



Observer report for *Aachen Riichi Open*

Observer: Manuel SCHLICH (GER)

Date: June 2th – 3th 2018

Place: Aachen-Eilendorf, GERMANY

Website or other source(s) of information: All information on the website of Maajanbu Aachen: Registration of players, location, format, bank account for entry fee payment, results of hanchans and final ranking were updated and displayed online

Participants: 40 players from 8 countries; formerly 44 but due to cancellations, two players from the organiser crew voluntarily withdrew their participation

							
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Playing schedule: 2 days, 8 hanchan (5+3) à 90 minutes

Location: Old german “Bauernhof” (farm house). “Just-fit” to host the 40 players but more could have been problematic. The venue was a little off from the centre in Aachen-Eilendorf, but nevertheless reachable by car with enough parking spaces and a bus connection from Aachen city itself.

Social play was held on friday evening at Chico Mendes in the city, saturday and sunday, social play could be done at the tournament location afterwards.

Equipment: Hanchans were played on square tables with junkmats. Most of the sets were identical with a yellow-ocre backside. The remaining sets were with white backs, which were unhandy in the eyes of some players because of their very small characters written on it, the complete white “Haku” and the similarity of the tiles “Nan” and “Shaa”.

Very nice gimmick: The Aachen crew adopted the “Oorasu sheet” from the WRC2017 to visualise the point differences during the last hand.

Refereeing: Waldemar Laube and Philipp Martin were non-playing referees.

Refereeing was competent and quick. Referees wandering around to ensure the right course of the game was appreciated by almost everyone at the tournament.

Information / communication during the tournament:

Registration was done by drawing lot numbers, everybody received a plate with their name and nationality. Seating was predetermined by the crew so that each player was exactly two times east, south, west and north to ensure a fair distribution. The clock was displayed on a laptop and Every session started on time. The clock was set to 75 minutes whereafter an acoustic signal announced the last hand to be played. Ranking very prompt and up to date between each session, printed and posted on walls and online on the organisers website.

Complaints:

Most of the complaints were focused on etiquette and behaviour of players during the sessions like

- Separating “dead wall/wanpai” at the beginning and replenishing it after Kan declaration
→ Often situations occurred, where it was more important to some players to replenish the dead wall than flipping over the Kan-Dora-indicator which halted the game and led to unnecessary delay.
- Some players took tiles after drawing out of the playing field onto their lap and outside of the view from other players, which can be a possibility to cheat.
- After someone declared a win by ron or tsumo, some players displayed the habit of touching the players hand tiles to control whether they fulfil the yaku requirements and hand shape or not. This should not be accepted for obvious reasons mentioned before.

These matters were addressed by the referees due to complaints before the last hanchan. After the hanchan, some players expressed their mood that such an announcement cannot be made before the last hanchan in the game and should be made at the start of it. The referees on the other hand did not know until the last hanchan that there were in fact these problems. There can only be the assumption that offended players did not wanted to call the referees for every minor incident but in the sum up over the course of the tournament, they eventually got fed up with it and eventually expressed themselves to the referee team.

An absolute no-go were players laughing during the referees announcement and some even refused to follow their bidding which I think is an utmost disrespectfulness beyond words

Another complaint mentioned by a player was the pre-seating procedure, which is not transparent enough in his/her eyes and should be thought of.

Another suggestion was to change the principle of the sessions held at a tournament whereas there should be like 6 hanchan in round-robin style and 2 hanchan play-offs for the best 8 players which would lead to a more balanced fight between players having the same average play levels.

Last but not least, the clock was sometimes not completely visible to all players because of the relatively low positioning of it. There were also some tables which had bumps on them and thus led to tile falling down frequently.

Sessions: The playing atmosphere was excellent during most of the time and people did enjoyed themselves a lot. However, due to rivalries between certain persons, some tables gave off a poisoned mood which had ruined the fun for some people.

This could have also led to the fact, that the last ranked person refused to attend the following tournament which could have felt really awkward and uncomfortable for the organisers and left a bitter taste behind.

Catering: Lunch was held at the same place. On the first day, chinese buffet was ordered, while on the second day, bread rolls with different toppings were provided by the crew. Drinks and coffee were also prepared by the crew. Everything was more than plenty of.

Prizes: Trophies for individual ranking (1st, 2nd and 3rd), last ranked player received a “voucher” to attend the tournament in the following year for free.

Conclusion: Very well organised tournament with lots of fun. Nevertheless, where there was light, there were shades that did leave a significant imprint on the overall atmosphere. This is by no means the fault of the organisers around Waldemar which did an excellent job before, during and after the tournament, but due to ongoing differences between the attending players and etiquette problems. There still seems to be a long way to go to harmonise general behaviour and sportsmanship at tournaments.

Social play afterwards and drinking/eating were so much fun. Aachen has a lot of possibilities for sightseeing too like the old town with many bars, pubs et cetera. I – in my personal opinion – advise everyone to join a tournament in Aachen the following year.