

## ***Symposium***

### **Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

I am overjoyed to see so many people here, even when everyone must be exhausted from today's Commemorative Tea Gathering.

As Daisosho told us the day before yesterday at the "Ceremonial Function", in Europe and the Americas *Chado* is not only the learning of the *temae* but is the study of how to live one's life, a heartfelt interpersonal exchange. This evening, speaking to us about "*cha no yu* and spirituality", we have the pleasure of listening to Rev. Father Pierre-François de Béthune, who is a Catholic Father and president of the Urasenke Tankokai Belgium Association, and Rev. Ulrich Haas, who is Rinzai Zen Monk and Tea Instructor at the Urasenke Freiburg Liaison Office, in Germany. After our guest speakers, we will have the opportunity to listen to brief reports about how Tea is being studied throughout Europe. Following the reports, I would like to open the discussion up to everyone, including our convention participants in the audience, to talk about how we can support each others' efforts and help each other in our common objective of conveying the *heart* of *Chado* to more and more people.

### **Rev. Father Pierre-François de Béthune (Belgium; translated from French/Italian)**

Allow me to start with a recollection. I retain a vivid memory of my visit to Urasenke, in 1983. I had come to Kyoto with 20 Christian monks and nuns, who had spent two weeks in a Zen monastery, as part of a spiritual exchange with Buddhist monks. At the end of our stay, we had the privilege to be called together by Grand Master Sen Soshitsu XV and his wife, Mme. Tomiko, at the *Totsutotsu-sai*. Sen Soshitsu honored us by preparing the tea, himself, while Mme. Tomiko placed the bowl in front of each of us. Afterward, they took us to Konnichian and *Rikyu-do*. There, Sen Soshitsu had an old edition of the Bible or the Missal, printed in Rome during the time of Rikyu, placed at the foot of the altar. He told us that when he came to the altar every day, to pay tribute to the founder of his lineage, he would also pay his respects to this book and turn the page. On that

day, he gave us a very memorable testimony to the traditional hospitality of the Sen school.

In fact, the welcome that we received on that day was truly in the spirit of Sen Rikyu. From its very beginning, *chado* has demonstrated a respect for foreigners. And there is nothing strange about that, because *chado* is the art of welcoming guests. It is known that Rikyu, in the Japan of the Momoyama Period, was in contact with many people who, in one form or another, were open to things that they hoped would promote the evolution of the country. Rikyu even associated regularly with Christians, amongst whom he found his best students. Historians still argue over the possible influence that Christianity might have had on Rikyu's particular way of offering Tea. What is pointed out are certain gestures, used when drying the tea bowl, which theoretically could have been inspired by the way that Catholic priests dry the chalice at the end of Mass. I, personally, find it easier to see an influence from the Gospel in the special attention that Rikyu gave to a spirit of brotherhood among the guests. I would even say that "fraternity" could be considered an implicit fifth principle of *chado*, alongside harmony, respect, purity and serenity. I am not trying to say, however, that the focus on equality and fraternity was received by Rikyu from an external source, because such virtues were already present in Buddhist tradition.

Whatever the case may be, in welcoming us so generously, the Grand Master gave testimony to his deepest conviction: "Peacefulness through a bowl of tea". Sharing a bowl of tea signifies, in a way most evident, the unity of all human beings. Is not our calling in life, perhaps, to realize in ways ever more concrete that we are all "guests", all brothers and sisters, who together share the riches of the earth?

I think you have all realized, by now, that I speak as a Christian *chajin*. (Calling myself a *chajin* is perhaps pretentious on my part. However, it is true that the Way of Tea is important to me.)

I agreed to talk, here, today, because I wanted to express my gratitude to the people that allowed me to participate in this precious

tradition of tea—Sen Genshitsu Dai Sosho and Nojiri Michiko Sensei. On this occasion of the Urasenke Convention, which is being held in Rome, capitol of the Catholic world, it would seem appropriate to recall what the encounter between the tradition of tea and Christian spirituality has revealed to us.

It would be instructive, as I begin, to explain to you why I decided to put my trust in this school.

