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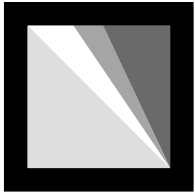


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Making Tea in Place: Experiences of Women Engaged in a Japanese Tea Ceremony

Mari Sakuae &
Denise Reid

This paper reports a small-scale qualitative study involving women who participated in the occupations of tea ceremony; an essential part of Japanese culture. Interviewing the women revealed the importance of using special tea implements in a performance comprising a series of occupational procedures from making the tea and hosting guests, to putting things away in a special place. Findings showed how engaging in tea ceremony enabled the sharing of common emotions, a sense of ongoing personal development, concentration, and a feeling of presence. The women's stories showed how the values espoused in the tea room, which is a special place in Japanese culture, gave meaning to ongoing participation in this tradition. These findings reveal that specific places have the potential to influence presence during occupational engagement and encourage the suspension of usual routines, learning new skills, and connecting with others who share common goals.

Keywords: Place, Presence, Tea ceremony, Occupational engagement

This paper explores how people experience places which may be encountered relatively infrequently, however are associated with deep cultural, societal and occupational meanings. It begins with a review of conceptualizations of place, and the importance of the environment to occupational engagement. A discussion of doing *temae* (tea ceremony) provides context to an occupational experience that is embedded in Japanese culture and mostly practiced in the East. A qualitative study that explored the experiences of women who participated in the traditional tea ceremony in *chashitsu* (places and spaces) in Hokkaido, Japan is described. Themes raised by the women, which were a strong sense of place and presence, connections, different ways of engaging, and expanding occupational engagement,

are discussed along with implications for occupational science.

Place, Environment, and Occupational Engagement

Aspects of the physical, social, and cultural environment are thought to influence occupational engagement and participation (Law, 2002; Townsend & Polatajko, 2007). A transactional relationship between the individual, the occupation and the environment has been proposed, whereby the environment can have both enabling and constraining effects on occupational performance (Law et al., 1996), affecting whether and how people engage in occupation (Ballinger, Talbot, & Verrinder, 2009; Rebeiro, 2001; Shaw, 2009). Particular places are important to everyone. Our connections with

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places are shaped by the place itself and our experiences of them. As Zemke (2004) discussed in her Eleanor Clarke Slagle lecture about occupation, time and space, culture is learned and its values are developed through interactions at particular times and locations. Thus, both time and place affect the expression of culture.

Additionally, the smells, sounds, a sense of freedom and safety, and the availability of knowledge, expertise, emotional support and encouragement in a place may represent new possibilities for engagement in occupation (Shaw, 2009). Rowles (2008) also suggested that:

The places in which we grow up, live our lives and grow old...[provide] both a constraining and, at the same time, a potentially liberating context through which individuals occupy themselves, love each other, exercise choice, and develop a sense of identification with their milieu that imbues life with meaning. (p. 128)

There is some evidence that engaging in shared occupation in place fosters a sense of social interaction and accomplishment through the learning of new procedures (Ballinger et al., 2009; Martin, Wicks, & Malpage, 2008; Rebeiro, 2001). Amongst women with mental illness, an affirming social environment has been shown to provide affirmation of the individual as a person of worth and a place to belong that supports occupational engagement over time. Opportunities for social interaction also developed through participating in a shared occupation (Rebeiro, 2001). For older women living in a rural community in England, engaging in tea drinking held shared meanings through social context and an awareness of family memories, customs, and the potential for well-being (Han-nam, 1997). Tea drinking was discussed by these women as a way to be hospitable, have social gatherings, and preserve customs, as well as being an opportunity for conversation.

The way in which a person engages in an occupation is thought to be linked to well-being and may also enhance satisfaction, motivation

and self-efficacy (Reid, 2005, 2008). Mindful engagement in an occupation supports awareness of the senses as well as one's intentions, thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which in turn may enhance the quality of the experience through a sense of presence with doing (Reid, 2009). Disengagement from what we are doing, and from being in and experiencing the moment, the place and occupation can occur and can influence well-being (Williams, Teasdale, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn, 2007).

Tea Ceremony Occupations

The tea ceremony is an essential part of Japan's historical and culture traditions and is considered a form of artistic accomplishment. The underlying principles of the tea ceremony, harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility, have been associated with a sense of peace and well-being. The tea ceremony was a common feature in the education of many young women starting in the 19th and early 20th century. Because many girls learned the tea ceremony at school, the percentage of women trained in tea ceremony increased over the years, and being trained came to be associated with a proper preparation for marriage. Since the Second World War this view has changed due to a decline in training in tea ceremony, however it is still regarded among Japanese society as a female occupation (Kato, 2004).

