asian continent, and gaining royal patronage.

Nara Period^b (710-784 C.E.): This saw the shift of the royal capital to Nara, and the finalization of a first comprehensive code of 'Japanese' law [律令, *ritsuryō*], originating in Táng China, that, on one hand, determined what patterns of conduct were to be deemed criminal, and the punishment held to be just for each such pattern [律, *ritsu*], and, on the other, those patterns of conduct that were expected of the governed populace [令, *ryō*]. Recipients of State funding, many of Nara's most important Buddhist temples were established, in response to the taking root in the area of the 'Six Nara Buddhist sects [南都六宗, *Nara-to Rokushū*]', forms of Buddhism that reflected contemporary Chinese Buddhist

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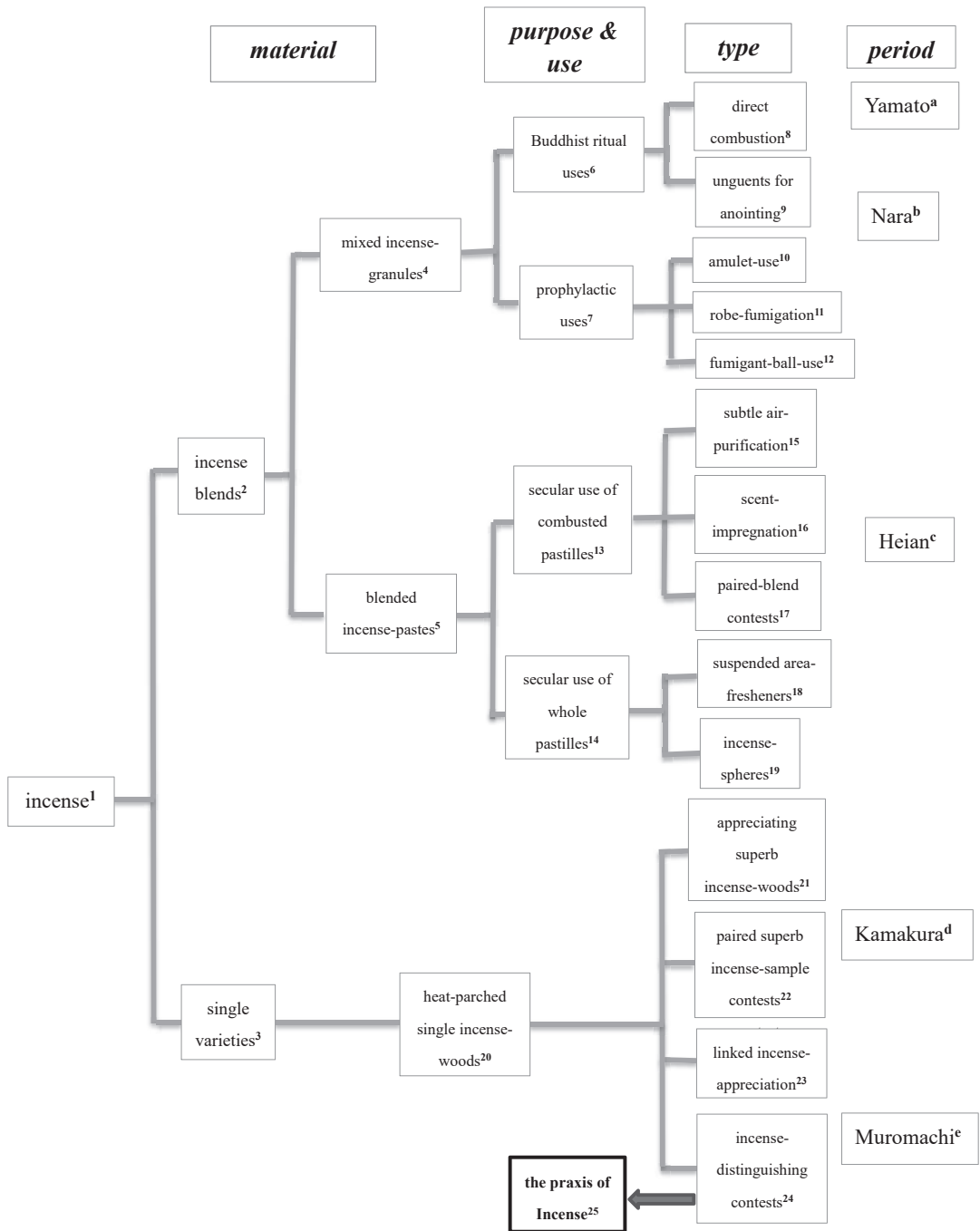


Figure 1. A Summary of the historical changes in dominant Incense-uses in Premodern Japan

trends favoring metaphysical scholasticism quite as much as individual praxis.

Heian Period^c (794-1192 C.E.): Primarily[?] for geomantic reasons, the royal capital was now shifted to Kyoto, and a rigidly-hierarchized yet unwritten register of nobility + aristocracy (a stable population of about 3000 persons) became established. The Fujiwara clan gained almost complete control over the royal harem-system by providing it with nubile, powerfully-connected women; the Shingon sect of Buddhism grew extremely influential in high places, and both it and the (in Japan) older Tendai sect provided a battery of exorcist rituals, these involving fire and combustion of powerful forms of incense. Simultaneously, an unspoken political drive to create culturally-distinguished, physically elegant and alluring salons intended to enhance the appeal, to the sovereign, of potential rivals for royal sexual favours, along with a deep-rooted belief in the magical power of well-wrought verses to contribute to vital harmony within the polity, and the well-being of the entire populace, brought with it an emphasis upon literary skill for both sexes, but now in deploying the native language [大和言葉, *Yamato-kotoba*] (as opposed to Pre-modern Chinese – almost entirely a masculine preserve), as well as an insistence upon subtle means of exerting powers of attraction – among which secular use of incense was not least.

Kamakura Period^d (1192-c.1333 C.E.): While the royal court – on increasingly-reduced revenues – strove to maintain the cultural standards of its heyday, political and military clout had been preempted by the Minamoto clan, which set up its own headquarters in Eastern Japan.

Originally simply a frivolous literary pastime, during this period linked verse-writing [連歌, *renga*] evolved into a serious, non-competitive literary pursuit that drew together persons of wildly-mixed statuses [寄合, *yorai-ai*] but (ideally) equality in talent – a social phenomenon once quite unthinkable. And the trend in its aesthetics – away from the polychrome gorgeousness of the royal court, and towards a sere, austere beauty to be discovered in the winter forms of deciduous trees, and withered reeds [枯野の美, *kareno no bi*] – influenced not only the quest for simplicity to be detected in the shift in focus from blended-incense mixtures to single-variety appreciation, but also what, in the following period, occurred with regard to the yet-but-budding praxis of Tea.

Muromachi Period^e (1336-1573): In both cultural and political terms, this is best grasped

as composed of the three eras: (i) that of Kitayama culture [北山文化, Kitayama *bunka*], (ii) the period of civil war known as the Ōnin Troubles [応仁の乱, Ōnin *no ran*] (1467-77), and (iii) the postwar epoch of Higashiyama culture [東山文化, Higashiyama *bunka*] – although, at least culturally, the divisions between them are far from clear cut.

(i) The term ‘**Kitayama culture**’ derives from the fact that, after relinquishing his political and military office in favor of his son, the [ex-]third Ashikaga shogun, Yoshimitsu [足利義満] (1358-1408), built himself a grand villa-of-[titular-]retirement outside the city boundary to the north-west of Kyoto (now popularly known as ‘The Temple of the Golden Pavilion [金閣寺, Kinkaku-ji]’), from which, relatively freed of the duties of public ceremonial, he ruled as a tonsured *éminence grise*. Yoshimitsu’s policy of supporting and encouraging trade (as well as diplomatic relations) with Ming China resulted in a huge influx of continental works of art and luxury utensils and implements; these came to adorn not only the royal palace and great Zen-sect mother-houses [本山, *honzan*; 京の五山, *Kyō no gozan*; 鎌倉の五山, *Kamakura no gozan*], but also the reception-pavilions [会所, *kaisho*] of the most powerful members of the warrior class, and provided one important stimulus to the various developments in the aesthetics underlying the praxis of Tea – this Japanese version of Ming taste becoming something both formatively embraced and (later) also fruitfully reacted against.

Yoshimitsu himself constitutes a very convenient emblem of the trend of this epoch, which was an acceleration of the amalgamation of aristocratic court culture and warrior-style values, aesthetics, and practices that, during the preceding period, had as yet become only sporadically evident: for example, while on one hand he somewhat scandalized the extremely defilement-conscious nobility, by determinedly patronizing what then was essentially an outcaste performance-art [猿楽の能, *sarugaku no nō*], now known simply as *nō* [能], on the other he was careful to adopt much of the traditional life-style of that nobility, and support and enter into, rather than supplant, the hallowed traditions of public panoply that it sought to maintain – or (by then, more often) to have rendered once more financially possible.

