Lecture

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Japanese Traditional Culture
“The Three Ways of Tea • Flower • Incense”

On November 2nd, 2019 At Abeno-Harukasu-Event Hall
in Osaka, Japan

Kogakkan University,
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梗概
日本の伝統文化の中に数多く成熟してきた様々な芸道の中でも、特に代表的な三つの道、茶道・華道・香道について、それらの成立の歴史と、内容と特徴、そしてそれらの意義と真意を説明する。

Summary:
Numerous arts have matured amidst Japan’s traditional culture. This paper explains the establishment, history, contents, characteristics, significance and secrets of three of the most representative arts: “the way of tea” or Sa-dou / Cha-dou 茶道, “the way of flower” or Ka-dou 華道 and “the way of incense” or Kou-dou 香道.

● Introduction:
Japanese traditional culture has been passed down from the mythical era and has matured through the seasons amidst abundant, tranquil and beautiful
natural surroundings.

Japanese culture is rooted in Shintoism 神道, and it has been influenced by Buddhism 仏教. It has also been shaped by continental culture brought to Japan through Japanese envoys to Sui 隋 and Tang 唐 Dynasty China (Ken-zui-shi 遣隋使 and Ken-tou-shi 遣唐使). These diverse influences were aesthetically integrated and refined into a unique Japanese culture.

Many of these skills and arts were classified as aesthetic vocations and training methods known as “a way” or michi 道.

Here, I will introduce three representative ways of tea, flowers, and incense. Together, they have been called San-dou 三道 (“the three ways”), or Cha-Ka-Kou 茶・花・香.

● Tea:

Tea was first brought to Japan from southern China as a medicine. It was included, together with various Buddhist ceremonial tools, amongst the treasures dedicated by the Emperor Shomu 聖武天皇 (701～756), to consecrate a newly-made Buddhist statue at Tōdai-ji 東大寺 temple in Nara 奈良, in 752.

Early in the Heian era (794～1185), the Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 (786～842) rowed a boat on the pond of Osawa 大沢の池 of the Saga imperial villa 嵯峨離宮, where he savored tea in the manner of the Tang dynasty poets.

At the beginning of the Kamakura period (1185～1333), the monk Yosai 栄西 (1141～1215) brought tea seeds from Qin 宋 Dynasty China together with Rinzai Zen 臨済禪, and incorporated the drinking of powdered green tea or macha 抹茶, into the rituals of the Zen Temple 禪寺. He also gave the seedlings to another monk, Myoe 明恵 (1173～1232), at Kozannji Temple 高山寺, Toga-no-o 梶ノ尾 in the capital Kyo 京 (present-day Kyoto). The tea came to be cultivated afterwards in the whole region surrounding the capital.
At the beginning of the *Muromachi* era (1336～1573), the taste of the tea which grew up at *Toga-no-o* 桃ノ尾 in *Kyo* 京 came to be considered to be of superior quality. People called this “original tea” *hon-cha* 本茶 and other regions’ tea “non-tea” *hi-cha* 非茶. They thereupon invented a tea-tasting game. Court nobles, samurai families and other men of culture would assemble in a large room of approximately 18 *tatami mats* (≒36㎡) in size.

The game, called “*Cha-Kabuki* 茶カブキ” or “*To-cha* 間茶” (“tea competitions”) was very popular among feudal lords and court nobles.

It was also called “*Kara-mono-cha* 唐物茶 (“tea with imported treasures from China”)” because Chinese paintings, calligraphic works, vases and tea utensils were placed as decorations in on the ornament shelf *Oshi-ita* 押板 (today more commonly known as the *Toko-no-ma* 床の間 (“alcove”) in the new style room or *Kaisho* 会所.

*Flowers:*

Since ancient times, people have offered flowers to gods and Buddhas.

Flowers are arranged in vases in front of the Buddha as a traditional *Zashiki-kazari* 座敷飾 (“room decoration”).

Each flower is a definition of beauty, and a flower arrangement is a creation of beauty. We can condense the truth of the scenery of nature by arranging flowers, and we can symbolize the Utopia or *Jo-do* 净土 where gods and Buddhas are waiting for us.

Japanese people love not only the flower in bloom but also its buds before blooming, as well as fallen flowers scattered on the ground or on water. We refer to flowerless pine branches with evergreen leaves, and maple branches with colored leaves as which shall died flower.

Japanese people even call the ideal beauty of poems and performing arts “a flower” or *hana* 花.
One can thus see how the Japanese people’s fascination with the charm of flowers inspired a concern with methods of display and appreciation.