The traditional Japanese chashitsu affords a unique place for meaningful participation in occupation. A chashitsu is a space removed from ordinary daily life (Mittwer, 2008). Usually there is an alcove, a space for preparing the tea and space for the guests. Some chashitsu have special ceilings and windows as well. Ceiling styles are diverse and used to indicate where the guests should sit and to give the tea room a feeling of spaciousness. There are also *Soan* style freestanding chashitsu that have the natural beauty of country-style houses and/or the *roji* garden path to a tea room. Tea room windows are unlike usual windows that serve the function of ventilation, bring in light, and provide a view. Tea

room windows represent sunlight or moonlight, its changing direction as time passes, contributing to the aesthetic atmosphere. They also create a sense of expansiveness in the small tea room.

The chashitsu must have a place to do *temae*, a display place and a place to engage in appreciation. The host sits at the *temaeza* (the place for doing *temae*) and makes tea there. Sitting at their seats, the guests can appreciate the display, the host's *temae*, and the implements being used. A *temae* is a series of procedures, which includes among other things the preparations, inspection of the objects used in tea making, the tea making, drinking the tea, cleaning of the objects used, and putting everything away. It is said that one reason the tea ceremony is recognized as a form of art is that it takes the extremely ordinary act of taking food and drink and incorporates a series of movements performed in a highly specialized space, and develops it into a *kata* or model form.

There are different types of *temae* but all basically progress as follows. The host carries the implements for making tea, which have been readied in the preparation room (*mizuya*), into the tea room where she then inspects them and arranges them properly. Special implements include the *kama* (metal pot) to boil tea, which was made in Japan around 750 AD and still used today. The *kama* is either heated over a portable brazier (*furo*) or in a sunken hearth (*ro*) built into the floor of the tea room, depending on the season. The *furo* is used between May to October. Several other tea implements include the *mizusashi*—water vessel, a container for fresh water used in the tea room to replenish the *kama* water and to rinse the tea bowl and tea whisk. There is also a *Chawan*, the tea bowl, a *futaoki*-lid rest, a small stand on which to rest the kettle lid and ladle, a *kensui*—rinse-water receptacle into which used water is discarded during the *temae*, and *sumidogu*—charcoal implements necessary for the charcoal-laying *temae*. There are *furo*-season and *ro*-season versions of each implement. The *chakin*—tea ceremony white linen cloth used to wipe and purify the tea bowl during the *temae* is also used to wipe and purify the kettle during the charcoal-laying

temae and to hold under the water pitcher spout in order to catch possible water drips. Finally, there is a *chasen*, which is a bamboo whisk for mixing tea.

The next step is for the host to mix the powdered tea and hot water together in the tea bowl. There are different procedures. Green *matcha* tea, a finely milled tea which appears thick and foamy, is the tea of choice in Japanese tea ceremonies. When thick tea is used, one cup is passed among the guests. When thin tea is used, different cups are used for each guest. Assistants prepare the tea and serve it to the guests. In the next three steps the host puts the tea bowl, containing the tea, out for the guest(s); the guest(s) receive it, drink the tea and then return the bowl; and the host rinses the returned tea bowl and prepares it for making the next bowl of tea. The final step is when the host is assured that no further tea is necessary, when she cleans up the items, returning them in their original arrangement and carries them out of the tea room (Mittwer, 2008). The cleaning process involves carefully wiping the cup with a cloth using circular motions then neatly folding it.

Throughout, there is a sequence of movements that the host and guest(s) are supposed to follow. As well, throughout, the host and guests share in conversation and the atmosphere within the space of the tea room. If this can be accomplished, then *ichiza konryu* (successfully building the performance) is said to have been achieved. Thus, having met all the elements realized by host and guests, *ichigo ichie* (a unique experience can never be repeated), has been achieved. This nonrepeatable occupational experience was defined by Pierce (2001) as a subjective event in perceived temporal, spatial, and socio-cultural conditions that are unique to that one-time occurrence.

