

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ УЛУЧШЕНИЯ КАЧЕСТВА ЖИЗНИ НА ОСНОВЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ МЕЖДУ ПРИРОДОЙ И ЧЕЛОВЕКОМ: ОБОСНОВАНИЕ ЦЕРЕМОНИИ ЧАЕПИТИЯ КАК ЧАСТИ ЯПОНСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ И ИСКУССТВА

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A Study on Improvement of the Quality of Life on the Basis of Interaction Between Nature and Human Beings, and Its Effect: Adoption of the Drinking of Tea as a Japanese Cultural Art

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Чай (чаепитие) являющийся частью повседневной традиционной жизни японцев, начал совершенствоваться как форма искусства примерно в 15 веке. Это то, что мы теперь знаем, как искусство чайной церемонии. Она включает в себя не только систему обслуживания процедуры чаепития, но также помощи к обогащению качества жизни и очищению духа. В исследовании автор обсуждает роль церемонии чаепития (использования зеленого чая) и его последствий как важной процедуры улучшения качества жизни населения Японии.

Tea, which had been drunk as part of the daily life of Japanese, began to be refined as a form of art in about the 15th century. This is what we now know as the art of the tea ceremony. It involves not only the manner of serving and drinking tea, but also has the effect of enriching the quality of life and purifying the spirit. In this study, I will discuss the improvement of the quality of life through the drinking of tea, and its effects.

Introduction

Today, tea is habitually drunk by people around the world. The tea leaves used for it are classified into two general groups: Chinese species for green tea and oolong tea, and Assam for red tea. The tea plant is evergreen, the Theaceae species, according to the author's review of various theories, originated in the highlands of a subtropical region along the Himalayas, from Assam in India to the Yunnan region of China. Fossilized tea leaves were found in Japan too, which confirms that tea grew naturally here also [1—3].

It is understood that tea was introduced to Japan from China in about the 9th century when priests Saicho (Dengyo-daishi) and Kukai (Kobo-daishi), who went to China to study Buddhism, brought it back with them. At that time, it was used for medical purposes. In the 12th century, priest Eisai, founder of the Rinzai sect brought back tea seeds from China. Tea plantations were then established to grow tea which spread into various regions of Japan. In each phase, not only tea itself, but also the accompanying tea culture was introduced.

The tea culture introduced from China to Japan has been changed and transformed into the Japanese style along with its proliferation throughout the country.

After the 9th century, when the tea culture was introduced, tea was drunk by select people such as high priests, nobles and high ranking warriors, however the custom of tea drinking gradually spread and by about the 14th century, lower ranking warriors and common people began to enjoy it. The drinking of tea, which prevailed among warriors, became a competitive game called 'tocha', which involved sampling and comparing various teas to distinguish their growing districts and quality. On the other hand, it was further refined and transformed into a Japanese tea culture from that of Chinese origin. This is owed to the great tea masters Murata Juko and Takeno Jouo who lived in the 15th and 16th centuries. In the middle of the 16th century, the simple taste of wabicha, which was initiated by Murata Juko,

was passed on to Sen Rikyu, a major merchant in the free city of Sakai. He perfected it as a spiritual and cultural art known as chanoyu (sado). After this, several schools of sado were created, but sado, established with a spiritual background, has been the base for Japanese culture and passed on to the present day [4, 6].

The culture of tea drinking, which had its origin in Buddhism, became established in Japan and has had a profound influence on the Japanese view of life, art and the environment.

Interaction Between Nature and Human Beings Through the Cultivation of Tea

The growing conditions of the tea plant, which originated in a subtropical region, are roughly as follows: annual mean temperature of above 13°C, effective accumulative temperature of above 2,000—2,100°C, annual rainfall of above 1,300—1,400 mm, rainfall during the growing season from April to October of above 1,000 mm, and snow depth of below 1.5 meters. As for the soil condition, it should contain less gravel and clay and be rich in water drainage, water retention and air permeability [2]. The places that satisfy these conditions are mountain slopes and hilly areas. In well-known Japanese tea-producing areas, sunny southern slopes on hills are used for tea plantations.

Tea plantations are divided into two types according to age: young plant plantations and mature plant plantations. In the young plant plantation, rooted cuttings are planted and, in some growing years, are raised to mature plants suitable for picking leaves. While in the mature plant plantation, about the same amount of tea leaves can be harvested every year [2]. There, the branches of neighboring plants intermingle as time passes and form rows of wavy lines. Leaves used for drinking are picked by hand or harvested by machine.

