
Tea Architecture and Tea Gardens

All sorts of rooms have been used for tea-drinking: from the splendid *shoin* reception room to the *sōan* (rustic hut). After many changes, it was the *sōan* that finally came to be considered the most appropriate of all places to enjoy tea without distraction.

In all there are four different styles of tea architecture: the large drawing room (*shoin*); the rustic hut-style *kozashiki*, which expressed the merchant's taste; the *sukiya* room, that appealed to the samurai class; and the aristocrat's tea pavilion. It may be felt that only the *sōan* can be considered a true tea room, but it is important to be aware of the background behind the use of each of the four types to understand the evolution of *chanoyu*. Tea gardens are also a reflection of the tea aesthetic, so I will also examine here the origins and features of tea gardens in relation to the tea ceremony.

From *Shoin* to *Sōan*

Prior to the Heian period, most Japanese architecture was in the Shinden style, a style adopted for the building of temples, shrines, and nobles' residences. In the course of time a new samurai-style dwelling was introduced, and later, in the Muromachi period, the *shoin* style was conceived.

The *shoin* was originally a writing room or study usually built as a small wing adjoining the drawing room in a temple. At the height of samurai power it was used as the salon where guests were received. The floor was covered with tatami mats, and the room had an alcove and ornamental shelves.

There were various ways of arranging the alcove and shelves, but the most popular was to have the *shoin* window desk (*tsuke-shoin*) face the veranda, with the alcove and shelves placed side by side next to it. Since there was no artificial lighting available in those days, it was practical for the *shoin* desk to be built near the window, and the alcove to be situated beside it. Even today this is the basic rule followed in designing Japanese-style drawing rooms.

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The small-scale tea room continued to be constructed until the late Muromachi period. It generally had four-and-a-half mats, whose papered walls and ceiling were similar to those of the *shoin*, but on a much smaller scale. In that room, a *daisu* (utensil stand) was used to allow the host himself to perform *temae*. It is interesting to note that in this transitional period from the *shoin*-room to the smaller, *wabi*-influenced *sōan*-style tea room the *daisu*, a *shoin* room object, was used in this confined space.

According to illustrations of Jōō's style of tea room in the *Record of Yamanoue Sōji*, it was four-and-a-half mats in size and opened onto a garden, facing in a northerly direction. A fire pit was built in the center of the floor. Three sides of the room were walls, while on the northern side there was a paper-covered sliding door adjoining a veranda. The wall on the eastern side separated the tea room from the *shoin*. This kind of tea room was typical of the rooms of that era, and there is written evidence to show that most of the tea practitioners in Sakai imitated this style.

The drawing room of the house was designed with windows to both east and south to admit direct light. By contrast, tea rooms were built to face north, for a more subdued lighting would allow the mind to focus better on the ritual. Probably for the same reason many artists today also build their studios to admit light from the north. The light from this direction is felt to be best for the appreciation of art objects and paintings.

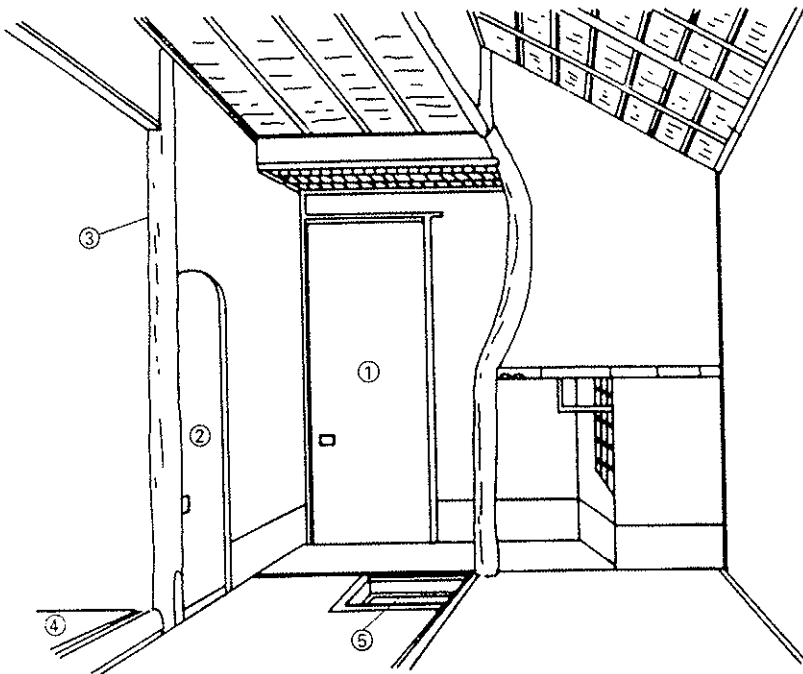
The fire pit used in the tea room was, on average, slightly smaller than one and a half feet square (forty-two centimeters square). In earlier days a charcoal or wood-burning hearth was set in the floor of the living room or the room adjoining the drawing room, but this was never used for guests. It was sometimes as large as a tatami mat. The fire pit in the tea room eventually came to be positioned between host and guests, and the host sat obliquely facing the guests to serve tea.