As a monk, I have always been interested in rituals and, in particular, in the celebration of the "Lord's Supper", otherwise known as Mass. From the very first time I came across the small Zen ritual known as *cha no yu*, I was fascinated. I wanted to become better acquainted with the source of such beauty, by practicing myself. The way that it was taught in Rome showed me, to my pleasure, that *cha no yu* is a very serious "Way", which deserves great respect and cannot be "used". I realized that I would have to counter my tendency to approach this tradition with the aim of extracting some elements that would be useful in my own tradition. This is how we Westerners frequently acted in the past, when we encountered other civilizations. Christians are also known to have co-opted various elements of cultures they encountered, removing them from their often religious context. Today, however, we see that this way of using, or of co-opting, the riches of others is always sterile. For this reason, I wanted to learn the *temae* with the sole objective of discovering their beauty. And this is how I was able to accept the question that *cha no yu* was to address to me.

Like everyone who starts this learning process, I first had to do some work on myself, to overcome my inhibitions, my clumsiness and my abstracting from concrete reality. My discovery of the importance of the body and of the requirement of truth in gestures was very healthful in helping me recognize how the spiritual is necessarily incarnate.

I would like to talk about two important discoveries of mine, however, before saying anything else.

The first discovery is actually a rediscovery: The possibility, thanks to *chado*, of discovering a better way of realizing certain Christian spiritual practices that had become somewhat atrophied.

Practicing the gestures of *cha no yu*, I was able to experience the unity of my entire person. When one practices tea, starting from the *tanden*, one realizes a just presence in and of oneself, which thereby enables one to give attention both to oneself and to others, without conflict. At the moment that you offer the bowl of tea to your guest, therefore, you can do so simply, as a flower that gives forth its perfume, without adding the intention of treating your guest well, which would do nothing other than underline the duality. We can even note that, in this case, the communication between the host and his guests is not uniquely interpersonal, momentarily excluding others. No—it remains open, transpersonal, even cosmic. The relationship with the guest is not a direct one; it passes, so to speak, through the *tokonoma*, which evokes precisely that vacuous space that saves the *chashitsu* from becoming a romantic cul-de-sac.

I was surprised to discover, while celebrating Mass, that I was able to spontaneously do that which, until that moment, had seemed contradictory to me—to be present to the members of the assembly in prayer and, at the same time, to be present to God, to whom we were praying. As long as we are ruled by a mentality that favors the rational, we are generally divided between these two ways of orienting our attention, and we pass successively from one to the other. Once we have become well accustomed to *kikai tanden*, however, this occurs easily. My aim in practicing *cha no yu* had nothing to do with finding benefits such as this; but, I am pleased to confirm that it does, also, have this beneficial effect.

After participating in the Tea Ceremony, I could also see how the gestures of the Christian liturgy had become so often rigid, awkward and vague. Our liturgies had reached the point where they had become long discourses, pronounced from behind an altar filled with numerous objects, where gestures no longer held any importance. When he laid down instructions for the Eucharist, the Lord Jesus Christ did not say, "Say this in my memory", but, "Do this...". And it was in the gesture of breaking the bread that the disciples recognized him, not by his words. The assiduous practice of *cha no*

*yu* allowed me to realize the power of those gestures, which "speak" more than a river of words do. Accepting this question and practicing *chado*, I, therefore, discovered that I was able to give more power and truth to my way of celebrating the Eucharist.

The other discovery that I wanted to speak about is something more in the realm of culture and aesthetics. Studying tea actually opened new horizons for me, in this respect. I was able to confirm, at *Midorikai* and in the environment of Kyoto, that *chado* encompasses nearly all the arts of Japan. When one sets out to walk along this path, one needs to know about soan-style architecture, the art of the *roji* tea gardens, the calligraphy of the *kakejiku*, the various kinds of *raku*, *hagi*, *karatsu* and other ceramics. And the list could go on and on.

