

The tea ceremony room in traditional Japan: a stylized organization of space and time?

Eric Decreux

Abstract

The paper has the purpose to present the organization of the tea room in the Japanese traditional tea ceremony and its interactions with Japanese imaginary. It suggests mainly that this space is organized in such a way that it eventually appears to become a stylized living place, taking into account two requirements.

The first one is clearly to provide a place where both host and guests can have an harmonious exchange around a bowl of tea. The second is to provide a place in harmony with an idealized cosmos expressing both the presence of an ecumene and of time, as it is perceived in the Japanese traditional spirit.

The paper thus investigates the presence of diverse Japanese crafts: tatami, calligraphy and poetry, pottery, flowers, metalwork, Japanese pastry, sometimes clothes etc., but also the relationship with outer gardens, outside weather, and the rules of behavior between people. All of these elements are not only considered in relation to one another, but also in relation to the season, to the guests or to other elements of the situation. We emphasize the valorization of different places at some moments, the role of frontiers of some tatami borders or of the fan of each participant. The mutual respect between people playing different roles is also highlighted, as well as the respect towards the chosen objects. Finally, the coordination of the movements and places during the meeting creates a specific and often really appreciated atmosphere. These rules contribute to building a living socialized and idealized place in accordance with two of the well-known watchwords of the tea ceremony: wa kei sei jaku – harmony, respect, purity, tranquility and ichiko ichie one time, one meeting.

space | place | tea ceremony | japanese culture

Introduction

The ability of the inhabitants of traditional Japan to organize their living space as idealized places has been observed early in their history. During the so called “Heian era”, at the dawn of the 9th century A.D., one can think of the anecdote from the *Genji Monogatari*, the famous novel of Murasaki Shikibu from the Japanese middle ages, presented and discussed by Augustin Berque (2010): a princess asking about the snow on a legendary mountain is obeyed by one of her ladies by opening the blind of the window of the palace. In fact, the admiration of the snow on this moun-



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tain from a similar window was evoked in a poem by Bai Letian, a widely respected Chinese poet in ancient Japan. The palace of the princess was then linked to the legendary house of the poet. The reproduction of the well-known seascape of Northern Japan called Shiogama (currently Matsushima) by the prince Minamoto no Tōru (822-895) in the garden of his residence Kawara in Kyoto is also significant: people of his house went regularly from this residence to the sixty kilometer distant sea to bring some salt water. They could then copy in the garden the activity of the salt workers of the people of the Shiogama bay of Northern Japan. This story is presented as paradigmatic of the conception of gardens in Japan of the Heian era by Bernard Franck (2011): the garden is an evocation of a legendary landscape.

If we consider the imaginary as shared mental representations within a cultural framework, both these stories show the importance of the imaginary for Japanese people in such circumstances. The studies around the concept of spatiality in Japan (Bonnin, 2014) may give hints about how the Japanese imaginary may be related to the organization of space in this country.¹ More specific knowledge of the Japanese cultural sensibility should then permit substantial observations on the interaction between the imaginary and the conception of place.

By trying to express this intuition in a more detailed way, the tea ceremony room appears to have many areas of interest: the development of the tea ceremony – or way of tea, the Japanese word *chadō* means indeed *way of tea* and is actually the word employed for what Western people call

¹ Like a lot of schools of Japanese traditional arts, the schools of *chanoyū* are organized around a pyramidal system, called the *iemoto* system. At the top, a *iemoto* is the heir of the whole tradition; this person attributes some ranks to the people of the school in accordance with their practical knowledge, only one person being supposed to become the next *iemoto*. The most well-known schools are the *sansenke*, id est *Omotesenke*, *Urasenke*, *Mushanokojisenke*, which inherited directly the tradition of *Sen no Rikyū*; some other schools like the one of *Enshū* for example developed within the world of feudal lords, *Sen no Rikyū* still being an important reference. Further, even if there were evolutions within the Japanese society, and liberty in the frame of the rules of each school and between the different schools, a common spirit was conserved.



the tea ceremony as a practice – is certainly one of the traditional arts of Japan which has concerned a large part of Japanese society from the 16th century onwards. The often heard assertion that this art can be a starting point from which to understand the whole of Japanese culture shows at least its link with many domains of the Japanese sensibility. This could thus be an entrance to the Japanese imaginary in these domains. If one considers that imaginary is structured by the culture and evolves slowly, even if the ways to reflect this imaginary, the practices, may sometimes evolve quickly, both historical and theoretical points of view have to be considered. The legends about the tea ceremony, and especially the story of the suicide of its most famous master, *Sen no Rikyū*, have been a source of inspiration for a vast literature on the topic. These texts, whether they are fiction or studies, give hints about the Japanese perception of this tradition. Furthermore, the history of the tea ceremony has often been described in detail, and there is a common view about the main steps of the evolution of this practice, as presented for example by main schools of tea ceremony in (Tani, 2008). Indeed, the study of this art requires a lot more than a few years, and, for the purpose of this article, the chosen way is to speak about elements given by the existing literature. The German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen (1998) compares the tea ceremony to a spiritual musical moment. Even if there are beautiful sounds during this kind of ceremony, it seems to us that such a lively impression is deeply related to the organization of the space and the behavior of each person; this contributes at least to give this space a spiritual dimension. A study of this kind of organization therefore appears to be insightful.

This leads us to look at the tea ceremony room as a *milieu*, where the word *milieu* refers to the French translation of the concept of *Fudō* of the Japanese philosopher Tetsurō Watsuji, as it has been introduced and used in France by Augustin Berque (2002). For such a *milieu*, both objective and cultural elements may comprise its complete meaning.

After a short presentation of the history and spirit of the tea ceremony, the paper examines the organization of the room, and the link among



some elements of this ceremony. First, it emphasizes the interaction strategies of different persons within the room and between one another. Secondly, it presents elements relevant to the traditional Japanese *ecumene*, where the word *ecumene*, as defined and developed by Augustin Berque (1986, 2000, 2004, 2010) means a place shaped by and for the human presence. It shows how these elements and those symbolically relevant to the rawness of outer nature are harmonized. Also the paper analyses how the attitude towards time is exposed in this context.

1. The way of tea in Japanese culture

The way of tea is usually considered as one of the Japanese cultural practices which expresses Japanese sensibility at its best. Even if the sensations attached to this practice are quite immediately and universally perceived, the construction of its framework may appear as the result of long and major movements of Japanese cultural evolution. As such, it appears to be one of the very significant representations of the Japanese imaginary.