The fire pit is first constructed out of boards. The inside of the pit is coated with mud, and it is then sunk into the floor by cutting away part of the tatami. A wooden cover is placed over it when it is not in use.

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TEA ROOM

This is a *daimyo*-style tea room in which there are two regular mats for the guests and a shorter mat for the host near the host's door (1). The ceiling (*tenjō*) is set at different heights and angles to add a feeling of space to the small room. As the guest enters the "crawling-through entrance" to the far right (not shown) and raises his head, the first thing he will see is the decorated alcove (4) directly in front of him.

1. Host's entrance (*sadōguchi*).
2. Assistant's entrance (*kyūjiguchi*).
3. Main alcove pillar (*tokobashira*).
4. Alcove (*toko*).
5. Fire pit (*ro*).

instead of north. Excessive light was screened off by constructing deeper eaves. The *sōan* stripped away many of the features of Jōō's style of tea hut, as well as most of the elements of the *shoin*-style structure. Its floor, ceiling, and windows took on new forms that were different from the earlier ones. This type of tea house was conceived to suit the needs of the times, when it was felt that members of all classes should be able to meet in the same room for tea.

Among the various changes in tea architecture brought about by the invention of the *sōan*-style tea house, the following are the most important.

THE FLOOR

Until this period the drawing room always contained a raised platform where higher-ranking people would sit. In the *sōan*, only the floor of the alcove was raised, then it was decorated with thick-tea containers or other tea articles that were highly appreciated among tea masters. By introducing a raised alcove, people from varying backgrounds could share the feeling of sitting together and being treated equally.

THE CEILING

Houses were built with high ceilings, but it was found that height in a small tea room did not make the guests feel more at ease. Even as early as Jōō's time the height of the tea room ceiling was reduced to seven feet

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meters).

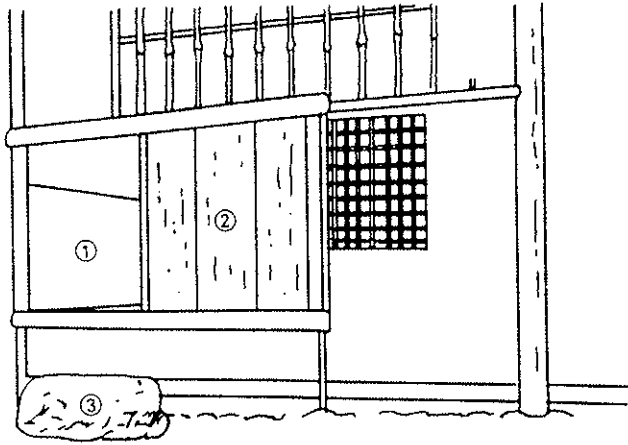
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GUESTS' ENTRANCE

Approaching the tea house through the inner garden, the stepping stones lead to the *fumi-ishi*, a high stone (3) for stepping up to the *nijiriguchi*, the guests' entrance. After the door (2) is slid open, the guests crawl through the entrance (1) one at a time, turning around to remove their straw sandals and stand them against the wall of the tea house.

1. Guests' entrance through which a guest has to crawl to enter (*nijiriguchi*).
2. *Nijiriguchi* door slides and is usually made of old timber from the main house.
3. High stone to step up to the *nijiriguchi* (*fumi-ishi*).

flow of air and a better view of the garden or natural scenery when people were seated on the floor.

Another feature of tea hut windows was the use of bamboo grilles, which not only let more light in, but helped to create a mood conducive to serenity of mind.

