

Cha Zen ichi mi - 'Tea and Zen are One Taste'

Calligraphy by Arthur Witteveen

The writing of a Zen Circle (*Ensō*) as depicted in the first issue of this journal would, outside monasteries, typically be displayed in the context of a tea ceremony. Most Westerners nowadays are aware of the existence of the Japanese tea ceremony (*cha-no-yu*; lit. 'hot water for tea'); its importance in the cultural life of the country is well illustrated by Alan Watts when he points out that 'the *chajin*, or 'man of tea', is an arbiter of taste in the many subsidiary arts which *cha-no-yu* involves – architecture, gardening, ceramics, metalwork, lacquer, and the arrangement of flowers (*ikebana*)'. Instituted in monastic life in the twelfth century by Zen master Eisai, the tea ceremony entered the world of the rulers of Japan, the Shoguns, in the fifteenth century and from there filtered down into society very quickly. Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591) perfected the ceremony and is considered the father of the three main schools of *cha-no-yu* of today, the *Omotesenke*, *Urasenke* and *Mushakōjisenke*. The tea ceremony thus forms a link between the religious and the secular world.

Through its procedures of utter simplicity, harmony and quiet concentration a person strives to arrive at a state of being completely in the 'here and now'. The idea that this is considered one possible way of pursuing the Zen ideal of *satori* ('enlightenment') is expressed in the phrase *Cha Zen ichi mi* – 'Tea and Zen are One Taste'.

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