1.1 Continental elements and Japanese sensibility in Japanese tea history.

The well-known catchphrase accompanying the quick industrialization of the modern Japanese Meiji era, *Western techniques, Japanese spirit* evokes a similar spirit during the few centuries before the Heian era, from the 5th to the 9th century of the Western calendar. At this time too, Japanese people imported from continental neighbours, in particular from China, not only a lot of elements which contributed to the building of their own culture: writing techniques, buddhism, musical instruments, but also literature and, at the end of the Chinese Tang era, tea. The cultural integration of Chinese tea into a Japanese custom which would become the *chanoyu*, the “hot water for the tea”, the designation of the way of tea in the current Japanese world, appears to be a significant example of Japanese cultural evolution. As it is presented for example in the general presentation of the



tea world by Omotesenke school, tea is said to have been first presented to Emperor Saga on April 22, Konin 6 (year 815), within the context of a Buddhist ritual. More generally, the art of tea seems to have been a component of the refined elegance called *furyu* way of life, a Japanese translation of the Chinese word *fenglin*. At this time, both the beverage and the ritual of drinking it seem to have been similar in both countries. Despite the fact that the art of drinking tea would evolve a lot in both countries, this initial proximity could be of some importance. Indeed, the *furyu* way of life should also have influenced the Japanese elites up until the Meiji era, in the domains of the art of living, poetry, and particularly the landscape theory and sensibility. This point is defended in Augustin Berque (2010), which emphasizes in particular the Japanese way of assimilating the Chinese theory with quite a different sensibility, and to thus obtain a different result. The question of the survival of such a communion in a renewed Japanese art within the practice of *chanoyu* is one of the mainstays of this article.

The tea culture seems to have nearly disappeared in the following centuries, when Chinese culture's direct influence weakened in Japan. A renewed introduction of this beverage by a Zen Monk called Eisai, this time as whisked powdered tea, a way of making tea which is quite close to the current way of preparing the tea of *chanoyu*, took place at the end of the 12th century onwards. From the next century, its success as a medically efficient beverage grew quickly in the world of Buddhist monks. Tea had truly taken roots in Japan. From the beginning of the fourteenth century, tea began to be introduced in the samurai houses, and then, progressively to wider sections of the population. It was now a preferred drink, and was drunk during meetings on prestigious occasions. A game named *tôcha* may have had a great success at this time: the guests had to guess the origin of the tea, and beautiful craft works from China, called *Karamono*, especially tea bowls or vessels for cold water, were displayed.

During the 16th century, a further evolution took place, under the influence of a master of tea called *Takeno Jôô* (1502-1555) or even one of his



predecessor *Murata Jukô*, (1423-1502), but mainly of one of his disciples, the well-known *Sen no Rikyû* (1522-1591). The style became less luxurious and the search for a beauty appeared as the main rule. The use of sober potteries from Korea *Koraimono* or the southeast of Asia *Nanbanmono*, and eventually domestic productions *Wamono* was one of the features of this evolution. At the same time, the habit of preparing the tea procedure in front of guests arose, and there were important innovations in the architecture of the place where these meetings were performed.

From this period onwards, the main features of the conception of practicing tea, in particular a large part of the aesthetics defended by *Sen no Rikyû*, were conserved, through the transmission within highly structured schools¹ during the whole Edo era, and finally, even after this in the modern world.

The strong character of *Sen no Rikyû* contributes to make his life and death a legend. The fact that he was ordered to commit ritual suicide for an unknown reason in 1591 by his employer, the feudal lord Shogun Hideyoshi is often associated with the aesthetics that he tried to develop. The novel by Yasushi Inoue (1991) suggests a parallel between his difficulties and those of some of his disciples – his disciple *Furuta Oribe* was ordered to commit suicide too, among other stories – with the achievement of his conception of tea practice. In fact, one usually considers that he is the founder of the tea ceremony. Anyway, at that time of his life, a balance between continental imports and domestic spirit had been reached, and this practice had become plainly a Japanese art.

Augustin Berque (2010) defends this point, using the concepts presented in his former works (1986, 2000 and 2004), the idea that there is a strong continuity in the conceptions underlying these different ways of carrying out the tea ritual, at least from the point of view of the conception of the place used for this practice. In this view, the tea place, and especially the *roji*, the Japanese tea garden, may appear as a paradigmatic example of the Japanese conception of the organization of space and relationship to nature. Section 1.2 examines in the following how Japanese writings about



the conception of the tea ceremony and the elements associated with the tea ceremony may support this view. For this purpose, we will examine in depth the domains which are associated with the way of tea.

The main areas are generally considered, as in the writings of the *san-senke* schools, to be zen buddhism, Japanese garden culture, and a Japanese tradition of poetry meeting called *renga*.

1.2 The connexion with Zen, gardens and poetry

Sono michi ni iran to omou kokoro koso waga mi nagara no shishou narikeri

The meaning of this short poem of Sen no Rikyû in the traditional tanka form (see *Sen no Rikyû*, 2008), may be translated as “the heart that wishes to enter this way should be your only master”. It expresses the view of the major figure of the realm of *chanoyu* about transmission of the spirit of the way of tea. This idea is closely related to the practice of zen. The search of a direct understanding beyond logical language is one of the well-known aspects of zen. The presence of zen in most traditional arts of Japan has been often commented upon. Originally imported from the *chan* tradition of China, it eventually has become a symbol of the Japanese philosophical attitude. Augustin Berque (2010) discussed this issues in the framework of Japanese culture. Indeed, the *chanoyu* way of tea was introduced by a zen monk, and the major figures of the realm of the way of tea, *Sen no Rikyû*, his followers, and most of the highly ranking warriors who also had a strong influence on this practice were connected to zen. Since this philosophical attitude consists of experimenting with the limits of logical thought in particular, it constitutes a fascinating object for the Western tradition, but a tradition difficult to study with our methodological tools, which are antinomic to its nature. For our purpose, we will consider both the insertion of zen within the buddhist realm, as a Japanese version of an Asiatic way of thinking, and the relationship with the Japanese aesthetic world, which may concern gardens, but also the objects used for the tea gathering, the realm of poetry or even the behaviour dur-



ing a meeting around tea. There seems to have been a confluence between the domestic Japanese conception of gardens and the continental model of constructed gardens from ancient times. In Japan, the *niwa* garden at first had a large range of possible meanings. According to the analysis of the uses of the word *niwa* from the 9th to the 11th centuries (Maurin, 2004, pp. 271-307), an important character attached to this word appeared to refer to a place devoted to sacred or prestigious activities, which is open, but frequently attached to a building. A comparison of gardens in Japan or in Asia, as presented in Leon Vandermeersch (2000) and Bernard Franck (2011), leads to a consideration of the Chinese conception of constructed gardens, which came to Japan during the Heian era: the purpose of which was the reconstruction of prestigious landscapes. According to Bernard Franck (2011), it seems that the collection of mineral and vegetal elements for a garden was, in this conception, a means of letting diverse positive energies from all the represented places converge on the person living there, in the quest for a long life. This would then be associated with a Taoist sensibility. The first well-known Japanese gardens constructed in such a way seem to have been created for the religious aristocracy of the Heian era, from the 9th century; some uses of such gardens are in particular described by Léon Vandermeersch (2000, pp. 93-114). The Chinese idea was adapted at least on two points. First, during this period, the Japanese people preferred representations of seascapes to mountain scenes. Then, even if there were exceptions and even if they kept to strong rules, they let their architecture develop itself in the spontaneity of a living organism rather than obeying a prepared plan. According to this first model, new classes of people, particularly feudal lords of the samurai class and citizens, built their own gardens.² Gardens evolved into several varying styles,

² This movement, important in the history of the way of tea, is described in Léon Vandermeersch (2000) The way that the art of the gardens evolved is often compared with Japanese calligraphy. There have been three styles: *shin*, regular, *gyō*, cursive, *sō* herbaceous. The first style being as near as possible to the model, the second one admitting some symbolization (for example, a stone figuring a waterfall), the last one being the most abstract model.



where those characteristics can still be observed. In this evolution, the *roji*, a garden associated with the practice of tea appears as an important step.

