



SOME ASPECTS OF THE TEA CEREMONY AND THEIR SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

by

ZDENĚK and VĚNA HRDLIČKA

Introduction

The Tea Ceremony is an institution which, whether our final assessment be positive or negative, had and still has, in Japan, an important social function and a wider influence than we might at first suppose. This ceremony, for which the Japanese term is *chanoyu*, as it exists today, is accompanied by innumerable precisely prescribed formalities which, to the uninformed observer may seem to be the expression of mere convention. Yet this select form of entertainment, has stimulated the development of a number of branches of art of a national and popular character. Thus it will be worth while to look more closely at the ceremony, bearing this fact in mind.

The Tea Ceremony can, in many respects, help us to understand the essential character of Japanese aesthetic feeling, which is shared in a measure rare among other nations by all classes. It is a feeling for refined simplicity, for beauty and unobtrusive elegance, as manifested in a Japanese farmyard as in a modern block of ferro-concrete flats, insofar as they still embrace principles stemming from traditional architecture, as in a vase of flowers or the lay-out of a garden. The Japanese have always had a natural love for simple entertainments, finding an endless source of enjoyment in the beauty and variety of nature—whether

it be feasting their eyes in spring on the sakur in blossom, or excursions in autumn to admire the glorious colouring of the maple trees foliage, or the custom of going to see the full moon on a September night.

It is, indeed, remarkable that despite the quick tempo and the wide variety of amusements of present-day life there are still enough people ready to find the time to cultivate a form of entertainment so seemingly unexciting as is the elaborate and long-drawn-out ceremony of tea-making and tea-drinking. And yet, in quite a number of department stores, in the large Japanese cities, we saw on the top floor, as a regular thing, a special little pavilion, where the local women go to be initiated into all the mysteries of the tea ceremony. Thus chanoyu, though today something of an anachronism, has certain positive aspects, such as the stimulus it has given to the development of certain branches of art, as already noted above. And it is from this point of view that we should like to assess its value.

What does the tea ceremony signify?

The word chanoyu means literally—hot water for tea.¹⁾ In any case, the tea ceremony has a greater social significance than the term suggests. It is a ceremony widely observed and with a long tradition. It is, in fact, a relatively compendious and integrated cultural complex which embraces several arts and a number of philosophical views, which still today exert an influence on Japanese society. Here we must note that the fact that in both Japanese and foreign literature chanoyu is generally highly praised, without critical reservation, inclined us to be doubly cautious in our approach to the present study. The well-known authority on Japanese history, G. B. Sansom, does not hesitate to express a sceptical view of the ceremony. He writes: There are enthusiasts who would have one believe that the Tea Masters hold the key to all problems of taste and conduct—and this is absurd, for no student of the history of this curious phenomenon can fail to see that it is a cult which lapses with dangerous ease into empty and arbitrary forms, or, if it takes another turn, into a mock simplicity. But its underlying sentiment

is admirable and its traces are to be found in the most unexpected corners of Japanese life, so that no student can afford to neglect its history.²⁾

At the same time, however, we must admit that tea and the praise of tea have given rise in Japan to a characteristic type of architecture and a flourishing ceramic art. A finally specialized art is that of garden architecture, as the setting for the ceremony and also ikebana, the art of arranging flowers in a vase, according to certain principles. Moreover, a special trend in calligraphy and in painting owe their origin to the ceremony, which has probably also influenced the production of lacquer ware.

Behind chanoyu were the aesthetic ideas deriving from Zen Buddhism.³⁾

There have grown up around the tea ceremony, in the course of its long existence, a great many different theories. If we ask what is the idea behind chanoyu, how can it be defined, we shall probably get as many answers as the number of people we ask.

Individual explanations may have innumerable nuances. They may begin with an attractive contemporary definition, which authoritatively states that chanoyu is an institution, the aim of which is the honoring of beauty.

Again we may be told that... chanoyu teaches us to perform the actions of daily life in a simple way, in keeping with a feeling for beauty, for economy of motion and in harmony with the idea that we should appreciate every movement which has its functions. Lovers of poetry may quote lines of which the following is an approximate translation:

"... what is it, the thing called chanoyu?

It's the voice of the wind

Among pine-trees— —painted in sumi..."⁴⁾

And so we might go on and on. But it will perhaps be better, before attempting a definition such as would be comprehensible for someone who has not lived in Japan, to summarize at least the basic facts we were able to ascertain about this interesting aspect of Japanese culture. During our stay in Japan we took part several times in a tea ceremony. There was present a group of between five and, at most, ten guests. After entering a small room covered with mats and having a low doorway the guests bowed in turn in front of a niche, in which a scroll picture was

hung, in most cases depicting a landscape. Beneath the picture was a vase, with a simple, but very lovely arrangement of flowers.