People usually plant tea along the contours of slopes, but sometimes do so after dividing slopes into many flat terraces. In both cases, tea plants standing abreast form horizontal lines. In the case that tea plants are planted in a line from an upper to lower area, they form vertical lines. In flatlands, people plant tea after ridging in a north-south direction.

Lines of tea plants play an important role in regional cultural landscapes. For example Uji city adjacent to and south east of Kyoto city has been famous for high quality tea since olden times and is blessed with many beautiful tea plantations, as shown in Photo 1. The seasonal scene of tea picking is one of Japan's unspoiled natural beauties and is sung about in a school song.

The quality of tea is influenced by how well the plants are cared for. Concretely, poor management concerning watering, fertilizing, etc. hinders the production of good quality tea. This is a result of human beings acting on nature. On the other hand, well-cared for tea plants produce high-quality tea and bring people joy. This is a result of nature acting on human beings. In such relations we can see an interaction between nature and human beings.

I will show one more example of the interaction between nature and human beings. The cultural landscape of a beautiful tea plantation shown in Photo 1 can be understood to be a result of the interaction brought by sympathetic resonance and spiritual excitement between nature and human beings. That is, when people face the magnificent landscape of a beautifully-finished tea plantation, they receive a psychotropic effect such as comfort and tranquility. Wishing to enjoy such beautiful tea plantations forever, people continue to care for them.

As shown in this example, people living in or close to a natural environment, receive both tangible and intangible influences from the interaction between nature and human beings.

Adoption of the Drinking of Tea as a Japanese Cultural Art

In Japan, there were two trends of tea drinking. One was that people seemingly drank «mountain tea» which grew wild on the mountains, and the other was the way of tea drinking which was brought back from China [2]. Here I will discuss how the drinking of tea introduced from China, was adopted in Japan as a cultural art.

Lu Yu, a Chinese poet and original tea master of the mid-8th century, found in chanoyu the same harmony and order that controls the universe, and wrote the book 'Chaijing,' in which he systematized the way of tea drinking [6]. The concept of tea drinking here has formed the underlying current of the process of adoption of tea drinking as a Japanese cultural art — from the introduction from China to its unique refinement and development in Japan.

As mentioned above, sado, starting from the custom of tea drinking and having been systematized and refined by Sen Rikyu, is a ritual art involving the enjoyment of preparing tea in a rustic style 'soan' tea ceremony house built in a garden with the mysterious charm of deep mountains and dark valleys. The tea room is an indoor space with a simple, tranquil and tasteful atmosphere called 'wabi', and creates a small world far from mundane worldly affairs.

Also called sukiya, the tea ceremony room has an alcove with exposed clay walls and an alcove post of round timber [7].

As shown in Photo 2, a hanging scroll called 'cha-gake' and a vase of flowers called 'cha-bana' are displayed in the alcove. A Zen priest's calligraphic inscription or painting is used as the hanging scroll. Modest and graceful flowers are preferred for the cha-bana. To understand these hanging scrolls and flower arrangements, religious and cultural accomplishments are necessary. Besides the ornaments in the alcove, tea utensils such as a hearth, iron pot, ceram-

ic tea bowl, tea container, water jar, waist-water container, etc are placed in the room [4, 6, 8].

In sado, a host welcomes guests in a tea room and entertains them by preparing and offering powdered green tea in accordance with the fixed manner and order called 'temae.' Guests look at and appreciate the hanging scroll and vase of flowers prepared for the ceremony before the host offers tea. Then the guests drink tea. After that, the host and guests have a quiet conversation in the small space of the tea room, while imagining the natural world in the atmosphere created by the hanging scroll and flower arrangement. They converse on various subjects from topics concerning the hanging scrolls and flowers to everyday problems. To enrich the conversation, the ability to appreciate and an aesthetic sense supported by precise and sophisticated cultural accomplishments are required. To create an outstanding hanging scroll and flower arrangement, a highly sophisticated cultural base is necessary. This is why sado is said to be a composite art.

As mentioned above, the habit of tea drinking, having been created and enjoyed in literary circles in China, was introduced to Japan and many outstanding tea masters have added artistic elements such as the concept and taste of wabi-cha (simple-style tea), tea ceremony utensils and their installation, procedure and manners for preparing and drinking tea, and the tea ceremony room and tea garden [1]. In this way, the drinking of tea has been refined, risen above a daily custom and been established as an elegant Japanese culture.