A more subtle influence on the way of tea, for a Western observer, is the influence of the collective creation of poetry called *renga*. Since the Japanese schools of tea Omotesenke, and Urasenke (2008) emphasize the importance of this influence, it is interesting to understand the nature and the circumstances of this practice. Poetry has always been highly valued in Japan. The domestic tradition is even thought to have been founded by an important figure of the Japanese pantheon, the God Susanoo no Mikoto, the younger brother of the highest Goddess of the Japanese pantheon, Amaterasu no Mikoto. In fact, it seems that there was a confrontation with the Chinese model of poetry observed from the 5th century by Japanese diplomats. The continental tradition valorized assonance and rhyme, and was practiced as such by the men of the Japanese aristocracy. Thus some native poets – especially women – built a different domestic tradition, avoiding such kinds of repetition, where very short poems of 31 syllables, with verses of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables, the *waka* poems, were particularly appreciated. Sumie Terada (2004) analyses the characteristics of these poems as ways to express communication between humans, but also between the visible and invisible worlds, where language possessed a near-sacred purpose. As is widely known, this poetic tradition led the Japanese aristocracy to take into consideration a world constructed by culture as a reference of first importance for further creations; excellence in this domain was also subject to competition. This has been studied in particular by Jacqueline Pigeot (1987, 1997), as well as Michel Vieillard Baron (2001, 2013). The common culture acquired through this practice eventually led to the development of another practice: the collective production of long sequences of alternated 5-7-5 and 7-7 verses issued from the *waka* poems. We will see that the rules of composition of these *renga* such as balance between symbolic elements, non repetition and preference to allusion may also be applicable to some of the rules of the tea procedure. An influence from the first practice on the second appears then to make sense.



1.3 *Ecumene / eremitic experience in the tea ceremony room.*

The prestige of eremitical life in ancient China among the literary elite through the *fengliu* way of life had an echo in the Japanese aristocracy of the Heian era, and after this in the Japanese well-read society under the qualification *furyū*. Bernard Franck (2011) presents the case of *Minamoto no Tōru* and the construction of the *Kawara no In*, and Augustin Berque (2010) examines the evolution of Japanese architecture, and in particular gardens from this point of view. Both these studies suggest that eremitical life was more of a contact with a symbolized nature, a constructed reality using the outer world, than a contact with raw wilderness like in the Western world, as it is also studied in Augustin Berque (1986). Moreover, the observation of traditional Japanese dwellings shows that from oldest times, these Japanese dwellings were quite open to outdoor nature, and that Japanese people had a high sensitivity to nature in their hearts when facing the outdoors. In Japanese traditional architecture, the garden is part of the house. The rooms of the house are generally separated from the garden with a *shoji*, a wooden sliding door covered in translucent rice paper, so the garden may be closed off from the interior of the house and, if you are outside, you can close the door. According to Augustin Berque (2010), there has been an evolution from the aristocratic gardens, with their large bodies of water, alluding to prestigious landscapes of Japanese or continental literature, to the citizens' domestic gardens or very sober tea gardens of feudal lords, even neighbouring luxurious residences, and symbolic eremitical experiences from the mountains. It may well be that there is some common thread among these developments. In fact, a very fine symbolic system seems to permit the connoisseur to read through the organization of stones or the vegetation. In terms of the tea ceremony, going through the *roji* tea garden was regarded as a way to purify one's mind before entering the tea room (see *Figure 1*).

The idea of the garden as an image of the eremitical world leads to the question of the status of the tea room itself. The quiet observation of this room is facilitated by its design, which allows a warm light to per-



vade all around the room. The first contact with it for a guest in a quite formal tea ceremony consists of coming through the tea garden, then, leaving one's sandals, to enter the room by gliding on one's knees through a special small entrance (see *Figure 2*), then standing up, going on a set path on the *tatami* mats of the room in front of the *tokonoma*, a special alcove of the room where some objects may be displayed (see *Figure 4*). The guest kneels down. If there is a calligraphy, the person bows in front of it, and then, admires the calligraphy in itself, its presentation, generally on a roll hung on the wall of the *tokonoma* alcove, and the vases, flowers or other objects displayed there. Then, he changes place and, standing up again, goes on a determinate path on the *tatami* in front of the iron kettle, and other objects that may be already displayed there: a cold water jar, tea pot, and perhaps other implements (see *Figure 4* and *Figure 6*). During the tea procedure, the host will bring some other objects, in particular the *chawan*, the tea bowl, and the *chashaku*, the tea scoop. The *chawan*, the tea scoop, and some pieces of silk used for a particular procedure, the *koicha*, the thick tea, are particularly observed and commented, as well as the tea which has been drunk and the accompanying Japanese traditional pastry. The room is naturally seen during the tea procedure and, under certain circumstances, can also be observed once again between the departure of the host and the departure of the guests. The appreciation of the room is then a part of the way of tea. The first characteristic of this room is to be the place of meeting between the host and the guests, and is thus organized for the presence and interaction of people. Before the changes introduced at the time of *Sen no Rikyū*, the places were big rooms in aristocratic dwellings. One may guess that their atmosphere was quite similar to the places of pastimes of the bygone Heian era. The sobriety and simplicity of the tea room of the following *chanoyu* appeared initially as a complete revolution. The use of clay walls, raw wood, and even *tatami* mats built with straw, as well as the use of tea implements of similar aesthetics may evoke the countryside. Nevertheless, it may also evoke the eremitic world, which was highly prized in the universe of *renga*, formal *renga* being mostly



practiced by the aristocracy; the citizens used to practice an informal form of chained poetry, using another vocabulary and other themes. One can also remark that the *tatami* mats were at the beginning mats used only for highly prized moments or persons, and otherwise folded up, this function indicated by the root of the word, *tatamu*, meaning *to fold up*. At this time, it was a sign of high social rank to have rooms permanently covered with such *tatami* mats. The presence of a place devoted to the displaying of objects may appear as another element of continuity between aristocratic dwellings with sumptuous gardens to the small and sober *chashitsu* and *roji* garden of the new *chanoyu* way of tea. It seems then possible to follow the hypotheses that natural elements have been introduced in the universe of tea with the aristocratic elements concerning gardens and dwellings into the culture of the new *chanoyu* tea way shared with the samurai class, and then with the citizens as highly prized eremitical elements³. This poses the question of the organization of this space as a place where human beings live and communicate, and if and how it can be regarded as an ecumene.

2. The construction of a spatial rhythm

This section illustrates the presence of some characteristics which can be observed from one tea room to another, through their apparent diversity, and contribute to the efficiency of a lively place answering to the specific demands of the *chadô* way of tea. If we refer to the work of Pierre Sauvanet (1999) about the history of the notion of rhythm in antique Greece, the rhythm appears to be a remaining form in a flow. As far as spatiality is concerned, we should observe the remaining significant form

³The cumulated prestige of these elements may also have made this tea place a paradigmatic one, which may have influenced the whole classical Japanese dwelling. This has certainly been reinforced by the strict organization of the society of the Edo era, which pushed the guilds of carpenters to use formatted elements in their activities. This point of view is presented by Augustin Berque (2010) or in the historical presentation of the Omotesenke school for example.



either within a structure admitting repetitions, or during the organization of tea gatherings. Since repetitions are avoided in the *roji* gardens as in the tea room itself, we observe here the repeated structures from one tea room to another, and the accordance of these constants with the behavior of the participants during tea gatherings. Indeed, these constants of tea rooms' organization are strongly related to the behavior of the persons. This may be a crucial difference between a simple space and a place organized for living.