Then the guests sat down, according to age, roughly forming an L-figure round the host, who in a series of precisely prescribed movements lit a fire in a small hearth, sunk in the floor. Charcoal served as the fuel, which was ready prepared in a basket and on which there lay several charred twigs dipped in white lime. The host put on the water for the tea in an iron kettle of bizarre shape, and, while waiting for it to boil, prepared with the same precise motions the other tea utensils, which were set out near the hearth. The visitors watched every movement politely and attentively. For making the tea, the host used green powdered tea known as *kōicha*, which he put into a dish and on it poured a little hot water with a bamboo ladle. He then beat the mixture to a paste with a bamboo brush. The ceremony appeared to us at first sight as a kind of adoration of the movements employed in making tea. Later on our friends explained us that, for instance, even to remove the cover from the little bucket of water was an action subject to a number of prescribed rules. The movements of the hand should not only delight the eye of the onlooker, but should be easy and natural for the person performing them. They should be satisfying from the aesthetic point of view and from the angle of vision of every guest. They should be rhythmical and economically functional. The general impression we gained was that all the movements were precise, but simple. The cover was raised by the right hand, with the help of the left, and supported on the edge of the bucket at a certain angle.

After stirring the tea in a coarser dish, the host poured out the tea for the first guest into a finer dish, which he took in his right hand, transferred to his left palm, clasping it with his fingers, and then placed his right hand under his left for extra support. Then he lightly raised the dish to his forehead, as a sign of thanks. Thereupon he turned the cup round a little with his right hand and looked into it. Having looked at it, he raised the dish to his lips and took a sip, waited a moment, till he felt the tranquilizing effect of the tea, then took a second and a third drink. The last drink was accompanied by a slight smacking of the lips. Each drink was differentiated, both as regards sound

and the movement with which it was performed. Probably an initiated person would know, from the sound alone, which stage of drinking the visitor was at. After emptying the cup the guest expressed aloud his admiration of the pottery dish, remarked on the delicate gradation of colour tones, the quality of the glaze and commented appreciatively on the mark of the master potter incised on the bottom of the dish. Then he handed the dish back to the host, who wiped it with a clean piece of folded linen, filled up the cup again and handed it to the next guest. Each guest went through the same formalities. The visitors also begged permission to look at the other tea utensils, placing each object separately on a folded square of silk, which each guest had brought with him.

The ceremony lasted about an hour and a half. The description of the ceremony given above is considerably simplified, but corresponds to the first impression which a foreigner gains of the ceremony, the fine points of which naturally escape him.

A few words about tea.

Nobody who has visited the Far East or South-East Asia can have any doubt as to the importance of tea for the inhabitants of this immense region. Tea is here a basic necessity of everyday life. It is drunk by rich and poor, old and young, by Chinese and Japanese, Koreans, Mongols and Indonesians. They have drunk it for hundreds and maybe for thousands of years and so tea is something which has acquired its special social significance. It seems probable that it was the Chinese who first cultivated tea, and its beginnings go back roughly two thousand years. Proof of the high esteem in which it has always been held is the existence of a kind of tea ceremony in China. Widely known is the "Book on Tea", Ch'a-ching—, written by a certain Lu Yü, in 780. But even previous to that we find in Chinese annals quite a number of references to tea and to its beginnings in China. The oldest mentions of it date from 264 and 273.⁵⁾

Views vary as to when tea reached Japan. It is likely that it became more widely known at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. In the written sources, it is

recorded that the Emperor Shomu invited one hundred eminent Buddhist monks to his palace in 729 and, after a reading of the Hannyako sutra served tea to his guests.⁶⁾ The Buddhist monk Gyogi cultivated tea in the 8th century, in the Yakuwoji Temple, in the prefecture of Mikawa. According to the same source, seeds of the tea plant were brought from China by the founder of the Buddhist Tendai sect, the monk Dengyo Daishi, in 805, and, shortly after him, also by the founder of the Shingon sect, Kobo Daishi. Dengyo Daishi then cultivated tea in Sakamoto, beside the Lake Biwa, not far from Kyoto. It is related of the Emperor Saga that tea was served to him when he was the guest of the monk Eichu, on the shore of Lake Biwa, when he passed through Sufukuji in 815, which was then in the Omi prefecture. He enjoyed the local variety so much that he gave orders for it to be cultivated in Kinai, Omi, Tanba and Harima, from where every year a tax in kind had to be sent to the Imperial Court.

At first tea in Japan was held to be a medicinal herb. Possibly a reflection of the fact that in China tea belonged to this category. It was cultivated on the estate of the Imperial Palace in Kyoto, under the supervision of the Imperial Apothecary. We know, too, that in 951 the monk Kuya gave tea to people struck down by plague, with, it was said, good effect.

The cultivation of tea was furthered by the monk Eisai, who returned from China in 1191, bringing with him the seed of new varieties, from which he cultivated tea in Saburiyama on Kyushu, the most southernly of the four largest Japanese islands.⁷⁾

Eisai is said to have won over the Shogun⁸⁾ for the cultivation of tea when he gave a Shogun a strong cup of tea to help him recover from a drinking bout. At this time, too, the monks of the Zen sect of Buddhists began to drink tea to keep their minds fresh in their long meditations lasting many hours. In the movement expressing thanks, which it was the custom for the monks to perform in this connection, are probably the hidden origins of the actual tea ceremony. Tea-drinking became general in Japan about two centuries later.

It was then that the drinking of tea at the Imperial Court and the courts of the Shoguns began to be transformed into a kind of tea ceremony, the rules of which were strongly influenced by the poet, painter and garden architect, Nakao Noami (1397—

1494).⁹⁾ Essentially it was a tea-tasting contest. Those taking part were given several cups of tea and they were then asked to say what variety of tea it was and what water had been used in making it. The serving of tea was performed according to a certain ritual and was called *shoin-tencha*. The guests usually assembled in a long and elegantly appointed room and the whole ceremony was formal to the extreme.