THE HOST'S ENTRANCE (*Sadōguchi*)

This is a small entrance, originally lower than the height of the average Japanese, a device that forced the host to bow his head to enter and instilled a sense of humility.

THE GUESTS' ENTRANCE (*Nijiriguchi*)

This is the entrance to the tea room through which guests have to crouch. It is said that in Jōō's time one had to enter the tea room on hands and knees from the veranda. An old illustration still in existence shows this entrance with a half-rolled bamboo screen outside its paper-covered door, but today the entrance is made of wood.

The guests' low entrance signified humility, but another reason for creating the low entrance was to make the guests feel they were entering a different world. Lowering the head during entry was also taken as a sign of respect to the other guests already seated in the room.

When the *sōan* first came into use, its entrance was so low that one had to stoop very low while crawling into the room. It is said that old storm doors from the main house were used in the earliest *sōan* tea houses as the sliding door for the *nijiriguchi*. This is evident from the position of its *san* (cross-piece). Later the door of the *nijiriguchi* was made of three boards: two old pieces of timber and a narrower new piece to finish the door.

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SOME OTHER ELEMENTS

The other features in the tea room—pillars, lintels, frames, ledges—look very light and fragile. Much care is taken to ensure an aesthetic balance between their height and width. The *akari shōji*, a sliding paper-covered screen with a wooden frame and lattice, is used for letting in light as well as protecting guests from the cold wind. Translucent white paper of varying widths is pasted on the frame, and in tea rooms, thin seams where the paper joins are made to appear between the lattices.

In Rikyū's time there was a discussion about the proper width of the seam. When Rikyū was asked about this, he said: "One *bu* (one-eighth of an inch / three millimeters) is too narrow, but one-and-a-half *bu* is too wide." This answer did not provide an exact measure, but by defining the maximum and the minimum, Rikyū indicated that the width had to be decided according to the size of the room. This episode shows how precise Rikyū was, even when it came to such minor details.

The introduction of the *sōan* brought about various changes in the way tea was served and the tea utensils were used. Up to that time, a large utensil stand had been used in a four-and-a-half-mat tea room, but because the *sōan* was too small to accommodate one, this had to be eliminated. As a result, people were freed from former restrictions on the way that tea articles were used, and this in turn helped make tea more accessible.

Changes in the Tea Room

In Matsuya Hisamasa's *Record of Tea Ceremonies*, he stated that he renovated his tea hut many times. Hisamasa, who lived in Nara, often visited Sakai, which was the center of the tea ceremony in his day, and he seemed to be influenced by the tea hut fashions of Sakai. Following the appearance of the four-and-a-half-mat tea hut, other types with four mats, three mats, and two mats were devised. Tea huts were all constructed on one-mat or half-mat units, which meant that the rooms were either square or rectangular in shape, and lacked variation.

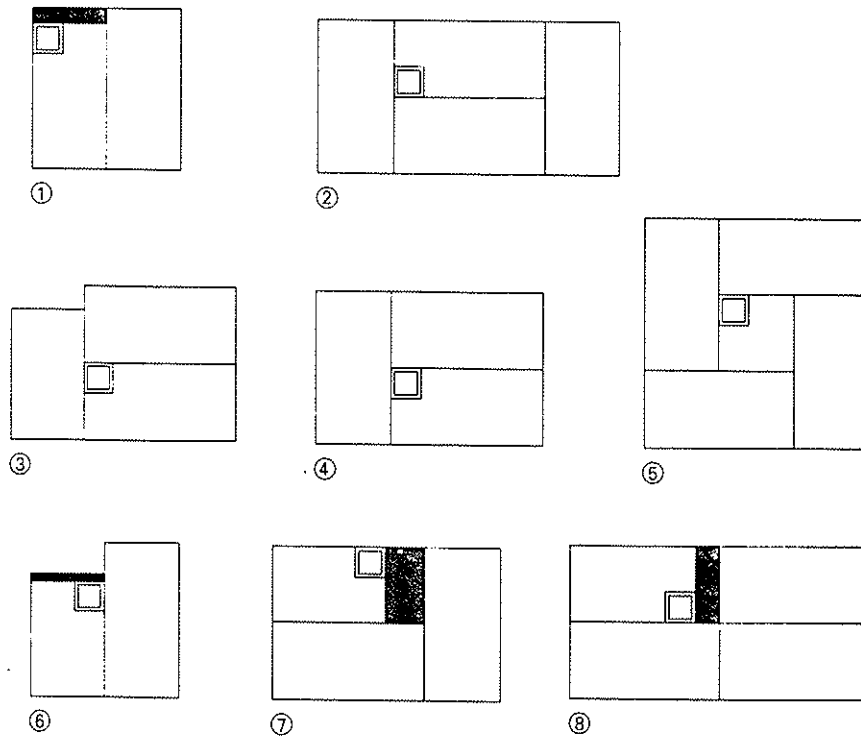
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EIGHT VARIATIONS OF THE TEA ROOM (LAYOUTS 3 AND 6 ARE DAIME)