2.1 The use of artisanal elements and arts: diversity and balance.

When a guest enters the tea room ceremony, some objects can already be displayed in two places (see Figure 4): the *tokonoma* alcove, and the host's place, organized around the kettle providing boiling water, heated with a carefully prepared charcoal fire.⁴ In the *tokonoma* alcove, the guest can generally appreciate important traditional arts: calligraphy, poetry, flower arrangement. These arts are already practiced outside of the *chanoyu* realm, but the form of this practice is slightly different within this realm. One can consider that they are not directly related to the main purpose of the meeting, which is to drink a bowl of tea together within an harmonious atmosphere; one can remark for example that usually, during night *chaji* tea meetings, the *tokonoma* alcove may be empty. But, contributing to the creation of the atmosphere, the guest can also admire the creation of more than one art craft: the calligraphy is written on a *washi* Japanese paper with a frame of printed silk, the flower vase may be a beautiful piece of pottery, metal or basketry as well as a simple bamboo piece, and other objects like incense containers of pottery or lacquerware may also be displayed. At the host's place, which is usually delimited by a *furobyobu* screen, stands the

⁴ The finalization of this preparation of the charcoal fire or the reanimation of the charcoal fire may be part of the tea ceremony in the most formal cases. A poem of *Sen no Rikyū* translated in Keiko Yokoyama (2005) indicates that even a guest can be invited to actively take part in such operations.



kettle. This is a piece of iron craft, and the guest can admire the way of having prepared the charcoal fire, and even the presentation of the ashes. In some cases, some of the implements of the tea procedure are already displayed, for example on a lacquered wood plate as in *Figure 6* or on a portable bamboo or wood shelving. In this case, the guest generally can see the fresh water jar *mizusashi*, of ceramic, lacquered wood or glass, the container for tea *cha-ire* of ceramics, used if the procedure for the *koicha* thick tea is followed, or *natsume* of lacquerware, used for the procedure of the *usucha* thin tea. Other implements may be added if they have a special aesthetic or symbolic meaning and if the fact to display them suits the chosen style of tea ceremony.

The other implements are brought by the host when entering the room. The first one is the *mizusashi* if it is not already displayed. Then, going back to the preparation room, the host brings the *chawan* ceramic tea bowl with the tea whisk and the tea scoop of bamboo, and, on the other hand, the tea pot if it is not already displayed in the room. At last, the host brings the rinse water receptacle of metal, ceramics or wood, with the water ladle of bamboo and a lid rest of bamboo, metal, ceramics or wood, if it is not already displayed. Some pieces of silk may be used in some cases, especially for the *koicha* thick tea procedure: a silk bag over the *cha-ire* tea pot, and a special silk piece used to place the tea bowl on in some circumstances.

One can remark that special attention is given to some of these objects: first, the *chawan* tea bowl may be fully observed and commentaries should be exchanged in the conversation between the first guest and the host after having drunk. Then, concerning the tea implements, a special observation of the tea pot and the tea scoop may be asked for by the guest. In cases of the *koicha* thick tea procedure, the bag of silk accompanying the tea pot is also observed. Anyway, tea bowl, tea scoop and the tea pot are ritually purified in front of the guest. This gives a particular status to these objects as a different kind of art craft. A first remark is that these objects are brought by the host in the room or particularly put in light when they are taken from the display shelving: when the tea pot is already in the room, the



first act of the host after having brought the *chawan* tea bowl is to take the tea pot from the place where it is displayed and to put the *chawan* and this tea pot in the neighbourhood of each another. The attention to ceramics or lacquerware in Japan is not surprising, since these crafts use difficult techniques and are specialities of this country. Otherwise, the tea scoop of bamboo seems to be very simple, but is of similarly major importance.⁵ On the other hand, the pieces used for purifying the other implements do not seem to be generally the center of attention.

Then, within a room of *chanoyu* tea way built with raw wood, clay walls, and the braided straw of *tatami* mats, the persons meet a selection of highly valued traditional Japanese craft objects: ceramics, Japanese traditional paper *washi*, lacquerware, cast iron, silk, also in the kimono that the people should wear at least for formal tea ceremonies, bamboo, and possibly glass or basketry. With these objects, one can appreciate the traditional Japanese food *kaiseki* and special Japanese pastry *wagashi*. Eventually, it is possible to admire a calligraphy or a painted roll, to follow the impressions given by the calligraphed poem and the flower arrangement. The style of flower arrangement as well as the poetry are themselves of sober forms, different from the well-known *ikebana* and from the long *renga* collaborative poetry, but they are the mirror of very important activities in the Japanese artistic domain. As the garden seems to welcome a symbolic form of major eremitic landscapes, the inner room seems to welcome the result of a hierarchical selection of major highly valued signs of human activity. It is remarkable that the most important ones seem not to be organized around the type of craft or the place in the room, but seem to be the ones which have a close contact with the tea itself. The ones which are most formally observed often belong to the one brought by the host. They can be the object of conversation between the host and the guest who speaks

⁵ In the fiction of Yasushi Inoue (1991), *Furuta Oribe*, a disciple of *Sen no Rikyu* who took a major place in the world of *chanoyu* tea way after the death of his master, even gets injured by going out of the protected lines during a battle, by looking for an interesting bamboo with the idea of making a tea scoop.



with him. Their geographical origin, the name of the craftsman who has built them, the history of the object, as well as the impression which it creates can be one of the most important parts of the conversation. The display and the appreciation of objects of diverse origins, their meaning as emanations of human creation and their appreciation as objects already having become part of the realm of tea seem then to be very important in the organization of a tea ceremony.

2.2 *The spatial organization of the place*

The tea room, the meeting place between host and guests is situated between two places: the tea garden, devoted to the guests, for the guests' entrance or the guests' rest, and the *mizuya*, the room of preparation and of the implements devoted to the host and possibly, the host's assistants (see *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*). These three places are not only different from the point of view of the persons concerned with them, but also from the point of view of their uses. As the garden is an image of the eremitical world, the room of preparation is only devoted to human activities, within an atmosphere of purity. It may be significant that the name of this room means, "the place of fresh water", and its main purpose is to wash and to tidy up the tea implements before and after their use. Even if the attitude in the *mizuya* preparation room may be more casual than in the meeting place, there still are rules. For example, the person shall be on one's knees during the washing of the tea implements. The preparation of the presentation of the *wagashi* Japanese pastry can also be done there; anyway, the cooking itself as well as for the *kaiseki* Japanese food served for the very long and formal tea ceremonies is done elsewhere and is often prepared by someone external to the *chaji* tea ceremony. The difference of status between *mizuya* room or garden and the tea room ceremony is also highlighted by the way to enter the meeting tea room ceremony from these places. The entry from the garden by sliding on one's knees implies humility, but has also been compared by Augustin Berque (2010) as well



as the Omotesenke school of tea to similar sliding in religious context, whose meaning should be the access to a religious quiet and happy world. On the other hand, the host's entry into the room is also ritualized, even if this may be partly motivated by the fact that the guests are already in the meeting tea room: the opening of the door, sitting on one's knees, with the presentation of one of the tea implements, and also the way of entering the room express the passage from one place to another.