Reform of chanoyu

A change set in with the appointment of a certain Shuko as Master of the tea ceremony at the Shogun's court, in the second half of the 15th century. Shuko gained the support of Yoshimasa (1449—1474), the eighth Shogun of the Ashikaga Shogunate, for a new conception of the tea ceremony. Shuko pushed the formality of the tea ceremony as an aim in itself into the background. His school, known as the "Soan" school, was founded on the ideas of the Zen Buddhists and stressed in *chanoyu* the aspect of human relations.

Shuko's view was that those who sat down to *chanoyu* should forget all the social differences which existed between them. It was a daring postulate, for it was made at a time when feudal society strictly preserved its hierarchical structure and when the military aristocracy sought by maintaining and stressing social differences to uphold their position as the ruling class in the State.

Shuko, who died in 1500, at the age of eighty, formulated four principles to be observed by those taking part in the tea ceremony: harmony, respect for others, cleanness and calm. By harmony, Shuko understood the principle that only those should take part in *chanoyu* who were ready to leave out of account their own and others' social origin and status during the ceremony. Respect for others meant that no matter how confidential and intimate a man's relations may be with another, familiarity must never breed contempt. Under cleanness Shuko understood not only physical cleanliness, which is so much stressed in Shinto, but also spiritual purity, a mind undefiled by ulterior motives, intrigue, etc. Calm, the tranquility of content, required that all

that was exaggerated, provocative, overbearing, should have no place in a man's conduct.

According to Shuko, in the whole atmosphere of chanoyu there should predominate the principle called—sabi—a concept embodying a quality difficult to define—a cultivatedness which an object acquires from being long used with loving care.

Shuko's principles were later variously interpreted. The core of his ideas, however, can be quite simply formulated. Those taking part in chanoyu should, on entering the tea-room—chashitsu—, see to it that their minds are void of passion and prejudice and in harmonious equilibrium. This was no small demand, if we remember that at the time the military aristocracy reached for their sword at the smallest provocation and as their first reaction to the mere hint of an insult due to the infringement of the elaborate rules of social etiquette. It was the period of wars known as Sengoku Jidai.¹⁰⁾

The participants in the tea ceremony should be considerate of each other. Their gestures should be without arrogance and their speech without haughtiness. Their manners should not be stiff, but moderate, combining a natural mode of behaviour with the observance of the rules and principles deriving from daily intercourse with one's fellow-beings. Moderate, too, should be, for example, the praise of anything coming up in the course of conversation, which should be mainly directed towards art, nature and philosophy.

In keeping with the principle of simplicity and the vow of poverty in the Zen conception, the decoration of the room was reduced to a minimum and the stress laid on absolute simplicity. Shuko pointed out the importance of the decoration of the chashitsu with flowers, as underlining the simplicity of the whole room. Flowers for the chashitsu should be chosen to help create an atmosphere of simplicity and elegant beauty. In opposition to earlier views that the tea utensils should be richly ornamented and expensive, Shuko recommended the use of simple ware, corresponding in character to the age of those drinking from it. This, too, was a requirement which was aimed against the tendency to ever greater luxury customary among the aristocracy. Among Shuko's disciples were both rich and poor. One of his poor disciples, whom Shuko set up as an example to the others,

was Zempo, who lived in Awatagushi, not far from Higashiyama near Kyoto. He was so poor that "he could not buy even an iron tea-kettle". And so he boiled the water for the tea in the same vessel as for the warming up of saké. Quite unorthodoxly and against the rules of chanoyu he used the same water for making tea as for the cooking of other food. This making do with what he had, to which Shuko drew attention, sharply contrasted with the extravagance of rich devotees of the tea ceremony, who would not hesitate to send for water for chanoyu from great distances. It was maintained that only three kinds of water could properly be used for the making of tea: water from mountain torrents, water from a well and collected rain water. Tea water must not, however, contain either iron or salt, or any other minerals. The best water was considered to be that from the Yoro waterfall not far from the town of Gifu. In later centuries, tea-lovers from Edo sent specially for water to Kyoto, these water-bearers travelling in a litter, called a kago, only to bring their masters a pitcher of water.¹¹⁾

A notable disciple of Shuko was also Jo-o Takemono, resident in the town of Sakai, who developed chanoyu still further. Jo-o Takemono formulated the principle called—wabi, which applied to both people and things. In accordance with this principle, people participating in the tea ceremony should be honourable, modest, devoid of pride and considerate of others. Tadachika Kuwata, an excellent contemporary interpreter of chanoyu, cites Jo-o, who, in order to explain what is wabi, used the following comparison from nature . . . Wabi is like the tenth month (according to the calendar of that time, the beginning of winter). In this month colour has disappeared from the scenery, the flowers of spring and the red maple leaves of autumn have gone. Plants have begun to dry up before the cold of approaching winter. The countryside is silent and deserted . . .¹²⁾

An important contribution was made by Kuwata in drawing attention to the class origins of those masters of tea who introduced into the ceremony new democratic elements, whether it was Jo-o Takemono or his pupil and successor, Sen-no-Rikyu (1521—91), for both came of the increasingly wealthy class of merchants from Osaka and Sakai. It was only natural that the wealthy merchants sought to take part in the same entertain-

ments as the nobility. In order to make access easier, they propagated the principles of equality and simplicity embodied in wabi.