(ii) Materially, the **Ōnin Troubles** proved extremely destructive, and, as the disputed battlefield – Kyoto itself – became increasingly ravaged and uninhabitable (during this

epoch, just over half of the city was destroyed), many important cultural leaders fled to other parts of the country. This decade of incessant military unrest did, however, have two positive effects. One was the dissemination, by such talented refugees, of the latest versions of the culture of the capital to provincial centers of power – all of the latter controlled by the warrior-class. And the other was a new sense of common suffering, and mutual need, springing up between the now often-nigh-on homeless noble families – most of whom had from generation to generation proudly maintained expert familiarity with at least one venerable and prestigious ‘house-art’ [お家芸, *o-ie-gei*], and/or what was then regarded as meaningful literary scholarship (the pinnacle of which would almost always be alluringly-esoteric, Shingon-influenced ‘secret teachings’ [秘伝, *hiden*]) – and commercially-affluent (if likewise war-afflicted) members of the Kyoto bourgeoisie [商人, *shōnin*; 町人, *chōnin*; 町衆, *machi-shū*], who were still dazzled by the quasi-sacred charisma in which the once-inaccessible nobility had for so long enshrouded themselves, and therefore wanted to learn, from these more or less indigent former hegemon themselves, arts and knowledge mastery of which would endow the paying recipients with a cultural clout that both matched and also somehow naturalized, justified, or even beautified, their once-unthinkable economic power.

(iii) Grandson of Yoshimitsu, Shōgun Yoshimasa [義政] (1436-90), could not upon retirement from office simply move into his grandfather’s northerly villa (since this had already been converted into a mortuary temple [菩提寺, *bodai-ji*] for its former owner); nor would he have wished so to do, its Heian-style stately grandeur now being out of key with inevitable (if, in a shogun’s case, relative) postwar frugality, while Yoshimasa’s own ideal of life-in-retirement, acted out at his **Higashiyama** retirement-villa, was to recreate and himself embody ideals taught or represented by the celebrated Zen prelate and garden-designer Musō Soseki [夢窓疎石] (1275-1351), for whom his own reverence – itself a dominant cultural characteristic of this epoch – was unbounded. Yoshimasa was extremely active as patron of the arts, and, while still in office, had made of his official city residence, the Muromachi palace, a center of cultural activity that as far as possible embodied a principle that had been dear to Musō, a relatively-holistic combination of Japanese sensibility with Chinese learning [和魂漢才, *wakon kansai*; 和漢兼帯, *wakan kentai*], there receiving not

only members of the court nobility and learned tonsured literati from the Five Mother-houses [五山, *gozan*] reorganized by the same Musō, but also the teachers of native poetics Seigan Shōtetsu [清巖正徹], Nōami [能阿弥], and Sugihara Sōi [杉原宗伊], and the painter Oguri Sōtan [小栗宗湛], Nōami's excellence in devising elegant arrangements for reception-chamber display [座敷飾り, *zashiki kazari*], and the work of the garden-designer Zenami [善阿弥] winning particular admiration from Yoshimasa's contemporaries.

One major characteristic of this epoch is the new accessibility of courtly culture to both the top stratum of the merchant-class of Western Japan and also recently enfeoffed warlords; and, in this respect, a figure highly representative of such a development is that of the Fujiwara-clan court noble, *waka*-poet, and prodigious literary scholar Sanjō-nishi Sanétaka [三条西実隆] (1455-1537), who served during four consecutive monarchical reigns, devoting much of his considerable energy to both restoration of lapsed palace-ritual and also reclamation of usurped lands once crown property. From the (commoner) poet-scholar Sōgi [宗祇], he received initiation into the prestigious and jealously-guarded esoteric interpretation of the *Kokin* state anthology [古今和歌集, *Kokin Wakashū*], and successfully recommended Sōgi as anthologist for a new state poetry-collection. His web of cultural connections was so extensive that his journal [『実隆公記, *Sanétaka Kōki*]] constitutes one of the fullest of extant records of this epoch; among these relationships was an intimacy with the Sakai merchant and Tea-practicant, (Rikyū's teacher) Takéno Jōō [武野紹鷗], whose studies under Sanétaka of native poetics – both *waka* and linked verse – are believed to have deeply influenced Jōō's drive to further that nativization [和様化, *wayō-ka*] of the praxis of Tea apparently begun by the priest Shukō, and presumably transmitted, by the latter's Tea-pupil Sōshu [宗珠] to his pupil Jūshi-ya Sōgo [十四屋宗伍], and by the latter to his own pupil Jōō. Finally – and of greatest significance for this essay – Sanétaka was an expert in incense-appreciation, and is regarded as the founder of one of the two main surviving schools of the praxis of Incense, the Oié School [御家流, *O-ie-ryū*].

2. 4. Explication of specialist terms

[*The indices found below relate directly to those found in Figure 1, above.*]

incense [香, *kō*]¹: Here, this term is used to comprise both vegetable and animal sources

of fragrant substances, but excludes those attars, *etc.*, derived directly from flowers such as roses. Relevant vegetable ingredients include sandalwood [白檀, *byakudan*], olibanum (a.k.a. frankincense) [乳香, *nyūkō*; 熏陸, *kunroku*], camphorwood [樟腦, *shōnō*], aloeswood [沉香, *jinkō*], turmeric [鬱金, *ukon*], benzoin (a.k.a. gum Benjamin) [安息香, *ansoku-kō*], and cloves [丁子, *chōji*], while animal-extracts are chiefly deer-musk [麝香, *jakō*], ambergris [龍涎香, *ryūzenkō*], and pulverized rock-shell [赤螺, *aka-nishi*] lids [甲香; 貝香, *kaikō*] (which has an aroma-preservative power).

incense-blends [合香, *gōkō*]²: Though no longer used for the praxis of Incense [香道, *kōdō*], incense-blends are still employed in incense-bags [匂袋, *noio-bukuro*], and other such ornamental textile containers designed to protect, by means of the efficacy attributed to their contents [魔除, *ma-yoké*], and, by all schools of Tea during the season of use of the **sunken hearth** [炉, *ro*] and, by the writer's own Enshū School, throughout the year, is also placed directly upon glowing charcoal, in order to purify the air of the Tea-chamber.

single varieties [一味香, *ichimi-kō*]³: This refers to use solely of an incense-wood other than sandalwood, presented one variety at a time (though I have read that there are – or at least used to be held – very advanced contests, in which *different combinations of dual varieties* have simultaneously to be distinguished).

mixed incense-granules [混香, *konkō*]⁴: These are employed dry and loose, both in Buddhist ritual contexts and as fillers for large ornamental incense-bags for secular use.

blended incense-pastes [練香, *neri-kō*]⁵: By following hallowed or innovative recipes, each of such pastes is constituted of carefully-measured, balanced proportions of a particular selection from the ingredients listed above under “incense”, for which pulverized rock-shell lid provides a stabilizing and preservative base, and which are bound together with either vegetable gum [甘葛, *ama-zura*] or else honey [蜂蜜, *hachi-mitsu*].

Buddhist ritual use [供香, *kūkō*]⁶: While a record of the (apparently) first employment of a (substantial) offering of burnt incense during a Yamato-state-commissioned Buddhist rite (the cremation of the Tenchi monarch [天智天皇, Tenchi *tennō*]) can be dated to 671 C.E., evidence suggests that the celebrants of the time did not really know what they should be doing: for, in 753 C.E., the eminent Buddhist cleric Kanjin [鑑真] (688-763) arrived in Japan from Táng China, and apparently set about instructing those chiefly concerned in

how things were now done by orthodox Buddhist establishments back in China. And, in the case of the (politically-powerful) esoteric Shingon sect [真言宗, *Shingon-shū*], of the Six Pious Offerings to be made to a benign supernatural entity [六種供具, *rokushu kugu*], two of these include use of incense-granules (see “**direct combustion**”⁸ and “**unguents for anointing**”⁹, a little below).

The five patterns of Buddhist (Shingon) ritual use of incense are as follows:

- powdered (pulverized) incense [抹香, *makkō*], employed mainly by being mounded or sprinkled on pieces of ignited charcoal set in large air-purifying incense-burners [空炷香炉, *sorataki-gōro*], or else open hearths before altars;
- unguents for anointing [塗香, *zūkō*]: (see **unguents for anointing**⁹, below);
- oral application [含香, *fukumi-kaori*]: holding incense in the mouth (without ingesting it);
- **blended-incense pastilles** [練香, *neri-kō*] (see **blended incense pastes**⁵, above): employed by being placed on pieces of ignited charcoal set in large air-purifying incense-burners or open hearths before altars; (this practice has, to varying degrees, been incorporated into all praxes of Tea);
- incense-impregnated waters [香水, *kōzui*]: water in which incense-wood has been immersed, used to purify bodies and sacred environments, by sprinkling them with such water.

prophylactic uses [除疫香, *joeki-kō*]⁷: This, it seems reasonable to believe, was one key point-of-entry for permeation of incense-use into the daily lives of at least the court nobility (and their more affluent aristocratic attendants). Let us, however, here step back to consider why identifying any such point should be necessary.