Photo 2. An alcove display Cited from Ref. [9]



Photo 1. Tea plantation in Uji city Cited from Ref. [5]

To establish and pass down the art of sado, many excellent architects, artists, gardeners and artisans were fostered in order to build the tea ceremony room and tea garden and to create calligraphic inscriptions and paintings, flower vases and tea bowls.

Thus, the adoption of drinking tea as a cultural art has worked to elevate the level of Japanese culture.

Improvement of the Quality of Life by Sado and Its Effects

The drinking of tea became an integral part of Japanese cultural art as sado. With such background, sado was widely accepted by warriors and merchants, and affected the general public, while improving the manner and way of tasting and drinking tea, as well as adding richness to everyday life so that they could appreciate familiar wild flowers at home. Sado, which was largely practiced by men, began to be incorporated into girls' school education. This brought improvement to the quality of life. The influences of sado on the Japanese people can be seen in various aspects of daily life such as the ways of exchanging greetings and other behavior, as well as indoor decoration. Such improvement in the quality of life had the following effects.

1) Valuing symbiosis with the natural environment

Views regarding nature vary from country to country. In Japan, people seek a lifestyle that conforms with the climate and integrates with nature, rather than challenging them. This means that people enjoy life in harmony with the natural environment. It is sado to teach such a lifestyle. Today, natural environments are rapidly disappearing in the name of development, while on the other hand, it is strongly required to regenerate and restore such environments, presenting us with a dilemma. This represents a pattern of people and nature standing face to face, and it is now necessary, by departing from this, to rather establish the concept of valuing symbiosis with the natural environment. At least, we should closely examine development and implement an elaborate environmental assessment of the quantitative and qualitative changes affecting the natural environment.



Photo 3. Serving and drinking tea in sado Cited from Ref. [10]

2) Saving by a natural way of living

Since ancient times, human beings have received tremendous benefits from nature. Sado values living with nature and therefore does not excessively seek its benefits. However, our modern and civilized lifestyle places emphasis on material comfort, and thus natural resources and energy are consumed beyond necessity. We are well aware of such warnings but no new ideas to change such lifestyle are yet seen. Although it is rather difficult to suddenly change an acquired lifestyle, it is important for each of us to reconsider fulfillment in terms of quality. It may take much time, but as a result, people can live an earth-friendly lifestyle by following the laws of nature, which ultimately will lead to the saving of natural resources and energy without difficulty. Thereby a wise cultural life will be realized. This has something in common with the word 'Mottainai' that is used in Japanese daily life.

3) Fostering near-at-hand natural environments

Sado is enjoyed in the specially designed tea garden, but essentially it values nature as it is. Today, the world is experiencing increased urbanization and far from natural environments. It is therefore all the more important to value natural environments and foster them from somewhere close to us. This will lead to conservation and revitalization of ecosystems in our vicinity as well as further afield and lead to qualitative improvement of our living environment. As one such activity, there is a conservation movement for 'Satoyama' (literally homeland/mountains) and 'Satoumi' (literally homeland/sea). Once such areas were sources of living necessities such as firewood and mushrooms. Today, this movement is being widely promoted, which includes the regeneration of Japanese unspoiled scenery. As shown in this example, natural environments affect each other, and so the fostering of near-at-hand natural environments leads to fostering the entire natural environment.

Conclusion

In this study, the author discussed the improvement of the quality of life from the viewpoint of interaction between nature and human beings, and its effect, through the example of the adoption of the drinking of tea as a cultural art, based on the consideration that the 'cultural' viewpoint is important for the conservation of natural ecosystems and improvement of the quality of life. In sado, 'simplicity' is valued, and people appreciate the minimum decoration of hanging scrolls and flower arrangements, think of nature and quietly exchange conversation in the small space of a tea ceremony room representing the universe. There, valuing the nonsymmetrical composition of beauty seen in tea room hanging scrolls and flower arrangements and stimulating sophisticated mental activity, people enjoy to live with nature. It can be said that, unless natural ecosystems and improvement of the quality of life are recognized in connection with natural environments, they cannot really be preserved. It is also true that simplicity and saving will indirectly contribute to conservation of the natural environment and ecosystems, only when they become embedded in our daily lives.

The author believes that this way of thinking is important in clarifying the interactive relationship between nature and human beings, and so would like to further study such cases in Japan.

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