1. Two-mat room with fire pit built into the host's mat and a 3-inch (7.5-centimeter) board behind it (*nijō*).
2. Rectangular four-mat room with the fire pit between host and guests (*naga yojō*).
3. *Daime*-style room with two guest mats plus a shorter mat for the host; fire pit is between the host and guests (*nijō daime*).
4. Three-mat room with fire pit between host and guests (*hira sanjō*).
5. Four-and-a-half-mat room with fire pit between host and guests (*yojōhan*).
6. *Daime* style with one guest mat and one short mat for host; the fire pit is built into the host's mat between host and guests (*ichijō daime*).
7. Three-mat room with fire pit built into host's mat on the wall side and with a 18-inch (45-centimeter) board (*fuka-sanjō*).
8. Old-style rectangular four-mat room with the fire pit between host and guests, but with a 6-inch (15-centimeter) board (*naga yojō*).

alcove placed in a lesser position, indicates this change. In the style called *teishudoko*, the host made tea in front of this alcove. The Jiko-in tea room built by Katagiri Seishu in Yamato, Nara Prefecture, is representative of this style. Exemplary of the *gezadoko* style is the Jo-an tea room in

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room. In contrast with Sōtan's tastes, Sōwa wished to impart a sense of elegance to the tea ceremony.

Thus *wabi* and the daimyo styles of tea coexisted to a certain extent from the time that Hideyoshi served tea at the Imperial Palace with Rikyū as his *sadō* in 1585. This was the event that established the form of the aristocratic tea ceremony, with Rikyū's *wabi* style as its basis.

Prince Toshihito (1579–1629), a member of the first generation of the Katsuranomiya family, constructed tea houses on the grounds of his palace in 1602. Later, he began work on the Katsura Imperial Villa, which was completed by his son, Prince Toshitada (1619–62). This villa represents a prime example of the *sukiya* style and contains *shoin* drawing rooms that incorporate elements from the *sōan*-style tea hut. The former emperor Go-mizunoo (1596–1680), who was well-versed in the tea ceremony, also built such tea rooms in his palace and at some temples.

What most distinguishes these tea buildings from the pure *sōan*-style hut is the aristocratic refinement of taste. This can be seen in the exquisitely shaped door pulls on the sliding doors, the artistic designs of the lower wood panels of the *shōji* (paper-covered screens) and the elaborate arrangement of shelves. The pine, bamboo, and plum designs that decorate the host's entrance to the Tōshin-tei tea room at the Minase Shrine in Osaka are fine examples of this aristocratic taste.

Simultaneously, there was a trend among commoners to make the structure of the *sōan* more intricate. This influence can be seen in the *itadami* (a board that was added to the tea room in order to enlarge the space), or in the idea of designing the alcove on a smaller scale. Most people sought to display their originality in minor details, while at the same time it became the fashion to use expensive timber to make the house more splendid. Thus the conventional, simple tea house that had symbolized the spirit of tea gradually came to acquire more decorative elements.

In the Meiji period, when Western-style architecture was introduced

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designed not only in accordance with the size of its garden, but also to take into account the way its roof looks from the main house. In a similar manner, windows are designed on the basis of the amount and quality of light they admit, as well as the view they command. The modern tea house today lacks the warmth, softness, and comfort of the individually designed tea hut, and unfortunately the art and skill of earlier artisans are rarely found today. Houses styled naturally and without artifice differ greatly from those produced through modern techniques of imitation.

The Origin of Tea Gardens

The garden surrounding a tea house differs from one outside a drawing room: while the latter may be viewed from a seated position within the house, the tea house garden is designed so the viewer may enjoy the scenery as he walks along its paths.