This is surely at least somewhat at issue because, according to contemporary indigenous politico-religious orthodoxy, the formal calendar of the royal court revolved around those rituals incumbent upon a monarch who was regarded as a living manifestation of [*usually*] his divine ancestor, the goddess Amaterasu-no-Ōmikami; and to this day *orthodox*, State-

approved *indigenous* religious praxes (much later termed by the Meiji oligarchy ‘Shintō [神道]’) appear never to have had truck with ‘un-Yamato’ foreign fumes (complexly-eclectic folk-practices remaining, however, a different matter).

And here we have to recall that the court nobility maintained a culture quite hag-ridden by fear, and fear in particular of being unable to fend off the influence of the supernatural. Food-taboos meant that their health was frequently weaker than that of those that served them (but were not so serving at starvation-level); consequently they themselves were plagued by dismaying illnesses (particularly beri-beri and malarial fever), and tendencies to endemic physical frailty; and such physiological misfortunes would summarily be attributed to possession or other forms of persecution by malign or vengeful forces, influential from another world grasped as one to which this world was felt to be perilously pervious.

During the beginning of the ninth century, having returned from the Chinese mainland an adept in the Tantric-Tibetan-influenced, esoteric-magical version of Buddhism known in Japan as Shingon [真言宗, *Shingon-shū*], and soon inspiring royal confidence and patronage, the monk Kūkai [空海] (774-835 C.E.), perhaps innocently, or perhaps somewhat calculatingly, did nothing to stem a cultural impulse to link, to the medical needs of a frequently-ailing nobility, the exorcist rites forming a major part of that menu of religious praxes which he had brought home with him, and which had (with the establishment, in 834 C.E., of the substantial temple known as the Kyūchū Shingon-in [宮中真言院] within the royal palace precincts, and inauguration of the large-scale, solemn rites there annually practiced) been demonstrated to have been adopted as the State’s best-approved form of Buddhism.

Soon, the mansions of that nobility would frequently be filled with clouds of acrid smoke – arising from ample combustions of aloes-wood, and billowing out from an interior enclosure adjacent to one sickbed after another; and, when a cure or remission did occur, it would have seemed only natural to attribute at least part of that improvement to the holy power of combusted incense: willy-nilly, use of incense was becoming a part of well-regulated aristocratic household life.

In another respect – and as the verb */matsuru/* 「祀る ; 祭る」 so neatly encapsulates – separation of (as it were) ‘worship from governance’ was not a concept that necessarily

occurred to this nobility and its divinely-descended royal masters; consequently, we must ask whether or not it can be so unlikely that, if those of elevated rank were ‘precious persons [貴人, *kinin*]’, it should have become felt that their supposed irreplaceability must be protected by activating the supernaturally-efficacious powers exerted by incense-vapours. With the dividing-line between capacity for practical medical intervention and powers of supernal virtue so little any matter of concern, it can hardly be puzzling that several forms of more-or-less-magical device believed to be rendered potent by an essential nucleus of blended incense-ingredients should have become first part of the common sense of ninth-century aristocratic life, and – somewhat later – also aestheticized as an expressive and ludic mode by means of which this leisured class constantly reasserted its hegemonic status, through demonstration of a sensibility that was elaborately refined and ceremoniously expressed.

At the same time, the Buddhist role of incense in protecting sculptural emblems of buddhas and bodhisattvas from evil influences will have made it appear seemly – nay, imperative – that those in high political positions should, during their (incessantly-conducted, essentially non-Buddhist) State rites, be guarded about by more clouds of benevolent fumes, as well as by the powerful essences exuded by uncombusted incense-pastes. (Those forms of incense-use marked below with [†] are major examples of what in secular life came to be employed to this essentially-protective end.)

direct combustion [焼香, *shōkō*]⁸: This means that the incense in question was used unprotected from direct contact with a source of fire, and thereby combusted and consumed, and thus not heat-parched.

unguents for anointing [塗香, *zūkō*]⁹ †: These are used to purify celebrants’ bodies in preparation for offering rites to buddhas and bodhisattvas, *etc.*, and to protect sculptural images of the latter from baneful approaches suspected of malign influences.

amulet-use [佩香, *haikō*]¹⁰ †: Incense-pouches devised to be worn suspended at, or girt around, the hips.

robe-fumigation use [衣香, *ikō*]¹¹ †: A layered set of robes fulfilled, prepared and assembled for the privileged to wear would finally be laid out over an incense-burner designed basically to transport or contain pieces of ignited charcoal [火取香炉, *hitori-kōro*], fitted

with a domed metal grill-lid [火舎, *hoya*], and surrounded by a small clotheshorse [伏籠, *fuse-go*], so that the silk thus supported would become thoroughly impregnated with the aroma emitted by combusted incense-pastilles.

This manner of having one's clothing 'finished' became one important mark of a person of good breeding and immaculate turnout (and a well-trained domestic staff), and – in a culture in which erotic trysts usually took place after dark, and with available very little artificial light (noblewomen disliking being seen by any male but their immediate kinsmen) – appears to have had a powerful aphrodisiac effect on members of both sexes. From within their various sets of screening-devices (which functioned as customarily-self-imposed, moveable purdas), noblewomen could look out upon noblemen visiting them; but, unless matrimony was finalized, what a noble male might know of a noble female was more likely to be her brush-calligraphy, her poetic powers and wit (*if* she saw fit to reply to his letters), her voice (*if* she vouchsafed to speak to him), how she performed on musical instruments suited to her gender (*if* she consented to play for him), how she dressed her gentlewomen, the balance of graded hues shown by the layered hems of her own robes just glimpsed from beneath her suspended means of camouflage, how beautiful her extremely long hair (the well-trimmed tips of which likewise could be 'carelessly' exposed) might well be, and – not least important – how her hair [薫髪, *kunpatsu*], her clothing, her writing-paper, her chambers, and – if he proved lucky – her skin, turned out to have been scented, by contact with the odours of blended and combusted incenses.

fumigant-ball-use [薬玉, *kusu-dama*]¹² †: For the relatively powerful of the Heian period, these balls were an indispensable accessory to celebration of the Feast of the Fifth Day of the Fifth Month (now 'the Boys' Festival') [端午の節供, *tango-no-sekku*], and somewhat resembled the contents of the pomanders in use in aristocratic European life in the late 16th-early 17th centuries (such contents were then-exotic pungent citrus fruit studded with then-exotic fragrant cloves, the resultant aromas emitted by which were of service in drowning out unavoidable stench, and believed to ward off infection by – in particular – the plague); likewise, these Heian fumigant balls were credited with a capacity to repel malign influences, the distinction between physiological infections and supernatural activity being (as already noted) of no importance to that culture. Chiefly, aloes-wood [沈香, *jinkō*],

deer-musk [麝香, *jakō*] and cloves [丁子, *chōji*] would be formed into a small globe, which was encased in a brocade bag, itself ornamented with paper-flowers, along with living sweet flag [菖蒲, *shōbu*] and mugwort [蓬, *yomogi*], and complex lace-like patterns formed of tiny loops of silk-thread, and given a trailing tail of silk-thread dyed in the five geomantically-auspicious colours (in the Shingon belief-system, blue/green, yellow, red, white, and black). These fumigant balls would be exchanged as salutatory gifts, and also hung up at the tops of the internal pillars and hanging blinds of major mansion-areas.

secular use of combusted pastilles [薰香, *kunkō*]¹³: This means that the compounded pastilles would be consumed by combustion, thereby powerfully emitting their fragrances as they vanished.

secular use of whole pastilles [置香, *oki-kō*]¹⁴: This means that the compounded pastilles would be employed uncombusted, thereby emitting their fragrances less intensely, but for a time far longer.

subtle air-purification [空薰物, *sorataki-mono*]¹⁵ †: This means an act of welcoming a guest through discreetly – or almost evanescently – purifying the reception-area chosen (or temporarily demarcated), by means of combusting blended-incense pastilles, but not obviously – either by concealing the incense-burner employed, or placing it only in an adjacent area.

scent-impregnation [移香, *utsuri-ga*]¹⁶ †: See the second paragraph to “**robe-fumigation use**¹¹”, above.