Through all of this, I was able to better feel what seems to me to be the heart of this culture: a constant search for the Zen ideal of simplicity. Of course, Japan is also home to many other kinds of searches—complex, brilliant, colorful and ostentatious artistic expressions. And, at the same time, at the heart of all this, there is always the search for "the sufficient minimum that contains all", as expressed in the words of Professor Hisamatsu Shin'ichi. During our study at *Midorikai*, Mme. Sen spoke to us about *wabi cha*, one of the principal characteristics of the Sen tradition. The *Konnichian*—the small tearoom built by Sen Sotan, which constitutes the heart of the present Urasenke complex in Kyoto—is a good example of *wabi*. The explanations given by Mme. Sen and reinforced by Nojiri Michiko Sensei clarified many things for me. Could *wabi*—or the "joy of the uncertain", as it is defined—possibly be the key by which one could access the secret heart of the Japanese culture? Either way, I strongly feel that *wabi* is one of the most precious of Japan's contributions to the cultural heritage of humanity.

A liking for things *wabi* finds its origins in the monastic environment, where people know how to appreciate simple things. In this context, ordinary reality is never trivial, because even the lowest of the low is respected. *Wabi* could, therefore, be defined as the art of saving ordinary things from falling into banality, revealing their marvelous simplicity and secret joy.

The elaboration of this art of living, however, took place in artistic surroundings. As a reaction to a tendency of the times toward pomp and ostentatious display of richness, some artists, finding inspiration in Zen Buddhism, initiated an "art of poverty", which continues to inspire us, today.

Instead of stubbornly persisting, in a passionate (and tragic) manner, to possess as much as possible, including perfection, the art of poverty is concerned with how to abandon more and more. Instead of preserving a nostalgia for the infinite, one contents oneself with the insufficient and, even, with nothing. While Heian gardens evoke landscapes without borders, Zen gardens are closed in by walls—and the space created within these walls has an incomparable intensity. Instead of tending toward refinement and finesse of execution (*netsuke* comes to mind, for example), they rely on spontaneity and on the immediate reaction that comes to a unified heart—what a calligraphy, for example, can express. The art of poverty even relies on the random patterns created by a kiln flame on a piece of pottery or on the chance occurrence of a defect in a piece of wood.

For Rikyu, the best expression of *wabi* was this poem by Fujiwara Iyetaka (d. 1237):

To those who only pray for the cherries to bloom,  
How I wish to show the spring  
That gleams from a patch of green  
In the midst of the snow-covered mountain-village!

With these words, Rikyu reveals to us the heart of the Way of Tea—one of patience and hope, in the expectation of an encounter.

This ideal of *wabi* calls strongly to me. It is in harmony with what San Francesco of Assisi discovered. It is very close to the Gospel. Practicing *wabi* allows me also to revisit my own heritage, with a new perspective. Thanks to this ideal, I am inspired to be more coherent during Mass.

It is especially at this level that the relationship between the Urasenke tradition and Christianity is pertinent.

There is something incongruous in evoking the ideal of *wabi* in a Roman Baroque setting, but I feel that it is very present-day. Today's trends for comfort and ostentatious display threaten all of us and lead us toward superficiality. The study of tea, too, could become a frivolous occupation, if not practiced with the spirit of its founders. It is certainly legitimate to practice *cha no yu* as an elegant pastime—everything that cultivates beauty is always very welcome. However, when we attempt to glimpse what is more precious in the Urasenke tradition, we bring ourselves into contact with the most profound of wisdom, of which Urasenke is the vehicle. And this wisdom is deeply rooted in Zen Buddhism.

I think, therefore, that the best way to bring *chado* to the West is still to convey *wabi cha*. Those who teach the practice of tea certainly must know all about the tradition, as it was developed in Japan over the course of centuries. They must be initiated in all the variations used in tearooms, in accordance with diverse circumstances. What best responds to the legitimate expectation of Westerners, in this respect, however, is the most simple of the *temae*. Performed over and over, ad infinitum, they help purify the heart and bring it into harmony with the environment.

In conclusion, I would like to clarify what, in my opinion, makes *chado* unique among all the arts practiced throughout the diverse cultures of the world. Like all arts, it is a way of bringing realities of ordinary life to perfection. We can see that in all eras, the elements necessary for life have been developed and refined. Everything has become material for the arts: the home, clothing, food, household utensils, writing and penmanship, verbal expression, and even combat. But only Japanese tradition (as far as I know) developed and brought to perfection the welcoming of guests. What has been brought to perfection, here, is not only the diverse materials necessary for human life—such as wood and ceramics, ink and paper—but also gestures and the practice of hospitality.

