

A DAWN TEA CEREMONY FOR THE FIRST BLOOMING OF THE MORNING GLORY

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Roji (Dewy Path)

Tap! Tap! Tap! Softly echoes the sound of the *zori* on the lightly sprinkled stones leading through the garden. It is an early June morning before the sun has fully risen and the air is yet cool. We make our way from the outer through the inner gardens to the *koshikaki machiai shitsu* (waiting area) of the Yu-in Tea Hut in Kyoto. The host has called us, three of her friends, together to celebrate the first blooming of the morning glory (*asagao*).

The *roji* (dewy path) leads the guests from the world of their daily concerns into the quiet enchantment of the world of *chadô*. The garden is a Zen landscape using plants, stone, and water to suggest a stroll in a mountain village and create a tranquil state of mind, receptive to the events that will take place in the *chashitsu* (the tea hut). The stepping stones, with no set pattern, placed four to five inches apart, are selected to afford easy walking.

Between the inner and outer *roji*, the *chumon* (a small lattice bamboo gate) is found slightly ajar and sprinkled with water, an indication of the host's readiness for her guests. The plants are native to the area, nothing unusual or especially fragrant is chosen. Cedar, maple, Japanese yew, and pine are combined with mosses, ferns, and other grasses to create an air of calm simplicity. A stone lantern, that includes the three basic design elements; the square (earth), the circle (water) and the triangle (fire) is placed in the garden.

We arrive in the waiting room and are greeted by the host who serves us cups of warm water. The water has no taste itself but the cups warm our hands, and the water cleans our mouths. The three of us relax there and prepare to enter the tearoom. We change our *tabi* (socks) for fresh ones. We put aside all of our unneeded items. We take a moment to enjoy the view of the garden with its aura of freshness. We notice the morning dew is still on the leaves and grasses.

We are invited to view the first blooming of the morning glory, which brings to mind an incident in the life of Sen no Rikyû (1522–91) considered the founder of the Senke schools of Tea Ceremony. The first guest related the story of Rikyû, Hideyoshi Toyotomi and the morning glory as follows:

Rikyû was known for cultivating rare, imported European morning glories in pots along his *roji*. Hideyoshi intimated his wish to see them so Rikyû invited him to a dawn tea ceremony. When Hideyoshi arrived, there were no morning glory blossoms to be seen. They had all been plucked. Astounded and displeased, Hideyoshi entered the tea room. Instead of the usual scroll hanging in the alcove, he saw one solitary blossom sprinkled with dew. The story is told to illustrate Rikyû's idea of simplicity and the artistic nature of his tea. One perfect blossom is worth more than many.

We walk to the stone *tsukubai* (water basin) where a ladle is placed so we can rinse our hands and mouths before entering the tea hut. This simple rite of purification illustrates the inclusion in tea culture of the ancient Shinto religious beliefs and practices and the respect for the *kami* (sacred being or spirit) that infuses all the arts of Japan.

Yu-in Tea Hut (designed by Sen Sotan, 1578–1658, grandson of Rikyû) is a simply constructed thatched roof building with a skylight in the center of the roof. A *nigiri guchi* (crouching entrance, two feet in width and height) is located in the lower right-hand side of the wall, through which we enter. A Rikyû invention, this form of entrance symbolizes the equalizing of all who participate in *chadô*. The distinctions between persons are based on the roles assumed in participation of the ceremony, between host and guest and guest and guest and not based on social rank, status, and positions held in everyday life. It was quite an astounding idea in his day. It is difficult to swagger and strut when crawling in on your knees, trying not to bump your head. This adds a touch of humility.

Based on ancient building practices, the tea hut, nevertheless, manifests an air of modernity in its clean lines and simplicity of style and materials. As we enter the *hon-seki* (main room) that is 4.5 *tatami* (reed) mats in size (about 6 feet by 3 feet), we look first to the alcove and the placement of the *furo* (brazier and kettle). Behind this room is the *mizuya* (preparation room) where the utensils are stored and prepared for use in the ceremony.

One at a time, we go to the alcove and bow, noting the arrangement of a single morning glory sprinkled with dew in a bamboo basket hanging on the *tokobashira*, the distinctly

shaped post by the alcove. The bow is a sign of respect rather than worship, a gesture through which the admiration and kindness between persons and for things can be expressed. Then we proceed to view the *kama* (kettle). This procession has modulation and rhythm. The gliding of our feet on the mats makes a gentle rustling sound. Like all the items used in *chadô*, the kettle is of handicraft manufacture to be appreciated for its beauty and the skill of the artist.