According to the records of tea gatherings during the Muromachi period, the garden played an important part in tea entertainment, for after a banquet the guests went out to the garden to rest in the cool air near the pond, and only after that went into a pavilion to have tea. A quiet place in the garden away from the main house was felt to be most suitable for drinking tea, and the participants felt more relaxed after going into the garden for a walk. One tea pavilion of this type that is still in existence today is the Kinkaku of Rokuonji temple in Kyoto.

An illustration of Jōō's garden around his four-and-a-half-mat tea hut, found in the *Record of Yamanoue Sōji*, shows two gardens, the *waki-no-tsubonouchi* (outer section close to the garden entrance) and the *omote-tsubonouchi* (the inner section near the tea hut).

Another illustration of a Jōō garden for the same type of tea hut describes the *omote-tsubonouchi* as the *niwa* (garden) and the *waki-no-tsubonouchi* as the inner garden. It is apparent from these terms that there was some difference in function between the outer garden and the inner garden, the latter being merely a passageway leading to the tea hut. The

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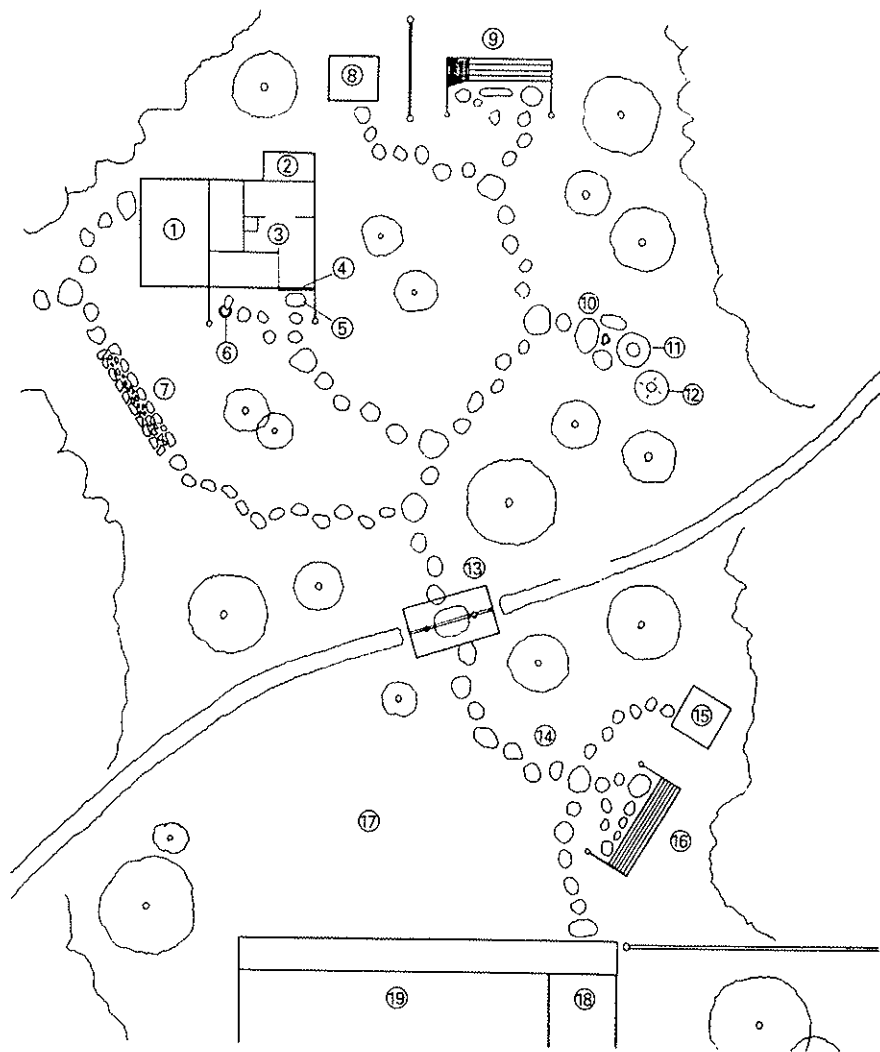
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LAYOUT OF A TEA GARDEN