paired-blend contests [薰物合, *takimono-awasé*]¹⁷ †: The Heian nobility were extremely fond of contests [合物, *awasé-mono*] during which an even number of participants, divided into two teams (termed, in reflection of the basic structure of the political and military hierarchy, ‘the Left’ and ‘the Right’), brought together things of a given sort, and, in pairs (of one person from each team), submitted them for comparative evaluation by one or more agreed arbiters [判者, *hanja*], the powers of judgment of whom were (theoretically) acknowledged by all participating. While, in a culture in which poetry composed in the indigenous language [和歌, *waka*] (as opposed to compositions cast in that form of Pre-modern Chinese mastery of which was demanded of all noblemen, and a prerequisite for their promotions in court-rank) was an essential aspect of polite social intercourse, by far

the most important genre of such competitions was the paired-poetry contest [歌合, *uta-awasé*], there were also held paired-painted-fan contests [扇合, *ōgi-awasé*], paired-seashell contests [貝合, *kai-awasé*], paired picture-scroll contests [絵合, *é-awasé*], paired-sweet-flag-root contests [根合, *né-awasé*], paired-chrysanthemum contests [菊合, *kiku-awasé*], paired-valerian-flower contests [女郎花合, *omina-eshi-awasé*], and, of course – in a culture that had become so preoccupied with various forms of incense-use – paired-blended-incense-pastille contests, for which the noble competitors would devise, seal away (and even bury) to mature, and keep secret until the day, novel blends prepared by their own hands. (In *The Tale of Genji*, there are to be found (separate) descriptions of both a fictional paired-blend contest [「梅枝, ‘Umé-ga-é’]: ‘A Branch of Flowering Plum’] and a paired-picture-scroll contest [「絵合, ‘É-awasé’]: ‘The Picture-contest’].)

suspended area-fresheners [掛香, *kakégō*]¹⁸ †: Designed chiefly for public ceremonial and pageant-like rites, the pavilions that members the Heian nobility were expected to have built for themselves [寢殿, *shinden*] did not comprise many ‘rooms’ as such: across sweeping wooden floors and beneath deep-eaved roofs, screens, blinds, and items of large but movable furniture would customarily be temporarily grouped according to the needs of the day, hour, or occasion; and (with the exception of storage-areas) the function of domicile walls (as opposed to outdoor walls for enclosure of grounds) was largely performed by massive, hinged wooden outer shutters [藪, *shitomi*], which were swung up and held open during daylight hours and even during warmer nights; thus, these structures were nothing if not well-ventilated (if not, sometimes, positively windswept). Nevertheless, opportunistic malignant spirits needed to be kept at bay; and undesirable odors still had to be suppressed. And thus brocade bags would be filled with blended-incense pastilles, given decoratively-knotted cording, and by this hung up from convenient pillars (of which there was no shortage).

The same term was also used of smaller bags of the same sort that were hung from parts of the body.

incense-spheres [香袋, *kō-bukuro*; 香囊, *kōnō*]¹⁹ †: Perforated silver containers formed of two matching hemispheres, and fitted with a cord (scarlet for women, purple for men) ending in a hook, allowing suspension within, say, a mosquito-net [蚊帳, *kaya*], or again an

ox-drawn carriage [牛車, *gissha*].

heat-parched single incense-woods [炷香, *chūkō*]²⁰: With the marked increase, during the second half of the Kamakura period (1185-c.1333 C.E.), in trade with both the Asian continent and (particularly) South-East Asia, there was a large-scale influx of (extremely costly) incense-wood timber; and busy, and increasingly-prosperous, high-ranking warriors were apparently more attracted by the subtle purity offered by the unadulterated form of such woods than by the heady but heavy, and labor-intensive, blends favored by the court nobility, preferring such woods to be delicately heat-parched, rather than wholesale-combusted. This method also made possible ‘re-appreciation’ [[聞き]返し, [*kiki-*]*kaéshi*], wherein participants would – particularly in the case of a sample of ‘superb incense-wood’ [名香, *meikō*] – circulate a sample on an **appreciation-burner** [聞香炉, *kiki-kōro*] not just once, but as many times as the quality of the given variety would still afford an aroma worthy of lingering appreciation.

appreciating superb incense-woods [名香聞, *meikō-mon*; *meikō-kiki*], including **single-tree appreciation** [一木炷, *ichiboku-daki*]²¹: Merchants importing incense-wood would obtain trunks complete with major limbs; and normally, since the response of a single tree to prolonged immersion in water is not necessarily consistent throughout its substance, these merchants would ascertain areas within a given tree affording desirable aromas, extract wood from these areas, pare off dross-tissue, and present these lumps as mutually independent. Newly-affluent warlords, however, gained a taste for lavishly obtaining whole trees, and, with their cronies, exploring the various scents that these might surrender [一木炷, *ichiboku-daki*].

More prevalent among high-ranking members of this *parvenu* social class was a passion simply for collecting – nay, positively amassing – superb incense-varieties [名香, *meikō*], the objects of doing which were at least two.

One such goal was satisfying that plutocratic drive to engage in conspicuous consumption which was for Western societies identified by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), and brought to general attention by his ground-breaking *The Theory of the Leisure Class [sic]* (1899). In mediaeval Japan, a group of militarily-successful, and therefore lucratively-enfeoffed, feudal lords (a.k.a. robber-barons) – behind its back dubbed *basara* [婆娑羅,

originally, 跋折羅, *basara*], a Muromachi-period buzz-word meaning ‘powerful and [in some eyes] glamorous spendthrift’ – gained publicity and notoriety for the J.-Gatsby-like lavish entertainments to which they summoned chums and allies, during which as many as a hundred servings of thick tea would be accompanied by combustion of even whole incense-trees, in walled and roofed reception-halls purpose-built for such assemblies [会所, *kaisho*], and profusely adorned with costly Chinese scroll-paintings, imported ornaments cast in bronze or carved from ivory or semi-precious stone, and finest Chinese lacquer-work. (This group’s pre-eminent doyen was Sasaki Takauji [佐々木高氏] (1296-1373 C.E.; more often referred to as the Lay-priest Dōyo [入道導誉, *nyūdō* Dōyo], and held to have amassed a collection of more than 200 superb incense-varieties); their later successors were instead termed ‘fashion-crazed eccentrics’ [傾者, *kabuki-mono*], and found their most emblematic figures in those of military dictator Oda Nobunaga [織田信長] (1558-1630 C.E.) and feudal lord Daté Masamuné [伊達正宗] (1567-1636).)

The other (and perhaps implicitly-competitive) goal was that of taking samples of these incense-woods to, and sharing them at, gatherings that might well also, or primarily, engage in cooperative linked-verse composition [連歌会, *renga-kai*]. Evidence suggests that, by the late Muromachi-period, the same sort of connoisseurs and linked-verse poets were also strongly engaged by the newly-emergent culture of the praxis of Tea-as-sociable-meditation [茶之湯, *cha-no-yu*], and a similar meditative element would surely have underlain this not-ostensibly-competitive concentration on incense-appreciation *per se*.

paired superb incense-sample contests [名香合, *meikō-awasé*]²²: At the same time, the cultural strain of Left vs. Right contests (see **paired blends contests**¹⁷, above) – and though quite absent from the newer culture of cross-status gatherings [寄合, *yoriai*] first arising around the praxis of cooperative composition of linked verse [連歌, *renga*] – evidently still exerted influence. According to one contemporary source, the format preferred was for ten participants each to bring a sample of each of two personally-favoured varieties, divide into two teams, and be paired off, Left with Right, for twenty rounds, just as with the paired poetry competitions [歌合, *uta-awasé*] held at the royal court, similarly complete with one or more arbiter-judges [判者, *hanja*], a contest-record, and costly prizes to be awarded to the members of the winning team.

linked incense-appreciation [炷繼香, *tsugitaki-kō*; 炷合, *taki-awasé*]²³: A combination of linked-verse-composition and non-competitive incense-appreciation that gained a temporary popularity towards the end of the Muromachi period. At such an assembly, the names [香銘, *kōmei*] already given to the varieties samples of which were provided by participants had not only to be appropriate to the given season and any artistically-engaging characteristic unique to the chosen venue, but also together to constitute a sequence in which each pairing of incense-samples (the first with the second, the second with the third, the third with the fourth, *etc.*) had, through the relevant variety-names, to manifest its own, independent, associative-thematic logic, the more understated the better: thus, a variety named ‘spring mist [春霞, *haru-gasumi*]’ might appropriately be followed by ‘fair [*or sacred*] Yoshino [み吉野, *mi-Yoshino*]’ [*because the masses of cherry-blossom for which the Yoshino spring was and remains famous were considered deceptively to resemble swathes of spring mist*], which might as appropriately be followed by ‘ninefold [九重, *kokono-e*]’ [*because this was a conventional epithet – in origin Chinese – for the concentric enclosures ideally surrounding a royal compound, and Yoshino had once been the site of such a compound*], and so on [*these examples are fictional*]. 31-syllable poems [和歌, *waka*], or again pairs of linked verses, would be composed around each variety-name, and a poetic record of the event created.