Values inherent in the tea ceremony are *chadogu* (tea ceremony implements), not only for the making of tea but also for their esthetic appreciation. For example, guests sit in front of the alcove and appreciate the items displayed there. Often a

kakemono—hanging scroll is displayed; the main types are *bokuseki*, featuring Buddhist verses or one-line phrases. There is also on display a *hanaire*—flower container which contains flowers selected and arranged according to the combination of implements and theme of the gathering. Sometime the tastes of the guests are also considered in selecting flowers. Guests usually sit in front of the scroll and gaze at it while placing their hands on the tatami. This is an expression of *haiken*. After drinking the tea, appreciation for the tea bowl that was used to make tea is made. Guests place the bowl outside of the tatami border in front of them and, with their hands on the mat, take a moment to admire the bowl. The bowl, picked up with both hands to view it more closely, is carefully not raised too high as it is not considered proper manners.

When doing *haiken* of the tea ceremony implements, the form, balance and aura of the individual pieces are considered. Because the selection of the implements is based on the concept of *mekiki*, importance is placed on the overall harmony of all the implements, the tea room and even the purpose of the tea gathering, rather than in judging each component for its individual qualities or worth. The qualities to be appreciated include the form (*nari*) which is the shape itself and its overall silhouette. Every implement has its own particular purpose and of first importance is that the shape suits the purpose. The quality of balance (*koro*) has to do with size and distribution. Almost all famous chadogu fit within a certain parameter or ratio and the item's balance and harmony with the other implements is of great importance. A third quality is aura (*yosu*), which means that each item possesses its own aura, such as a fussy or gaudy aura, with too prim an aura being avoided. Rowles (2008) emphasized that there is much to be learned from exploring the relationship between the artifacts or implements, their use in a place and the relevance the place has in people's lives. This study explores how women derive meaning from being in a special place engaging in a tea ceremony.

Methods

A convenience sample of three women was recruited from a University tea ceremony club, along with another four women known to the investigator who had experience with tea ceremonies. Two of the women were in their 50s and two in their 60s. These women were either teachers of tea ceremony, or homemakers. The three others were in their 20s and were all students. All the women practiced the Ura style of tea ceremony, which is one of the most common styles. The women lived in different parts of the north island of Japan, four of them in Sapporo, a city of over 1.8 million people. The others lived over 300 km away; two in Tsubetsu (5,700 population), and one in Hakodate (282,000 population). Their experience of engaging in tea ceremonies ranged from 1 year for one woman, 4 years for two, 20 years for one, and 35 years for three women. Four women had a license to teach tea ceremony to others. All of the women engaged in tea ceremony at least once a week, except for one who participated twice a week.

Ethical procedures were used. The women were informed of the purpose, risks, and were given the option to participate in the research. A written consent was obtained prior to interviews. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, multiple informants from different locations and trained interviewers were used. Three interviews were conducted by the first author. The other interviewers received training regarding in-depth interviewing skills from the first author. They were three qualified occupational therapists with between 7 to 9 years clinical experience and some experience with qualitative methods. Two interviewers conducted one interview each and two were conducted by the third interviewer.

Interviews for each participant ranged in length from 1 to 2 hours. An interview guide was used to ask open-ended questions about the participants' experiences with tea ceremony occupations. They were prompted to talk about how the place, occupations of tea ceremony (making tea, drinking tea, using tea objects), and other guests

influenced their experience. Some examples of questions were: When did you start tea ceremony?; Why did you start?; Why do you continue to engage tea ceremony?; How do you engage in tea ceremony now? (where, whom, how, what-place); and Tell me about your experiences in tea ceremony.

A digital recorder was used to record their stories. The recordings were transcribed and read by both the first author, and a native English teacher also fluent in Japanese. The English teacher assisted the first author in verifying the accuracy of the English translation of the transcripts, which were corrected for proper English for some of the wording, taking care that the essential meaning of the stories was maintained. Using the Japanese version, the first author used a blend of content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to develop a preliminary list of themes in the data. The second author reviewed the preliminary themes and through ongoing discussion and consensus meetings with the first author a final list of themes was agreed upon. A member check was completed with all the informants, who reviewed a summary of the themes, reported complete agreement and had nothing to add.

Findings

Four major themes and 10 sub themes were identified. The major themes were: (1) sense of place, (2) being present, (3) different ways to engage, and (4) expanding occupation.

Sense of place

The tea ceremony requires a *chashitsu* space and *temae* procedures, but those are not enough if there are no guests to be hospitable to. All informants spoke about hospitality as important in a tea ceremony and described the tea ceremony as a series of procedures for making and drinking the tea and using the tea implements. This process is referred to as *Kata*. Expressing hospitality through the occupations of making tea and using tea implements is important. In turn, guests

respond by sharing similar hospitality with each other.

Engaging in tea ceremony occupations means sharing similar emotions

Through the process of *Kata*, most informants expressed the importance of caring for one another and engaging in an occupation as one. Four informants discussed this theme.