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|---|---|
| 1. Host's preparation room (<i>mizuya</i>). | 11. Stone washbasin (<i>chōzubachi</i>). |
| 2. Alcove (<i>toko</i>). | 12. Stone lantern (<i>ishi-dōrō</i>). |
| 3. Tea room (<i>chashitsu</i>). | 13. Middle gate (<i>chūmon</i>). |
| 4. Guest's entrance (<i>nijiriguchi</i>). | 14. Stepping stones (<i>tobi-ishi</i>). |
| 5. High stone at entrance to tea room (<i>fumi-ishi</i>). | 15. Toilet (<i>setchin</i>). |
| 6. Debris pit (<i>chiri-ana</i>). | 16. Outer waiting arbor (<i>soto-koshikake</i>). |
| 7. Paved stone path (<i>nobedan</i>). | 17. Main garden of the house. |
| 8. Toilet (<i>setchin</i>). | 18. The room where guests arrive first to prepare themselves for the start of the gathering (<i>yoritsuki</i>). |
| 9. Inner waiting arbor (<i>uchi-koshikake</i>). | 19. House proper. |
| 10. Washbasin area (<i>tsukubai</i>). | |

According to the *Record of Yamanoue Sōji*, a veranda (*en*) was added to the four-and-a-half-mat tea hut; the guests would pass through the tea garden and mount the *en* before entering the tea house. Tea houses less than three-mat had no veranda.

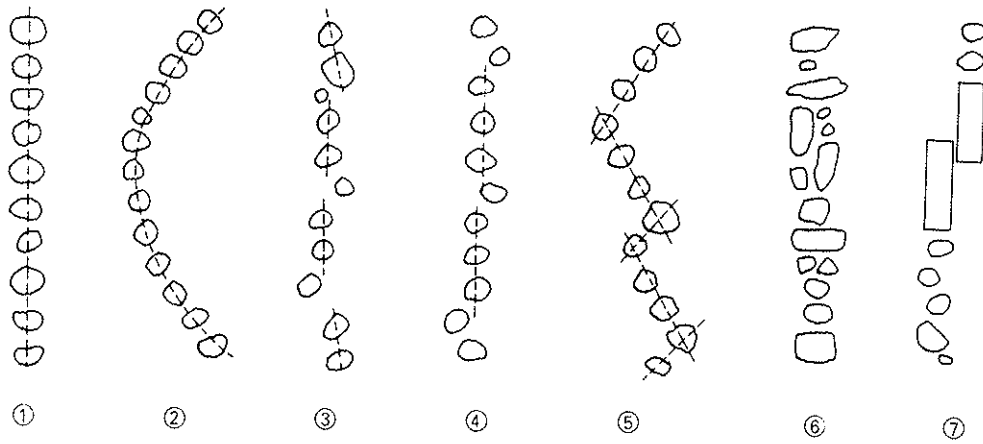
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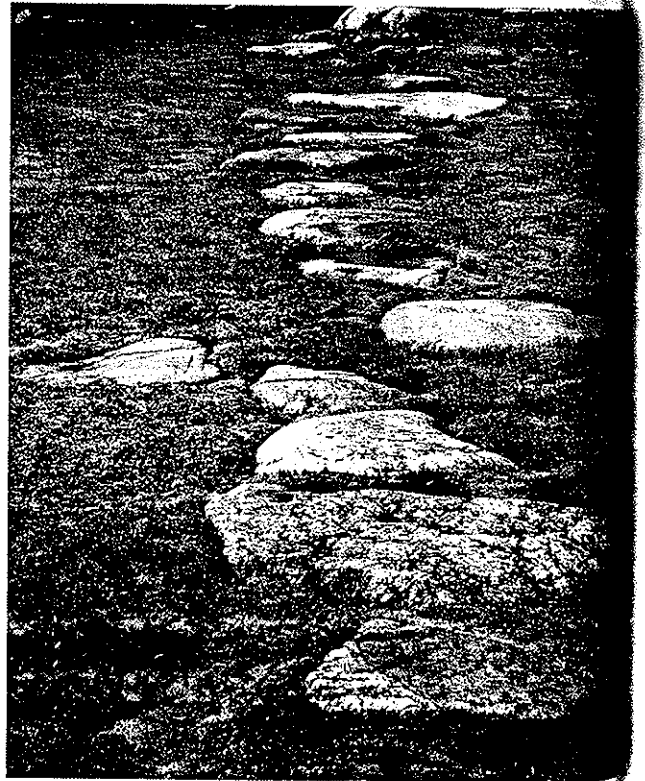
DIFFERENT CONFIGURATIONS OF STEPPING STONES

1. Straight line (*choku-uchi*).
2. Broad curve (*ô-magari*).
3. Chain of pairs linked with extras (*niren-uchi*).
4. Chain of threes linked with extras strewn (*samen-uchi*).
5. Geese in flight (*gan-uchi*).
6. "Seven-five-three" (*shichigosan-uchi*).
7. Rafts (*ikada-uchi*).