The *shokyaku* (first guest who is the person especially invited by the host for this occasion and who has responsibility for responses to the host as part of the ritual) takes a seat closest to the alcove. She is the principal guest and shares a responsibility with the host in maintaining the flow of events and seeing to the enjoyment of all in the experience of sharing a bowl of tea. *Chadô* is not a performance for the passive pleasure of the guests, but the coming together of all in the creation of a unique experience, *ichigo ichie* (one time, one meeting). Each occasion is unique in its combination of the time, setting, implements, and people.

The silence that follows the seating of the last guest is the signal to the host to begin the *chaji* (a series of ceremonies lasting for about four hours).

***Kaiseki* (Light Meal)**

A *chaji* begins with a light meal of *kaiseki* (literally warm stone) gets its name from the meals taken by monks in the monastery to ward off hunger but not fill and sate and is not meant to be elaborate but just to take the edge off the guests' hunger. It consists of rice, soup, *sake* (rice wine), fish, and garnish, appropriate to season and elegantly served on decorative lacquer and ceramic ware by the host and her assistant. The succession of tastes is arranged for the best effect. The foods include items from the sea and mountains. Dishes are delicately seasoned with soy or salt, made from the finest part of an item, chosen for its flavor. Meat is rarely served. Steaming, boiling, and grilling are the main methods of preparation. The soup is a light broth or a miso soup chosen for the season (dark red, salty for winter, light colored less salty for summer). A second serving is offered, but the guests should never accept a third. Sake is served with the meal. No oil is used in the preparation of the dishes. Contrasting flavors are preferred but nothing should linger on the palate and thus impede appreciation of the taste of tea and sweets. The guests engage in simple, light conversation, mostly about the food and the selection of utensils. At a point near the end of the meal, the host comes out to share *sake* and greetings with her guests. Hot water and pickles are brought out to rinse the mouth and the rice bowl.

As this tea is specifically to remember Rikyu, the discussion among the guests is of the contributions to *chadô* of Sen no Rikyû. Takeno Joo (1502–55) materialized the *wabi*

ideal in the 4.5 mat room of a commoner's dwelling, introducing a fireplace sunk in the floor (*irori*). He taught his disciple to be satisfied with a simple tea emphasizing sincerity in the service rather than ostentation in the display. Sen no Rikyū added the freshness of spirit of the newly emerging merchant and warrior classes to produce a form of tea practice in cultivation to the present day.

All the dishes have been cleared away and the host begins the first ceremony, *shozumi demae* (First Charcoal Ceremony). Charcoal (six pieces ranging in length from two to five inches, carefully selected, cut and prepared) are added to the fire which is laid on a bed of *hai* (ash) made from wisteria and carefully shaped for form a trough resembling a valley with smooth sides. This provides ventilation for the fire. Unless properly laid, the charcoal will not ignite and burn evenly and the water will take a long time to boil. One part of the ceremony includes the destruction of the smooth ash form and in so doing honors the guests, showing them that for them alone this mound of ash was shaped. Sandalwood incense (other fragrances may be used) is placed on the charcoal in fire which slowly heats the wood bringing out the subtle fragrance. The first guest asks to view the *kogo* (incense container), which the host then wipes and sets out for the guests to pass and view. The host returns to the *mizuya* with the utensils.

The first guest begins the *haiken* (appreciation) of the container. The appreciation of the utensils is an important part of the ceremony and follows a prescribed pattern. When all of us have had an opportunity to view it, she returns it. The host comes back, answers the first guest's questions about the type and make and returns to the *mizuya*. The *kogo* used was a simple wooded round container with the design of a swirling top (one of the symbols of the Sen schools of tea). We are then served *omokashi* (wet or thick sweets). The host has chosen *sasa no tsuyu* (*mizuyokan*, a red bean confection that is served in a green bamboo reed container wrapped in a green bamboo leaf). The last guest returns the sweet container, a simple black lacquer box to the *sadō guchi* (host's door) and after we have all eaten, we exit for a *nakadachi* (break of about twenty minutes) to stroll around the garden.