The strongly-literary emphasis of this pastime cannot but have influenced the literary basis of so many of the formats subsequently devised for **incense-distinguishing contests**²⁴ – in which, however, the actual variety-names, though duly recorded, have become but a minor detail.

incense-distinguishing contests [組香, *kumi-kō*]²⁴: During the Kamakura period (1185-1333 C.E.), the popularity of the newly-introduced fashion for drinking blended or whisked solutions of powdered tea in combination with the perennial Japanese love of gambling seem to have been what led to ‘blind’ tea-tasting contests [闘茶, *tōcha*; presently, 茶歌舞伎: 茶香服, *cha-kabuki*], in which betting participants strove to distinguish, by flavor, colour, and aroma alone, between ‘pedigreed tea’ [本茶, *honcha*], grown only in the grounds of the Kōzan Temple in the Toga-no-o area [梅ノ尾高山寺] of the outskirts of Kyoto, (grown from seeds believed to have been given to its incumbent of the era, the Blessed Myōō [明恵上人,

Myōe *Shōnin*] (1173-1232) by the Buddhist priest conventionally identified as having brought the custom of consuming suspensions of powdered tea back with him from Song China, Eisai [栄西] (1141-1215)), and ‘pedigree-less tea’ [非茶, *hicha*], grown elsewhere.

Four Varieties, Ten Samples

In the early Edo period, the same gaming principle became extended, by substituting for tea-brands varieties of incense. The rules adopted for the earliest forms of such contests are not presently known; but it is reckoned that Four Varieties, Ten Samples [十種香; 十炷香, *jishu-kō*] was probably among the earliest formats to be devised. In its least elaborate form (here, as handed down in the Shino School of Incense-appreciation [志野流, *Shino-ryū*]), the procedure of play was as follows: three samples each of varieties A [一ノ香, *ichi-no-kō*], B [二ノ香, *ni-no-kō*], and C [三ノ香, *san-no-kō*], but only one of D [客香, *kyaku-kō*], were placed in ten sample-packets each marked secretly with the identity of its contents, the packets were shuffled and then, one after another, their contents were presented in appreciation incense-burners, and the order in which the packets were opened was carefully preserved, probably using a sample-packet-skewer [鶯針, *uguisu-bari*; 香串, *kō-gushi*] temporarily thrust into the matting between the respective seats of the incense-presenter [香元, *kō-moto*] and the scorer-scribe [執筆, *shippitsu*], onto which each emptied packet was threaded. The participants must have submitted diagrammatic answers, quite probably in a form as exemplified following, for the (randomly-selected) sequence C³B³C²D A³C¹B²B¹A²A¹ and recorded from right to left, as Pre-modern Japanese wrote.

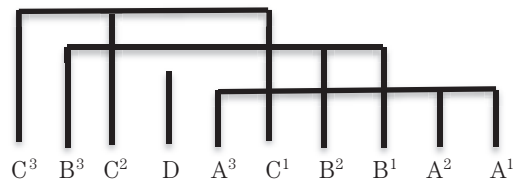


Figure 2. A graphic expression of a participant's judgment as to order of presentation, in a contest as to successfully distinguishing ten samples of four varieties

What matters in this format is not whether the first sample was A¹, B¹, or C¹, (since no participant could make such identifications) but, rather, which subsequent samples turned

out to be of the same variety as which preceding ones. Of course, whether or not the first sample was, instead, D did indeed matter; but D could be identified only retrospectively – as that variety a sample of which had been presented just once. (In the above example, at the point at which each participant encounters the sole sample of variety D, s/he cannot tell whether or not the development of the sequence will reveal that it is accompanied by fellow-samples yet to be presented.) This would have made it as yet unfeasible to increase the severity of the demand for a capacity instantly to recognize incense-varieties, by adopting use of a set of incense-tiles [香札, *kō-fuda*], described below.

While it would have been perfectly possible for more sensitive participants to have already gained a clear memory-trace of the combination of flavor, hue and aroma characteristic of the uniquely-pedigreed tea-brand, which, at least in the Kinki Region, would presumably have been generally available (if probably only to the well-off), the same could not have applied to varieties of incense more costly (because rarer) than mere sandalwood or aloes-wood – the respective, rather bland aromas of which are indeed instantly recognizable. In order both to make it less difficult to recognize a given variety D, and yet also raise the stakes in another manner (later explained), use of individual sets of small tiles and at least one closed tile-receptacle [札筒, *fuda-zutsu*] was introduced. (Although a similar device can be found used for ‘blind’ tea-tasting contests, it is now impossible to determine which practice copied the other.)

A set of incense-tiles usually comprises (i) an outer box or frame, (ii) a number of far smaller boxes (usually 10, sometimes 12) each containing (iii) a subset of 12 tiny tiles, fashioned from wood, bamboo or ivory, and usually fitting into its smaller box in two piles of 6; with this comes (iv) either one or two lidded tile-receptacles – of which more below. On one side of each tile in any given set is a uniform motif unique to that set – usually but not exclusively botanical, and, if so, the subsets start off from a pine-set, a plum-set and a bamboo-set, these sets being by convention distributed to the chief guest and her immediate left-hand neighbors (the remainder of the sets being ordered by season). On the other side of three of the tiles in every subset is the Chinese ideograph for ‘one’ [一], while three more bear ‘two’ [二], and a further trio ‘three’ [三]; the last three, however, carry the *katakana*-character for /u/ [ウ], which is an abbreviation of the ideograph [客, *kyaku*],

meaning ‘visitor’, which in turn is the symbol for a given variety D (presumably there were also contest-variations according to which up to three samples of the given variety D were mixed in, or even a sample each of D, E, and F, which simply had to be identified as ‘an [other] interloper’ [客]).

Preliminary Identification of Certain Varieties

Along with this innovation will necessarily have been incorporated preliminary presentation of one sample of varieties A, B, and C, respectively, each enclosed within a packet clearly marked on its obverse face with either ‘one’ [一], ‘two’ [二], or ‘three’ [三]: preliminarily-identified samples [試香, *kokoromi-kō*; *tameshi-kō*] of three of the selected varieties, the number identifying which is still announced by the incense-presenter as he presents it on a small appreciation incense-burner to be circulated by the participants. And only once all three of the preliminarily-identified samples have been presented does the presenter shuffle the packets containing the ‘blind’ samples, and then begin to send out their contents, for identification by the participants. When a set of such tiles is used, closely following on the circulation of the incense-burner bearing each sample is likewise passed round a tile-receptacle, which has in its lid a slot that is just big enough to slip a tile through it, and thus conceals any tiles already in it. Confronted by this receptacle, each guest has to select for insertion a tile indicating that variety as belonging to which she has identified the sample the aroma of which she has just inhaled. The contents of the receptacle are removed by the scorer-scribe, who is the last participant to receive it, and are arranged face-down in the order of the guests’ seating – starting of course with ‘pine’. (Instead of a tile-receptacle, one of a numbered set of ten flat-folding receptacles [折据, *ori-sué*], formed of stiff card, may be used to receive the participants’ tiles, which are inserted with their motif-faces upwards.)

What this device necessarily entails is that, should a guest make a mistaken identification, taking a sample of B, for instance, to be a sample of A, and so expending in vain one of her ‘one’-tiles, this error is not only irrevocable, but also means that she no longer has sufficient ‘one’-tiles left, with which correctly to identify all of the [remaining] samples of variety A: she will find herself left no choice but willy-nilly to make a second incorrect

identification, thus lowering her own score by a whole fifth (since scoring is usually out of a total of ten correct identifications – though successful identification of D may *ad libitum*, and by general consent, have already been weighted with at least one extra mark).

Although himself also participating in the contest, meanwhile, the scorer-scribe has been drawing up a score-sheet containing all of the participants' names and identifying tile-motifs, each at the head of a column that will receive that participant's results, the incense-names [香銘, *kōmei*] of the four varieties, and the place and date, all in the most elegant brush-calligraphy that he can manage. Next, each tile is turned upwards, and the identifications made by each participant recorded. Finally, the incense-presenter passes to him the opened 'blind' sample-packets kept in order on their skewer, the actual sequence of presentation is recorded, the participants' identifications are marked for correctness (sometimes in vermilion ink [朱肉, *shuniku*]), and the score-sheet, having first been passed around from guest to guest, is rolled up (its top-end then dented inwards to keep it closed), and ceremoniously presented to the winner.

In another basic contest, *Tale of Genji* Incense [源氏香, *Genji-kō*], five samples each of five varieties of incense are all placed in 'blind' sample-packets, these packets shuffled, and, at the start of each of five rounds, a random five drawn out by the incense-presenter (thus, there is no preliminary identification of any of the five varieties). To each of the guests is distributed both a small ink-stone box from a matching, tiered set [重硯箱, *jū-suzuri-bako*], equipped with an ink-stone, a stick of Chinese ink, a small calligraphy-brush, and a tiny metal water-container, and also a narrow paper name-slip folded in two [名乗紙, *nanori-gami*], on the front of which she uses the writing equipment to inscribe her name, while later employing the inside of the paper to indicate her sample-identifications, by means of horizontally-linked and unlinked vertical lines, in the same manner as is shown above. Thus, ABCDE will be indicated with the pentagram [*as it may surely be termed*] shown on the left, following, and ABABC with that on the right:



Figure 3. Graphic representations of (left) a randomly-generated set of five samples each of alternating five different varieties, and (right) of two samples each of two varieties plus a single sample of a third.

