

Abstract

The Japanese way of tea has been explored with scientific rigor through the fields of anthropology, aesthetics, philosophy, religion, semiotics, and other academic disciplines. This thesis will examine the phenomenon of the “bowl of tea” (considered here as the axis mundi of a tea gathering) on three levels: as a gift, as the basis for the foundation of responsible and considerate relationships in the community, and as a medium of transformation into peacefulness. First, it will explore the nature of the gift in different social practices of exchange in general and in the way of tea in particular. Second, it will present research connecting the gift and the process of giving as a mode of hospitality in the tea gathering. Third, it will assess, through concepts of spatial semiotics, the transformative nature of the way of tea. It will conclude with a statement as to the potential of the way of tea experience to transform human experience and behaviour to others via the phenomenon of gift.

Key words

Japanese way of tea, Gift, Hospitality, Peacefulness, Transformation, Medium, Semiotics