Sen-no Rikyu was originally called Sen-no Soeki. He received the Name Rikyu from his patron (Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi), whom he served as Master of the Tea Ceremony.

Rikyu counted many connoisseurs of chanoyu among his friends. And it was his relations to one of them, Hechikan by name, which strongly influenced Rikyu's view of the function of chanoyu.

Once Rikyu was invited by Hechikan to where he lived in the village of Yamashima near Kyoto. In front of Hechikan's house, however, he fell into a pit of mud, concealed by a covering of bamboo and grass. At that moment Hechikan ran out in surprise and with profuse apologies helped him to his feet. Then he prepared a bath and a clean yukata.¹³⁾ In the friendly atmosphere which this unpleasant incident evoked, Rikyu drank tea according to the rules of the tea ceremony. And this was just the right atmosphere which should permeate chanoyu—an atmosphere of deep and respectful politeness on the part of the host and of complete self-control, politeness and gratitude on the part of the guest, appreciative of the help his host had accorded to him. It is said that Hechikan dug the pit in front of his house intentionally, so that he might show what the properly induced mood should be like in the chashitsu. Rikyu knew all about it, so it is maintained, but refrained from saying anything, because he realized Hechikan's intention.

As regards the theory of chanoyu, Rikyu added yet another principle to the four laid down by Shuko, namely that of "esteem", as the crowning virtue. According to his teaching, none of the preceding principles could be of value, if not joined to esteem.

Rikyu was, in the end, executed for the application of his democratic principles in chanoyu, at the order of Hideyoshi.¹⁴⁾

After Rikyu's death, the tea ceremony began to return to its former character and again became an entertainment cultivated by the aristocracy in an environment of luxury.

And so ended one of the flashes of democratic thought which lit up for a while the deep obscurity of Japanese mediaeval life. Rikyu's ideas, however, remained the axis round which the tea ceremony was always to revolve.

Moreover, Rikyu's views continued to operate widely in a whole range of branches of the arts especially—in architecture, in the making of pottery, in the lay-out of gardens, in calligraphy, in painting and in ikebana.

The influence of chanoyu on Japanese material culture

A very interesting part of the tea ceremony is its setting. Important for evoking the proper atmosphere is the tea garden, the Japanese roji, the tea-room or chashitsu being usually in a little pavilion called a sukiya, forming part of the garden architecture.

Garden architecture existed in Japan on a fully developed scale as early as in the Heian period (794—1191), when so-called “floating gardens” were laid out for the aristocracy. They were gardens containing a pond, with several tiny islands. Then there were gardens intended to conjure up a mountain landscape, with rocks, coniferous trees, especially pines, and waterfalls. Very popular, too, were “gardens of good fortune”, with various symbols of good luck, such as the three kinds of lucky trees—the bamboo, the apricot tree and the pine, and “dry gardens”, where white sand was used to create the illusion of a waterfall or a stream of water. Widely famed to this day is the stone garden in the Ryoanji Monastery in Kyoto, which is made of nothing else than sand and stone and is meant to create the impression of a seascape.¹⁵⁾

Famous, too, are “moss gardens” and other kinds, admired and valued by one generation after another. Various styles of garden arose, too, among which we may distinguish the informal style—so, the formal style—shin and the less formal style—gyo. Schools of garden architecture had their own rules, according to which, for instance, rocks should be set up at a certain angle to give the impression of distance. The branch of a tree should partly cover the waterfall or stone lamp, to create the desired impression of intimacy. But always it was the endeavour of Japanese architects in laying out a garden to bring man close to nature and not only from a purely aesthetic point of view, but

also from the standpoint of the philosophical conception of the unity of nature and man. The garden, like nature herself, was to help man to grasp his true place in life, in the natural world. Thereby man was to be helped to find the proper proportion in his actions and in setting and reaching his life's aims. This, too, was Rikyu's goal which he had in view when formulating his conception of what a tea garden should be like.

Tea gardens were laid out from the first on the principle of shibumi,¹⁶⁾ which was worked out down to the smallest detail by the monks of the Zen sect.

The term shibumi is again not easy to explain. Perhaps we can best express the core of meaning if we say that shibumi is cultivated elegance in which is summed up the essential, specific beauty of an object or of an artistic complex. Jiro Harada characterizes shibumi as a quality that is quiet and subdued. It is natural and has depth, but avoids being too apparent or ostentatious. It is simple, without being crude. Austere without being severe. It is the refinement that gives spiritual joy, a subtle touch of the modest of the soul . . .¹⁷⁾

The designers of gardens cherished this quality like the apple of their eye. The garden which does not express shibumi is not a garden which conforms to the requirements of chanoyu. It is as bad as a picture without inner significance and painted without artistic taste and mastery.

The garden belonging to a Japanese house is usually divided into two parts. The part in which is the sukiya is always, as far as possible, separated from the rest of the garden by a hedge. Thus an inner and an outer garden are formed. The outer garden is entered by a garden gate, beside which is usually a yoritsuki, a little lodge not usually exceeding more than an area of three mats.¹⁸⁾ Here the guests assemble and from here they go to the koshikake—a little bench near or sometimes close to the house. If the koshikake is outside the tea pavillion, it is not usually more than six or eight metres from the house. Here the guests wait for the host who either comes for them or intimates in some other way (by striking a wooden board or a metal gong etc.) when it is time to go in.