Let us say between parentheses that simplicity and, even, *wabi* are necessary in order to receive guests well. The mutual welcoming is cordial and real only if realized in its simplicity. For this reason, to enter into a *chashitsu*, a tearoom, Rikyu established that you must pass through a low doorway, the *nijiriguchi*, the "door of humility". Be

on guard, also, for the host that exhibits too many rare and precious objects, to impress his guests, because in such cases the encounter risks not being right. It is for this reason that the *wabi* style seems to me to be so essential to the tradition of tea: It ensures a human quality in the encounter and, in this way, allows the artistic quality to be found not only in the objects but, more importantly, in the attitudes of the participants.

Today, in a world ignited by many conflicts, the demonstration of hospitality is more necessary than ever. According to Homer, "Religious piety, hospitality and civilization always go together" (Odyssey, VI, 119). Where hospitality is derided, the door is open to all kinds of misfortune. Certainly, all cultures respect hospitality; but they do not always succeed in putting it into practice. The tradition of *chado* has the particular responsibility of testifying that this attitude is beautiful, that it is an art of living wonderfully.

It is this testimony of *chado* that I most appreciate, as a Christian, or, simply, as a person in the 21st century. I would like express, once again, my gratitude to everyone that has allowed us to come to know and to practice the Urasenke tradition in the West.

### **Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

*Thank you very much. And now, let's hear from Ulrich Haas Sensei.*

### **Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

When I was asked to give a short talk on Tea and spirituality from the point of view of Zen, I felt some reluctance to the word *spirituality* and the kind of market of spirituality we face today. For many people the word spirituality has become a kind of promise which cannot be kept or realized anymore.

I can, however, understand this kind of longing for a word like "*spirituality*". We have all become tired of being satisfied with the banal superficiality of our lives. We are tired of being at the mercy of teachers, masters or priests who use rhetoric without any trace of insight and awakening. We are tired of living in all these well-lit rooms which do not hold even a trace of the mysterious for us any



longer. We have become tired of functioning instead of using our mind.

We therefore grasp this new word "*spirituality*" and do not realize that its only promise is that it is just that—a new word—and we are left searching for the answers to the same old questions: What do we stand for in our life? How do we escape from the constraint of trying to justify our functioning? How can we use our language, our gestures, our teaching and how can we give our advice to others in such a way that we do not betray our own mind? And for me as a teacher: how can I pass on something which I myself have probably realized only fifty per cent or even less?

Our generation will be measured by what we leave behind for our children and grandchildren: a world shattered to pieces, or a world in which they can breathe the air, drink the water and enjoy the fruits of the earth. If we only leave the vast emptiness of our minds and the result of our violation of nature there will be no forgiveness.

So when we come together to share a bowl of Tea with our friends, we realize that in the Tea room these friends are not measured by what they can do or by what they have, but rather by their longing and by the questions they carry deep inside themselves; and it is this which makes them beautiful. Longing is caused by the realization that we need more than we now have, at this very moment. But there is also a very different kind of longing—that which originates where we experience the richness of our life.

Also the beauty of life teaches us what longing means: the wonderful encounter between host and guest, the sounds of the simmering water in the iron kettle, the dark-green moss on the garden path moistened by dew. In Tea we learn that it is not important what someone has or does not have ? only what he truly IS. The longing that I am talking about cannot be satisfied by objects, possessions or quantities. Two important wishes are always hidden in our longing: the one is our wish for our own completeness and salvation and the other is the longing for the unity with our eternal Self which also encompasses the abyss of our life and death.

Our longing for unity and harmony can be so strong that we completely miss the deeper meaning of "Wa" the first principle of the Way of Tea which is mostly translated by harmony or peace. I have—of course— nothing against harmony, but I do have something against obligatory harmony for there is great danger in what we often hear:

*"Think positive, act positive and you will break through all barriers! Unhappiness and bad luck is just another mask of harmony; and if the mask drops nothing can stop you from becoming enlightened! It is simply your own fault if you cannot reach the realization of true harmony and unity!"*

If we look at *Wa* this way, the destruction and suffering around us become invisible. And it could be that we forget one of our basic human attributes: loving-kindness and compassion. If we are not able to sense the deep sadness of one of our guests who has lost his beloved; if we cannot feel the everyday suffering around us, or even—very simply—the pain in the knees of our guest, we have not understood the meaning of *Wa*.