RIKYU STYLE

Simple, small, and set almost flush with the ground.



ORIBE STYLE

Geometrically arranged stepping stones.

contains some moisture, which is necessary for raising moss. Among the many kinds of moss, the *sugi-goke* variety, which resembles a miniature tree and grows in foggy areas, is especially highly prized. This moss has a beauty distinct from most other varieties, and is often cultivated in tea gardens.

THE MIDDLE GATE (*Chūmon*)

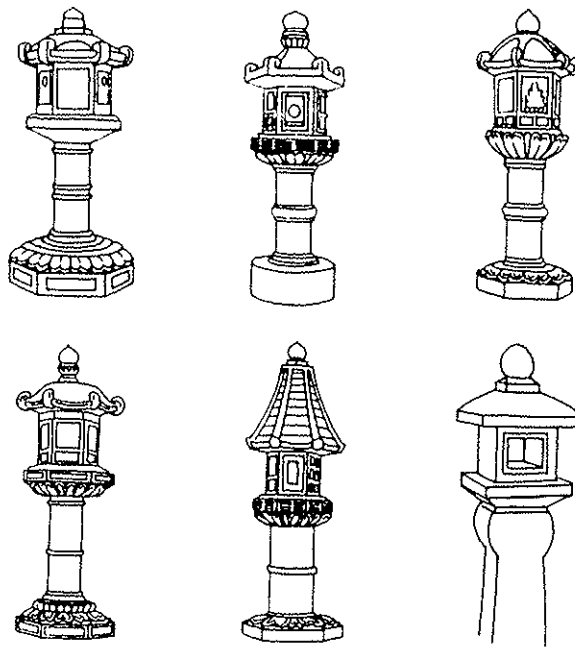
The middle gate is meant to cut off the outer world from the inner realm of tea. Some tea gardens have two gates: an outer gate at the street entrance that enables the guest to go to the *machiai* without passing through the main entrance of the domestic building, and a middle gate to separate the inner and outer gardens. It is at the middle gate where the host greets his guests for the first time, silently, with a bow.

At first the middle gate was a simple wooden structure, but later, one with earthen walls and a small entrance came to be used. A hedge was grown beside the gate and also surrounded the garden.

THE WASHBASIN (*Tsukubai*)

One noteworthy element in the inner garden was a stone washbasin where guests rinsed their mouths and washed their hands as an act of purification before entering the tea room. Originally a standing washbasin was placed at the end of the veranda that adjoined the reception room so that it could be used without stepping into the garden. The basin was large and tall, in keeping with the noble's custom of having his servant pour water for him with a ladle when he wished to wash his hands. After it was placed in the *roji*, however, it became shorter and smaller, so that guests had to squat by its side to wash their hands by themselves. *Tsukubai* literally means "squatting."

Another reason for the use of a smaller basin and the shorter *tsukubai* is that the *sōan* tea ceremony required the host, before receiving his guests, to bring a pail of water with which to fill the washbasin. In other



ISHI-DŌRŌ

Stone lanterns used in a tea garden, often styled after famous temple lanterns.

eleven-volume *Kaiki*, written in 1724, the light should fall on the basin.

In the daytime the paper door of the lantern is lifted and the inside cleaned. At night an oil lamp is put into the lantern, shielded from the wind by the paper-covered door. Various ideas were employed to provide more aesthetic effects; for example, on moonlit nights more wicks were added, while in snowy weather the light was not used at all. Thus stone lanterns are not merely garden ornaments or a means of illumination, but their beauty when lit should inspire the admiration of the beholder.

THE AREA AROUND THE GUESTS' ENTRANCE

A stone higher than the other stones, called *fumi-ishi*, is placed in front of the guests' entrance. It is just high enough to enable the crouching guest's hand to naturally reach the entrance, and its surface is just wide enough for one pair of feet. Since it is placed before such an important place, it is a carefully chosen stone, oblong and wider at the bottom than the top, and with features distinguishing it from other stones.