The guests approach the house by way of a series of irregular stepping-stones, called tobiishi. Beside the entrance to the tea

pavillion is a katana-kake on the wall, on which the guests in ancient times hang up their swords.

The inner garden is arranged so that every tree, every bush and stone is so placed as to produce its effect on the visitor. Trees and shrubs are harmoniously combined and grouped to give the impression of a natural scene in miniature. But behind it all, one is so fully conscious of the human effort and planning that its effect on a foreigner is sometimes almost oppressive—the thought of the immeasurable care and the craftsmanship, dying out elsewhere in the world, which have gone to the effective and judicious selection and setting of every stone, the smallest shrub, each single flower. The favourite trees in Japanese tea gardens are conifers, mixed with choice kinds of deciduous trees. They are different kinds of mountain pine, in which Japan abounds. Here, too, however, are planted cedars and monkey-puzzle trees, intermingled with shrubs having strong foliage and few flowers. Among the deciduous trees first favourite is the maple, whose leaves turn dark red in autumn and give colour to the whole garden. The little garden paths are usually covered with a layer of moss, which usually covers the stone lamps, half concealed in thickets and called *ishidoro*.¹⁹⁾ Sometimes the garden paths are sprinkled with dry pine needles. An inseparable part of a tea garden is water trickling through a bamboo cane or a coarse stone pipe into a stone tank, or the winding stone bed of a little stream or into a miniature artificial lake. Very often the water flows into a stone container called a *tsukubai*.²⁰⁾

Rikyu stressed the principle of a natural arrangement of the tea garden. There is a story that once he told his son to sweep the garden before the guests arrived for *chanoyu*. The boy (or youth) came back in a little while and said that he had performed the task. Rikyu looked out at the garden and said that it was not in the state it should be. And so his son set to work again. Then he came back again and informed his father that he had finished the job and that there was not a twig or a leaf on the paths. Rikyu again declared that the garden still did not look as it should and went out along the path that led to a large maple. He shook its trunk and a shower of red leaves fell and formed a proper carpet. "That is how a garden should look before the tea ceremony", said Rikyu.

On another occasion Rikyu remarked that a tea garden should create its main impression by means of its thick cushions of moss, warmed by the sun, and that there should be nothing more than glimpses of the sea between the trees, to remind those preparing to sit down to chanoyu all the more vividly of their unity with boundless nature. Under Rikyu's influence, aesthetic views on the lay-out of tea gardens were developed in surprising detail. There is another story of how Rikyu cut off all the flowers for which his garden was famous, so that they might not detract from a single bloom that he had placed in a vase in the tea room.

The place in which the tea ceremony is held is usually in the tea pavillion.²¹⁾

The original chashitsu had not till about the 15th century enclosing walls. Instead there were bambus hangings, which could easily be rolled up and allowed of an uninterrupted view of the landscape or of the garden scenery.

Later, especially under the Shoguns of the Ashikaga family, when the content of chanoyu also comprised aesthetic discussions, a new milieu was created for the tea ceremony, on the basis of a synthesis of the views of Shuko, Jo-o and Rikyu. The place where tea was served began to be separated from the rest of the house and, finally, was transferred to the garden.

The room set aside for the tea ceremony did not at first occupy a greater area than four and a half mats. In the course of the 16th century, however, separate tea pavillions came to be a general requirement. The dimensions, however, remained the same. Whereas earlier the tea pavillions were designed after the pattern of noblemen's palaces of the Shoin type, the structure being supported on pillars forming the corners of the room, with walls gummed over with paper and a veranda on the north side, which served as the entrance, Rikyu reformed the whole architectural conception of the tea garden. The entrances to the pavillion were replaced by two small and uncomfortable openings. One was for the host and was called sadoguchi and was usually square. The other entrance intended for the use of the guests, called nijiriguchi, was low and more like a window, through which the guests had literally to creep into the room. This was an element in the design whereby Rikyu enjoined modesty on the, for the most part, high-ranking participants in the tea ceremony

and obliged them to lay aside their accustomed dignity. Besides the two entrances there were several windows of different sizes. One of these is, as a rule, a window filled with bamboo lattice work—a renjimado, as it is called; then there is an alcove window, after the manner of windows in old noblemen's houses, known as a shoin-mado (which, however, Rikyu left out), and then very often a round window or various windows reminiscent of those in farm-houses. The chashitsu was thus practically enclosed and separated from the outside world. The heavy carved pillars, which were a typical feature of noblemen's houses were done away with, as also the paper from the walls, the painting on the doors and the metal ornaments. Instead, Rikyu left the plain wooden posts and mud walls, as were usual in farm-house architecture. Of the pillars, particularly important is the naka-bashira—the pillar supporting the alcove and providing, at the same time, a decorative element. Thus also in the forming of the milieu, Rikyu kept equally to the principle that he who would grasp the real "spirit of tea" must discard all established convention and seek beauty in simple, natural materials. Operative in this sense, too, were the reduced dimensions of the tea room. Whereas previously the room had been so large that the noblemen taking part in the tea ceremony could sit so far apart that they did not touch each other, now they were obliged, according to the new conception, to sit closely side by side, in mutual harmony and not be afraid "... to rub shoulders..." Rikyu carried through his reform of the architecture of the tea pavillion about 1576 and this type predominated from then on.²²⁾

The ground plan of the chashitsu is apparent from the room designed by Rikyu's master, Jo-o, where a four-and-a half mat room, with a fireplace in the centre mat and in the half-mat area has still an entrance and exist from and onto the verandah, called the nure-en.