The way of entering the room, with signs of respect, may be interpreted as the presence of a frontier, as a line delimiting differentiated places, whose crossing has a meaning. It appears also that the interior of the rooms has its own areas. We should distinguish three of them (see *Figure 4* for a formal four and half tatami piece, or *Figure 6* for a more informal large tea room): the place of the guests, the place of the host and the exchanges' area. The *tokonoma* alcove shall be visible from the guests' entry of the room and may be bordered with the guests' place in most of the cases. Indeed, the attribution of a place in proximity with this *tokonoma* is generally a way to honor particularly one of the guests in certain occasions. The space between the host's entry and the area organized around the boiling water to prepare the tea may be considered as the host's place.

The empty space between them appear to be an exchange area. The construction of the space of the room with *tatami* mats gives the possibility to let the frontiers between such areas appear, using the borders of these *tatami* mats. Even if there are variations for the rules of behavior of the persons according to schools of tea, season, the size of the room, or other reasons, the host always does the preparation sitting on one *tatami*, and the guests are sittings on special *tatami* mats, naturally not overwhelming the path from the host's entrance to the area of preparation of the tea. The intermediate area is used during the transmission of the tea bowl between the host and the guests (see *Figure 5* and the attached explanations) or for the transmission of the tea implements for observation. The person to go on it at these moments are the guests or the host's assistant, and these moments are organized as intermediate ones. People do not



speak, and the gestures are clearly organized for the taking or the restitution of the objects. During the moments where the guests are alone and examining the room, as it may happen in the frame of quite formal *chaji* tea ceremonies, the path they are walking on is going successively on these three areas, passing over determinate points at the crossing of the borders of some *tatami* mats. Within these areas, subspaces can be founded. Within the guests' area, the *tokonoma* alcove plays a particular role. First, this is a little heightened area, where it is not permitted to climb. Even when it is observed, the usage is to put the closed fan between oneself and the observed calligraphy. Indeed, this fan is never opened to fan oneself, and seems to play the role of a portable frontier when it is closed. This frontier is put between the persons and important items or mainly for the salutations between persons. The role of the fan, when it is open, seems to be an offer for observation. It happens sometimes between follower and teacher. One can remark that once the host enters the room with the colored piece of silk which is used for the ritual purification of the objects called *fukusa* hung at the *obi* belt, the host does not have any fan and the guests put theirs behind themselves. During all the time when the host wears this *fukusa*, this role of personal frontier between the persons appears to be abolished. Furthermore, during tea procedure, it happens that the area of the host may appear itself as separated in the area of the implement and the area of the procedure itself. The organization of the room in the described areas can easily be verified. We believe that the areas that we describe can be qualified as places, since they appear to be spaces organized for a specific activity of human beings, within the living process of tea procedure. Moreover, we will see that the arrangement of these areas is contributing to the uniqueness of each *chaji* tea ceremony. This organization of the space appears then to be one of the major articulations that determine the form of the action of the persons, each of the described area being quite autonomous in itself.

2.3 *The people's behaviour*

An observer may make some first remarks about the behavior of the



persons during a *chaji* tea ceremony: the mutual respect between the participants, the differentiations between different kinds of persons, and the coordination of the actions. The first one is an evidence. At each important moment of the exchange, for example when the host enters the room, after the installation at the host's place, when the bowl is about to be drunk, as it is about to be cleaned to end the tea procedure, or after leaving the room, the host and the main guest, or the host and the guests exchange bows. The differentiations between the persons may have more than one form. Naturally, the host and the guests are differentiated by their places, but they may be also by their clothing. At least, the host wears the *fukusa* colored piece of silk, with which the tea implements are purified. The guests are placed in order of their arrival. In principle, only the first guest speaks to the host, the role of this main guest being to speak also to the other guests and to ensure the harmonious communication. Men and women do not wear the same kind of kimono, and there are also some differences in the gestures or in the colors of certain implements. At last, as the bows are useful to underline the main moments of exchange, there is a close coordination of the actions of each person. After repeated participation in tea ceremonies, one can observe that there is a regular precision of these kinds of observations, particularly if they are considered in relationship with the different types of area which have been described in the last paragraph. As such, for a Western observer, the tea ceremony often looks like a shared choreographic performance. First, the host goes to his place by doing the same number of footsteps each time (usually three for half a *tatami* mat), he never walks on the guests' place and goes on the exchanges' area only for offering the *wagashi* Japanese cakes to the guests before the beginning of the tea procedure itself. Then, he organizes all the procedure by putting the implements in the same sub-area of the host's place. He uses them in another part of the host's place for the tea preparation procedure: purification of the utensils and then, the preparation of the beverage with some tea powder and hot water whisked together with the *chashaku* tea whisk. When an implement leaves the host's place to be put in the exchanges' area as presented in the illustration of



Figure 5 for the transmission of the tea bowl to the second guest, there is a special gesture. For example, the bowl is turned so that the *shomei*, the “face” of the bowl, is placed in front of the guest. The implements which are given for being observed are ritually purified and turned before being put out of the host’s place. From the guest’s point of view, similar observations can be done. The guests are served according to their order of arrival. Before being received, the bowl of tea is placed out of the border of the tatami delimiting the guest’s place, in the exchanges’ area, in front of the guest concerned. This guest takes it, and places it between himself and the preceding guest within the guest place, and both exchange bows. Then, he places it between himself and the next guest and both exchange bows. This is understood as a recognition by all the guests of the place of the person being served at the moment: the prior one has been already served, the next one will be served at his turn. The guest then puts the bowl in front of himself, exchanges bows with the host, expresses thanks, and drinks the tea from the bowl. It is interesting to point out that when leaving the meeting place which is the tea room, one avoids showing one’s back to the persons present in the room by turning oneself around. A similar rule takes place for the guests for all the possible walks within the room during the tea ceremony. The choice of the direction of the turn is carried out so that that the guest does not present his back to the guest preceding him. The exchanges’ area may not so clearly appear as a place, since the persons do not stay for such a long time in it, and the way of entering or leaving it is not so ceremonious. Since this kind of theoretical distinction is not mentioned in the tea practice, where the things have to be understood through feelings, one can only make some observations. For example, when the room is observed ceremonially at the beginning of the *chaji* tea ceremony as described in 1.3, the person should walk first on the *tatami* mats of the guests place to admire the content of the tokonoma alcove, then walks on the intermediate area, and finally walks on the *tatami* mats of the host’s place to observe the charcoal fire. Furthermore, in the case the host is being asked to present the tea implements (tea pot, tea scoop, and silk bag), the main guest looks carefully at them and gives



them to the next guests. The last guest in this case goes out of the guest's place in the between area, presents the objects to the main guest, who examines them again, and puts them in front of the host's place. By now, the host is out of the room. This space may then appear as a place devoted to exchanges. A similar question can be asked about the status of the *tokonoma* alcove, where usually no human beings goes. The calligraphy is observed with the same kind of respect as a being, the use of the fan and the bow being similar. Moreover, if a person is alone as a guest, the rule concerning the turning direction to go to one's sitting place is to not present one's back to the alcove. This seems to confer to the alcove a similar role as an inhabited place, even if this kind of inhabitation is not as important as the presence of a human being. Then, through these examples, one can consider that the tea room is organized as a rich and balanced place containing images of highly valued Japanese crafts and arts, and that the rhythm of the persons is organized in accordance with the spatial rhythm of the place. This correspondence between space and time is not unusual in Japanese culture, which may lead one to ask oneself about the existence of corresponding remarks on temporalities in the tea ceremony.

