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Article

Reconsidering the religious layers of the Art of Tea

Kencha-ceremonies and the central meaning of a tea offering

Markus RÜSCH

ABSTRACT: The Art of Tea is often considered to see its most natural expression in Rinzai Zen Buddhism, and most research on the religious meaning of Japanese Tea has regarded Zen as its ultimate reference. There is no doubt that the close connection between Tea and Zen begins at a very early stage in the development of the Art of Tea, namely, with the appearance of Shukō (1423–1502). However, Murata’s standpoint is neither the earliest point in the religious history of Tea in Japan nor an adequate reflection of the manifold connections between Buddhism and Tea at present. I will reconsider the adequacy of Zen’s predominant role in the Art of Tea in two steps. I will first analyse the theories on the Art of Tea by Yanagi Muneyoshi and Sen Sōoku (Zuien-sai). Then, I will deal with *kencha* ceremonies as a material aspect of Tea religion. This relatively young phenomenon of public tea offerings at temples and shrines creates a unique religious space that combines art with religion. An analysis of present *kencha* ceremonies and their historical model in Buddhist practice by using the results of part one can provide a new understanding of the religious side of the Art of Tea.

KEYWORDS: Tea religion, *kencha*, Yanagi Muneyoshi, Sen Sōoku, Sadō

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1. Introduction

The Art of Tea (*sadō/chadō* 茶道, *cha no yu* 茶の湯) is often highly valued as a kind of art that synthesises nearly every aspect of traditional Japanese culture, such as calligraphy, pottery, incense, gardening, or flower arrangement. In this context, some of the emphasis also lies on the strong connection with Zen Buddhism. Most studies on the religious aspect of Tea, similar to a significant section of the practitioners of Tea, follow this interpretation. However, the too intensive focus on Zen Buddhism has created at least two problems. First, it has blurred the vision of the manifold mutual influences between the Art of Tea and other sects of Buddhism as well as religion in general. Secondly, the nearly exclusive look at Zen Buddhism led to the vagueness of the Zen element itself. In the following article, I aim to provide a *clarification* of the religious potentials of the Art of Tea. The condition to achieve this objective is the assumption that not in every conceivable situation of a tea serving lies Buddhism or Zen. Notably, many religions developed the idea that someone can observe a deity in every part and moment of the world. However, if we want to discuss the religious aspects, we also need—from the standpoint of philosophy of language—to define the areligious fields. Moreover, the recognition of the omnipresence of Zen also would lead to the question of why we need the Art of Tea in general since every other aspect of a human being's life would be of equal suitability.

To avoid such an approach, I will use the expression “Art of Tea” as a translation for the words mentioned above in Japanese. I connect in this point to a short discussion of an appropriate translation of *cha no yu* by Sen Sōoku. He mentions that every translation into English tends to highlight only one aspect of *cha no yu* and, therefore, fails to express its whole character. Sen sees the disadvantage of “Tea Ceremony” or “Way of Tea” in its strengthening the impression of *cha no yu* as something far distant from everyday life. The problem of “Tea Gathering” lies in its highlighting only the act of getting together, and “Art of Tea” carries the danger of focusing too much on *cha no yu* as art.¹ Since the choice of either one of those translations depends on the own concept of *cha no yu*, my decision to use “Art of Tea” should become evident during the following analysis. Therefore, I may only shortly explain my selection.

“Tea Ceremony” tends to understand *cha no yu* in a formalistic way that only applies to strongly ritualised extraordinary occasions. I see the problem in “Way of Tea” in the point that it either overstretches the religious part in the meaning mentioned above or

¹ Sen, Sōoku 千宗屋 (2011): *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara: Cha no yu ni manabu 'gyakusetsu' no motenashi* もしも利休があなたを招いたら: 茶の湯から学ぶ“逆説”のもてなし. Tōkyō: KADOKAWA, pp. 130–133. Sen's conclusion instead tends to use one of the three Japanese terms in English similar to the anglicised Kendō or Jūdō.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

expresses no more than the never-ending process of learning that is inherent in all art forms. In both interpretations, the translation does not suit to ask for religious meaning. The reader should not understand the decision to use “Art of Tea” as a declaration to understand Tea as art in the sense of art objects that are stored in museums. By using the term Art of Tea, I want to discuss to what extent the complex system of tea utensils, such as tea bowls, architecture, and picture scrolls, serves as a means for the host to transmit a special message to the guests. The content of this message is open and can range from a reference to the beauty of a willow to the meaning of Buddha’s compassion. An analysis of the strategies to communicate religious points, such as the second example is object of the following article.

The article is divided into three main parts. The first provides an overview of the current state of research in the relevant context. This part questions the predominant role of Zen and argues for broadening the religious references. Not the first part nor this article aim to argue for the importance of other Buddhist elements of Tea besides Rinzai Zen by reconsidering its *history* of influence. Therefore, the following historical references serve only as illustrators to understand why Zen has such a dominant function in the contemporary discourse on Tea. The objective of the first part is to ask whether Rinzai Zen can cover all religious potentials of the Art of Tea and what are the problematic points in the arguments concerning Tea religion in previous research. The second part deals with two *theories* on the Art of Tea (not its history) to provide a method of analysis to get access to new aspects of the connection between the Art of Tea and religion. These are the theories by Yanagi Muneyoshi and Sen Sōoku. The two authors criticise the limitation to Zen as the Buddhist influence on Tea and develop an approach to the Art of Tea that is connectable to various kinds of communication goals. Finally, the third part is an application of the method expounded in part two and focuses on contemporary *kencha* 献茶 ceremonies, which are the offerings of tea to a Buddhist or Shintō deity. After clarifying its equivalent in Buddhist practice, this part analyses recent *kencha* ceremonies and their methods of creating an environment that satisfies the religious context.² Through *kencha* analyses, I aim to clarify the potential as well as the limits of the Art of Tea in a religious

² The analysis of *kencha* ceremonies aims not to clarify any aspects of their history nor to argue for the legitimacy of other Buddhist sects as the result of historical development. The selection of those ceremonies and no other kinds of Tea gatherings lies in their characteristic of being most suited to show religious aspects of the Art of Tea as explained below. The reason to focus on contemporary ceremonies lies in the approach within the analysis that demands information on the usage of the temple’s or shrine’s halls and the order of the sequences. Since these details are usually not accessible to a sufficient extent, only participation could solve this problem.

context.³ To put it in other words: The objective is to reconsider the religious role of Tea by extending its meaning through a clear definition of its fields of action. The Art of Tea is not primarily a means for meditation or to make progress on the way to enlightenment. It can undertake various tasks, of which, one is the deepening of a religious concept. The purpose of this article is to develop a new approach to Tea religion based on the theories by Yanagi and Sen and to prove the strength of this method by applying it to contemporary *kencha* ceremonies.

2. Problems of the discourse on Tea religion

2.1 The main reference points within the discourse⁴

Most publications that deal with the Art of Tea and religion in general or Art of Tea and Buddhism in particular focus on the influences by so-called Zen Buddhism.⁵ However, already the usage of the term “Zen” indicates—at least from a contemporary perspective—the vagueness of this concept of religion. The reason is that the word “Zen” is under defined since it includes, among others, Rinzai Zen, Sōtō Zen, Ōbaku Zen, or the Zen part within Tendai doctrine. Based on a supposed deep Zen structure of the Art of

³ A *kencha* ceremony necessarily creates a religious context. Otherwise, one must suggest that there is an areligious way of offering tea to a Buddhist or Shintō deity that not collides with the whole religious ritual. We should instead state that an areligious *kencha* ceremony has failed its inherent purpose.

⁴ I use the word “discourse” to emphasise that the objective of this article is not a clarification of the history of influence between Tea and Zen. Regardless of the historical problems of some points within the Tea discourse, I aim to question the accuracy of its inner structure even after admitting the historical statements.

⁵ Two outstanding exemptions are Elisabetta Porcu (2008): *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (Leiden: Brill) and Dennis Hirota (1995): *Wind in the Pines: Classic Writings of the Way of Tea as a Buddhist Path* (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press), which refer to the Art of Tea and Jōdo Shinshū. However, both authors pursue a different aim compared with this article. Hirota uses only about ten pages of his monograph to refer to a Jōdo Shinshū perspective on the Art of Tea. His interest lies in giving an alternative view on the concept of Tea by Sen no Rikyū from a historical viewpoint. Porcu provides a detailed overview of the construction of an image of Tea that centred on Zen by modern scholars. She also emphasises that one crucial factor for the still-dominant role of Zen in the Art of Tea are the activity by famous Rinzai Zen monks and the way of teachings Zen in many Tea schools (pp. 188–192). Porcu’s analysis also includes a comprehensive account on the connection between the Yabu no uchi school and the temple Hongan-ji. Finally, she draws attention to the difference between Zen as culture and Zen as religion (p. 221). The following approach of this article differs in the point that it does not focus on the ordinary practice of Tea in contemporary Japan and that it does not look from the perspective of Buddhism on Tea but contrarily from Tea on Buddhism.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

Tea, those authors often suggest that the practice of Tea fundamentally connects to one's way to enlightenment. However, the Buddhist sects mentioned above developed distinctively different concepts of *how* humans can gain enlightenment.⁶ Therefore, a significant problem already lies in the choice to use the word Zen without clarifying that in most cases, it may mean Rinzai Zen.

The influence of Rinzai Zen on the world of Tea *in terms of power* is difficult to deny.⁷ One central figure in the discourse on the history of the Art of Tea Shukō 珠光 (1423–1502)⁸ is often said to be creator of the phrase “Tea and Zen are indistinguishable (*cha-zen ichimi* 茶禪一味).”⁹ The so-called founder of the Art of Tea Sen no Rikyū 千利休 (1522–1591) has been ordained at Nanshū-ji 南宗寺 that is a Rinzai Zen temple and Daitoku-ji 大徳寺, one of the head temples of Rinzai Zen, can also be referred to as the head temple of Tea. The temple Jukō-in 聚光院 within Daitoku-ji is the place of Sen no Rikyū's grave as well as of the three Sen-families (*san Sen-ke* 三千家).

Because of this connection, the heads of these families receive ordination at this temple where they get their *sai*-name (*sai-gō* 齋号). They also work as additional information to identify the distinct person in history or present, since in the context of the

⁶ Noteworthy, we can subsume all these sects under the term “Buddhism,” and no sect would deny a distinct set of core concepts of Buddhism. However, these shared parts are not specific enough to be a sufficient basis for a discussion of their application as the Art of Tea. Moreover, the sects themselves may not have denied other interpretations of Buddhism, but it was a standard method to argue why the own sectarian understanding is superior to other opinions. Therefore from a certain level of detail in the analysis, any Buddhist reference needs to focus on a distinct tradition.

⁷ The following overview aims less to consider the state of research in the field of history. The primary purpose is to identify significant elements that produce the Tea-Zen-discourse until today. Based on the essential points of reference given in part 2.1, part 2.2 deals with the problems of the arguments' content, which are the main interest of this article.

⁸ Kōzu Asao emphasises that the use of the name Murata Shukō 村田珠光 should be avoided since the family name contradicts his life as a monk. Kōzu gives Dōgen as an example who is equally not called Koga Dōgen 久我道元 (Kōzu Asao 神津朝夫 (2009): *Cha no yu no rekishi* 茶の湯の歴史. Tōkyō: Kadokawa gakugei shuppan 角川学芸出版, pp. 115/116).