The changes introduced by Rikyu are then apparent from the ground plan of the tea room of the yuin type which is to be found in the Urasen House in Kyoto.²³⁾

Four tatami (mats) are placed clockwise to enclose a corner of the room, beginning with the mat in front of the tokonoma (alcove). The host enters so that he does not cross the path of his guests and the chief guest sits on the mat beside the tokonoma.

A small hearth—*ro*—let into the floor in the area of the half mat, thus forms the focal point of the room.²⁴⁾

Tea rooms of two or three mats were also built, though the four-and-a-half-mats room was the commonest. One other type of room is worth mentioning—the *nakaita*, where a board of beautifully polished wood was let into the middle of the floor, from where it reached to the hearth and on which were set out the tea utensils.

The type of ceiling also impressed its character upon the room. Up to the middle of the 15th century the ceiling of the *chashitsu* was of the same height as in the rooms of the dwelling house. Later the ceiling of the tea room was lowered above the place where the guests sat. Its various parts began to be made of different kinds of wood, or at least arranged with the grain running in different directions. Sometimes a timbered roof, with the beams exposed, served as a ceiling. Sometimes a window was let into the roof to allow those taking part in *chanoyu* to see the moon.

In the small space of the tea room, enclosed by walls, contrasts of light and shade created by the differently-sized windows played an important role. The windows are placed so that muted light enters through them, but sufficient to allow the tea utensils to be examined and appreciated. To this end the functional purpose of the windows is ingeniously adapted.

The main ornament of the room, after the reform of the architecture of the tea pavillion carried through by Rikyu was the alcove—*tokonoma*—which became the central point of interest.

Prior to Rikyu's reform, the *tokonoma* was the place where the host's most valued treasures were on show. Rikyu, however, made his influence felt here, too, in a simplification of the decoration of the niche. Only one scroll picture, usually painted in black Chinese ink, is hung in it, representing as a rule a mountain landscape, with waterfall, river and sea, etc. According to certain sources, the custom of hanging a *kakemono* (scroll picture) depicting a landscape had been adopted before Rikyu by the Buddhist monks of the Zen sect.

In order that an element from nature might be present in the *chashitsu*, Rikyu introduced a vase into the *tokonoma*, with

a simple, but choice arrangement of flowers, which innovation strongly influenced in succeeding centuries the development of ikebana. Although the walls of the room were, for aesthetic reasons, roughly whitewashed, Rikyu allowed the lower parts of the walls to retain their covering of paper—called *koshihari*—to prevent the whitewash coming off onto the guests' clothes. The *tokonoma* determined the orientation of the room and the seating of the guests. And so it is to this day. There is a *tokonoma* in every farm and family house. Adjacent to the tea room was a small place for keeping the tea utensils and a container with water for washing them. Here, too, was stored over winter the small portable metal hearth used in the summer months instead of the hearth let into the floor. Sometimes a shelf was let into the wall of the tea room for the tea utensils. This *doko*, as it is called, was within reach of the host's place, so that he did not need to get up during the ceremony and could take what he needed without effort. The host sat facing the chief guest, with whom he spoke most during the ceremony. The other guests were arranged, according to age, on his left, in a row round the room. Thus they had an uninterrupted view of the host and all his movements in the making of tea and also of the tea utensils, which aesthetically play such an important role in the ceremony.

The tea utensils have always been the object of special attention, combined with real love and artistic appreciation. The articles used in the ceremony are chosen to be in harmony with the prevailing atmosphere in the *chashitsu*. They should embody the principles of *sabi* and *wabi*, and express the cultivated simplicity and beauty of a master's work, as the product of philosophical insight based on practical living experience.

First and foremost among objects of this kind are the pottery dishes. Here we find amazingly attractive peasant ware, fired in traditional colours, in forms going far back into the past, whose production was developed and maintained thanks to the masters of the tea ceremony who, in keeping with Rikyu's views, drew on the peasant potter's art, just as they went back to the peasant house architecture, as a source of inspiration and for the democratizing element, which they sought to introduce into *chanoyu*. It is natural that, under the influence of the tea masters, the production of peasant pottery underwent certain changes. The

drinking vessels were in accordance with the canons of taste of Rikyu and of his cultivated successors and embody, for the most part, the element of 'refined simplicity'. Nevertheless, their makers never deteriorated into mere formalism.

The effectiveness of tea ware is due in large measure to its functional character. Colour glazes or combinations of glazed with unglazed areas, and effects attained by varying the firing technique give rise to ceramic products of admirable artistic value. The colours are mostly subdued. Most frequently they range from yellow to green, and through brown to brownish-black or deep black. In those parts of Japan where the colours are brighter, they are usually brought into harmony with the muted atmosphere of the tea ceremony by an ornament, the sketchy outline of a figural motif, or by the suitable choice of a ground colour in a delicately restful tone, which dispels any suggestion of garishness and restores to the object a simple, refined elegance. Of the Japanese ceramic ware most frequently used in chanoyu, we may make special mention of the traditional pottery from the town of Seto—known as 'seto-guro' or 'the black pottery from Seto, and 'ki-seto' yellow pottery from the same town. Well-known, too, is 'shino-seto', white potter's ware from Seto and 'oribe', which is ornamented.