The number of possible permutations of this pentagram happening to equal the number (52) of chapters of the great 11th-century Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji* [源氏物語, *Genji-monogatari*] excluding the first and last, and, every permutation soon having become assigned its own chapter-title, each guest (who is properly equipped with a tiny folding booklet indicating the whole range of these assignments [源氏香函, *Genji-kōzu*], or avails herself of such a booklet passed out by the scorer-scribe) submits her final decision by writing the appropriate chapter-title (the pentagram on the left, above, has for instance received the title ‘The Broom-tree’ [「帚木, *Hōki-gi*], and the one on the right ‘The Village of Drifting Petals’ [「花散里, *Hana-chiru-sato*])).

While the long-observed rules of the *warrior*-tradition of Incense, the aforementioned Shino School, limit the creation of new incense-distinguishing contests to just one per generation of grand master, the *noble*-tradition, the Oié School [御家流, *O-ié-ryū*], encourages its members to create new ones, so long as those employ courtly, elegant or classical motifs. All in all, there are quite hundreds of these minor contest-formats, many of a certain antiquity; one common pattern (which results in a not-too-lengthy contest) is to take a (5-7-5-7-7 = five-segmented,) 31-syllable courtly poem [和歌, *waka*] that is seasonally-appropriate, or appropriate to the overall purpose of a given gathering, and prepare two sample-packets each of five varieties of incense; on the obverse face of each of the five sample-packets the contents of which are to be **preliminarily-identified**, and in a concealed place in the case of each of the ‘blind’-sample-packets, one segment (or, in the concealed version, its segment-number) of the chosen poem is inscribed; the incense-presenter presents all of the preliminarily-identified samples in the right order, intoning each assigned segment as he sets out the burner in question, and then, from the shuffled set of ‘blind’-sample-packets, withdraws a single one for climactic presentation. Each of the

participants submits her answer by writing on her name-slip the poem-segment that she judges to be relevant.

the praxis of Incense [香道, *kōdō*]²⁵: A hospitable chamber-art centered upon incense-distinguishing contests, the roots of which lay in a fusion of Buddhist (and particularly Zen-sect) expert ritual uses of incense, communal composition of linked verse, and the courtly **paired superb incense-sample contests** [名香合, *meikō-awasé*]²², the earliest form of the praxis of Incense emerging as one aspect of the remarkable post-war cultural efflorescence characterizing the Higashiyama epoch (see, **Muromachi period^c, (iii)**, above), and apparently originally taking the format of ‘Four Varieties, Ten Samples’, and its evidently-extravagant variant, ‘A Hundred Samples’ [百炷香, *hyakuchū-kō*] (details undiscoverable).

When one considers that the close forerunner of the incense-distinguishing contest was the literature-steeped praxis of linked incense-appreciation (see **linked incense-appreciation**²³, above), and that the ‘definitive’ catalogue of sixty-one supreme incense-varieties [六十一種名香, *rokujūissshu-meikō*] (long erroneously held to have been compiled, at the behest of Ashikaga Yoshimasa, by the two ‘founders [流祖]’ of this praxis, the above-mentioned court noble, poet, and literary scholar Sanjō-nishi Sanétaka [三条西実隆] and the Kyoto commoner Shino Sōshin [志野宗信] (1433?-1523 C.E.) – who himself did indeed serve in Yoshimasa’s household – but was in fact selected in, or during the decade before, 1573, during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573-98), by the Incense-practitioner Takébé Shōryū [建部勝隆] (dates unknown)) comprises all of 40 varieties the names [香銘, *kōmei*] of which have distinct literary resonances – including six taken from customary chapter-titles employed to refer to sections of *The Tale of Genji*, and two of Chinese literary provenance²⁾ – the assertion, made in *Shimpan Chadō Daijiten* (p. 413), that it was ‘people like experts in linked-verse composition [連歌師ら, *renga-shi-ra*]’ who – primed by the epoch’s characteristic reverence for a balanced attention (the importance of which had previously been urged by the influential Zen National Patriarch [国師, *kokushi*] and garden-designer Musō Soseki), to both things Chinese in origin (such as the teachings of Zen Buddhism, and the Chinese pre-modern literary canon) and also those Japanese in provenance (especially *waka*, courtly tales, and the diaries of nobles and prelates) – first ‘investigated the uses of

incense respectively characterizing the households of the court nobility and the warrior-class and Zen monastic institutions [公家・武家ないし禪院の愛香を探り, *kugé, buké naishi zen'in no aikō o saguri*]', and exerted their artistic energies in identifying superb incense-varieties, selecting the most appropriate utensils and implements, and gaining expertise [香法, *kōhō*] in doing full justice to each sample of a single incense-wood, thereby creating an entirely-new chamber-art, has considerable cogency.

Particularly active among these figures was Sōgi [宗祇] (1421-1502), who was crucially effective in the elevation of linked verse-writing to a major literary art. After his natal family's fortunes collapsed, at a young age he took the tonsure and entered one of the Zen-sect's Kyoto Mother-houses, the Shōkoku Temple [相国寺, *Shōkoku-ji*]; in his thirties, however, he became inspired to gain proficiency as a linked-verse poet, studying under first Sōzei [宗叡] (?-1455 C.E.; *waka*-pupil of Shōtetsu [正徹] (1381-1459), and linked-verse pupil of Bontō[-an] [梵灯[庵]] (1349-?, the latter a linked-verse pupil of the court noble Nijō [Fujiwara] Yoshimoto [二条良基] (1320-88))), and then Senjun [専順] (1411-76). Subsequently, he proceeded to study native poetics [歌学, *kagaku*] and the native literary canon [古典, *koten*] under Asukai [Fujiwara] Masachika [飛鳥井雅親] (1416-90) and Ichijō [Fujiwara] Kanéyoshi [一条兼良] (1402-81), eventually gaining a name for himself as a tutor-arbiter in the realm of linked verse [連歌師, *renga-shi*].

Another such was Sōgi's disciple Botanka Shōhaku [牡丹花肖柏] (1443-1527), a linked-verse practitioner related to the noble Nakanoin [中院] [Minamoto] family, who attended expositions concerning native classics offered by the above-mentioned Sanjō-nishi [Fujiwara] Sanétaka, studied *waka* composition under Asukai [Fujiwara] Shigémasa [飛鳥井榮雅], from Sōgi received initiation into the prestigious esoteric teachings concerning interpretation of the *Kokin* State Anthology [古今伝授, *Kokin-denju*], additionally studying Pre-modern Chinese poetry under incumbents of some of the Five Kyoto Motherhouses [京都五山, *Kyōto gozan*]. Apart from *The Tale of Genji*, on which he wrote a commentary, he cherished three great loves [三愛, *san'ai*]: rice-wine, flowers and incense, and requested Jō-an Ryōshū [常庵龍崇] of the Kennin Temple to compose a treatise in [Pre-modern] Chinese concerning these three matters [『三愛記』, *San'ai-ki*], to which he himself then appended a translation into Pre-modern Japanese [大和言葉, *Yamato-kotoba*]. By the second

Kashiwabara monarch [後柏原天皇, *go-Kashiwa-bara tennō*] he was commanded to write a *New Approach to Linked-verse Composition* [『連歌今案』, *Renga Kon'an*], and accepted invitations to participate in court poetry-events. To his personal *waka*-anthology, *Jottings on Spring Dreams* [春夢草, *Shummu-sō*], the august Sanétaka himself contributed a preface. Botanka Shōhaku is one of the three celebrated participants in a linked-verse composition-session recorded as *Three Poets Create a Hundred Verses, offered at Minasé Shrine* [『水無瀬三吟百韻』, *Minasé San'gin Hyakuin*] (1488), which became received and revered as a perfect model of ideal linked-verse handling (one the other two participants being Sōgi). Constituting a culturally-influential group that included an extremely-affluent merchant-Tea-practicant who, it is believed, had in his thirties himself aspired to become a linked-verse exponent, Takéno Jōō [武野紹鷗] (see **Muromachi period**^e (iii), above), these men and others, and despite their heterogenous social backgrounds, crucially and successfully sought sustained cultural intercourse with politically- and culturally-high-ranking court minister for the interior [内大臣, *nai-daijin*] Sanétaka, if primarily with literary goals in mind. At the same time, Sanétaka himself was an *aficionado* of single incense-wood appreciation; and, in an epoch during which reverence for Musō Soseki, and his view of the literary and chamber-arts [諸芸能, *sho-geinō*] as one, perfectly-proper facet of Zen-style spiritual training, had never before been greater, we should not be surprised that these formulators of the praxis of Incense should have believed that, just as in the case of both flower-arrangement (itself of Buddhist ritual origin) and also the service and drinking of powdered tea (this of Chinese Zen-sect monastic origin), the appreciation of incense – albeit through participation in distinguishing/identification contests [組香, *kumi-kō*] – could, nay *should*, be apprehended as a[nother?] path towards ultimate self-improvement: in short, a ‘Way’ [道, *dō*], although the first recorded use of the term *kōdō* [香道] is no earlier than 1733 C.E. What seems more likely is that the essentially-unworldly activities of composition of *waka* and linked verse, selection, arrangement and appreciation of combinations of flowers, grasses and branches, preparation and enjoyment of both tea itself and the decorative displays and utensils employed for those purposes, and connoisseurship relating to incense-woods, were all felt to be part of a single way of life that could be summed up by the term *tashinami* [嗜み], and that had been exemplarily put into practice much earlier

by Musō Soseki, during the period he spent at the Saihō Temple.