One of the most important gestures in Tea for me is what in Japanese is called "*kansha*", a gesture of gratitude and humbleness. For me, this *kansha* is much more: it does not only include the sun, the earth, the Tea, but also the whole universe—and not only in its harmony and unity: in this simple gesture I can feel that every seven seconds a child under the age of ten is dying of starvation, that at this very moment thousands of prisoners are being physically and mentally tortured, and that there are about 40 different significant wars going on right now in the world - and then I become truly humble and grateful. Life itself is holy and Tea is a practice of how to cherish all life.

In order to practise Tea in this way, we need something which is very important and which is indeed the essence of Zen: awareness and mindfulness. Am I truly capable of being *aware* and of being able to *feel*? How do I deal with my fellow beings and how do I treat the objects of my daily life? Can I truly honour them as a gift or am I more a "user" and "possessor" of this world? Do I treat the water,

the night, the animals, the air I breathe with reverence, or do I think that all these are just here for my personal use?

Spirituality is awareness brought into form—a kind of creative awareness. We do not exist only of our own inner Self and of our good intentions. We are not only mind or soul but also body. We do not have a body—we ARE body! From this point of view we can also look at spirituality as a kind of art. Spirituality is certainly not a talent of a religious genius. This means that we can learn spirituality in the same way that we can learn how to cook or how to build a house. But every art has its rules and we can only be successful if we follow these rules. In Tea we have many rules—the form. These rules and the form not only help us to see where we stand right at this moment they can also purify us from the contingency of the moment.

Tea students often ask me if they should practise at home and I advise them to create a special place for Tea in their homes. It can be a very small space—maybe just one *tatami* or a soft carpet—it is only important to create this space exclusively for Tea practice. If we build a large Tea room or just set up a small space within our apartment, the room we create will always teach us something.

The Tea room is a very special place which should not be contaminated by mundane activities. This means that a Tea room can never be as familiar to us as our family living room. When we enter a Tea room it is rather like a journey to an unknown country and it is the *strangeness* of our Tea room that enables us to see ourselves from a different point of view. Rikyu who built a 4.5-mat Tea room and then made it smaller—first into three mats and finally into a 1.5-mats—had in mind to bring host and guest so close together that they were able to form a kind of unity: they became One. To achieve this, the guests have to leave all their possessions, their titles, their social rank and their family status outside. If we leave all these outside, it is easier and quite natural for us to truly meet each other and to open our hearts to our neighbour. Ideally the guests enter the Tea room with a completely empty mind ? *mu shin*. Only when we leave all these outside barriers behind us and open our hearts can guests and host act freely and spontaneously.

These are all quite high goals and we should remember that Rikyu himself admitted that he had experienced chanoyu to his ideal only once or twice in his lifetime. Rikyu's vision should be interpreted in the context of Zen. Shibayama Zenkei calls training in Zen "*a desperate inner struggle to destroy ordinary dualistic consciousness.*" Rikyu was firmly committed to following this course of action. As he said:

*"In Zen, truth is pursued through the discipline of meditation in order to realize enlightenment while in Tea we use training in the actual procedures of making Tea to achieve the same end."*

So the Tea room is not only the place where the individual form of the preparation and drinking of Tea is practised, but also a place for the teaching and practising of *Dharma*. Not only is *Dharma* the Cosmic Law which controls our world as described by the historic Buddha, it is also the teachings of the mystics of all religions who formulated this law after they had experienced an awakening during their contemplation. In order to reach *Dharma*, our individualism, our ego must first make room for it.

In a Tea room it is important that we are in harmony with others, just as milk and honey mix completely. All beings are at one with the environment. In the Tea room this joint influence is beneficial and important for all of us in the Way of Tea.

Through our awareness and mindfulness we use the form to get in touch with each other. Following these rules and the exercises means following the Way. Everything which is practised at this very moment is *Dharma*. The repetition of the movements results in a deepening of understanding, and the more this is deepened, the easier it is to understand the significance of the individual rules and of all of our actions. These rules help us create a strong and harmonious atmosphere, enabling us to come to terms with ourselves.