When the host and guest care for each other, they can share unification... We must harmonize with the other person.

I think that hospitality is caring for each other and it is very nice to greet people with high regard.

When we drink tea and eat a sweet, we must thank somebody before doing those [things]. I wonder whom we thank? And I think we thank everyone who is concerned with a cup of tea; the host, manufacturers of tea leaves, and others.

This sense of caring for others is carried out in other subtle behaviors imbedded in the *temae*. The meaning of *temae* is expressed by performing it beautifully. Some examples are:

The host slides her feet in the tea room. My teacher taught me... She doesn't show her soles her feet bottom to the guests because they may be dirty.

When I carry dirty water, we change the direction we turn so that we don't show dirty water to the guests. I think that caring is very important.

Artistic representation of hospitality

Hospitality was also discussed as how the host strives to please the guests by either making up a story theme or choosing particular implements based on the guest's preferences. Informants readily described their understanding and appreciation of the reasons the host chose particular implements and the theme picture on the scroll in the alcove of the room to please them. Most informants spoke readily about this.

In the summer, the host may choose a shallow tea bowl because that type of tea bowl looks cool.

The host shows the theme of her tea

ceremony on the scroll and guests take that as a hint of their host's theme.

Being present

This overall theme was on being present with their current occupation – tea ceremony in a tea room and nothing else. Informants viewed the tea ceremony as being conducted in a separate closed place, a tea room with a concentrated focus.

Doing away with other occupations

There is a sense that other occupations are done away with. Informants spoke about not bringing into the tea room any other objects or sensory stimulations that were not connected with a tea ceremony. Informants also discussed the idea of “living in the moment” when engaged in tea ceremony. This notion for them added to the value of participating in the tea ceremony. Almost all informants referred to these ideas.

In the tea ceremony, we use the word ichi-go, ichi-e, which means once-in-a-lifetime encounter. Because we might never meet that guest again in our life, we meet them with deep sensitivity.

Other participants added that:

I think that experience is my treasure and my cherished memory.

When I was at the farewell tea ceremony in a high school, I really realized that time was my final chance... When I felt ichi-go, ichi-e, I was motivated to value each performance. I wanted to perform temae more beautiful than usual.

Peaceful and connected occupation

Many informants mentioned that being present with the occupations of the tea ceremony brought them peace and a release from the routines of daily life. Comments revolved around the meditative, quiet, rhythmic nature and the connective power of the tea ceremony. They described feeling calm, refreshed, or a sense of relief, perhaps “because [of] the tea leaves. These are green color.” One referred to the tea ceremony as being timeless, meaning it is a comfortable and peaceful time to get away from it all

I can settle down and take a breathing spell in the tea ceremony. I think a tea room gives me such a feeling... maybe, because of the tatami mat. And we perform temae fluently... the whole ceremony is simple... In the tea ceremony, slow movements are recommended. It is more beautiful for that to move in no hurry.

One woman who had been a teacher of tea ceremony for years spoke of how women's bodies were integral to performing a beautiful tea ceremony, and others spoke about the beauty of slow and fluid motions.

I think the rules of behavior in the tea ceremony have many economical motions and are very beautiful... I never forget anything learned by using our bodies. I am reminded of the next motions naturally as I go along; 'I perform that next'.

Almost all of the informants talked about the important connection between nature and the tea implements used in the tea ceremony.

This scroll picture is for this season... Can you hear a sound of wind in the pines now? All of the tea implements are connected. We prepare the tea implements in season... seasonal tea bowls, tea scoop... In January and February we use this hot water kettle. April is the season of cherry blossoms. And we use one drawing with cherry blossom in the pattern.

Complexity of temae, concentration, and beauty
Most informants reported that after learning the skill of temae they can perform the tea ceremony automatically. However, they must keep their focus on both the temae and the tea ceremony in order to experience a meaningful tea ceremony with attention to the season, the types of tea implements and the levels of experience of the participants. Informants also spoke of the beauty in the tea ceremony. There was a desire to be able to perform it beautifully.

The flow of performances is very beautiful... I think a tea ceremony has [a] long history and gets sophisticated... My teacher's temae is beautiful... the position of the tea implements is beautiful... The be-

gining shape is the same as the ending shape . . . When my teacher makes tea . . . the way to make tea and wipe a tea bowl . . . when she wipes it, the motion of her hands is smooth and we don't see the bowl wobbling. I am impressed with that.