⁹ Recent research in the history of Tea showed that Shukō never got a Zen monk but remained to be associated with the Jōdo-shū for his whole life. Kōzu Asao shows that the phrase on the indistinguishability of Zen and Tea was first used in a book from the late Edo Period and became an essential motto through the book *Chazen ichimi* by Tanaka Senshō 田中仙樵 from 1905. Kōzu emphasises that this view on Tea and Zen was constructed after Shukō and Sen no Rikyū by figures like Yamanoue Sōji 山上宗二 or monks of Daitoku-ji (Kōzu Asao 神津朝夫 (2016): “‘Chazen ichimi’ setsu no saikentō 「茶禪一味」説の再検討,” in: *Zen kara mita nihon chūsei no bunka to shakai* 禪からみた日本中世の文化と社会. Tōkyō: Perikansha べりかん社, pp. 154/164/165).

three Sen-families every successor, head of the school and the retired head receive the same name.¹⁰ However, the character of this ordination is a perfect example of the kind of connection between Tea and Rinzai Zen. According to Kankyū-an 官休庵, there are two types of ordination: layman ordination (*zaike tokudo* 在家得度) and monk ordination (*shukke tokudo* 出家得度). The difference lies in the point whether one performs Zen practices or enters a Zen temple. The argument is that the layman ordination was simply a kind of certificate nearly every person of the cultural society needed and enabled its holder to get access to new kinds of social groups.¹¹

Kankyū-an also emphasises that the interaction between Tea and Rinzai Zen is less motivated in terms of faith or the aspiration to make religious experiences. Rinzai Zen not as a religion but as culture was instead a means, for example, to get access to the newest imports from abroad as Chinese literature, architecture, or even fashion. Therefore, the Rinzai Zen temples mainly served as a cultural circle. The purpose of this argumentation lies not in the point to deny any religious layer in the Art of Tea. Instead, it clarifies the distinct religious aspects¹² and deepens its religious potential through a negation of a universal understanding that argues for religious meaning in every aspect. Further, this argumentation widens the perspective from an exclusively Rinzai Zen interpretation to other sects of Buddhism, Shintō, and even Christianity. Thereby, Kankyū-an clarifies that only the contact to the Buddhist world and Rinzai Zen, in particular, does not necessarily imply an influence in a religious sense.¹³ I will refer to this central problem in the discussion of the religious side of the Art of Tea later in more detail. However, we can already observe the reason for this problem. It lies in the assumption that a temple or shrine as the *place for an action* or the *origin of a piece of art* already implies a religious meaning.

¹⁰ Omotesenke 表千家 uses for its head Sōsa 宗左, for the retired head Sōtan 宗旦 and for the successor Sōin 宗員. In the same order, Urasenke 裏千家 uses Sōshitsu 宗室, Genshitsu 玄室, and Sōshi 宗之, and Mushakōjisenke 武者小路千家 uses Sōshu 宗守, Sōan 宗安, and Sōoku 宗屋.

¹¹ See *Cha no yu to no deai* 茶の湯との出会い、(NHK Shumi yūyū, Cha no yu: Mushakōjisenke NHK趣味悠々 茶の湯: 武者小路千家 (2003), pp. 11/12). Similarly, the monthly service in remember of the death of Sen no Rikyū at Jukō-in, which involves a memorial service and Tea gatherings in Daitoku-ji's precincts, is not an expression of the strong connection between the Art of Tea and Zen in terms of content. We should rather understand it as a family custom to pay gratitude to the ancestors that is simply open to the public.

¹² I understand the “religious aspect” as those parts that make usage of a religious sign system as, in the case of Buddhism, by referring to concepts that are formulated in Sūtra or treatises by Buddhist monks. Therefore, any “religious aspect” cannot be defined generally but must ground on a distinct religion.

¹³ *Cha no yu to no deai*, p. 13.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

However, the problem of the relationship between the Art of Tea and Buddhism concerns not only the question of the Buddhist influences on Tea. Also, in the opposite direction, namely the usage of Tea within the Buddhist world is not limited to Rinzai Zen temples. I will refer to the roots of tea within Buddhist ritual later in more detail, but already a look at the temple-tea-network makes its multi-sectarian character apparent. Tsutsui Hiroichi provided a detailed insight into this aspect. In his monography on the Art of Tea and Buddhism,¹⁴ he also refers to monks of Nara Buddhism, Jōdo-shū, Nichiren-shū, Jōdo Shinshū, and Ōbaku-shū. Tsutsui's work shows not only the critical role of the Tendai-shū especially in the early stage of Tea history but also significant figures of sects as Jōdo Shinshū or Nichiren-shū that already during Sen no Rikyū's lifetime and soon after played considerable roles.

Moreover, a look at the role of Tea in contemporary Buddhism gives insight into the Tea's role that is not limited to Rinzai Zen. For example, Hongan-ji 本願寺—head temple of the greatest sect of Jōdo Shinshū—is strongly connected with the Yabu no uchi-ryū 藪内流 tea school, Senju-ji 専修寺—head temple of the Jōdo Shinshū sect Shinshū Takadaha 真宗高田派—with a smaller school called Sōtan koryū 宗旦古流 and the Hayamiryū 速水流 school participates at important ceremonies that include Tea servings at the Tendai Shugendō head temple Shōgo-in 聖護院.

Besides this aspect, even within Rinzai Zen, the specific role of tea is from two perspectives quite different from the meaning of it in the Art of Tea. First, the Rinzai Monk Yōsai 榮西 (1141–1215)—one central figure in the introduction of tea drinking to Japan—begins his famous work *Kissa yōjōki* 喫茶養生記 with the following words: “Tea is an elixir for the care of health. It is an exquisite means to lengthen the life of humankind.”¹⁵ In this sense, the drinking of tea is simply a method to guarantee a Zen practitioner's physical condition. Second, we can say that the Art of Tea can be a means for a Rinzai Zen practitioner to make progress on the way to enlightenment. Theodore Ludwig describes the view on Zen by Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394–1481), who is said to be the Zen teacher of Shukō, as a practice of “the realization of the Buddha-mind in the everyday realities of human life.”¹⁶ In this sense, we may say that a Rinzai Zen practice can take everything

¹⁴ Tsutsui, Hiroichi 筒井紘一 (2019): *Cha no yu to bukkō: Sōryo no jiseki kara semaru* 茶の湯と仏教: 僧侶の事跡から迫る. Kyōto: Tankōsha 淡交社.

¹⁵ Yōsai 榮西 (1977): “Kissa yōjōki 喫茶養生記,” in: Sen, Sōshitsu 千宗室 (ed.): *Sadō koten zenshū* 茶道古典全集, vol. 2. Kyōto: Tankōsha 淡交社, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ludwig, Theodore M. (1981): “Before Rikyū: Religious and Aesthetic Influences in the Early History of the Tea Ceremony,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 36/4, p. 388.

as its object of contemplation to attain enlightenment.¹⁷ However, it is a logical mistake to conclude that this usage of tea within Rinzai Zen results in a necessity of the usage of Rinzai Zen within Tea.¹⁸ Therefore, there is a difference in the sentence of the indistinguishability of Tea and Zen and the influence by the Aesthetic of Rinzai Zen we observe in the design of a tea house or tea utensils. An individual may use the Art of Tea for his private progression on the Buddhist path, but this usage as a Rinzai Zen practice cannot explain the need for a Tea *gathering*.¹⁹

2.2 Problems of the main arguments within the discourse

To question the adequacy of the dominant role of Rinzai Zen within the religious side of the Art of Tea, finally, I want to refer to some main arguments that characterise the academic discourse on this topic. The viewpoint that Tea automatically leads to Rinzai Zen is older than one may expect. We can read in a record by Chikamatsu Shigenori 近松茂矩 from the early 18th century the following description of the Tea society:

Concerning recent Tea gatherings, they regard every calligraphy not done by a monk of Daitoku-ji as disappointing and, in extreme cases, you are not allowed to hang other calligraphies in small rooms and find only those of Zen monks. [...] This custom started, since many masters have a lack of knowledge and venerate monks in all occasions. Moreover, the monks have a talent to bring someone onto their way and say far-fetched things (*kenkyō fukai* 牽強付会) as “the taste of Tea and the taste of Zen form a harmonious whole” or “The [whisper of

¹⁷ See, for example, *Zen in the art of archery* (Eugen Herrigel), *Zen in the art of flower arrangement* (Gustie Herrigel), or *Zen in the art of the tea ceremony* (Horst Hammitzsch). Those examples show that western authors also had a significant influence on the discourse of Tea and Zen. This tendency may be one result of modern Japanese scholars (for example Suzuki Daisetsu, Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 or Hisamatsu Shin'ichi) who contributed to the image of Zen as one central element of Japanese culture and thought in general. Their strong influence on the Tea discourse could also be one reason why the view of a strong connection between Zen and Tea is still vivid regardless of much historical research on this relationship.

¹⁸ We have to admit that there were even famous figures in history which stressed the mutual relationship of Tea and Zen as Sen no Rikyū's grandson Sōtan. In his work *Zencharoku* 禪茶録 he writes: “The mind of tea is precisely the mind of Zen. Whoever puts aside the mind of Zen does not have the mind of tea, and whoever does not know the flavor of Zen does not know the flavor of tea.” (Ludwig, “Before Rikyū,” p. 368). However, since Sōtan wrote this work in close exchange with his Rinzai Zen teacher Takuan Sōhō 沢庵宗彭, a strong “flavour of Zen” is not surprising.

¹⁹ The only way to harmonise this view is to interpret the relationship of a guest and the host as similar to that of a disciple and his teacher. However, even this problematic interpretation cannot explain why a multiple number of guests are attaining to a Tea gathering.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

the] wind in the pines²⁰ brushes off the dust [of the mundane world].” We must say that it is a great mistake only to think that every aim in the Way of Tea is based on the spirit of Zen.²¹

This description is not only to an astonishing extent similar to one tendency in contemporary Tea gatherings, but it also shows that one reason for the strong impact of Rinzai Zen lies not in the nature of the Art of Tea but is instead the result of the Rinzai Zen monks’ power.

There is only few research that deals explicitly with the religious side of the Art of Tea. By far, the most significant amount of works analyse the Rinzai Zen influence on picture and scripture rolls that are used in tea rooms.²² However, this approach is not different to an analysis of the usage of Zen art within the Art of Tea, but it does not clarify the religious or Rinzai Zen aspect of the *whole act* that the Art of Tea implies, namely the act of the serving of tea or a Tea gathering.²³ In the following paragraphs, I will refer to some main arguments in this context by referring to representative modern authors who were very influential in spreading the Art of Tea in the West and two recent articles by Dorinne Kondo²⁴ and Jennifer Anderson.²⁵ My aim is to demonstrate the problems that arise if one sees Rinzai Zen as the primary source in Tea religion that moreover characterises *every aspect* of a Tea gathering. Besides the critic of Rinzai Zen, the following aspects also address the problem of the discussion of Tea religion in general.

Theodore Ludwig identifies in the modern discourse the scholars Hisamatsu Shin’ichi 久松真一 (1889–1980), Furuta Shōkin 古田紹欽 (1911–2001), and Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) as those who “elaborated the view that the Way of Tea is a characteristic creation of Zen.”²⁶ One more important figure in this history is Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (Tenshin 天心, 1862–1913). Without going into in-depth detail of their theories on

²⁰ *Matsukaze* 松風: a synonym for the sound of boiling water in a kettle.

²¹ Tsutsui, *Cha no yu to bukkō*, p. 10.

²² See, for example, *Chaseki no zengo handobukku* 茶席の禪語ハンドブック (Arima Raitei 有馬頼底) or *Zen-Wörter im Tee-Raume* (Hermann Böhner).

²³ This perspective is similar to an analysis of the religious side of a classical concert by focusing on the Christian meaning of classical music. Although this perspective would clarify important aspects in Western music, not all works played at a concert have a strong connection to Christianity nor describes an analysis of an opus the whole act from entering until leaving a concert hall. Similarly, a Zen painting has an essential influence on the religiousness of a Tea gathering. However, the religious aspect of this event is not solely defined by this single item.