● Incense:

It is recorded in the oldest chronicles of Japan, the *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀, that in the third year of the Emperor *Suiko* 推古 3年 (595) a branch with a rare fragrance washed up on *Awaji* Island 淡路島, and was accordingly presented to the Imperial Court.

Since then, incense has been produced and sold as an offering to Gods and Buddhas to protect the sanctuary of the Imperial Court, and to provide court nobles with an exquisite fragrance.

The Tale of Genji or *Genji-monogatari* 源氏物語 (1001?) by *Murasaki Shikibu* 紫式部 describes various customs surrounding incense in the lives of the nobility. Such customs included mixing many diverse high quality incense materials, and using them to fragrance the air (*taki-mono* 薫物), comparing the quality of different incense materials (*ko-asase* 香合), and scenting their clothes with incense (*utsuri-ga* 移香).

In the *Nambokucho* era (1336~1392 南北朝), the *Basara daimyo* バサラ大名 or extravagant and ostentatious feudal lords indulged in luxury past times when visiting the capital. Such entertainment included the new game of “incense tasting” (*Monko* 聞香) using aloe wood incense (*Jinko* 沈香).

In this game the participants sampled various incenses, and competed for the prizes in return for guessing what scent the incense was.

● The art producers or *Doho-syu* 同朋衆:

The *Ashikaga shoguns* employed artisans known as *Doho-syu* 同朋衆 in their courts. The *Doho-syu* were Buddhist priests who were well versed in
Japanese and Chinese classical literature. They were good at displaying paintings and calligraphic works and arranging flowers (Tate-hana 立花) as room decorations. They organized collaborative poem competitions (Renga-kai 連歌会), tea ceremonies with utensils from China (Karamono-cha 唐物茶) and incense tasting games (Monko 閏香). They could also design and construct many beautiful gardens.

The most historically renowned Doho-syu are No-amì 能阿弥, Gei-amì 芸阿弥, and So-amì 相阿弥, three generations of Doho-syu who served the 8th shogun Ashikaga Yosimasa 足利義政 (1436〜1490). Their birth is thought to have been low class, but they rose socially under the Ashikaga shogunate through their cultivation in classical culture, literature, and aesthetics. These men became versatile artists, general culture producers, and cultural policy advisors.

Before long, the governance of the Ashikaga shogunate 足利将軍政權 became weak, the O-nin Civil War (Onin no ran 応仁の乱) (1467〜1478) broke out, and the age of Civil War (Sengoku-jidai 戦国時代) (1467〜1590) began. People who excelled in the arts sought to survive the confusion of the world by continuing to hone and mature the practice and philosophy of each art.

Some of them were assigned as masters of Japanese poems waka 和歌 or collaborative poems renga 連歌 etc. to local feudal lords Daimyo 大名. Moreover, talented entertainers arose amidst diverse social classes such as priest, samurai or merchant, serving masters who remained in the capital. A new era of art, aesthetics and philosophy was rebuilt by their efforts.

● The way of Tea or Sa-dou / Cha-dou 茶道

The capital was burnt down and destroyed in the course of the O-nin Civil War. People’s hearts began to be filled with a view of life as something transient and empty (Muzyo-kan 無常観), and artistic aesthetics increasingly embraced qualities such as quietness (Sa-bi 寂び), mortality (ka-re 枯れ) and
coldness (hi-e 冷え). A new tea gathering style, cha-no-yu 茶之湯, became popular amongst both the nobility and commoners. The host would serve a bowl of green tea to his guests in a small tearoom, using ordinary utensils. Tea taken this way in refined hermitages was called wabi-cha 侘び茶, or the rustic tea ceremony.

It is said that wabi-cha was first established by Shuko 珠光 (1422～1502) who was a Buddhist monk of Syomyou-ji temple 称名寺 in the former capital of Nara 奈良. Later, Sen-no-Rikyu 千利休 (1522～1591), a merchant of Sakai 堺 is considered as the master who completed it. Sen no Rikyu served the ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537～1598) as a master of tea ceremony and also achieved the role of his political adviser.

The three sons of Sen-no-Soutan 千宗旦 (1578～1658), the third generation of the Sen family (Sen-ke 千家), were divided into three schools corresponding to the three sons’ families: Omote-sen-ke 表千家, Ura-sen-ke 裏千家 and Musha-no-koji-senji-senke 武者小路千家. These schools, together with many others, have inherited Sen-no-Rikyu’s spirit of tea through the way of tea or Sa-dou / Cha-dou 茶道 to the present day.