Figure 1 - A roji garden and a house for *chanoyu* in Matsue city.





The approach of the tea room through the roji garden contributes to some changes in the spirit of the guests.

Figure 2 - The nijiriguchi entrance for the guest in a chashitsu tea room (in Kyoto).



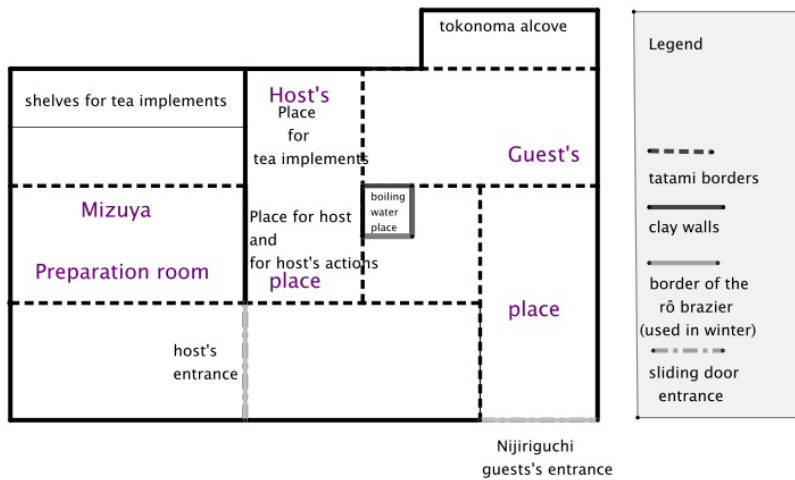
The obligation to bow by entering the room emphasizes the role of this passage.

Figure 3 - A view of the shelves of a mizuya preparation room.



Each implement has its own place on different shelves. Those which are directly in contact with water like the fresh water jar and rinse water receptacle are directly on the bamboo elements, the chawan tea bowls on the first shelf, the tea container on the second etc.

Figure 4 - The organization of a tea room – in the winter case.



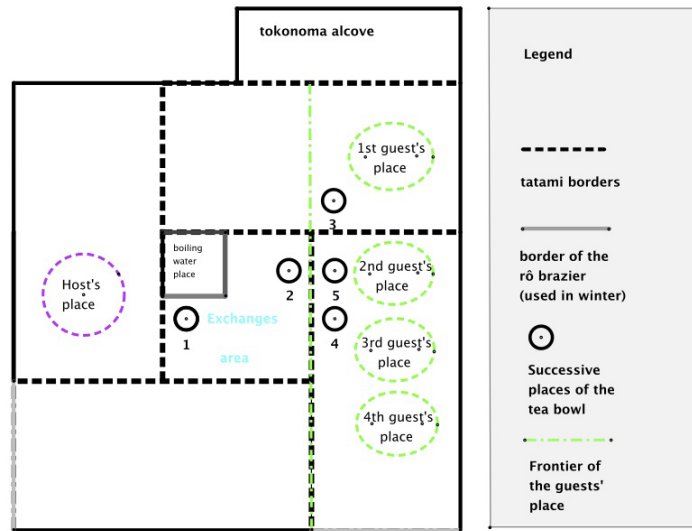
During the summer time, the portable brazier is placed among the tea implements.

Figure 5: the places of the moves of a tea bowl from the host to the second guest.

This drawing is an illustration of the principle of subsection 2.3.

The case chosen here, that of the second guest, is one of the most significant.

There are naturally some adaptations for the first and the last guest.



The tea bowl's moves are these:

Step 1: After the tea has been prepared by the host, the host turns the *shomei* front of it so that it faces the guests' place, and puts it in 1.

Step 2: The tea bowl is put in 2, in front of the concerned guest, outside of the tatami delimiting the guests' place. The *shomei* face is still in front of him.

Step 3: At the times it enters the guests' place, the way of using this bowl must respect the rules of this place. To express his respect to the neighbouring guests, guest 2 places the bowl between himself and each of them; first, in 3, between himself and the preceding guest, who has already drunk, then in 4, between himself and the next guest, who will wait.

Step 4: The second guest puts the bowl in 5, in front of himself, exchanges bows with the host, drinks, and observes carefully the bowl still in 5. If there are exchanges with the other guests, it is still in the guest zone.

Step 5: The guest puts again the bowl out of the guest's place, in 2, then



in 1 again. Before being put in 1, the bowl is turned so that the *shomei* face is again in front of the host.

Step 6: The host takes the bowl from this place to clean it in front of the guests.

Figure 6 - A *hiroma* large room for tea (in Matsue).



Such rooms are often more sumptuous than the small *kyoma* rooms, even if the spirit of modesty is still important. One can observe a portable brazier among the tea implements, as in the summer organization.

3. Remarks on temporalities within the universe of tea

As the coordination of movements of the participants of a *chaji* tea ceremony may evoke a precise choreography to a Western observer, the expression of time during such events appears to be mostly done through a net of allusions excluding an absolute measure, preferring comparisons and evocations of sensations attached to sensitive experience. As such, the attention to temporal and spatial elements should contribute together to the construction of both a subjective and objective atmosphere of the gathering.

3.1 *The use of seasonal elements*

The organization of the tea room depends closely on seasonal conditions. We can first examine the utensils' use in the host's place. They seem to take into account the concern for the comfort of the guests, essentially from the point of view of the heat of the season. The main items in this perspective are the charcoal fire and the kettle. First, the implements are different for winter time, from November to April, and for summer time, from May to October. In winter, the charcoal fire is made in an excavation in the floor of the room bordered by a hearth frame of wood, bamboo or lacquerware called a *ro*, situated between the host and the guests. During the summer, the charcoal fire is made in a portable brazier called *furo*, situated in front of the host, farther than the *ro* place from the guests. One of the motivations for these changes appears to be to provide more heat to the guests when it is necessary, and not to heat the air when it is already hot. The size of the kettle and the charcoal fire as well as the form or the position of the *furo* portable brazier confirm this point of view. The rules concerning the possibility of keeping the doors open during summer, which is not the case during the colder season, seem to have an analogous meaning. The form of the *chawan* tea bowl may play a similar role. During the winter, the persons often use high bowls with relatively closed rims, so that they can conserve the heat of the tea. Indeed, the tea must be hot when it is drunk, the Japanese taste excluding even lukewarm beverages. During the summer on the contrary, the bowl can be low with a very open mouth. These examples show that the choices concerning the inner organization of the room may contribute then to the objective comfort of the guests, at least in the very traditional places, which are not heated or cooled. One can however note that this choice may sometimes be emphasized by the procedure itself. The use of the special *chawan* tea bowls for winter or summer is generally a little different. Even if the special forms of these *chawan* contribute to the choice of this special procedure, the main effect is certainly to show the winter or summer procedure itself. The expression of the attention to the seasonal conditions may be