The production of Japanese pottery was at its height in Rikyu's lifetime, that is, at the time when Hideyoshi united Japan (1590) and the arts flourished on all sides. This rare period of the flowering of the arts is known in Japanese history as the Momoyama Period.²⁵ Rikyu worked in close collaboration with the master-potters and himself designed tea dishes expressive of 'refined simplicity'. Then it was that for the first time there appeared broad, mostly irregular dishes for tea, with a special glaze which, in order to differentiate it from the peasant ware, began to be called raku-chawan.

There are still extant a number of pieces which were made under Rikyu's supervision by a number of potters, among them especially the distinguished ware of the potter Chojiro. Other famous masters of the tea ceremony also devoted great care to the choice of ware, among them such noted names as Kobori Enshu (1579—1647) and Furuta Oribe (1543—1615).

Under Rikyu was further developed the custom of admiring

the ceramic ware and other tea utensils, as part of the tea ceremony. These objects were admired with a connoisseur's critical appreciation. They were, indeed, given as an award for bravery by the shogun to those who served him faithfully. The value set on them was sometimes almost incredibly exaggerated. Thus, for instance, Akechi Mitsuharu, before committing seppuku,²⁶⁾ and setting fire to the castle he was unable any longer to hold against the enemy, let down from the ramparts some sixty works of art. Among them were many articles used in the tea ceremony. Mitsuharu had requested the commander of the hostile forces to take them into his care, as they were things of such beauty that they should not be destroyed. This incident took place in 1582 on the shores of Lake Biwa. Similar in character is the story of how Hideyoshi gave his warrior Sansai the gift of a small vessel for brewing the tea, called Ariake, whose history is a series of adventures which would fill a whole book. The vessel was so highly prized that, in the end, it was sold for the then fantastic sum of 1,800 gold pieces, for which sum Sansai's son bought rice for the people of his district in a time of famine. The vessel then changed hands many times and it is, so it seems, at present in the hands of a collector in Tokyo.

Other essential utensils used in the tea ceremony are the mizusashi — a vessel for water; the chaki — a vessel, usually lacquered, used as a tea canister; the chashaku — a teaspoon of bamboo; chasen — a bamboo brush for beating the paste of tea-leaves; chawan — a dish for drinking tea from; chakin — a cloth for wiping the dishes; kensui — a slop basin; hishaku — a small ladle; futaoki — a littel pad for putting beneath the laddle or the lid of the tea-kettle; fusuka — a square of silk; tetsubin — the metal tea-kettle which, along with the ceramic ware, is one of the most highly valued items of the chanoyu inventory. The famous workshops where they are made have behind them a centuries-old tradition. The name of the highly-skilled metal-founder, Yojiro, who lived in the Momoyama Period, is still widely known throughout Japan, as is also the metal founding workshop in Ashiji, on the island of Kyushu.

It would be unjust not to mention here the flower-vases and the flowers arranged in them according to the ikebana method, which delight the eye of everyone taking part in chanoyu. A testi-

mony to the loving admiration of the Japanese for vases is the story told about Nomuru Soji, of the Owari prefecture, who once visited master of the tea ceremony by the name of Jizen in Kyoto, hoping to have the opportunity to see his celebrated bamboo vase. When he asked about the vase Jizen replied more or less in this sense: 'No, I am not showing it this year, but next year, when I break the seal of the tea-canister, with the new season's tea, I shall have the pleasure of showing it to my guests'. When the promised time came round Jizen invited guests to take part in the tea ceremony. In the garden, he had previously cut down all the bamboo canes and removed all bamboo from the tea pavillion, in order to show off more effectively the bamboo vase which he then showed to his guests.

O n p r e s e n t - d a y c h a n o y u

The impression which the tea ceremony makes on the present-day observer is that of a petrified aesthetic form, which still in a kind of way continues its existence, but ceased to have any real social significance, and is, above all, a form of entertainment indulged in by the Japanese bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the tea ceremony has beneficially influenced several branches of Japanese material culture. Up to this day, in an unbroken line of development going back some centuries, dozens of pottery kilns in Japan turn out artistically highly valuable wares, still retaining traces of the special qualities associated with the principles of wabi and sabi. The choice of colours, the somewhat crude potting and rustical texture of the enamel colours, the variety of the forms and of the firing techniques — all point to a long experience in the craft, attributable to a demand for wares of this kind by lovers of the tea ceremony. Every Japanese inn — ryokan — takes a pride in serving tea in choice dishes of traditional pattern different from those of other inns. In simple peasant households, too, there are always several cups and a teapot of traditional ceramic ware, which are used to set before guests.

The influence of chanoyu comes out very strongly in the architecture of Japanese family houses, especially note-worthy

being the alcove — tokonoma — with a scroll picture and a vase of flowers, a widespread feature attributed to the influence of chanoyu. Tokonomas were to be found everywhere. They were in the little house of a writer or teacher, as well as in a village cottage or a workman's one-room dwelling. The kakemono representing almost invariably a Japanese landscape with mountains and water is also an inseparable part of the niche. It is evident that here, too, it was mainly the demand for pictures of traditional landscapes or with calligraphic inscriptions, comprising only a few characters, and telling of the beauties of nature, which helped to maintain and develop the traditional school of Japanese painting in black and white, called sumi-e.