Another stone, placed a little lower than the *fumi-ishi*, is called *otoshi-ishi*, and in front of it another stone, *nori-ishi*, is placed. These three stones are arranged precisely so that the *nori-ishi* can be used to catch raindrops from the eaves of the tea house.

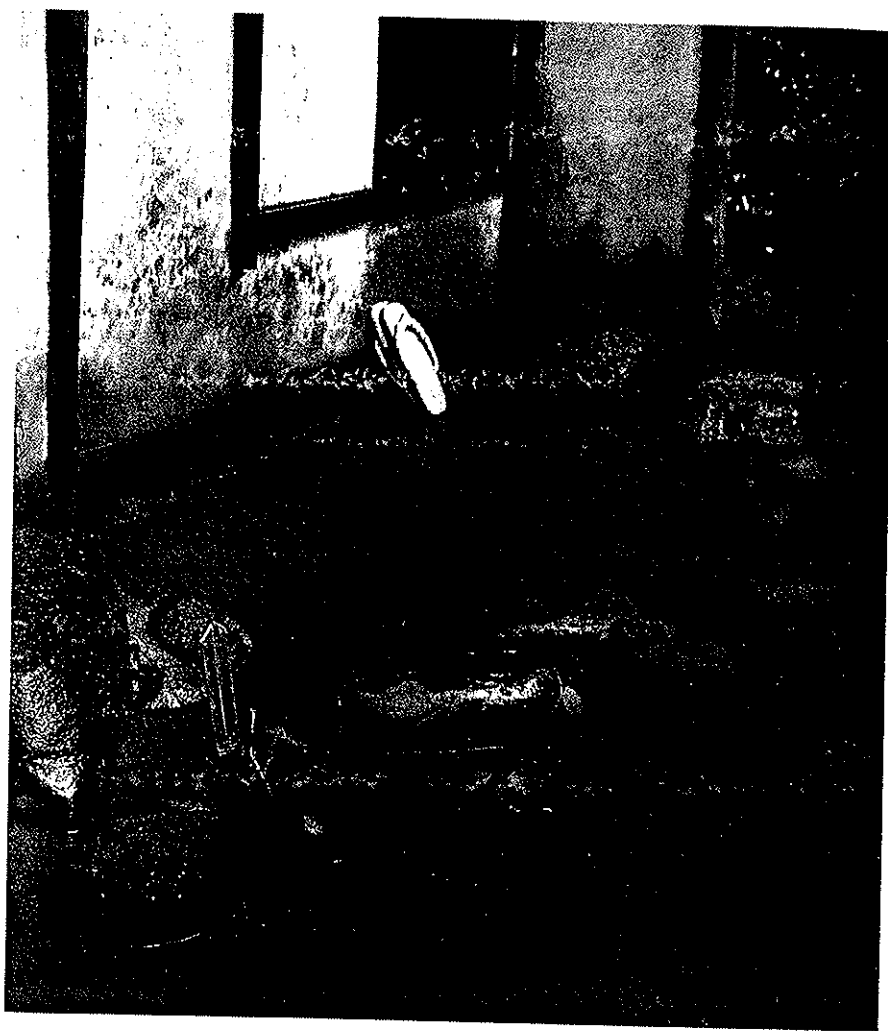
From this area in front of the guests' entrance, the garden path divides into two, one going in the direction of the *chiri-ana* (a pit into which fallen leaves are placed), and the other toward the *katanakake* (the

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CHIRI-ANA

The debris pit is seen in the foreground of the guest's entrance, with a twig from the garden and bamboo chopsticks.

STONE PAVEMENTS (*Nobedan*)

This is another path through the garden, distinguished in its appearance by an alternation of oblong and small natural stones. The contrast between the artificially cut stones and the natural stones gives an interesting effect to the path; a noteworthy example is the famous Shin-notobi-ishi path of the Katsura Imperial Villa.

THE WAITING ARBOR (*Machiai*)

In the ordinary course of the tea ceremony, the guests wait for the host on two occasions in the garden. The first time is before entering the tea house, when the host appears and bows to the guests in the outer garden. The second occurrence takes place after the short recess (*nakadachi*) before reentering the tea hut. Two separate waiting arbors with benches accommodate the guests. Stones are placed before the bench for resting the feet. The stone for the principal guest is different from the others,