²⁴ Kondo, Dorinne (1985): “The Way of Tea: A Symbolic Analysis,” *Man* (New Series) 20/2, pp. 287–306.

²⁵ Anderson, Jennifer L. (1987): “Japanese Tea Ritual: Religion in Practice,” *Man* (New Series) 22/3, pp. 475–498.

²⁶ Ludwig, “Before Rikyū,” p. 368.

Tea and its history, I want to focus only on the main problematic arguments in the treatises by Okakura and Suzuki.²⁷

Okakura begins to discuss the religion of Tea in *The Book of Tea* by giving an overview of the contents of “Taoism and Zennism” in chapter 3. He opens this chapter with the following assumption:²⁸

The connection of Zennism with tea is proverbial. We have already remarked that the tea-ceremony was a development of the Zen ritual. [...] Our interest in Taoism and Zennism here lies mainly in those ideas regarding life and art which are so embodied in what we call Teatism.

The structure of this argument shows well that for Okakura Zennism is one means to emphasise the differences between East and West. He does not deduce distinct religious elements out of the Art of Tea, but his argument itself grounds in the assumption of inner connectedness. Another problematic part in the cited passage is the view that the origin of something limits the extent of its possibilities. Regardless of the accuracy of the opinion that the Zen ritual is the origin of Tea, we cannot conclude that Zennism is an inevitable element of Teatism. That would be equal to the view that any composer who is influenced by Bach could only create church music. Okakura continues to use this pattern as when he states: “The simplicity and purism of the tea-room resulted from emulation of the Zen monastery.”²⁹ Here again, the assumption of Okakura’s theory itself is that Tea was a result of Zen Buddhism. Therefore, the statements in *The Book of Tea* are an exciting example of a Zen Buddhist reading of the Art of Tea, but they cannot contribute to an understanding of the Tea reading of Zen nor do they sufficiently argue why Zen should be the only or at least most essential Buddhist reference.

For Suzuki, Zen and Tea have in common that they simplify things and remove everything that is not necessary.³⁰ He develops his theory on Tea along with the famous phrase “harmony-respect-purity-tranquillity” (*wa-kei-sei-jaku* 和敬清寂) and argues what aspect of Zen each character expresses. For Suzuki, these four elements express the way of life at a Zen temple. Regarding “harmony,” Zen serves as a means to prevent humans from being polluted by their environment. The purpose is to become free of the self and

²⁷ See Porcu, *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (pp. 183–188) for a discussion of the main points in the Tea theory of Suzuki and Hisamatsu.

²⁸ Okakura, Tenshin 岡倉天心 (2008): *Cha no hon* 茶の本 — *The Book of Tea*. Tōkyō: IBC Publishing, p. 63.

²⁹ Okakura, *Cha no hon* — *The Book of Tea*, p. 95.

³⁰ Suzuki, Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1969): *Zen to nihon bunka* 禅と日本文化. Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, p. 121.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

construct a Pure Land in this world.³¹ Suzuki's approach to Tea shows even more evident than *The Book of Tea* that Zen stands not at the end of their argumentation as its result, but it is the condition for all arguments. Therefore, we can say that the Art of Tea is more suited to practise the teachings of Zen than, for example, playing baseball. However, he is not able to explain why all or even the most practice of Tea should satisfy the religious concept of Zen.

Moreover, some of Suzuki's points are problems regarding the question of whether they are characteristics of Zen. For example, in the section on "respect" Suzuki emphasises the contribution of Zen to "the democratic spirit" of Japan and states that this Buddhism allowed the concept of equality even during the feudal days.³² However, since Japanese Buddhism generally belongs to Mahāyāna, it is, on the contrary, more difficult to find a sect that not practises the equality of humans. In Suzuki's attempt to develop the concept of Tea as a Zen practice, we may admit that one specific point in this Buddhism is that the Art of Tea can become a means for religious practice. Therefore, there are less distinct Zen Buddhist elements in Tea, but the inner structure of Zen teachings allows their practitioners to use also the Art of Tea on their way to enlightenment. Nevertheless, despite that, supposedly, every form of art can share this quality, if one only arranges the concrete contents without changing the main structure. We may call this applicability the strength of Rinzai Zen. The problem in Suzuki's approach is that it tries to argue for one true shape of the Art of Tea, namely that which fits the concepts of Zen. However, if we follow this normative view, we cannot label the Tea practice of aristocrats or Meiji connoisseurs (*sukisha* 数寄者) with "Art of Tea." One may argue that those kinds of Tea contain no religious elements, although they belong to the Art of Tea in a broader sense. In chapter 3, I will show how we can avoid an approach to Tea religion that departs already from a specific religious content like Okakura and Suzuki.

The localisation of the religious aspects: The first problem in those articles that seem to succeed in the tradition of modern Japanese authors, as described above, lies in an insufficient distinction between "ritual" and "religious."³³ There is no doubt that one primary concern of the Art of Tea is to create a place that is distinctively different from everyday life. However, Tea shares this character with nearly all kinds of art since a theatre performance, a concert or even an art exhibition also are dependent on an unordinary space that enables them to transfer a specific message to the visitor. A certain behaviour is not limited to the visiting of a Tea gathering but is instead a condition of the most experiences of art. The opposition of "mundane" and "ritual" is, therefore, less a religious characterisa-

³¹ Suzuki, *Zen to nihon bunka*, p. 126/127.

³² Suzuki, *Zen to nihon bunka*, p. 129.

³³ See, for example, Kondo, "The Way of Tea," pp. 295/297/298.

tion than an aesthetic, and it allows the performers of art to make distinct aspects visible.

The notion of Zen: Although Zen is often understood as a religion that is beyond words, the actual presence of a vast number of texts on Zen shows that language is in the Zen traditions a valuable means even to overcome language. However, most authors do not define what Zen and the characteristic of a Zen influence is. This leads to two problems. The first is the reference to a so-called Zen aspect that is, in many cases, an aspect of Buddhism in general. One example is the following statement: “Zen describes a fusion of opposites in which the beautiful and the ordinary are no longer distinct.”³⁴ The negation of an opposition of A and non-A is an integral part in nearly all sects of Japanese Buddhism as seen in the concept of the “ten worlds” (*jikkai* 十界, Tendai) and the expression “the ocean of the One Vehicle of the Primal Vow [is] nonduality” (*funi* 不二, Jōdo Shinshū)³⁵. As already mentioned, the problem begins already with the usage of the term “Zen” that not distinguishes between Rinzai Zen, Sōtō Zen or other variants of the Zen thought.

The omnipresence of Zen: The second problem lies in the tendency to interpret every part of the Art of Tea as an expression of Zen thought. The following examples may illustrate this point:

- [1] Each [anecdote concerning Rikyū] stresses in some way his conviction that the simple act of preparing a bowl of tea can become a positive step towards achieving enlightenment.³⁶
- [2] Heart-sized stones bound with black twine (*sekimori ishi*) have been placed on paths which do not lead to the tearoom by the host. These indicate his desire to help the guest follow the most direct spiritual path.³⁷
- [3] The discomfort experienced entering the tearoom [through the crawling-in entrance *nijiriguchi*] also symbolises rebirth.³⁸

Regarding the second example, one may ask whether any sign for direction is also a symbol for leading to enlightenment. In this case, we would admit that a sign directing to the underground in a station or the words “staff only” in a department store are all Zen symbols that lead their observer to enlightenment. The third example may implicitly refer to similar interpretations in Shugendō 修験道 where narrow formations of rocks

³⁴ Kondo, “The Way of Tea,” p. 292.

³⁵ Shinran 親鸞 (2011): “Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui 顯淨土眞實教行證文類,” in: Kyōgaku dendō kenkyū sentā 教学伝導研究センター (ed.): *Jōdo Shinshū seiten zensho* 浄土眞宗聖典全書, vol. 2, Kyōto: Hongan-ji shuppan 本願寺出版, p. 57.

³⁶ Anderson, “Japanese Tea Ritual,” p. 481.

³⁷ Anderson, “Japanese Tea Ritual,” p. 484.

³⁸ Anderson, “Japanese Tea Ritual,” p. 485.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

symbolise a path to rebirth. However, the symbol system of a tea house with its garden as well as the soteriology of “Zen” is barely appropriate to support this interpretation. Nevertheless, the most unconvincing point is that the interpretation of rebirth itself is supportive in this “Zen” narrative. Finally, the first is an excellent example of the extent of the Zen interpretation. It is not only questionable whether *all* anecdotes of a Rinzai Zen monk reveal his religious insights—especially concerning the question of enlightenment—, but it is also even more arguable in case of Sen no Rikyū. Politically or socially motivated contacts also characterise his life significantly.

The purpose of the Art of Tea: The previous point leads to the following aspect that is a reduction of the multifaceted goals of the Art of Tea to the purpose of achieving enlightenment.³⁹ One reason for this tendency is that the undefined religious meaning of Tea serves as an explanation of the pragmatic question of why the drinking of tea needs such a complicated ritual background. However, as I will show later, the purpose of the Art of Tea should not be seen in the act of drinking tea. Moreover, the reference to enlightenment even creates a new problem that concerns the question of why Tea gatherings that include solely the host and one guest are rare cases.

The religion of Tea: Finally, the discourse on Tea religion includes not only a focus on “Zen” but also references to other religions as Shintō or Taoism. This mixture, even more, demands a clear definition of what Zen or enlightenment means. An analysis “in the light of a soteriological definition of religion”⁴⁰ together with reference to Shintō elements in Tea, raises the question of what Shintō could contribute to the idea of soteriology.⁴¹ The inexactness mentioned above not only applies to the definition of Zen but also the other mentioned religions. Besides, a high number of attributions are questionable in their exclusivity. Is purity only a Shintō aspect and stands in no relation to the concept of purity (*shōjō* 清浄) in Buddhism? Is respect only a Confucian value and has no connection with Buddhist reverence (*kyōrai* 敬礼)?⁴² However, a discussion of the religious side of the Art of Tea requires a reference to concrete religions. Hence, the claim that Tea needs no distinct concept of religion but is based on a somehow religious feeling makes it impossible to make any statement on the place of religion within the Art of Tea.

On the core of most problems analysed above lies a circular argument. Their presupposition is the religious element as an inherent aspect of the Art of Tea. On that basis,

³⁹ See Kondo, “The Way of Tea,” p. 302.

⁴⁰ Anderson, “Japanese Tea Ritual,” p. 495.

⁴¹ Anderson, “Japanese Tea Ritual,” p. 482.

⁴² Anderson, “Japanese Tea Ritual,” p. 492. Ludwig’s article is an excellent example of a broader interpretation of so-called religious concepts. In referring to Confucianism, Ludwig describes the Art of Tea as a method of training (Ludwig, “Before Rikyū,” p. 369).

they start from a Zen Buddhist world view to refer to aspects in Tea which stimulate the Zen approach to phenomena. It is one strength of the Art of Tea that it can fit multiple numbers of contexts. However, the conclusion that Zen Buddhism fundamentally structures tea is simply a consequence of their approach to see the world with Zen glasses. To solve this problem, we must change the direction of our question. We should not try to search for religious parts that are *inherent* in the Art of Tea, but to establish a method that allows clarifying the religious *potentials* of Tea; that is the ability of Tea to express a religious concept. In the following chapter, I will show how we can change the approach from a religious view on Tea to a Tea view on religion.