An interesting feature is the nation-wide assimilation of the principles of garden lay-out in the spirit of the tea garden, to be observed not only in the town gardens, both large and small, but even in the depth of the country, which have certainly not been touched by the hand of a professional gardener. And yet in all we find the same combinations of coniferous and deciduous trees, of water and stones, suggestive of the natural scene, as if they had been designed by someone intending to lay out a tea garden.

As regards ikebana, that is the art of flower arrangement in vases, we at first supposed that it was a kind of hobby of the well-to-do classes in Japan. To our surprise, however, we found exhibitions of ikebana in country towns and villages, in schools and even in every household, where the housewife arranges flowers for the vase in the tokonoma also according to the principles of ikebana. This, too, must be placed to the credit side of chanoyu, for ikebana is today a truly popular art which is now spreading from Japan to other countries.

Much could also no doubt be said about the influence of chanoyu on the making of Japanese lacquer ware and of cast-iron tea-kettles, as well as on the stone-masons' work of supplying stone lamps for garden decoration.

If we take into account all these aspects, chanoyu ceases to be for us an archaic survival or modern anachronism, but a phenomenon which contributes to the well-developed artistic taste and sensibility of the Japanese people.

The collections of the Náprstek Museum in Prague, which in-

clude quite a number of specimens of Japanese arts and crafts such as have arisen directly under the influence of chanoyu and its requirements, adequately represent also this aspect of Japanese cultural life.

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Notes:

1) According to some authorities, chanoyu is more than a tea ceremony. It is a kind of tea cult. Mock Joa cites, in support of this view, Kakuze Okakura, who in his "Book of Tea" says that chanoyu is a cult which may be called "Teism". Mock Joa: Things Japanese, p. 489, Tokio, 1958.

2) G. B. Sansom: Japan — A Short Cultural History, N. Y. 1943, p. 397.

3) Buddhism reached Japan from China by way of Korea. Of the various sects which sprang up in Japan, the Zen sect had the greatest influence on Japanese cultural life. Zen ideas were in circulation in Japan, already in the time of Nara (710—794), and in their original form as propagated in India, where the word zen corresponds to the word *dhyana*, signifying "meditation" or "enlightenment by means of meditation". A true Zen school did not develop till the time of the Kamakura shogunate, 1192—1333, and incorporated several of the principles of native Shintoism. — Shinto — the Divine Way was the original Japanese religion, in which physical and spiritual purification played an important role.

4) Jiro Harada: A. Glimpse of Japanese Ideals, Tokyo, 1937, p. 195.

5) Derk Bodde: China's Gifts to the West, Washington 1942, p. 11.

6) Yasunosuke Fukukita: Tea Cult in Japan, Tokio, 1955, p. 4.

7) For this reason Eisai is sometimes wrongly held to be the first to cultivate tea in Japan.

8) The Shoguns were high military commanders who

gradually came to be dictators and the real rulers of Japan — the full title was Sei i tai Shogun.

⁹⁾ See V. Hilská: Dějiny a kultura japonského lidu — History and Culture of the Japanese People, Praha 1953, p. 118.

¹⁰⁾ Sengoku Jidai — a period of internecine warfare for power among the feudal nobility, dating roughly from 1500.

¹¹⁾ Mock Joa, loc. cit., p. 293.

¹²⁾ Tadachika Kuwata: The Honourable Philosophy of Tea, This is Japan 1960, Tokio, p. 106.

¹³⁾ A kind of summer kimono.

¹⁴⁾ Koichiro Kimura and Hochu Watanabe: The Tiny World of Tea, This is Japan 1960, p. 110.

¹⁵⁾ Tradition has it that the garden architect was Soami (1521—7). According to one version, the stones in the sand are meant to represent islands in the sea, according to another, a vixen or a tigress carrying her cubs from one island to another.

¹⁶⁾ Now the form shibui is more commonly used.

¹⁷⁾ Jiro Harada, A Glimpse of Japanese Ideals, Tokio 1937.

¹⁸⁾ The dimensions of Japanese rooms are measured by the number of mats covering the floor, these mats having a standard size of 180 by 90 cms.

¹⁹⁾ Ishidoro were originally installed only in buddhist temples. The oldest is in the Tomayi temple in Yamato and dates from 682. The making of stone lamps is still widespread in Japan, there being over two hundred different kinds.

²⁰⁾ In the course of the many centuries which chanoyu has existed a variety of small customs have grown up, such as, for instance, the marking of the paths which lead elsewhere than to the tea pavillion by placing a stone tied round with string at the crossing or the placing of a ditch for fallen leaves near the entrance to the house, etc.

²¹⁾ Chanoyu may be performed in any place, but it should always be a room set aside.

²²⁾ It is sometimes claimed that the architecture of the tea pavillion provided the prototype for the whole later design of Japanese family houses.

²³⁾ Here lives at the time of writing a master of the tea ceremony and a descendant of Rikyú's in the fourteenth generation, Soshitsu Sen by name.

²⁴⁾ The siting of the hearth may change with changes in the area of floor space.

²⁵⁾ Momoyama was the title of Hideyoshi's palace.

²⁶⁾ A form of suicide known in Europe under the designation "harakiri".



The tea ceremony





The Golden Pavillion in Kyoto



Tokonoma

Ikebana-japanese flower arrangement