as important as the objective effect of this procedure. Indeed, the summer *chawan* has no particular effect on the taste or heat of the tea. The effect on the openness of the large mouth of the *chawan* may be essentially psychological. A similar interpretation could be made concerning the kimono and the associated dressing. They are also different during the cold and the warm seasons, but the main differences underline mostly symbolic differences between these seasons. The kimono for men are not allowed almost any originality and the restricted choice of the color and the existence or not of a discrete lining are the only observable elements. The decorations of women's kimono may exist and in this case, they have a temporal meaning. The *wagashi* Japanese cakes which are served before the tea are seasonal too, but in a symbolic way. There should be no difference in nutritional value of the *wagashi*, but for example, during the summer, nearly transparent material should be used, to express coolness. As a matter of fact, one can observe a significant difference between Western sensibility and the Japanese way of thinking in the following remark: as Western people would choose implements evoking snow or coldness during the winter, the Japanese tea practitioners seem to prefer to compensate for the coldness of the outer world in winter with warm colors, or the heat of the summer with an expression of coolness, so that the guests can have a comfortable feeling. For example, the *mizusashi* fresh water jar may be in glass during the summer, but such a choice would be a mistake during the winter. In this case, the form or the color of this recipient would be chosen so as to call to mind a warm comfort.

Some elements also seem to be a representation of the season with some objectivity when they appear: the sceneries, the flowers, or the poems. The sceneries may appear on some tea implements of ceramic, wood or lacquerware. The flowers appear as decorative motives of tea implements or as such in the *chabana* floral arrangement presented in the *tokonoma* alcove. In both cases, one can interpret their presence as citation of the outer world. In fact, the sceneries are generally allegories, and flowers express the seasons. The host generally chooses rare flowers, possibly in



advance of the current time. The fiction of Kenichi Yamamoto (2008) indicates for example that the Shogun *Hideyoshi* sent a cavalier a hundred kilometers to the south to pick a flower which was not yet flourishing in Kyoto at the time of a tea gathering that he was organizing. Anyway, there are treatises showing which flowers can be used at each time of the year. The indications transmitted by such flower arrangements are precious in the frame of a tea ceremony, since the *roji* garden is supposed to have no flourishing essence. The motivation behind this rule is said to valorize the flowers of the *tokonoma* alcove.⁶ The use of such scenery or flowers could then be to give indications about the ritual time, closely linked to nature in Japan. Indeed, the form of certain tea implements are said to have such a use too. In this case, these elements would have a comparable function as the poems of the Japanese tradition, and join for this the poems of the *tokonoma*. This poem is generally a zen sentence, but often appears to be related to the current time at the moment of the gathering. In this case, the seasonal elements would not only express the care of the consequences of the weather on the guests, but also the inscription in a ritualized world, perhaps close to the world of the *renga* collaborative poetry of ancient times.

3.2 *A temporal meaning of assortments of tea utensils?*

The organization of the room, and particularly the use of the tea implements seem then to have an important relation to time, first through the perception of the seasons. The objective influence on the comfort of the guests, but also the symbolic representation are part of the pursuit. The importance of this aspect may be emphasized by a fact asserted in

⁶ The history of the feudal Lord *Hideyoshi* visiting the tea master *Sen no Rikyū* to see well-known *asagao* (*morning glory* flowers) of his garden is known in Japan (see for example the fiction of Kenichi Yamamoto). He saw a garden without any flowers, but he felt his anger transform as he entered the room, seeing a unique *asagao* in the *tokonoma* alcove.

James-Henry Holland (2003). According to this author, as for a beginner, the tea ceremony appears as an impressive performance, the professor and the real connoisseur of the tea ceremony are eventually more interested in the way of assortment of tea implements. Moreover, an important item in the study of *chadô* tea way should be the beginning of a written genre called *kaiki*, a record of the gathering. The choice of the implements and the way to build their mutual accordance, called *toriamase*, appear

to be of major importance. The purpose of writing such *kaiki* is thus a way to learn to pay attention to this point and notice the implements used at each occasion. Moreover, some major schools of tea write publications about the *toriamase* of *chaji* or *chakai* performed by highly recognized persons, the *chakai* being tea ceremonies performed with a larger audience than the *chaji*. This may allow the people learning tea to make comparisons and to appreciate the organization of the room in fine detail. This may also help the persons to understand the structure of the conversations around the objects displayed in the room during the gathering. The content of the presentation of living observation James-Henri Holland (2003) shows that at least a part of this conversation has spatial and temporal implications, as it evokes various important places or moments. In this writing, the author makes in particular an authorized presentation of a special *chakai* made by his professor for celebrating her own professor. On this occasion, special *kaiki* called *oboegaki* were provided to the students attending this gathering. They may have been understood as some pedagogical material, with some more details as the *kaiki* provided for the other guests. They contained in particular geographical information and the family name of craft workers who made the implements, as well as precise information about some implements not mentioned in the ordinary *kaiki*. The analysis of the author focuses on the art of allusions in this celebration. He emphasizes first that there were public allusions. The season was naturally evoked, through the flowers and the *wagashi* Japanese pastry, but also through discrete allusion, brought to light by the main guest who mentioned the temple of the monk having made the *chashaku*



tea scoop, this temple being famous for a spring celebration. The second one was the theme of the celebration of an important person through the display of auspicious objects, and also of the age of this person through more discrete allusion with the mentioning of the same – aged zen monk who calligraphed the hanging scroll at the time of this writing. The last public theme should have been the theme of the transmission from master to follower. This could be understood through the display of objects of craftsmen of different generations belonging to the same family, or even a screen signed by both the current *iemoto* of the Omotesenke school of tea of this time and his father, the former one. Moreover, he mentions several personal allusions to some of the persons attending the gathering, evoking some passed shared tea events. The allusions during these conversations appear then to refer to narrative temporalities, which may be more generally significant components of tea ceremony.

Indeed, at first sight, the questions evoked during these conversations are mainly related to the place of the origin of the products. This is the case concerning the tea or the *wagashi* Japanese pastry, but the questions also include the persons or the tradition of making these specialties. This aspect of the questions seems to be of most importance in the case of the conversation about the *chawan* tea bowls or the tea implements. Each of the details concerning the place of origin, the style, the school or the master who made each object, the moment of fabrication may conceal a meaning. This meaning may not be related with a measurable place or time. Indeed, the clocks, as well as any items which could help to make an objective measurement or counting like an abacus, are not allowed in a tea room gathering. This exclusion of any activity of objective measurement can be put in relation to the fact that the room in itself is very precisely measured, and that these measurements have influenced the size of the *tatami* mats and the whole traditional architecture of Japan. In fact, the meaning refers generally to places of the Japanese traditions. One can even guess that the relationship with a tradition is sometimes at least as important as the objective conditions of the creation of the object. For



example, the *chashaku* tea scoop may be made by the tea master himself, but the giving of a poetic name shall be as important as its shape, even if both are related. In this framework, the concern with the presentation of tea implements of various places or traditions shall appear as the concern with a symbolic presence of various important places of Japanese culture itself or of the continental literature integrated to this Japanese culture. Within the tea room, such a way of thinking can already be observed in the *renga* collaborative poetry tradition. Indeed, in this tradition, two following verses shall not speak about the same place or speak about the same kind of beings, even if the construction of a common atmosphere is one of the aims of this activity. The presence of these objects, products of the human activities, could then contribute to the construction of an ecumenal landscape, whose understanding depends both on the objective way of their production and their symbolic meaning in the frame of the allusive *chadô* tea way culture.