The change of this approach also demands a change in the object of analysis. In the examples above, it became clear that they applied the religious concept (the authors' condition) to distinct parts of the Art of Tea. However, in this article, the objects of Tea form the basis to clarify how they refer to religion. We can access to these objects by using the recordings of the Tea gatherings (*kaiki* 会記). These records are the textual basis in the following analysis of chapter 4. Those recordings provide rich material for a text-based approach to the Art of Tea which has not yet become a focus in the study on Tea religion.⁴³

3. Two theories of the Art of Tea

Holding the above-analysed problems in the study of the Art of Tea in mind, I will continue to discuss the *theories* of the Art of Tea by Yanagi Muneyoshi 柳宗悦 (1889–1961) and Sen Sōoku 千宗屋 (Zuien-sai 隨縁斎, 1975–). Although both authors also have an interest in the history of the Art of Tea, my referring to them aims not to connect to any historiographic discourse. Further, I do not refer to Yanagi and Sen as facts illustrative of alternative cases in the Tea practice equal to the *kencha* ceremonies analysed below. Instead, they serve as two concepts of the Art of Tea that we can apply in the analysis of *kencha* ceremonies. The choice for these two figures is not the result of a direct influence of Yanagi to Sen. One reason was their reference to Rinzai Zen that not denies its impact on the Art of Tea nor focuses solely on it. Instead, both authors not even see Zen as the most important religious influence on Tea. The second reason—and this may become clearer in the following pages—was a similarity in their understanding of the Art of Tea that emphasises the function of Tea utensils to communicate a special message to the

⁴³ The most prominent author in the context of the study of recordings of Tea gatherings is Tani Akira 谷晃. Tani analyses the characteristics of famous Tea people on the basis of recordings (*Chakaiki no fūkei* 茶会記の風景 (Kyōto: Kawara Shoten 川原書店, 1995) and *Kindai sukisha no chakaiki* 近代数寄者の茶会記 (Kyōto: Tankōsha 淡交社, 2019)) as well as the development of used objects (*Chakaiki no kenkyū* 茶会記の研究 (Tankōsha, 2001)).

guests. Although Buddhism strongly influenced the writings of Yanagi and Sen, their theories of the Art of Tea do not stress a necessarily present religious meaning of Tea. The purpose of the following analysis is to concretise the purpose of the Art of Tea in general. On this basis, the following chapter will analyse the possibility of practice of Tea in a religious sense. As explained above, a determining of the basic motive of the Art of Tea is the condition to ask for its religious side. One core problem in recent research was the approach to question the religious aspects of Tea without clarifying its fundamental functioning.

3.1 Yanagi Muneyoshi and the rejection of formalism

Although Yanagi wrote many works directly on the Art of Tea, it is necessary first to analyse his view on Buddhism as well as art, in general, to clarify what is the fundament of Yanagi's Tea theory. He refers in his writings also to Rinzai Zen and Sōtō Zen, but his main concern was the tradition of Pure Land thought in Japanese Buddhism. In this context, he focused on famous figures as Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), and Ippen 一遍 (1239–1289) as well as less well-known people as Mokujiiki 木喰 (1718–1810) or outstanding laymen and laywomen in Shin Buddhism (*myōkōnin* 妙好人). Within the list of Hōnen-Shinran-Ippen, Ippen was for Yanagi the most crucial figure. Although he emphasises the importance of Hōnen and Shinran and understands the possibility of Ippen's thought as fundamentally dependent on the achievements by the other two thinkers, Ippen symbolises for Yanagi the highest point in Pure Land thought. In this sense, he writes: "On the groundwork of Hōnen stand the pillars from Shinran and on them the ridge from Ippen has been erected" or "[The teachings of] Hōnen matured thanks to Shinran and they further improved by Ippen."⁴⁴ This particular importance of Ippen is most apparent in the statement: "The thought of the Nenbutsu 念仏⁴⁵ got to its completion through Ippen-shōnin."⁴⁶

Yanagi's interest in Pure Land thought lies mainly in the concept of a religion that is

⁴⁴ Yanagi, Muneyoshi (1991): *Namu Amidabutsu* 南無阿弥陀仏. Waidoban Iwanami bunko 38. Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Generally, the thinking of Buddha or the intonation of his name. In Pure Land thought the intonation of the phrase "*Namu Amida-butsu*" (I take refuge to the Buddha Amida).

⁴⁶ Yanagi, *Namu Amidabutsu*, p. 6.

accessible to all kinds of humans⁴⁷ regardless of their ability to perform distinct practices. In his attempt to spread this kind of Buddhism⁴⁸ and to bring it closer to humans, he draws particular attention on understandable language. Although this includes specialist works that only address very detailed questions, Yanagi does not want to criticise educated language itself. Concerning Buddhist sermons, he instead points out the problem that they are often not able to address younger people who—according to Yanagi—have a more intellectual approach to problems. In this context, understandable language is to avoid Chinese vocabulary.⁴⁹ One should not arrange the content of the Pure Land Teachings, but only the language that he uses for its transmission.

At the core of Yanagi's Pure Land aesthetic lies one of the 48 vows of the Buddha Amida that are formulated in *The Larger Sutra on [the Buddha of] Immeasurable Life* (jap. *Daimuryōjukyō* 大無量寿経). For Yanagi, the fourth vow can function as the basis for a Buddhist aesthetic namely the “Vow that there [in the Pure Land] may neither be beauty nor ugliness” (*muu kōshu no gan* 無有好醜の願). The critical point of this vow is not that those who dwell in the Pure Land of Amida are equally beautiful, but the Land negates the dialectic of beauty and ugliness itself. Yanagi compares the role of this vow for someone who constitutes a “Dharma-gate of beauty” (*bi no hōmon* 美の法門) with the function that the Primal Vow (*hongan* 本願, the 18th vow) has for followers of the Pure Land path.⁵⁰ Therefore, the 4th vow serves as the *sine qua non*, and this concept must be the basis for every act in Yanagi's aesthetic.

According to Yanagi, the negation of the opposition of beauty and ugliness as a quality of the Pure Land, directly applies to things (mostly art). He writes: “Finally, truly beau-

⁴⁷ Yanagi's interest lies primarily in religion (and in the context of art in an aesthetic) that is suitable for “ordinary people” (*ippan no minshū* 一般の民衆). However, he not rejects the value of other kinds of Buddhism as those who lay emphasise on ascetic practices. He understands the different theories as a distinction in the method but not in the goal that is the gaining of Buddha-hood (Yanagi, *Namu Amidabutsu*, p. 35). This universalism also applies to his view on folk craft (*mingei* 民藝) and other kinds of art (Yanagi, Muneyoshi (2011): “Chokkan no jiyū 直観の自由,” in: *Yanagi Muneyoshi korekushon 2: Mono* 柳宗悦コレクション2: もの. Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 筑摩書房, p. 347).

⁴⁸ In this context, it is necessary to note that Yanagi is not interested in Pure Land Buddhism in the narrow sense of religion or a distinct sect. Instead, he criticises firmly institutionalised sects and the custom of preferring the bloodline before the religious abilities. This criticism also applies to the Tea society with its heads of tea families or also ceramist families. He calls these elements of the feudal system (Yanagi, Muneyoshi (2000): “‘Cha’ no yamai 「茶」の病い”, in: *Cha to bi* 茶と美. Tōkyō: Kōdansha 講談社, pp. 271–274).

⁴⁹ Yanagi, *Namu Amidabutsu*, pp. 26/27.

⁵⁰ Yanagi, Muneyoshi (2011): “Bi no shūkyō 美の宗教,” in: *Yanagi Muneyoshi korekushon 3: Kokoro* 柳宗悦コレクション3: ころ. Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 筑摩書房, p. 93.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

tiful things, that means supremely beautiful things are free of the duality of beauty and ugliness. Therefore, we may call this the beauty of freedom.”⁵¹ For Yanagi, the notion of freedom describes the absence of all obstacles. This view is another analogy to the Pure Land rhetoric that describes the immeasurable light (*muryōkō* 無量光) of Amida also as unobstructed light (*mugekō* 無碍光). This concept of freedom in the context of objects of art stands for that the duality of beauty and ugliness should not restrain their creator. In practice, he or she must go beyond the intention to produce something beautiful. Therefore, his or her action must ground on an absoluteness that necessarily leads the creator to the result. In this context, it becomes apparent that Yanagi uses the term “beauty” in two ways. In the first meaning, beauty is the one side of the aesthetic duality that one must overcome and, in the second meaning, he speaks of beauty in the sense of the fulfilment of the fourth vow.

Since this second kind of beauty is no value that grounds in the human language, an object of art that represents this beauty cannot be the result of its creator’s judgement on beauty and ugliness. This problem leads Yanagi to the conditions of creation. He claims that a work of art should not be an intentional creation (*zōsa* 造作), but similarly, the producer should not be attached to the idea of unintentional creation (*muzōsa* 無造作), which is, in this case, either only one kind of intentional creation. Here, Yanagi raises the example of Raku ware (*raku yaki* 楽焼). In his view, the problem in this kind of pottery lies in recent potters—supposedly he addresses the Raku family and not the Raku ware itself—who forcibly try to produce a beautiful bowl, and by this intention, they create bad-looking parts. In consequence, we can say that Yanagi supposes bowls from the early phase of Raku ware as suited to express the unconditioned beauty, but just this quality produces the described problem of an intentional copy of an unintentional object. Hence, Yanagi identifies as the origin of ugliness the self (*jiga* 自我). The self is the reason why someone loses his potential to be free in his creating objects of art that are unconditionally beautiful.⁵²

Yanagi compares this expression of beauty within art as the appearance of Buddha himself.⁵³ Within the process of the production of an object of art, it is not an individual that gives birth to a beautiful thing, but the principle of the fourth vow expresses itself. This concept shows a strong parallel to a Pure Land concept of the Nenbutsu. Namely: Although a human being speaks the name of Buddha with his mouth, this act of speaking itself must be the Buddha speaking through the mouth of this person. Otherwise, the

⁵¹ Yanagi, Muneyoshi (2011): “Bi no hōmon 美の法門,” in: *Yanagi Muneyoshi korekushon 3: Kokoro* 柳宗悦コレクション3: ころ. Tōkyō: Chikuma shobō 筑摩書房, p. 108.

⁵² Yanagi, “Bi no hōmon,” p. 113.

⁵³ Yanagi, “Bi no hōmon,” p. 119.

speaker adds a part of his self to this act. However, this addition would be equal to an end of the unconditioned character⁵⁴ of the intonation. Yanagi even compares beautiful things with objects that became a Buddha (*jōbutsu shita shina* 成仏した品). He writes: “When things show their original condition, they are called beautiful objects. Ugliness means a condition where the essence [of this thing] got influenced by some obstacle.”⁵⁵ This connects directly to an idea of salvation in the context of art that is for Yanagi—not necessarily but to a particular degree—folk craft. He describes this kind of art as one that “went deep into the [problem of] the salvation of ordinary people (*bonbu* 凡夫).”⁵⁶ Folk craft may be described as suited for Yanagi’s concept of aesthetic due to two points. First, producers of folk craft are thought of to be independent in their creating of art since social ties do not bound them, nor are they dependent on economic success or restricted by the task to maintain their tradition in a formalistic sense.

The second point concerns the side of the observer. Yanagi searched for an art that is comprehensible for each kind of human beings. Hence, folk art represented a kind of beauty that is not dependent on a distinct intellectual discourse. Moreover, due to the little attention folk art received over a long time, to Yanagi the factor may also have been crucial that those objects were more comfortable and cheaper to collect. He sees one problem concerning a free view of art in expensive objects of art. This problem is less a feature inherent in those objects, but a disability of humans. Yanagi writes explicitly: “It is challenging for a rich person to become pure.”⁵⁷ Therefore, the problem of already highly valued objects applies in the other direction also to folk art. Their unique quality lies not only in the above mentioned first point but also in their being not part of elitist circles. Thereby unprejudiced access to them is easy to a particular extent. In consequence, if folk craft would be situated within a highly regulated social system, it would be very probable that those objects lose their quality to give its observer a view of the unconditioned beauty.