●The Way of Flowers or Ka-dou 華道

The monks at Rokkaku-do temple 六角堂 in Kyo 京 were skilled at creating flower arrangements to present to Buddha statues. In particular, Ikenobo Senkei 池坊専慶 was recorded as a master of flower arrangement or tate-hana 立花 (“standing flowers”) around the year 1462. Following that, Ikenobo Sen no 池坊専応 (1482～1543) wrote the book “Ikenobo-Senkei-Kuden 池坊専応口伝” to theorize the technique of tate-hana 立花.

Thereafter, in 1594 Ikenobo Senkou the First 初代池坊専好 (1536-1621) put up a flower arrangement to welcome the ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537～1598) at the residence of a daimyo, Toshiie Maeda 前田利家, and in 1629
this he and his successor Ikenobo Senko the Second 二代池坊専好 (1575-1658) acted as the judges of an exhibition of tate-hana 立花 at the Imperial Palace held by the Emperor Gomizuno 後水尾天皇 (1596～1680).

From the middle of the Edo era (1603-1868) onward, great numbers of men and women of all ages began to learn the way of flower or Ka-dou 華道 under the guidance of many teachers across Japan. These days, we can learn it by many traditional schools of flower, for example Ikenobo-ryu 池坊流, Saga-goryu 嶋峨御流, and Ko-ryu 古流, and many new schools established after Meiji era (1868～1912), for example Ohara-ryu 小原流, Sogetsu-ryu 草月流 and Adachi-ryu 安達流.

And by many other schools, the way of flower has been inherited until today.

● The Way of Incense or Kou-dou 香道

In addition to earlier incense games, kumi-kou 組香 was developed as a new style of game in which contestants sampled incense and responded with waka 和歌 poems or tales or monogatari 物語 from classical literature.

The new kumi-kou 組香 games were refined by the court noble Sanjonishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (145～1537) and the samurai Shino Soshin 志野宗信 (1441～1522).

For example, one of kumi-kou 組香, “Genji-kou 源氏香” refers to the Tale of Genji or Genji-monogatari 源氏物語. Another, “San-seki-kou 三夕香”, refers to three poems about sunset. It is said that hundreds of types of kumi-kou 組香 have been developed so far.

In the Edo period (1603～1868), each became the Oie-ryu school 御家流 and Shino-ryu school 志野流, and both school has been inherited by adding a wide range of people as a disciples of the way of incense or Kou-dou 香道 across Japan. The current masters of the two schools are Sanjonishi Gyosui
(1962～ ) and Hachiya Sogen (1939～ ).

Through these schools and through many others, the way of incense has been inherited to the present day.

Conclusion

In this way, cha-no-yu 茶之湯 (tea), tate-hana 立花 (flowers) and kumi-ko 組香 (incense) gained the patronage of new rulers after the age of Civil War Sengoku-jidai 戦国時代 (1467～1590), in the Azuchi-Momoyama era 安土桃山時代 (1573～1603). Eventually, in the Edo period 江戸時代 (1603～1868), the ways of tea, flowers, and incense were loved by a wide range of people.

By the guidance of many masters of tea, flowers and incense, the spirits and skills of each way have been passed down to the present day.

Japanese people have stylized various aspects of the culture of everyday life as accomplishments or gei-dou 芸道. They are known as “the way” or michi 道 which leads us to enlightenment. We have made them into training hall or dojo 道場 through practicing skills of them.

Three of the representative accomplishments or gei-do 芸道 are “the way of tea or Sa-dou / Cha-dou 茶道”, “the way of flower or Ka-dou 華道”, and “the way of incense or Kou-dou 香道”. These are,

“The way of tea or Sa-dou / Cha-dou 茶道” is the way of training our spirits through serving a visitor with tea.

“The way of flowers or Ka-dou 華道” is the way of training our spirits through creating ideal spaces with flowers to represent the Utopia where gods and Buddhas dwell.

“The way of incense or Kou-dou 香道” is the way of training our spirits through tasting exquisite fragrance and answering in classical literature contexts.
We can be disciples of these accomplishments and can achieve the
cultivation of the heart in these ways by repeating lessons of these skills. We
can learn courtesy, sharpen our sensibility, enjoy Japanese and Chinese classical
literature, and succeed the heart and the sensitivity as the Japanese. In other
words, we can become a strong, right, and beautiful Japanese person.

Japan is full of ways to enlightenment, for approaching gods and Buddhas.
Welcome to Japan, a country blessed by gods and Buddhas.
Thank you very much.

**Special thanks for the review**

Dr. Lorentz Poggendorff

Dr. Alice Freeman