3.3 The creation of an atmosphere

By examining the organization of the tea gathering place as the possible construction of an ecumenal landscape, we shall first remark that there is a significant choice of the elements which enter the tea ceremony room. In harmony with buddhist aesthetics, some criteria are important. We notice that the implements are pure from the point of view of this religion: leather, weapons, red meat for example are not present in this room. It is even not usual to put flowers with too strong a fragrance in the *tokonoma* alcove and the smell of the charcoal is concealed by the host adding a little piece of incense to the charcoal fire. The *sansenké* schools of tea pursue some more qualities: the implements must be serene and discrete, natural, simple, not luxurious, they must have an interesting form but must be balanced, and have a subtle aura, that will give reality to their presence. With this, each of them must be of practical use, and, as in the evocations in the *renga* collaborative poetry tradition, there are rules of non-repetition that

impinge on a variety of these items. These rules may be complemented by the way of combining the elements, which is in accordance with symbolic systems like the yin and the yang. For example, one may use veiled light (which is *yin*) for tea ceremonies taking place in the morning (which is *yang*) and direct light (which is *yang*) for tea ceremonies taking place in the evening (which is *yin*): each time, the choice of the light, *yin* or *yang*, complements the moment of the day with its opposite. One can remark that the kaiseki food, coming from the classical spiritual way of understanding food in zen buddhism, follows similar rules, and that the tea itself is in accordance with the spirit emanating from these kinds of conceptions. The rules of comportment, the choice of sober clothes, of white socks, eventually make the comparison of the way of entering the room to a symbolic access to the pure land of buddhism or some shintô places which appear to have some resonances with the other observations of the organization of this practice. Nevertheless, this idealized place shall have interactions with the outer world. As it has already been pointed out, the place of the kettle, the flowers in the *tokonoma* alcove, or the choice of implements are made in accordance with the circumstances, to provide the guests with an objective and symbolic serene atmosphere. Other details can express such a conception. The tea ceremony first developed during a time of war, and several signs of the exclusion of conflict can be pointed out. For example, the host enters the room with the left foot, as a *katana* saber attack begins with the right footstep. The guest also crosses his/her left hand over the right hand as a *katana* attack is done with this right hand. But there are attentions to other elements too. A poem of *Sen no Rikyû* (2005) translated in tells “*When you offer tea to persons coming from hanami do not put any image of birds nor flowers?*” (*hanami yori kaberi no hito ni cha no yu seba, kachou no e mo hana no e mo okumaji*). Indeed, the *hanami* refers to the practice of looking at the flourishing cherry trees; on this occasion, the person’s heart may be full of images of trees, flowers and birds, and no more shall be added. This connection with the atmosphere of the outer world is particularly emphasized in the fiction of Yasushi Inoue (2011), which is a pursuit of the



understanding of the fact that *Sen no Rikyū*, after having received the order to commit suicide, did not beg the Shogun *Hideyoshi* for clemency, which should probably have been granted. The purpose of this fiction is the search for an explanation in the internal spirit of the tea ceremony itself. The relationship of a tea ceremony to the times of war of that age, and the necessity to create a tea ceremony in a time of peace is often evoked as a commentary of the acts of the followers of the disappeared master. In his study of space and time in Japanese culture, Katō Shuichi (2009) compares the contemplation of the bowl of tea in the tea ceremony with the admiration of a landscape. This may emphasize the dual meaning of the objects displayed in the tea room ceremony. Even if they must be practical items, their symbolic presence is of major importance. The importance of the pursuit of mostly valuable implements for this practice is a well-known fact, emphasized by the literature. For example, in the fiction of Yasushi Inoue (1991), the master *Furuta Oribe* exposes his own life to look for material for making a *chashaku* tea scoop. In another part of the novel, the same *Furuta Oribe* and his own master *Sen no Rikyū* meet in front of a well-known landscape of Japan even during a war, although they are in opposite camps: there they discuss the dream to build a charcoal fire imitating the beach of this landscape. Even currently, some tea practitioners intensively look for the most original items. This, and the considerable work which necessitates not only the aspect of performance, but also the capacity to understand the nearly invisible net of allusions present in a tea ceremony may appear like an echo of such an attitude. The tea room presents then more than one paradoxical characteristic. Indeed, this very strongly built and standardized small space which cannot move but could be reproduced, derives most of its life from the display and the use of objects, which can move but create each time a very unique atmosphere. It then provides the guests with a place where the most valued elements of human activity are displayed in an atmosphere which may evoke, thanks to the development of a very ancient culture, both the eremitical world of Japan and a highlight of the Japanese way of civil life.



Conclusion

In conclusion, one can assume that the Japanese *chashitsu* tea room has a paradoxical presence. This could be first represented as a simply organized space, plans of which may easily be found in manuals. On the other hand, if we consider the way that it is used, it appears to be a mostly meaningful living place, one of the essential components of the architecture of this place being constituted by the assortment of the tea implements chosen by the host of the ceremony. Even if we include the proximity to a highly symbolic Japanese garden, the character of this place itself should not be concealed in its construction as such, and not even in its insertion in the rest of the city. We think that the subjective cultural world attached to this room is related to a huge cultural realm, which is interesting in itself. But the very point in the conception of such places is their relation to a living practice, the reflection of a human milieu, between objectivity and the subjective world, the understanding of which may be essential for its real appreciation. We have shown that the shared representations underlying the understanding of a *chashitsu* tea room may be strongly related to major elements of the construction of Japanese cultural sensibility. In this case, the activation through a ritual of these cultural elements appears as significant of the presence of a constructed imaginary and contributes to keep this imaginary alive. This may have been the result of the history of Japanese culture, and seems to be present in a wide range of Japanese cultural practices. As the room has appeared as a paradigmatic element of traditional Japanese architecture, the influence of this practice within the Japanese way of life may be, as it is often said, a paradigmatic element of the Japanese culture. Its place within the educational system through the presence of clubs in high schools or in universities, its importance within the civil life especially through women's practice, and even its presence in the labor world is a known fact. The role of ritual in Japan has often been emphasized. The observations of the young André Leroi-Gouhan about Japan between 1937 and 1939, reported in André Leroi Gourhan (2003), give a presentation of the importance of these rituals in modern



Japan. The studies about women's practice of tea ceremony of Etsuko Kato (2010) or Kaeko Chiba (2011), as well as the presentation of the Japanese House by Inge Daniels (2010) within modern Japan poses the question of the means of transmission of symbolic values through this practice in the framework of the questions of modern Japan. One of the purposes of this article may be to suggest that the tea ceremony, even in a quickly evolving world, contributes effectively to such a transmission. The solidity of this practice could be evoked by a well-known anecdote about a *chashitsu* place of tea that was detached from its main building during a huge earthquake, but, despite its apparent fragility, floated intact on the neighbouring river.

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