This leads to the second core concept in Yanagi’s aesthetic—besides the fourth vow—that is the idea of “immediate looking” (*jika ni miru* 直に見る, also used in its Sino Japanese equivalent *chokkan* 直観). Yanagi describes this concept as follows: “Immediate looking means to look freely. [...] It is a looking that is before making any judgment.”⁵⁸ Therefore, the unconditioned beauty is not only dependent on a creator who is entirely

⁵⁴ Applying Yanagi’s understanding of beauty and ugliness to the case of the Nenbutsu, this would mean the negation of the duality of Self Power (*jiriki* 自力) and Other Power (*tariki* 他力).

⁵⁵ Yanagi, “Bi no shūkyō,” p. 88.

⁵⁶ Yanagi, “Bi no shūkyō,” p. 90.

⁵⁷ Yanagi, “‘Cha’ no yamai,” p. 267.

⁵⁸ Yanagi, “Chokkan no jiyū,” p. 347.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

free of his self, but it also needs an observer with an unprejudiced mind. Since this kind of beauty has an absolute value, the act of creating and observing art becomes a complicated task since in both cases the human tends, in the beginning, to use his language to reflect what he or she is doing or seeing. For Yanagi, the Art of Tea has both aspects. First, it can make the experience of an unconditioned beauty possible. However, second, due to its development within society, it got to a significant extend formalised, and traps emerged that prevent someone from getting into contact with beauty. In analogy to this two-fold character, Yanagi's writings on the Art of Tea both show Tea's potential of being a part of the "religion of beauty" and, simultaneously, they point out the problematic parts of the Tea society of that time.

The following citation reveals Yanagi's high appreciation with the Art of Tea:

Until today, the nearest approach to the religion of beauty is presumably the Way of Tea (*sadō* 茶道) in Japan. [...] This [art] established its way in strict conformity with the beauty. [...] The characteristic of the Way of Tea is its teaching in the way of the heart (*kokoro no michi* 心の道) by using the beauty of tea utensils⁵⁹ as a medium.⁶⁰

The application of the Pure Land thought to the Art of Tea included not only the usage of objects of art (mainly folk craft) that formerly often has been neglected. Yanagi's fundamental interest also lies in a practice of the Art of Tea that is not dependent on one's intellectual or monetary abilities, but that is comprehensible to everyone. Yanagi's writings on the Art of Tea follow less a logical structure to develop a theory of Tea but discuss its potentials and problems along with specific problems. An essential work due to its range of subjects is "Thoughts on the Way of Tea."⁶¹ The chapters deal with the following issues:⁶²

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. The meaning of seeing | 7. Fundamental beauty |
| 2. The result of seeing | 8. The beauty of simplicity |
| 3. Utilisation | 9. Ordinarity |
| 4. Tea utensils | 10. Handicraft |
| 5. Patterns | 11. Inwardness |
| 6. Politeness | 12. Formalism |

⁵⁹ The word "*chaki* 茶器" mostly refers to a caddy for thin tea. However, Yanagi uses *chaki* in his writings to describe tea utensils in general.

⁶⁰ Yanagi, "Bi no shūkyō," p. 94.

⁶¹ Yanagi, Muneyoshi (2000): "Sadō o omou 茶道を想う," in: *Cha to bi* 茶と美. Tōkyō: Kōdansha 講談社, pp. 138–160.

⁶² There are no chapter titles in the original.

Many of the conditions of this “Thoughts,” as well as distinct arguments, directly connect to the above-analysed theory of a religion of beauty. Therefore, I will only refer to the new points that immediately concern the Art of Tea. In “Thoughts on the Way of Tea,” Yanagi emphasises the special competence of a true Tea person (*chajin* 茶人) that lies in giving birth to a tea utensil by the act of looking. The Art of Tea is for them a means to transmit the insight they got by immediate looking. Yanagi states: “The founders of Tea did not look at things from [the perspective of] the Way of Tea. The Way of Tea arose due to their looking. How much differ the Tea people after them in this point?”⁶³ Here, the Art of Tea is less an art form that is particularly suited to express the unconditioned beauty, but its very origin lies in its capability to serve in this function. According to this conception, for the founders, the Art of Tea was not a method to cultivate their minds. Their art was already an expression of the founders’ freedom in looking at things.

However, this exceptional quality of the early Tea people does not consist of uncovering an object’s aspect that is hidden or that needs a kind of knowledge. This immediate looking has a contradictory two-fold aspect. On the one hand, due to the tea people’s discovery and usage, “light comes out of those things.” On the other hand, “they did not look from an individual perspective, but watched them just as they are (*aru ga mama ni*).”⁶⁴ Here, we can observe the parallels to Pure Land thought where someone must become able to receive the Other Power of Amida without adding any part of his self. However, through this negation of any Self Power, the person himself becomes a medium of the Other Power. Applied to the Art of Tea, this means that one must negate any judgment in his looking at a tea utensil to become able to claim that he elected an object that can be an expression of absolute beauty. Yanagi describes the observing of this kind of contradictory beauty as “seeing extraordinariness within ordinariness” (*heibon no naka ni hibon o miru* 平凡の中に非凡を見る).⁶⁵

Naturally, this high demand for practitioners of the Art of Tea disqualifies a high number of them. The all too big discrepancy between Yanagi’s ideal and the reality of the Tea society may have motivated him to use a significant amount of his writings for a critic of such kind of Tea practice. The core point of his critic is that this society blurs the vision of the truth of beauty. A very illustrative example is the boxes for tea utensils with a note of authentication (*hako gaki* 箱書き). Yanagi does not criticise the value of the content itself of those boxes. He sees instead a threat of focusing only on the note and not on the object that this note describes. In this case, an observer gets only in contact with the

⁶³ Yanagi, “Sadō o omou,” p. 140/141.

⁶⁴ Yanagi, “Sadō o omou,” p. 148.

⁶⁵ Yanagi, “Sadō o omou,” p. 153.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

thing through the writing—that means only by his intellect—and not through his heart.⁶⁶ Equally, any appreciation of an object of art by this kind of an intellectualised approach runs into danger not to lead the observer to the true beauty of an object. This risk also applies to the role of Sen no Rikyū or old tea houses. Although Yanagi explicitly attaches a high value to both, his critic concerns those people who value people of former times or old objects only regarding their importance within the Tea institution.⁶⁷ Hence, his critic addresses the formalism that emerged around objects and historical figures.

A theory of the Art of Tea in terms of Yanagi contains the difficult task to use the sign system of Tea without forgetting the original purpose that gave birth to this system. Therefore, a Tea person must be inside and outside this world at the same time. He must use the Tea language without descending into a formalism. Noteworthy, the purpose of the following analysis of *kencha* ceremonies lies not in discussing the “trueness” of distinct Tea persons or their insight into the unconditioned beauty. Instead, Yanagi will serve mainly in the following respects.

First, his religious interpretation that does not focus on Rinzai Zen allows us to see a religious purpose in the Art of Tea that not concentrates on individual enlightenment. Such an ego-centric view would not be able to explain why someone should perform a Tea gathering with respect for a Buddha or Shintō deity. However, that is the very motive of a *kencha* ceremony. Second, since the means of tea utensils lies in their being a guide to the absolute beauty, an analysis of the items used at a *kencha* ceremony should focus on the question how they refer to the distinct object of worship. Third, as *kencha* ceremonies, in particular, must focus on the religious object and not on the performing individual, another aspect will be a clarification of the strategies a Tea person utilises to make usage of the sign system without being directed by it.

3.2 Sen Sōoku (Zuien-sai) and communication goals

Although the Tea theory by Sen Sōoku differs in various points compared with Yanagi, they share two essential concerns. First, both emphasise that the religious side of the Art of Tea should not be seen exclusively in Zen. Yanagi, as well as Sen, admits the Rinzai Zen impact. However, we have seen that for Yanagi, the Pure Land thought is more suited to ensure an approach to the Art of Tea that is not limited to a particular piece of knowledge. Sen, on the other hand, draws attention to the high range of possibilities that Buddhism generally offers to deepen the religious aspects of Tea. The second similarity of the two authors lies in a rejection of formalism. To illustrate the importance of new inventions, Sen uses the Buddhist metaphor of “handing down the [Dharma-]flame” (*dentō* 傳燈/伝

⁶⁶ Yanagi, “‘Cha’ no yamai,” p. 257.

⁶⁷ Yanagi, “‘Cha’ no yamai,” p. 244.

灯).⁶⁸ Based on the “unfading Dharma-flame” (*fumetsu no hōtō* 不滅の法灯) at the principal hall of Enryaku-ji 延暦寺 at Mount Hiei, the preservation of the flame continually requires the adding of new oil. In this case, the old value (the flame that the founder of Enryaku-ji Saichō 最澄 (766/767–822) lit in the past) only can be transmitted to the following generations by the addition of new elements (the oil). A light difference between Yanagi and Sen lies in the point that Yanagi sees a problem in the intellectualised approach to old objects whereas for Sen a vivid usage of them demands the addition of new elements that can build a bridge between the past and the present.

We can observe two concepts that lie on the core of Sen’s Tea theory. The first main point is his understanding of the Art of Tea as a “communication tool.”⁶⁹ Sen clarifies that one significant accomplishment of Sen no Rikyū was the shift from tea as something to drink to the emphasis on communication through Tea.⁷⁰ This shift was the condition for the Art of Tea to introduce hanging scrolls and other utensils as objects that not only decorate a room but form a complex language through which the host tries to transmit a special message to the guests. Therefore, the purpose of practising the Art of Tea is not primarily a religious training as to finally gain enlightenment. The Art of Tea is a language that allows its users to make a particular kind of conversation effectively.⁷¹ Noteworthy, one can use this language to talk about religion, or it can thus even serve as a kind of Rinzai Zen conundrum (*kōan* 公案). However, in Sen’s concept, such religious purposes not describe the Art of Tea in an immediate sense but represent one of the Art of Tea’s great potentials that are a result of its basic structure.

One remarkable point in Sen’s theory is that it solves the main parts of the problems analysed in chapter 2. The claim that every aspect of Tea is an expression of its Rinzai Zen character leads to a problematic point. It risks the abolition of any religious aspects due to the impossibility of a distinction between religious and areligious meaning. Sen, on the other hand, even lies particular emphasis on the religious side of the Art of Tea, since he describes it as a potential and not as a necessity. His theory gives an interpret the possibility to identify the distinct religious sides of Tea. Like every language, the Tea language can be useful in specific occasions to transmit a message that another language could not guarantee with the same effectivity. In this context, Sen calls the Art of Tea

⁶⁸ See Sen, Sōoku (2010): *Cha: Rikyū to ima o tsunagu* 茶: 利休と今をつなぐ. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha 新潮社, pp. 223–226, and Sen, *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara*, pp. 148–151.

⁶⁹ Sen uses this expression (in Japanese equally *komyunikēshon tsūru*) explicitly in his foreword to *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara*. Here, he describes the “world of tea” as the “most powerful communication tool” (p. 7). The idea of the Art of Tea as a means for communication characterises both above-cited works.

⁷⁰ Sen, *Cha*, p. 95.

⁷¹ Sen, *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara*, p. 60.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

“a piece of equipment to create a fictional place.” Due to this fictional context, a user of the Tea language may become able to give expression to a thought that an ordinary context does not allow him.⁷² Every fiction must connect to an extent to what we may call “real” life in order to provide new insights into this second context of living. Equally, Sen emphasises that the place of a Tea gathering—especially a tea house within a tea garden (*roji* 露地)—does not construct an environment that is *completely* cut-off the ordinary life. He sees the characteristic of such a place in that it is not only an extension of ordinary life nor a completely unordinary situation. The point is that a tea room should construct a temporary *unordinariness within ordinariness*.⁷³ Hence, one crucial function of the Art of Tea lies in the point that the experiences within the fictional situation have relevance for one’s everyday life.