Nevertheless, an extreme concern with time-hallowed precedent [有職故事, *yūsoku koji*; 古事, *koji*] that undoubtedly had its origin in a sympathetic-magical belief that doing all things *correctly* – which is to say, as they had ‘always’ been done – was an essential part of effective government, and that dominated the lifestyle of the royal household and the nobility, soon came to influence each of even these then relatively-*avant-garde* praxes. As a result, Sanétaka – who himself indubitably regarded his copious literary studies as far more important – and his descendants came to be regarded as one source of authority concerning how questions of incense was properly to be handled, their tradition eventually becoming dubbed ‘the Oié School’, while the extremely-wealthy Kyoto commoner Shino Sōshin mentioned above was gaining a widespread reputation as another connoisseur of single-wood incenses, with the result that his family line became generally regarded as constituting another ‘incense-lineage’ [香道の家, *kōdō no ié*], lending its name to what is now still termed ‘the Shino School’, although the grand mastership [家元, *ie-moto*] long ago passed to the Hachiya [蜂谷] family. (For single-incense-wood appreciation, the three Senké Schools of townspersons’-Tea still adhere to the Shino tradition, while the Enshū School largely observes the practices of the Oié School.)

All of Shukō, Jōō, Rikyū, Tea-master Tsuda Sōgyū [津田宗及] (?-1591), Nobunaga’s tonsured brother and celebrated Tea-practitioner Oda Uraku [織田有楽] (1547-1612) and shogunal Tea-master Furuta Oribé [古田織部] (1543-1615) studied appreciation of incense (these latter four in what was basically the Shino tradition), and, each in his different way, sought to devise ways of combining this with intimate Tea-occasions [茶事, *chaji*].

While acquisition of superior incense wood (specifically, eaglewood [a.k.a. agalloch] [伽羅, *kyara*]) was one of the main objects of that minimal amount of maritime trading with Asia [朱印船, *shuin-sen*], which was permitted by shogun Tokugawa Iéyasu from 1607 C.E. on, by the start of the eighteenth century attention to incense-appreciation had begun to wane. Nevertheless, one of the last powerful and highly-educated cultural leaders still to accord to this activity an importance for a truly cultivated person equal to that of painting, calligraphy, Tea, and grand flower-arrangement [立華, *rikka*], was the court-noble Konoé [Fujiwara] Iéhiro [近衛家熙] (1667-1736). Extremely-highborn (his mother was the eldest

acknowledged daughter [内親王, *nai-shinnō*] of the second Mizuno'o monarch [後水尾天皇, *go-Mizu-no-o tennō*]), while a large number of his paternal forebears had, by right of hereditary succession, one after another been appointed supreme minister [太政大臣, *dajō daijin*] and grand chancellor [関白, *kampaku*] to the adult monarch each had served), he in his turn not only received the same titles, but even that of regent [摂政, *sesshō*], from all of which positions he in his 46th year resigned, to devote himself to a life of scholarship [学問, *gakumon*; 学芸, *gakugei*] and artistic activity [風流, *fūryū*] – much like Musō Soseki and then Ashikaga Yoshimasa, some centuries previously. At the age of 58, and although recently granted even quasi-royal rank [准三宮, *jun-sangū*] and emoluments entailed, Iéhiro took the tonsure, assuming the Buddhist soubriquet Yoraku-in [予楽院], by which he is now best known.

This final part of his life was characterized by both productive scholarship (he prepared a vast, scholarly, annotated edition of an authoritative eight-century Chinese code of laws, published posthumously, as well as an illustrated catalogue of 250 major botanical species [『花木真寫』, *Kaboku Shinsha*],) and organized, catalogued [as 『大手鑑』, *Ō-te-kagami*], and meticulously copied, all the examples of distinguished calligraphy in his family's possession) and also socio-cultural activity the breadth of which is recorded in detail, in diary-format, by the Konoé-house medical attendant and Tea-practitioner, Yamashina Dōan [山科道安] (1677-1746) in his Journal *Kaiki* [『槐記』 (more properly, 『槐下与聞』, *Kaika Yobun*)] covering the period 1724-30. While this contains a great deal of material concerning Yoraku-in's praxis of Tea, including records of the intimate Tea-occasions [茶事, *chaji*] that he held, to which were invited practitioners of wabi-Tea, in addition to disquisitions concerning proper conduct of this praxis, making the work an entirely-unique record of aristocratic Tea [公家茶, *kugé-cha*] (as opposed to both warrior-Tea [武家茶, *buké-cha*] and also townspersons'-Tea [町衆茶, *machi-shū-cha*]), which he studied originally under the Cloistered Prince Ji'in [梶井宮慈胤法親王, *Kaji-i-no-miya Ji'in hosshinnō*] (1617-1700), it also contains so much information of strictly-limited transmission [秘事, *hiji*] concerning the (jealously-guarded) Konoé house-praxis of Incense that the family originally insisted that – as, in itself, constituting what was virtually a precious manual of incense-handling and appreciation – *Kaiki* should never be released for general circulation [他見, *taken*].

That a considerable number of manuscript copies have nevertheless survived, having once passed to others' possession, is perhaps a clear indication of the lingering fascination then still exerted by the praxis of Incense, at least among a limited elite and its satellites; and the fact that a busy statesman, botanist, natural scientist, painter, calligrapher, poet, and scholar such as Konoé Yoraku-in should have devoted so much time and energy to the preservation and transmission (at least within his princely house) of this praxis surely constitutes a testimony to its perceived role as one important form of aestheticized spiritual training, familiarity with which was still presumed to be essential to anyone bent on achieving literary and personal cultivation.

As in the cases of the *nō* tradition [能楽, *nōgaku*] and the praxes of Flowers [花道, *kadō*] and Tea [茶道; 茶道, *sadō; chadō*], the collapse of the shogunate in 1867, and subsequent abolition of the feudal system and the once-powerful patronage (by both cultivated feudatories [大名, *daimyō*] and their wealthy brokers [両替商, *ryōgaé-sho*; 両替屋, *ryōgaé-ya*]) that it had financed, along with State persecution of what had formerly been great Buddhist temples, support for the traditions of the various Schools of Incense sunk to a nadir; and, while interest, and market for instruction, in the praxes of Tea and Flowers – if this time as a substitute for the pre-marital period of service, grooming, and training in a feudatory household [屋敷勤め, *yashiki-zutomé*] that had in the early-modern period been customary for a girl from a family of middling social rank – had begun to revive by the end of the nineteenth century, and although the anciently-prestigious lineage of the Sanjō-nishi [Fujiwara] family seems to have ensured enduring support for the Oié School among a socially-select elite (one disciple of which was the mother of the present monarch's consort, Michiko), it was not until the middle of the previous century that the fortunes of the two Schools of Incense-appreciation really began once more to flourish. By contrast, since the 1980s, there has been such a quiet boom in interest in this activity that it is said that almost every Incense-teacher in the country has a waiting-list, of applicants for tuition.

3. Metaphysics

Some (essentially-secular) pre-modern Chinese couplets composed by the Northern

Song-dynasty poet the Sino-Japanese version of whose name is Kō Teiken [黄庭堅, Huang Ting-jian(?)] (1045-1105), which gained widespread notice in pre-modern Japan thanks to the Zen priest Ikkyū [一休宗純, Ikkyū Sōjun] (1394-1481), is now known as ‘The Ten Virtues of Incense’ [香の十徳, *Kō no Jittoku*].

[Incense] moves even buddhas, gods, and souls of the dead³,
and purifies both mind and body;
it is as powerful in banishing dirt and defilement
as in promoting wakefulness;
in solitude it befriends the heart, and, amid hectic bustle,
quietens and soothes the spirit,
in plenitude is never superfluous, and yet
in scarcity is always sufficient.
Long storage will not damage it;
its constant company can bring no harm.