***Nakadachi* (Break)**

While we are refreshing ourselves and stretching our legs, the host changes the flower for a *jiku* (scroll) in the alcove and completes the preparation for the serving of *koicha* (thick tea) made from powdered tea but having the consistency of melted chocolate). Usually a scroll would be changed for a flower at this time, but the host has chosen to follow the order Rikyū used. The host has placed a calligraphy by Sen Soshitsu Hounsai (the XV generation Grand Tea Master of the Urasenke School), *muji korei kinin*, which is in essence an exhortation to keep the same feeling whenever preparing tea.

In the garden, our conversation turns to the history of tea after the death of Rikyū. Rikyū's chosen successor was Furuta Oribe (1544–1615). His practice diverged from the austerity of Rikyū. Succeeding him, as Tea Master of note (*chadō* practice was not yet established as being passed on from father to son) was Kobori Enshū (1579–1647), who taught Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. Tea masters were chosen for their ability and many of Rikyū's disciples formed schools of *chadō* of their own for example: Hosokawa Sansai–Sansai School, Oda Uraku–Uraku School, Nanbo Sokei–Nanbo School, Kanamori Sowa–Sowa School and many others.

Rikyū's immediate descendents were independent of great lords. His grandson, Sotan divided the family property between three of his four sons, creating the three main Sen schools of *chadō* (Soshū–Mushanokojisenke, Sosa–Omotesenke, Soshitsu–Urasenke). Some of Sotan's disciples also formed their own schools—Fujimura Yoken–Yoken School, Yamada Sohen–Sohen School, Matsudaira Fumai–Fumai School—many schools have branched out from the Ura and Omote schools, for example Hayami Fuhaku, also called Edosenke, Hisada Horiuchi and Matsuo Schools. There are about 24 principal schools plus a few more. While each has its own modifications and special practices, they are all basically derived from the same tradition.

The sound of the gong struck with differing intensities five times announces to us that the host is ready.

***Koicha Temae* (Thick Tea Ceremony)**

We return to the tearoom, each viewing the new arrangement in the alcove and the arrangement of the utensils set out for the *koicha* ceremony. Next to the bronze brazier is the *mizusashi* (water jar) called Tsurube, a square wooden bucket with a divided cover and before it is placed the *chaire* (ceramic tea container). When we have taken our seats, the host enters carrying a simple black raku bowl that contains the whisk, wiping cloth and a bamboo tea scoop made by Sotan. She returns to the *mizuya* and brings out the wastewater container that contains a lid rest and on which is carefully balanced a bamboo water ladle. After seating herself on the mat before the kettle, she bows to us signaling the beginning of the ceremony.

This is the *kokoro* (heart) of *chadō*. The *koicha* is shared by all of us from the same bowl. It is a quiet ceremony; we concentrate on the natural sounds that punctuate the flow of movement in the ceremony.

The host cleans the utensils. Then the tea is put in the bowl and hot water is added. The tea is mixed and more water added until the desired consistency has been achieved. The first guest receives the bowl and all the guests bow together to thank the host for the tea. We drink in succession. As the bowl is passed, the first guest inquires the name and

producer of the tea. We are being served an Uji tea named Shohaku from the Kameyama family. The last guest returns the bowl to the first guest who wipes it and begins the *haiken* (appreciation). The bowl is returned to the host who begins to clean the utensils and arrange them for return to the *mizuya*. The first guest asks to view the *chaire* (ceramic tea container), its *shifuku* (a container bag made of brocade), and the scoop. The host sets these out and returns to the *mizuya* with the wastewater container.

The steps in the *temae* and the interaction between participants express the principles of *chadô* set by Rikyû: *Wa* (harmony), the result of the interaction between host and guests, the food served and the utensils used. *Kei* (respect) is recognition of the dignity inherent in human beings, nature and things, expressed in the order and structure of the ceremony. *Sei* (purity), the cleansing of the mind, body and utensils that enables the participants to see beyond the material state into the true nature, the sacred essence of human beings, things and nature. *Jaku* (tranquillity) is a state of mind achieved through the practice of *chadô* that is immured in the first three principles.