From the understanding of Tea as language follows that it serves as a tool for someone to express himself or herself.⁷⁴ Here, the regulations to serve the tea or the knowledge about utensils all have the purpose of providing the wealthiest grammar and vocabulary for the individual. Connecting to this aspect, Sen criticises two extreme types of practitioner of Tea. The first is someone who only focuses on the regulations to conduct a Tea gathering without having adequate knowledge of Tea history and utensils. The contrary extreme focuses on the other side while neglecting formal aspects. For Sen, etiquette and utensils are mutually connected. He compares their relationship with a Stradivari violin that demands a proper way of playing. Therefore, the Tea etiquette serves as a methodology to produce the best tone of the utensils.⁷⁵

The second keyword in Sen’s theory is the “relationship with straight forwarded hearts” (*jikishin no majiwari* 直心の交わり). Sen even defines this kind of a relationship as the finale objective of the Art of Tea. This expression describes the situation where the members of a group can directly communicate together; directly from heart to heart. In this respect, the Tea language is the most appropriate way to guarantee such immediate contact.⁷⁶ For Sen, Raku ware is the best example of a utensil that perfectly fulfils this purpose. He describes the motivation for the making of this kind of tea bowl as the result of the search for “a bowl with the purpose of abolishing its being as a utensil.” Similarly to Yanagi, Sen values the kind of tea utensils that not emphasise their existence but can lead its users to a communication objective that is more than only the presentation of

⁷² Sen, *Cha*, p. 215.

⁷³ Sen, *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara*, pp. 164/165.

⁷⁴ Sen, *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara*, p. 22.

⁷⁵ Sen, *Cha*, pp. 104/105.

⁷⁶ Sen, *Cha*, p. 21.

objects of art.⁷⁷

In contrast to Yanagi, Sen draws more attention to the Art of Tea as a means to provide the most sophisticated way for a conversation. The goal is not necessarily leading to an aesthetic or religious truth, but primarily the transmission of a message. Based on this standpoint, it is already apparent that Rinzaï Zen can never be more than one communication goal besides others. The conception of the Art of Tea as language denies the understanding that Zen is an essential element in Tea. It only can be one objective like in any language where their speakers can communicate about religion as well as politics or the last holiday. The view of the Art of Tea as a language illustrates why it is necessary to refer to the recordings of Tea gatherings, as mentioned above. The regulations for preparing the tea, the set of objects used at a gathering, and the basic spatial structure are the grammar of Tea language. The decision for concrete behaviour and the use of distinct objects and rooms allow the whole act to transmit a message. The grammar is only the framework.⁷⁸

Another difference to Yanagi lies in the view of history. Yanagi does not distinguish between old or new objects of art in general. For him, the unintellectual approach is significant. Sen, however, draws attention to the question, how a right passing on the past to the present is possible. A strong rejection of formalism unites the two authors. Sen also showed us that an analysis of the religious side of the Art of Tea requires a distinct religious goal for communication. Therefore, the following analysis of *kencha* ceremonies must clarify the questions of what is the objective of the gathering and how the host uses the Tea language to achieve his goal.

4. *Kencha* ceremonies

As already mentioned, a *kencha* ceremony is an offering of tea to a Buddhist or Shintō deity. We may describe those ceremonies as a combination of a Buddhist or Shinto service with a number of Tea gatherings (*chakai* 茶会).⁷⁹ This custom in the Art of Tea should

⁷⁷ Sen, *Cha*, p. 139. Sen, *Moshimo Rikyū ga anata o maneitara*, p. 201.

⁷⁸ Like any language, the Art of Tea is not only the reproduction of already clear religious contents but through the distinct qualities that only the Tea language owns it can express aspects of a religion which other languages could not communicate with the same quality.

⁷⁹ Although the religious service and the Tea gathering form one event, these two elements are almost not mutually influenced in their concrete sequence. Therefore, we can discuss the Tea part of the event without referring to the details of the Buddhist or Shintō service and its tradition. The main question of the religiosity of Tea concerns not the characteristics of the religious service in general. The analysis focuses on those parts that are addressed by the gatherings.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

become first a focus of attention concerning the problem of the connection between Tea and religion. However, most research⁸⁰ draws the primary attention even in this question on *chaji* 茶事 that is a Tea gathering, including a meal, thick and thin tea.⁸¹ However, connecting to the analysis above, the communication goal of a *chaji*—as well as any other ordinary Tea gathering—can be manifold, whereas a tea offering in front of a Buddhist or Shintō altar as the background of a number of Tea gatherings is necessarily forced to be at least aware of its religious context. This is the reason why I focus in this article on *kencha* ceremonies to analyse the religious potentials of the sign system of Tea. Although the range of the religious meaning depends on the person responsible for the *kencha* ceremony and the host(s) of the following Tea gathering(s), the general setting of the whole event is inevitably religious.⁸² A typical Tea gathering (*chakai* as well as *chaji*) is much more dependent on the host's individual decisions in what he or she wants to communicate.

The history of *kencha* ceremonies in the context of the Art of Tea is relatively short. The first *kencha* dates to December of the year 1878, where the head of Yabu no uchi-ryū conducted this ceremony at Kitano Shrine in Kyōto. A *kencha* ceremony by Omotesenke at the same shrine in January 1879 followed this event. From this point on, every December of a year, the tea schools Omotesenke, Urasenke, Mushakōjisenke, Yabu no uchi, Hayami, Hisada 久田, and Horinouchi 堀内 hold a ceremony by rotation. This new *kencha* custom was not only a critical invention to ensure the head family system, but added a significant new public aspect to the Tea society. Until that time, the Art of Tea was not a kind of public entertainment, but their practitioners mainly acted in limited circles.⁸³ Since a *kencha* ceremony requires the usage of the highest rank of tea serving procedure, the new public element of the Art of Tea also included the fact that a tea offering was visible to everyone which formerly was often limited even to one part of a Tea group. Therefore,

⁸⁰ I found only one article that deals with *kencha* ceremonies in particular: Komiya, Yayoi 古宮弥生 (2019): “Sadō ni mirareru higengoteki na poraitonesu: Kencha no bamen kara no kōsatsu 茶道にみられる非言語的なポライトネス: 献茶の場面からの考察” (*Tōa Daigaku Kiyō* 東亜大学紀要 29, pp. 13–21). However, Komiya's interest lies not in the religiosity of the ceremony.

⁸¹ A *kencha* ceremony in the broader sense also usually includes a meal, thin and sometimes even thick tea. However, the difference to a *chaji* lies in the range of the host's responsibility. In a *chaji*, the host is responsible for all parts, whereas every part of a *kencha* ceremony has a different host. One more difference is that the guests also differ in each *kencha* part.

⁸² Noteworthy, we must also emphasise that the place of the event as a temple or a shrine alone is not enough to judge about the religiosity of the event itself. A high number of present, especially public Tea gatherings take place at temples and shrines. The significant element in a *kencha* ceremony is less its place than the presence of a religious object of worship that is the target of the tea offering.

⁸³ Tsutsui, *Cha no yu to bukyō*, pp. 319–322.

the invention of *kencha* had also an indirect influence on the license system that allowed only advanced disciples to see and learn high-ranked procedures.

The Japanese term for “*kencha* ceremony” is mostly *kencha shiki* 献茶式. However, in some cases of ceremonies conducted at shrines, the term *kencha sai* 献茶祭 is used. According to Sen Sōoku, the tea utensils for a *kencha* ceremony are either newly made or special *kencha* utensils that the temple or shrine usually stores. Therefore, most objects get not into contact with a human’s hand or mouth except during the process of making the tea. Moreover, since the host uses typically a stand for the bowl (*tenmokudai* 天目台), he can avoid most of the direct touches with the bowl. The bowl, its stand, and a cover are the only part of the utensils that become an offering right before the object of worship. One more characteristic of a *kencha* ceremony concerning the attempt to avoid human’s impureness lies in the use of a mask.⁸⁴ The host usually wears the mask from before taking the bowl cover until its covering.

Although this offering of tea to a deity connected with a Buddhist or Shintō service represents the *kencha* ceremony in a narrow sense, in the following I will also refer to the Tea gatherings that accompany this event. We may rather say that only the *kencha* ceremony in its narrow sense together with the Tea gatherings can make full usage of the complex sign system of Tea. They mutually influence each other. The usual structure of a recent *kencha* event in a broader sense consists of the following parts:

- Tea offering to the deity (*kencha* in its narrow sense)
- Main Tea gathering (*haifukuseki* 拜服席, tatami-style or table-chair-style)
- Secondary Tea gathering (*fukuseki* 副席, tatami-style or table-chair-style or two secondary Tea gatherings in both styles)
- Meal (*tenshin* 点心)

A participant of a *kencha* ceremony is free to choose the order in which he or she joins the gatherings. Only the tea offering takes place at a specific time, and every participant should attend this central part. From a Buddhist perspective, a taking part of the whole event should start with the offering, since in the Buddhist ritual the offering of a meal and drinks to the deity should be made before the monk takes his meal. In practice, in most *kencha* ceremonies, the main Tea gathering starts earlier than the offering to ensure the participation of all attending people within the day. Before the final analysis of *kencha*

⁸⁴ Sen, Sōoku (2012): *Chami kūkan: Cha de yomitoku nippon* 茶味空間: 茶で読み解くニッポン. Tōkyō: Magajinhausu マガジンハウス, p. 158.

ceremonies, I want to refer to the offering of tea in Buddhist ritual.⁸⁵

4.1 *Kencha* in Buddhist practice

According to Tsutsui, the beginning of *kencha* as a Buddhist ritual in Japan lies in the Heian period (794–1192). Of particular importance are monks returning from Tang-China such as Saichō and Eichū 永忠 (both returning in 805) or Kūkai 空海 (returning in 806).⁸⁶ I want to focus here on two aspects in Buddhist ritual that are important for the *kencha* ceremony in the context of the Art of Tea. Therefore, my focus lies not on tea as one material content of Buddhist rituals (that is the use of tea within Buddhism),⁸⁷ but on the contrary, the purpose of the following references aim to clarify important patterns utilised in *kencha* ceremonies as one aspect of the Art of Tea (the reference to Buddhism in the context of Tea).

First is the daily offering of tea to Saichō in his mausoleum Jōdo-in 浄土院 at Enryaku-ji.⁸⁸ The structure of this custom can serve as a prototype for *kencha* ceremony in general. The daily routine of the responsible monk *jishin-sō* 侍真僧⁸⁹ begins at half-past 3 a.m. and consists of a tea offering to Saichō, the Buddha Amida 阿弥陀 and the Bodhisattva Monju 文殊 at 10 a.m. The monk offers the tea together with the second meal to Saichō. Although we must understand *each* part of the daily routine as a necessary element, it is remarkable that the relevant writings on the *jishin-sō*⁹⁰ mention the offering of the meals

⁸⁵ As mentioned in the introduction, I emphasise again that my reference to Buddhist ritual serves not as a legitimization of a historical connection between early *kencha* and present *kencha* ceremonies. The following reference has the purpose of clarifying the main elements of the tea serving in front of a deity. This claim does not imply that *kencha* ceremonies are limited to those elements. The following two examples of *kencha* only should show the context to which the host of a *kencha* ceremony can connect through a particular use of the Tea language.