(The original and its Sino-Japanese reading runs thus:

感格鬼神, <i>kankaku kijin</i>	清淨心身, <i>seijō shinshin</i>
能除污穢, <i>nōjo owai</i>	能覺睡眠, <i>nōkaku suimin</i>
靜中成友, <i>seichū seiyū</i>	塵裡偷閑, <i>jinri tōkan</i>
多而不厭, <i>taji fuen</i>	寡而為足, <i>kaji isoku</i>
久藏不朽, <i>kyūzō fukyū</i>	常用無障, <i>jōyō mushō</i>

According, however, to the esoteric teachings of the State-espoused – and therefore, culturally, profoundly-influential – Shingon Sect, incense is far more: it is a veritable ‘servant of the Buddha’s truths [佛使, *bussshi*]’; if the quality of the incense in question is good, exposure to it can exert a most beneficial effect on the skin, the internal organs, and the spirit [心, *kokoro*] – that is to say, on both mind and body; and a pursuit of such exposure has much in common with faith in the tenets of Buddhism. For incense-wood consents to consign its own substance to the destructive effects of heat, in order to offer

others its fragrance, and increase their wellbeing; and, in this respect, it embodies the Buddhist virtue of selfless endeavor for a good not one's own [利他, *rita*].

With further regard to its capacity, attributed to it in the preceding Chinese couplets, to 'purify both mind and body' [清浄心身, *seijō shinshin*], above, we might also note that a pre-modern Japanese Buddhist priest, Eishō [湖東三山, Kotō Miyama; 西明寺住職, Seimeiji *jūshoku*; 中野英勝, Nakano Eishō], recorded in his temple-journal not only the devout wish, 'Would that this self of mine might become as pure as is a holy incense-burner' [願わくは我が身浄きこと香炉のごとし, *negawaku-wa waga mi kiyoki koto kōro no gotoshi*], but also a description, expounded by the teacher under whom he had been trained, of the fragrance of incense as 'symbolizing the very truth of Buddhism', and an injunction to regard any temple-incense-burner as 'the mouth of the Buddha himself', and therefore to treat it as carefully as he would his own.

The expression '*listening to incense*' [聞香, *monkō*; 香を聞く, *kō o kiku*] may well have originally arisen simply because, in Pre-modern Chinese, the fourth of the significances to accrue to the ideograph ^{wen}聞 was '[physically] to detect an odour'; be that as it may, it is perhaps worthwhile noting that, within the Asian cultural sphere characterized by use of Chinese ideographs [漢字圏, *kanji-ken*], the first recorded use of [聞香; *monkō*] to mean 'to inhale, and thus attend to, what incense has to tell one' is in a Kamakura-period (1185-1333) *Japanese dictionary* (of Sino-japanese). So, what was it believed might be 'heard' when one inhales the fragrance released by a heated incense-wood? According to the artistic and spiritual praxis of Incense [香道, *kōdō*] as it developed in mediaeval Japan (and nowhere else – at that time and for centuries after) particularly now under the influence of the (distinctly non-esoteric) metaphysics of Zen Buddhism, a tree that has come to offer incense-wood, is – even now, if only implicitly – regarded as being, though physiologically dead, akin to something still very much animate: possessed of a soul, an energy, and also a *voice*; and, for that reason, as well as because of its miraculous rarity, every sample of it is to be accorded deep respect (just as, in the praxis of Tea, are treated powdered tea, hand-made sweetmeats, and all vital utensils offered for use or examination). And this is because what one is given a chance to heed and catch, as one inhales the almost supernatural-

seeming odour of incense-wood (for the praxis of Incense does not employ any other form of incense-ingredient) can be none other than silent communication from that venerable tropical tree a tiny part of which it once was, but which has otherwise long died to this world, and yet lives on in the voice of its immersion-crystallized resin. And such voices are, in turn, manifestations of the fundamental voice of the universe itself [森羅万物, *shinra bambutsu*] – elements of a *mandala* not visible but instead audible, and yet audible only through fragrance; and encountering plural varieties of incense-wood purely in order to listen to each of them in turn is the serious aspect of this practice. As above, a ludic praxis known as **incense-distinguishing** [組香, *kumi-kō*] is the form now taken by its playful aspect, and appears to have been in use since the more-recent Azuchi-Momoyama period (second half of the 16th century). It is a contest – and one the format of which can only have been influenced by that of the rather older practice of ‘blind’ leaf-tea-distinguishing [闘茶, *tōcha*], (itself a development of an early contest-format [闘水, *tōsui*] concerning prized fresh waters [名水, *meisui*] from different localities). And yet those that engage with this praxis deeply will maintain that the proper function of its competitive aspect is merely to sharpen attention to the voices thereby to be heard; and that a true practitioner regards relative success or relative failure only as an index of present capacity truly to listen.

Notes

1) Original Japanese – language version: 「香の流れと原料・種類」. (n.d.). 漢方を知る. Retrieved from http://www.kigusuri.com/kampo/asano/asano_15.html

2) The 61 supreme varieties are as follows; those with literary resonance have been asterisked.

The Hōryū Temple [法隆寺, *Hōryū-ji*] a.k.a. Prince Shōtoku [聖徳太子, *Shōtoku Taishi*], The Tōdai Temple [東大寺, *Tōdai-ji*] a.k.a. *Ranjatai* [蘭奢待], Peripatetics [逍遙, *shōyō*], Fair Yoshino* [み芳野, *mi-Yoshino*], Worldly Troubles* [紅塵, *kōjin*], Leafless Tree [枯木, *karé-ki*], Nakagawa River* [中川, *Nakagawa*], Lotus Sutra [法華経, *Hoké-kyō*], Flowering Mandarin Orange* [花橘, *hana-tachibana*], Zigzag Plank-bridge* [八橋, *yatsu-hashī*], The Onjō Temple [園城寺, *Onjō-ji*], So Very Like [to *Ranjatai*] [似, *ni-tari*], Smoke above Mount Fuji* [富士煙, *Fuji-no-keburī*], Sweet Flag [Calamus]* [菖蒲, *ayamé*], Wisdom/Visage of a Demonic Female* [般若, *hannya*], Partridge-plumage [鸚鵡斑, *shako-han*], Green Plum [青梅, *ōme*], Yang Gui-fei* [楊貴妃, *Yō Kihī*], Flying Plumtree* [飛梅, *tobi-umé*], Tanéshima Isle [種島, *Tanéshima*], Channel-marker* [湍標, *mio-tukushi*], Moon [月, *tsuki*], Tatsuta River* [竜田, *Tatsuta*], Admiring Fall Leaves* [紅葉賀,

momiji-no-ga], Westering Moon* [斜月, *shagetsu*], White Plum-blossom [白梅, *hakubai*], Flock of Plovers* [千鳥, *chi-dori*], The Flower of the Law [法花, *hokké; hōka*], Ancient Plumtree [老梅, *rōbai*], Eightfold Enclosure* [八重垣, *yaé-gaki*], Royal Flower-viewing* [花宴, *hana-no-en*], Storm of Petals* [花雪, *hana-no-yuki*], Harvest Moon [名月, *meigetsu*], Celebration [賀, *ga*], *Ransu* [蘭子], Fit for a Sanctuary [卓, *shoku*], Mandarin Orange Blossom* [橘, *tachibana*], Village of Drifting Petals* [花散里, *hana-chiru-sato*], Sunset Mists* [丹霞, *tanka*], Keepsake Flowers* [花形見, *hana-gatami*], *Uwadaki* [上薫], Suma Beach* [須磨, Suma], Akashi Bay* [明石, Akashi], Night of the Full Moon* [十五夜, *jūgo-ya*], Next Door's [隣家, *rinka*], Autumn Evening Showers* [夕時雨, *yū-shigure*], Pillowing Arm* [手枕, *ta-makura*], Dawn Moon* [晨明, *ari-aké*], Above the Clouds* [雲井, *kumo-i*], Crimson* [紅, *kurénai*], Hassé* [泊瀬, Hassé], Winter-flowering Plum* [寒梅, *kambai*], Early Days* [二葉, *futa-ba*], Early Plum-blossom* [早梅, *sōbai*], Night Frost* [霜夜, *shimo-yo*], Seventh Night of the Seventh Month* [七夕, *tana-bata*], Awakening* [寢覚, *né-zamé*], First Light* [篠目; 東雲, *shino-no-mé*], Faint Crimson* [薄紅, *usu-kurénai*], Veil of Cloud* [薄雲, *usu-gumo*], and Rearing Steed [上馬, *nobori-uma; agari-uma*].

3) Other possible translations of this segment are 'elevates the senses to supernal heights' and, less hyperbolically, 'sublimely sharpens all five senses'.

Reference

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