Different ways to engage

There are different ways people can perform a tea ceremony, as long as they follow the rules for making tea, cleaning a tea cup, and meeting guests. The tea room is viewed as a space unlike everyday spaces, where people can rediscover the beauty and value in performances that don't have any "wasted motions".

I feel that I can apply things discovered in the tea ceremony to my daily life . . . don't tread on the edges of tatami mat, the way of walking, my posture . . . I think it is good for me to have learned the tea ceremony.

We learn things connected with everyday life . . . we learn the way of walking, languages, and the ways to handle and touch the objects . . . and a way to stow the objects . . . to wash them. All things are connected. When I wash a tea bowl, I can't do it roughly or in the same way that I do it in my kitchen. When I do that at home, we use a dishpan and wash many objects all together. But in a tea ceremony, we must not do that . . . if somebody does that, the tea implements get damaged easily.

An expanding occupation

The informants expressed the idea that there was no specific goal in the tea ceremony beyond learning the art of doing temae, where their interest in tea bowls, tea flowers, the ways of hospitality, spirituality, mindfulness, and so on can progress. Informants spoke about the endless desire to learn and the support they have from others, mentioning that their personal goals were formed with an open mind and were met at the individual's own pace as her interest and understanding of the different potteries, seasonal words, and "many ways and things to enjoy in all stages of the tea ceremony" increases.

I asked my student why she continues to learn. She told me there are many things to

learn. But there are no deadlines or time boundaries . . . Also I enjoy expanding my interests. After being through learning one thing, another new thing to learn comes to me . . . And there is no problem if someone can't perform. If somebody forgets what they learned in the tea ceremony, it is OK. They can ask for help from the teacher or others. I set my own goal. We sometimes notice the beautiful motions. But it's not necessary to give scores for the performance. Because of that, I can go for anything that I want to. I feel breath of mind [awareness of breath]. When I was in junior high school, I belonged to sports clubs and felt pressure. But now, I don't need to compete with others.

Confirmation of occupational progress

Informants spoke about getting certified in tea ceremony, which attests to their progress. They also explained that another way of knowing your progress is the value placed on performing the process of the tea ceremony, where the performance is recognized by other people. Having other people see your temae is another way to learn.

I had a lot of practice. But I couldn't learn the temae well. Since I showed my temae and could perform fluently at my university festivals, I gained self-confidence. I received positive feedback from my club members. I feel a sense of accomplishment.

The upper teachers come to Hokkaido every spring and fall. We make tea in front of them to be taught.

Discussion

The tea room, a place with special significance, was described by participants as essential to the experience of engaging in tea ceremony occupations, and making a hospitable place was essential to the performance of the tea ceremony. That awareness aligns with theories proposing a transactional relationship between people, occupation and the environment (Law et al., 1996). Participants were aware that the tea room afforded certain behaviors to be shared and enjoyed. This

place also provided an opportunity for participants to try out learned procedures and learn about alternative and new ways of performing. Gathering in a tea room allowed participants to develop a sense of accomplishment, which supports previous findings that shared occupations foster accomplishment and learning (Ballinger et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2008; Rebeiro, 2001). Through participating and watching their host and each other, participants connected with each other and began to share feelings and values associated with the art of doing tea ceremony.

A strong sense of personal presence, of “being there”, was felt by most women as they engaged in tea ceremony occupations. There was a conscious “getting rid of” other occupations and preoccupations so that concentration on the one occupation of tea ceremony could be realized. Associated with this sense of presence was a feeling of peace and a release from the pressures of the day. The women felt the place and the occupations provided them with the ability to be in harmony with others, which is highly valued in Japanese culture. The tea ceremony was essentially, for these women, a co-occupation that was shared and experienced (Pickens & Pizur-Barnekow, 2009).

Limitations

The insights are restricted to a small sample. They provide a starting point to explore shared meanings amongst other people, contexts and occupations. This study is merely a beginning in an attempt to understand the importance of specia-

lized places to the meaning and experience of occupation in human life, and its impact upon the presence and well-being of individuals.

Conclusion

The findings from this small-scale qualitative study of women who engaged in tea ceremony highlighted the importance of unique places to fostering a sense of presence during occupational engagement. This place, which exists for the sole purpose of engaging in a specific occupation – a tea room for making tea, drinking tea, and other tea ceremony occupations, allowed participants to suspend their usual routines and concentrate on learning a new set of skills and connecting with others who shared similar goals. Occupational scientists are encouraged to explore further the meaning of closed or sole purpose places and their relationship to occupational engagement and presence. Further studies may involve examining the role of places on feelings of connection and personal occupational development.

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