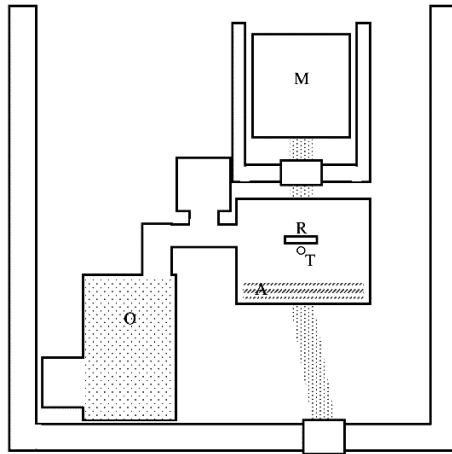
⁸⁶ Tsutsui, *Cha no yu to bukkō*, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Hashimoto Motoko refers for example to the esoteric rites Hokutoku 北斗供 and Miegu 御影供 where tea was used (Hashimoto Motoko 橋本素子 (2018): *Chūsei no kissa bunka: Girei no cha kara 'Cha no yu' e* 中世の喫茶文化: 儀礼の茶から「茶の湯」へ. Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 吉川弘文館, p. 18). See for this context also *Bukkyō girei to cha: Sen'yaku kara hajimatta* 仏教儀礼と茶: 仙薬からはじまった (ed. Chadō Shiryōkan 茶道資料館 (2017), Kyōto: Chadō Shiryōkan).

⁸⁸ My reference to Jōdo-in aims not to suppose that all *kencha* ceremonies or tea offerings at a temple or shrine historically go back to the practice at Jōdo-in. It serves only as an example with a comparatively long history that especially suites due to its prototypical character.

⁸⁹ The *jishin-sō* at Enryaku-ji refers to a monk, who is solely responsible for caring for the mausoleum of Saichō and the temple Jōdo-in. He is not allowed to leave the temple for at least twelve years.

⁹⁰ The two scriptures that are also the basis for the current regulations of the *jishin-sō* are *Kaizan-dō jishin jōsei* 開山堂侍真条制 and *Jōdo-in kiku* 浄土院規矩.



and the tea at the beginning. Further, the practice at Jōdo-in also represents a prototype in terms of the spatial structure.

The map shows at its top the mausoleum (M) of Saichō. This place corresponds to the object of worship of a *kencha* ceremony in the Art of Tea. In the middle of the central building usually hangs a picture scroll showing Saichō as his representation (R). The *jishin-sō* offers the tea bowl (T) in front of this scroll. The responsible monks (A) worship Saichō right in front of these three elements. This worship hall (*haiden* 拜殿) directly connects the Amida-hall and the place for ordinary matters (O, *mandokoro* 政所). Each element of Jōdo-in, as well as the service of the *jishin-sō*, is part of the worship of Saichō. Hence, we also must consider place O as an integral part of the act of offering meals and tea. This structure connects to the events of a *kencha* ceremony that accompany the act of offering tea itself. One more similarity lies in the fact that the monks offer the tea not directly in front of (or within) the mausoleum, but they maintain a distinct distance to the original object of worship. One difference to *kencha* ceremonies lies in the fact that nobody makes a tea directly within the worship hall.

One other differing point is the circumstance that only monks are responsible for the conducting of the offering. In a *kencha* ceremony, the tea master usually is not a member of the religious institution.⁹¹ Since it is not allowed to an ordinary person to enter the

⁹¹ One exception is a *kencha* ceremony at Rinzai Zen temples conducted by members of the Sen families who received the layman ordination at Daitoku-ji. Another exception is Sen Sōoku who received a monk ordination at Enryaku-ji. However, even in those cases, not the tea master himself takes the tea bowl to the final place of offering.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

inner sanctuary (*naijin* 内陣) of a temple or a shrine, the ceremony with the attendance of a member of a tea family requires a part in the ritual where the layperson hands over the tea to the monk or priest. This part of a service is called *tengu* (伝供, also *dengu*), where laypeople and monks successively pass on the offerings to the front of the principal object of worship.

4.2 Analysis of *kencha* ceremonies

Finally, I want to analyse four *kencha* ceremonies that the Kankyū-an (Mushakōji Senke) school conducted in the years 2018 and 2019:⁹²

2018, October: Kōfuku-ji 興福寺 (Nara)

2019, September: Ikuta Jinja 生田神社 (Kōbe)

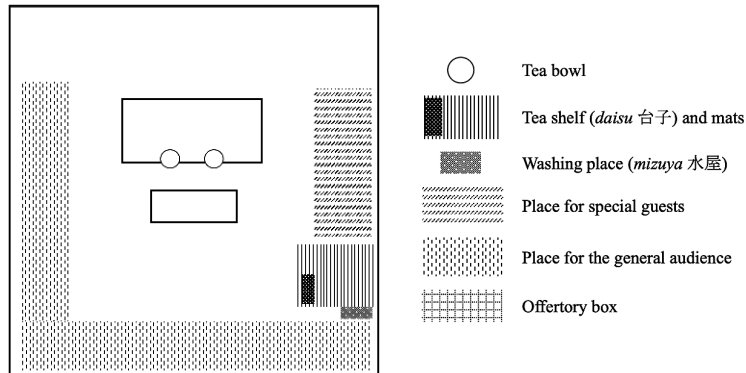
2019, November: Minase Jīngū 水無瀬神宮 (Ōsaka Prefecture)

2019, November: Daitoku-ji (Kyōto)

The reason for a reference to that school lies not in the point that the following analysis that also bases on Sen Sōoku would only apply to Kankyū-an *kencha* ceremonies. However, we can suggest that *kencha* ceremonies out of this context should be most suitable to use the strengths of that theory of the Art of Tea. This assumption applies to a significant extent to those ceremonies that were in the responsibility of Sen Sōoku himself. The order of the analysis follows the complexity of the ceremonies' religious references, which not implies a "ranking" of the ceremonies in general. The analysis connects to the theories by Yanagi and Sen in the following three guiding questions:

1. What is the concrete religious context of the ceremony?
2. What is the goal of communication?
3. In which way do what Tea utensils refer to the object of the tea offering?

⁹² Except for the *kencha* ceremony at Kōfuku-ji, I only analyse ceremonies I was able to attend (attendance to these ceremonies is not limited to members of the school). However, the analysis is—as already mentioned above—almost only based on data in the form of texts, namely the recordings of the Tea gatherings and descriptions concerning the temples and shrines (the principal objects of worship etc.). The attendance to the ceremonies was necessary to get a detailed insight into the spatial structure of the ceremony that the published photographs only allow to a limited extent. Kankyū-an's quarterly journal *Kifū* 起風 contains information on the *kencha* ceremonies. Number 100 of the journal (published in 2019) lists all *kencha* ceremonies that are reported in previous issues of *Kifū* (pp. 120–126).



Hattō

First, I want to refer to the *kencha* ceremony at Daitoku-ji.⁹³ One significant difference between a *kencha* at a temple and a shrine lies in the point that in most temple *kencha* the monks conduct a service parallel to the serving of the tea. The preparation, as well as the taking of the tea bowl to the place of offering, occurs during this service. In most shrine *kencha* the tea master conducts his task in sequence after and before a Shintō ritual. The Daitoku-ji *kencha* ceremony took place at the Hattō 法堂 of the temple that is the lecture hall in a Zen Buddhist precinct. This hall's principal object of worship is Daitoku-ji's founder Daitō *kokushi* Myōchō 大燈国師妙超 (1282–1337). The context of the *kencha* ceremony was the anniversary of the death of Myōchō. As in most cases, the tea master not directly faces the principal object of worship during the serving. The most significant part of the hall is used by the monks, which stands in stark contrast to *kencha* ceremonies with the tea master's place nearly in the centre. Therefore, this ritual draws much attention to its Buddhist side, and the *kencha* serving appears as a supporting element.

Besides the *kencha* ceremony in its narrow sense, the event included one Tea gathering at Jukō-in (*haifukuseki*) and one at Hōshun-in 芳春院 (*fukuseki*).⁹⁴ I only want to discuss the case of Jukō-in, where three parts of the utensils were of particular significance. The motto (*mei* 銘) of the first bowl was “harmony-respect-purity-tranquillity” (*wa-kei-sei-jaku*) that serves as one of the most representative phrases to characterise the Art of Tea. The tea scoop takes up the last motive since its motto was “light of calmness”

⁹³ See *Kifū* 102 (2020), pp. 50–53.

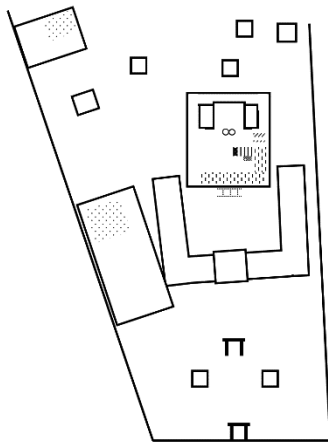
⁹⁴ In all *kencha* cases, I do not refer to the meals.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

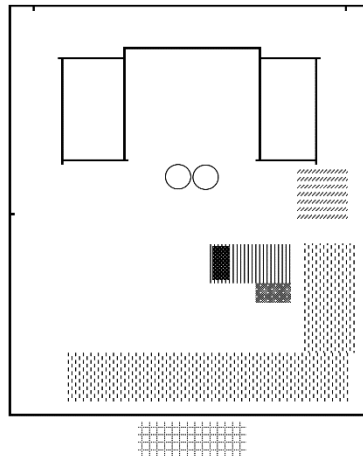
(*jakkō* 寂光). Here, the character *jaku* 寂 refers to the term *jakujō* 寂靜, which means the state in the Nirvāṇa. The light reference expresses that the Buddha emits the light of his merits to this world of passions. The third aspect is the scroll in the alcove (*tokonoma* 床の間). It reads: “Patience makes ten thousand of virtue stores.” The structure of these elements emphasises the value of patience for succeeding a tradition. Here, the focus lies not in performing outstanding actions but in the succession of more ordinary things. The usage of this scroll drew attention to the long history of Daitoku-ji and the value of its persistence.

Further, the motto of the tea scoop made clear that those who deceased—especially people with high virtue—lead the remaining people provided that they attained already Buddhahood. The usage of the famous phrase on the Art of Tea, finally, maintained that the practice of Tea could be an essential means to transmit the truth of Buddha. Therefore, we can conclude that the *haifukuseki* represented an ideal example of leading the guests of the Tea gathering to the Buddhist meaning of the ritual in the Hattō and its significance for present life while creating a level of meaning that is unique to the Art of Tea.

The second example is the *kencha* ceremony at Ikuta Jinja.⁹⁵ The enshrined deity is Wakahirume 稚日女 who also is the “harmonious soul” (*nikimitama* 和魂) of Amaterasu 天照. The precinct of the shrine contains not only various sub-shrines, but its history is also tightly connected with legends on Taira no Atsumori 平敦盛 (1169–1184) and the



Shrine



Kencha

⁹⁵ See *Kifū* 101 (2020), pp. 70–72.

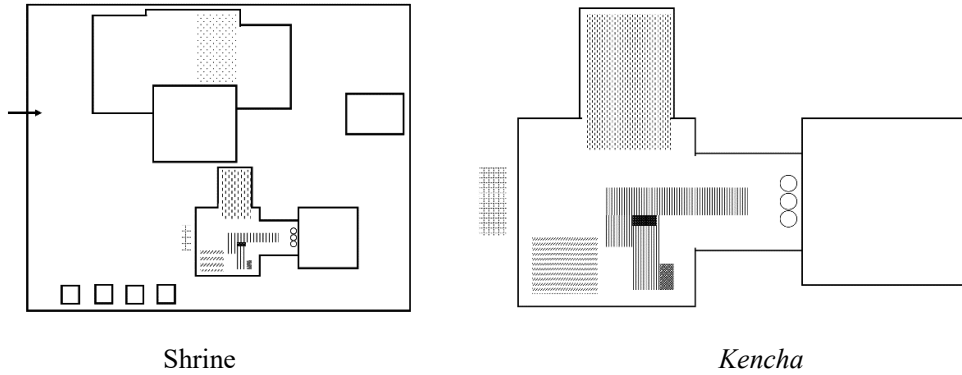
Taira family in general. The direction of the place of the master is—similar to the case of Daitoku-ji—shifted by 90 degrees to the principal object of worship. A difference lies in the fact that the place of tea serving was nearly in the centre of the hall. Further, since no service accompanied the *kencha* simultaneously, there was a high focus on the process of preparing the tea offering. The actions by the Shintō priest before the tea making consisted of reciting introducing words, purifying all attending guests, and announcing the beginning of the ceremony in front of the deity. The offering of the tea was followed by the offering of the sacred trees by representative people and closing remarks.

