

Brief Remarks on the Architecture of Japanese National Tea Houses

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ABSTRACT

Japan is distinguished by its own national traditions and customs. A clear example of this is "Tea Ceremonies". This ritual is considered ancient and dates back to the Edo period. Japanese national teahouses first appeared in the Sengoku period. The Japanese pay special attention to this ceremony. This article talks about the unique architecture of Japanese national teahouses.

KEYWORDS: architecture, tea ceremony, Buddhist ceremony, samurai, tea competitions, chashitsu, tokonoma, mizuya, roji garden, tatami.

We all know that today Japan is distinguished by its unique national traditions and national architecture. One of such national traditions is "Tea ceremony". The appearance of tea in Japan dates back to the 8th century. Also, their religious ceremonies had a significant impact on the development of tea ceremonies. In Japan, the tea ceremony is considered a Buddhist ritual, and there is evidence that in 792 Emperor Shōmu, a great fan of Buddhist teachings, offered it to the emperor.[5] Later, the samurai class paved the way for the widespread spread of the tea ceremony among the population.

At the end of the 13th century, at the beginning of the 14th century, a new ceremony - "tea competitions" - began to be held. By the middle of the 14th century, this competition became popular and started to be held on special grounds in the territory of castles and palaces.

Teahouses first appeared in Japan during the Sengoku period (middle of the 15th century - beginning of the 17th century). Teahouses were built mainly by Zen monks, samurai, and merchants who practiced the tea ceremony. They pursued the central tenets of Zen philosophy - simplicity and tranquility. Later, simplicity, which was considered the main motif of the teahouse, became a unique Japanese tradition. Olga Androva writes in her article

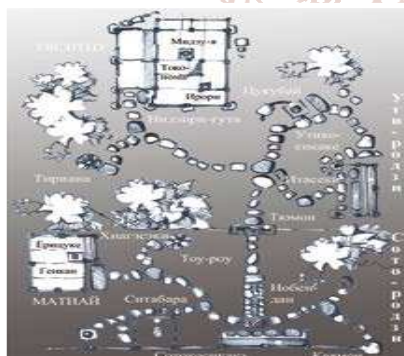


Figure 1



Figure 2

"Architektura japonskikh chaynykh komnat" that the first creator of the tea house was Murata Soju[1].

Japanese teahouses were surrounded by a small roji garden and there were stone paths leading to the teahouse. The outer part is covered with a landscape that gives the mood of



Figure 3

a valley or a forest. In this part, benches and toilets are placed for guests. It also served as an open space for gathering guests. After the host's invitation, the guests visited the inner garden.

Before entering the tea house, they washed their hands in a special stone pool. (Fig. 6)

The teahouse was entered through a low door which required bending. It has a symbolic meaning, separating the inside from the outside noise. The rooms have low ceilings and are unfurnished. A classic version of teahouses is the Soan hut designed by Senno-Rikyu.[2] Its most important

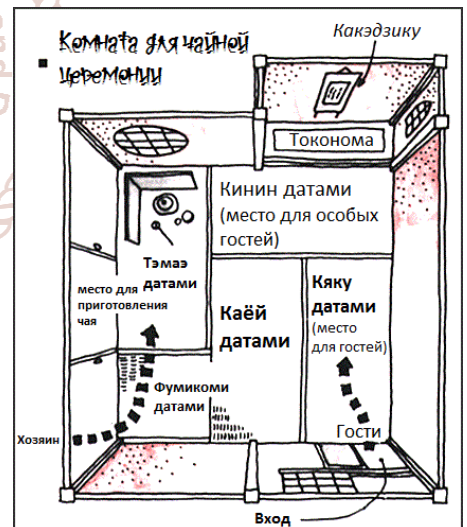


Figure 4

feature is the absence of galleries or verandas. The guests were sitting on the floor. The interior of the rooms is also made simple. When painting the walls, they added tea to the clay, and as a



Figure 4

result, the walls were green or red. Paper is pasted under the wall so that the color does not hit the guests. The windows are usually small and covered with shoji fabric that lets in natural light. In teahouses, there was also a furnace in the middle of the floor for use in winter. (Fig. 2) The ideal floor for teahouses was 4.5 tatami. The smallest tea house consists of two rooms: a room where guests and hosts gather to drink tea, and a room where sweets are prepared and equipment used in the ceremony is kept - mizuya.

Very large tea houses can have several rooms of different sizes. A waiting room for guests, separate toilets for men and women, wardrobes and rooms for leaving items not used in the ceremony. (Figure 4)

In the room, there is a tokonoma with a hattot or a scroll drawn with a brush. In addition, there can be simple flower arrangements. Love the extra decorations.

Teahouses are usually named after their owners or benefactors. Myoki-an Tai-an teahouse near Kyoto, Yamazaki, Japan, has been preserved as the oldest example of a teahouse. Jo-an teahouse is the most famous and recognized as a national treasure of Japan. The Jo-an tea house was built by Sen-no-Rikyu's disciple Odoi Uraka in 1618 in Inumaya, near Nagoya. The decoration of the teahouse is mainly based on the tradition of Sen-no-Rikyu.

In conclusion, the tea ceremony and the architecture of Japanese teahouses are deeply rooted in tradition and reflect the values of simplicity, tranquility, and Zen philosophy. The teahouses serve as a sanctuary for guests, providing a peaceful and intimate space for the tea ceremony. The

careful design and layout of teahouses, with their low ceilings, unfurnished rooms, and small windows, create an atmosphere of serenity and focus on the present moment. The teahouse experience is not just about drinking tea but also about immersing oneself in the beauty of nature and finding inner peace. The preservation of these teahouses as cultural treasures is a testament to the enduring significance of the tea ceremony in Japanese culture.

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