To these Rikyû added seven rules: 1) Make a delicious bowl of tea; 2) Lay the charcoal so that it heats the water; 3) Arrange the flowers as they are in the field; 4) In summer suggest coolness, in winter warmth; 5) Do everything ahead of time; 6) Prepare for rain; and 7) Give those with whom you find yourself every consideration. These are very simple things to do, but, when we try to put them into practice, they are quite difficult indeed. These seven rules are meant to be guidelines for the way to serve guests so that the host keeps in mind the purpose of the *temae* or event is the enjoyment of others not just the actions of the host. These are simple rules for entertaining others that can be applied in almost any situation if you keep in mind the essence is to care for others and show that concern in what you do.

After these utensils have been viewed and the questions concerning their shape, design and name, if any, have been answered, the host then begins the second charcoal ceremony. The charcoal basket is brought out to replenish the fire for the *usucha* (thin tea) ceremony to follow. After the charcoal has been arranged, we are invited to view the fire. The host replenishes the water in the kettle, replaces it on the brazier, opens the lid, and leaves.

Usucha Temae (Thin Tea Ceremony)

The assistant brings in the sweets for us on a lacquer tray and places it before the first guest. The sweets for *usucha* called *higashi* (dried sweets) are different from those served for *koicha*. The host is serving two kinds of sweets, the first one is a dry-powdered sweet in the shape of a wild flower that is set in the upper right-hand corner of the tray. The

second is a candy, an ice blue sweet shaped to suggest cool swirling water, that is set in the lower left-hand corner of the tray.

The ceremony, much lighter in mood than the previous ceremony, begins with a bow at the door and follows a series of steps similar to that in the *koicha* ceremony, but some of the utensils used are different. The host enters carrying the *natsume* (lacquer tea container) in her right hand and the tea bowl containing the same implements as before in her left. The *natsume* is a black lacquer by Nakamura Sotetsu (there are families of utensil makers associated with the Senke and other schools of *chadô*) with Kodaiji *makie* (chrysanthemum and paulonia) design. The *matcha* is placed in the container in a mountain shape. Viewing the landscape created inside the *natsume* by the removal of the tea is one of the artistic points to be appreciated by the guests when viewing the implement.

Matcha is prepared from specially grown and cultivated tea plants. The tea plants are covered to protect the leaves from sunlight. The tea leaf that is ground for *matcha* is called *tencha* and the Uji area is especially known for its cultivation. Leaves that are a brilliant bluish green are chosen for *usucha*, and those that are dark purplish green (produced by shutting out more sunlight and elaborate fertilization) are used for *koicha*. The leaves are steamed, dried, and ground. Grinders with extra fine grooves are used for *koicha* and slightly coarser grooving is used for *usucha*. The tea is then sealed and carefully stored. *Matcha* contains higher concentrations of vitamin C and caffeine than other teas.

The tea bowl is thinner than that used for *koicha*. Since several people drink from the same bowl for thick tea, a bowl that will retain the temperature of the tea without burning the hands of the drinker is needed. In *usucha*, each person is individually served (from the same bowl in succession or from different bowls) so a thinner, wider bowl is needed to dissipate some of the heat before drinking. To create a sense of coolness in summer, the host has chosen a bowl by Ninsei, Urokomo Kusuri Kirei, which has a design of triangles in blues and golds that suggest dragon scales.

After placing two scoops of tea in the bowl, the host invites her first guest to take a sweet. The tray is passed and each guest takes a sweet and drinks tea in turn. The same bowl is used and returned to the host to be cleaned and used again. When all have been served and the host is ready to remove the utensils, the first guest asks to see the *natsume* and *chashaku*. These are prepared and set out on the mat.

The light atmosphere of the *usucha* ceremony and smooth flow of steps and movements encourages light conversation between our host and us and makes the small room seem larger. The events of the ceremony, the shared appreciation of the food and utensils selected for our pleasure by the host, her elegant, graceful service and the collective remembrance of the history, philosophy, and goals of *chadô* have helped to bring us as friends closer to each other.

The utensils have been returned. The host informs us that Oribe made the *chashaku* (tea scoop). Returning to the *mizuya*, she stops at the door and bows, marking the end of the ceremony. Beginning with the first guest, we take our leave by again viewing the *furo* and *tokonoma*. In the *machiai shitsu*, the host and *hanto* join us before we finally depart.

As we walk down the *roji*, with tranquil minds to take up our diverse interests and tasks, the simplicity of Rikyū's teaching echoes in our thoughts:

Tea is nought but this:
First you heat the water,
Then you make the tea
Then you drink it properly
That is all you need to know.☺