Two additional Tea gatherings were the content of the *kencha* ceremony. Again, I want to refer only to the *haifukuseki*. Generally spoken, an analysis of the religious meaning in the context of Shintō is more difficult compared with a Buddhist setting due to the missing of comprehensive teachings. A significant number of the utensils call attention to the legend of Taira no Atsumori—as, for example, the second scroll that shows a famous scene with him—or to the season. However, the tea caddy showed an explicit Buddhist word that reads: “It is clear and so obvious. It is completely unhidden” (*myō rekireki ro dōdō* 明歴々露堂々). The meaning of this phrase is that the truth is visible in all aspects of the world, but humans are not able to see it due to their blinded eyes. The motto of the second tea bowl corresponds to this concept since it says: “a jewel within the palm.” Because there is a low probability that a tea bowl refers to its high value, we can interpret the “jewel” as the tea within the bowl. Connecting to this aspect, also the offered tea appears as a precious means to express the presence of Amaterasu. The usage of the light metaphor by the tea caddy may also correspond to Amaterasu, who is the sun deity that brings light into this world. Therefore, the Tea gathering’s utensils expand the connection between the enshrined object and the tea to the Art of Tea itself. In that case, it becomes an expression of the deity.

The case of Minase Jingū⁹⁶ has one unique characteristic that lies in the decision to conduct one of the additional Tea gatherings not within the shrine’s precinct. The second place was the temple Myōki-an 妙喜庵 that belongs to the Rinzai sect of Myōshin-ji 妙心寺. The enshrined deities in Minase Jingū are the Emperors Gotoba 後鳥羽, Tsuchimikado 土御門, and Juntoku 順徳. These lead to the second characteristic that lies in the custom to perform three *kencha* ceremonies per year, namely in April (Urasenke), October (Omotesenke), and November (Mushakōjisenke). Although every *kencha* focuses on one emperor, the ceremony contains the offering of three bowls which stands in contrast to most other *kencha* customs that include only two bowls (in general one thick and one thin tea). Finally, one more difference to the above-discussed examples lies in Kankyū-an’s usage of a table ceremony (*ryūreijoku* 立礼卓). In the case of Minase Jingū, the tenth

⁹⁶ See *Kijū* 101 (2020), pp. 73–76.

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA



head of the school Yukō-sai 愈好齋 (1889–1953) designed this table in 1937. The motivation for this invention lay in making the act of the serving of tea better visible to the attending guests.⁹⁷ The position of the table resembles the *kencha* at Ikuta Jinja, but the far smaller area of the outer sanctuary of the main building combined with the visibility of the table increases the importance of the offering of the tea within the whole event.

The *haifukuseki* took place within the precinct of Minase Jingū, whereas the place of the *fukuseki* was Myōki-an. The organisers realised the movement of the guests over the quite long distance between shrine and temple with buses. We can interpret this simultaneous use of a shrine and a temple as an attempt to draw attention to the unity or at least mutual influence of Buddhism and Shintō. Concerning the objects of the offering, this connects to the history of the Emperors Gotoba and Tsuchimikado who received a Buddhist ordination after their retirement. The utensils used at the two additional gatherings emphasise this connectedness of Buddhism and Shintō. The *haifukuseki* referred to the Buddhist side by the usage of an incense case in the shape of the Buddhist monk Bodhidharma, who is a central figure in Zen Buddhism.

Further, the host of this gathering used a rearrangement of old nails from Myōki-an as the rest for the lid of the teakettle (*futaoki* 蓋置). On the contrary, the *fukuseki* used various utensils that refer to Minase Jingū as the incense case showing a white chrysanthemum, which is the shrine crest. The same applies to the “Minase chrysanthemum” sweets as well as to the chopsticks for the tobacco tray (*kōbashi* 香箸) whose tops are in the shape of chrysanthemums. Therefore, the message of the *kencha* ceremony at Minase Jingū was less the expression of a religious concept, but the emphasis on the

⁹⁷ *Kifū* 98 (2019), pp. 23/24.

connectedness of Buddhism and Shintō. This *kencha* clearly showed that the achievement of this objective was only possible due to the usage of the sign system of the Art of Tea.⁹⁸

The last example—the *kencha* ceremony at Kōfuku-ji⁹⁹—is a paradigm of the religious possibilities of the Art of Tea. The occasion was the completion of the rebuilding of the hall Chūkon-dō 中金堂 with the Buddha Śākyamuni as its principal object of worship. The Buddhist service lasted for five days and included not only different Buddhist ceremonies but also variations within the Tea gatherings. The responsible of the *kencha* ceremony was Sen Sōoku, who used a table and designed a new set of utensils for the temple. The reason for the choice of a table ceremony was to respond to the high building itself and to refer to the Chinese style that was predominant during the time of the first erection of Chūkon-dō.¹⁰⁰ The order of the Buddhist services and the changing elements of the Tea gathering was as follows:

Day	Service	Object within the alcove (Waiting room)	Bowl motto
1	Kōfuku-ji	Kannon statue	Hōrai 蓬莱 (Isle of Eternal Youth)
2	Saikoku Kannon Fudashokai 西国観音札所会	Bronze bell (<i>seidō fūtaku</i> 青銅風鐸)	Onjō-ji 園城寺
3	Nanto Rinzankai 南都隣山会	Pantomime mask (<i>gigakumen</i> 伎楽 面) of Karura 迦楼羅	Wild fence
4	Enryaku-ji	Bronze Vajra bell	Ōtsu 大津
5	Kōfuku-ji	Kannon statue	Morning sun

There is not the place to go deep into the analysis of the Kōfuku-ji *kencha*, which is the most complex event within the examples discussed here. Since the occasion for the

⁹⁸ I should mention at this point that at the same time, a significant number of alternative interpretations are also possible. My purpose lies not in claiming that the religious meaning is the single or even most crucial communication goal. Instead, we should see one potential in the Art of Tea in its function being a medium to address a guest in manifold ways.

⁹⁹ See *Kifu* 97 (2019), pp. 87–89 and Furukawa Bijutsukan Bunkan Tamesaburō Kinenkan 古川美術館 分館爲三郎記念館 (2019): *Cha: Inori to tanoshimi* 茶: 祈りと楽しみ. Nagoya: Furukawa Bijutsukan.

¹⁰⁰ Furukawa Bijutsukan Bunkan Tamesaburō Kinenkan, *Cha: Inori to tanoshimi*, p. [5].

RECONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS LAYERS OF THE ART OF TEA

kencha was the rebuilding of the central hall of the temple, some of the tea scoops were made of material from the temple's halls. Other references are for example the *kencha* tea bowls, which are recreations of famous objects from the treasure house Shōsō-in 正倉院. However, a fascinating aspect of this *kencha* ceremony lies in the translation of the Buddhist services into the Tea language.

The Kannon statue on day one and five are part of the so-called “thousand Kannon” from Kōfuku-ji that broadly spread also to ordinary people during the Meiji period. One well-known purchaser was the art collector and Tea connoisseur Masuda Takashi (Donnō, 益田孝 鈍翁) who alone bought a high number of the statues. Therefore, the statue used at the Tea gathering is also a reference to the (ideological and material) connection between Buddhism or Buddhist art and the Art of Tea. The mottos of the tea bowls express the auspiciousness of the rebuilding after about 300 years and the wishes for fortune in the future. An organisation of the Saikoku pilgrimage held the service of the second day. This pilgrimage contains 33 temples. Kōfuku-ji's hall Nan'en-dō 南門堂 is temple number 9, and the motto of the tea bowl refers to Onjō-ji as temple number 14. Although the bronze bell is no characteristic of the two temples, the emphasis lies on the tea bowl. The unique point concerning day two is a tea bowl by Chōjirō 長次郎, who is the founder of Raku ware. Since the Art of Tea demands not only the creation of an exciting combination of tea utensils but also the ability to collect rare objects,¹⁰¹ the actual usage of a Chōjirō bowl—rather an exhibition object for museums—with a suitable motto intensifies the expressed meaning. Similar to the second day, day three and four also draw attention to Kōfuku-ji's strong connection to other Buddhist sects. The Nanto Rinzaikai consists of representatives of the Nara sects, namely of Tōdai-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Saidai-ji, Tōshōdai-ji, Yakushi-ji, and Hōryū-ji. This collaboration corresponds with the mask of Karura, who is a protection deity of Buddhism. Finally, the service by Enryaku-ji represents a novelty since Kōfuku-ji and Enryaku-ji formerly were in a somewhat antagonistic relationship. The integration of Ōtsu—the temple town of Enryaku-ji—in the Tea gathering at Nara emphasises this attempt to cooperation.

¹⁰¹ According to Sen, the Art of Tea prohibits the usage of utensils that are self-made by the host. One reason for this rule lies in the fact that the guests usually praise the utensils and self-made objects would imply a pretentious attitude by the host. The second reason is that the act of searching for the ideal object for a Tea gathering disappears since the host could produce any object without a significant effort (Sen, *Cha*, p. 133). In this sense, we should understand the usage of rare and expensive objects as an expression of the endeavour for collecting the most suited object for the gathering. The highest level of rare objects applies to most of the utensils used at the Kōfuku-ji *kencha*.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to develop a new understanding of the religious layers of the Art of Tea. The condition for such a revision was a fundamental critic of the focus on Rinzai Zen Buddhism as the most important and natural religious reference. To overcome this interpretation, I pointed out the problems of typical arguments in the discourse on Rinzai Zen and Tea and widened the view on religion *from the standpoint of the Art of Tea*. The theories by Yanagi and Sen made clear that we should not see the ultimate goal of Tea in making progress on the Rinzai Zen way to enlightenment, but in transmitting a special message. The sign system of Tea gives its users—the host and the guests—the opportunity to communicate their concern with a particular language that is especially suited to achieve this goal. Yanagi draws special attention to the importance of avoidance of a simple object fetishism. This point unites him with Sen, who also criticises the formalistic tendencies in the practice of Tea. Therefore, one purpose of this article was to emphasise that the Art of Tea has not *necessarily* a religious goal, but can undertake multiple numbers of tasks. However, this accentuation intended not to weaken the religious potentials of Tea, but—on the contrary—to strengthen its capacities in the cases that have a religious communication goal.

To illustrate this approach to the Art of Tea, I focused on *kencha* ceremonies. Due to the general openness of the objective of a Tea gathering, the presence and absence of a religious meaning are only dependent on the host's decisions. However, *kencha* ceremonies as gatherings that not only take place at temples or shrines but are further in the first-place offerings for a deity, the demand for a religious awareness is to an extraordinary degree intense. Hence, the use of the word “central” in the subtitle of this article was not motivated to claim the “most important” or “most natural” meaning of Tea. I aimed instead to look at a style of Tea gathering, where the central part of the event is inevitably religious.

Further, *kencha* ceremonies allowed us to analyse their roots in Buddhist ritual that is not only drinking of tea as a means for better meditation but as an offering. In this case, the addressee of the tea shifts from humans to a deity. The analysis above also drew attention on the interconnectedness of all parts of the *kencha* event. The main point was to show how the Art of Tea realises its potential not only to reproduce but to *deepen* the religious meanings that are introduced by the act of the tea offering.