We know that it is not possible to study the Way of Tea from the outside; it is only possible from within - through our own body and mind. True understanding is transferred through practice and must be mirrored in all our actions of

everyday life. Understanding through books alone results in knowledge, but not wisdom.

So it is also important for the mind to return to the body. The body has its own wisdom. The body can act spontaneously if our mind is at rest. All of the great Masters reached the Way after having mastered their body and after having controlled their mind.

If we look at the last of the four values of Tea—*jaku*—we see that it is a distinctively Buddhist concept. The same ideograph forms part of the Japanese word for Nirvana—*jakumetsu*—which means the ultimate Buddhist endeavour, a complete freedom from the limitations of existence. While *wa*, *kei* and *sei* contribute primarily to the confirmatory character of Tea, *jaku* suggests its transformatory potential. It gives us a sense of lasting inner tranquillity, which transcends our individual desire and dualistic thinking. *Jaku* can not exist if there is a lack of harmony with the social and natural orders and with the purity of mind and spirit nor if there is a lack of respect for these.

As Rikyu said:

*The garden path, the Tea house,  
The host and the guest ?  
All are whipped together  
In the Tea and are without distinction.*

Tea is prepared in a very special form. Each of the actions has a deeper sense, no matter whether it is the whisking of the Tea or merely the closing of a door. It is a prayer with our body. During a Tea gathering it is not necessary to act from our thoughts.

An old text states:

*"If actions, even good ones come from a darkened awareness, they only bring a limited amount of happiness into the world. When, in contrast, the light of the Samadhi of Zazen allows our personal thoughts to be extinguished, the slightest action will be illuminated by it as it is produced before any form of judgment is created."*

Formally speaking, the Way of Tea without Zazen would be like a flower without scent. It provides the practice with a religious dimension refines our mind and makes our conduct fine and noble. Our manner and behaviour strongly influence the mind. The repetition of the movements in the actual preparation and in receiving Tea with gratitude shapes our character as a whole and develops into a profound education which extends into our everyday life. Zen sees us as emotional beings capable of transcending the world around us yet remaining an active part of it. And it was Sen Rikyu, who incorporated this kind of freedom into the Way of Tea in his saying *cha zen ichi mi*—the taste of Zen and Tea is the same.

Taisen Deshimaru, a Japanese Zen-Master who brought Zen to Western Europe, told us:

*"The natural beauty of the body is the mirroring of the practising of the mind by concentrating on the gestures."*

And to close my short talk I would like to quote Hounsai Genshitsu Daisoshō:

*"Chanoyu is a way of life, applicable anywhere by anyone. To understand this century-old discipline we must first look deeply into the outward forms of chanoyu and then look beyond them. Only then can we see that the foundation of chanoyu is mind—our own mind—and spirit—our own spirit."*

If today the Way of Tea still holds an important place within the different Ways of Zen, it is precisely because also in Japan man yearns for tranquillity in an age where he has lost his centre in so many areas of his life. And also far away from Japan, in western dress and using simple utensils the Way of Tea may also be found.

Perhaps people like us, who study the Way of Tea, do have something which distinguishes them from many others. We have learned to concentrate on the essential things in our lives. In the way we offer our guest a bowl of Tea and in the way he or she receives it, we can create living harmony in contrast to the disorder and chaos which surround us, we can show living respect in contrast to egoism and self-righteousness, we can create living purity in contrast to repulsiveness and filth and indeed we can practise living

tranquillity in contrast to the haste and restlessness of life in the world of today.

Thank you.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

*Thank you very much. Now, we would like to open the discussion to include the audience. Would anyone like to say or ask anything?*

**Dr. Peter Schendl (Austria)**

Dear ladies, dear gentlemen, just a few words.

To me the Way of Tea is - as the name implies - a "way". As a European, I see the Way of Tea (*Chado*) as a wonderful gift from Japan. But to me, it more makes sense when Tea and Zen are interconnected. Otherwise it would merely be a beautiful part of Japanese folklore, in my view, comparable to Austrian traditions a Japanese might want to learn, like the Viennese Waltz or yodeling.

I would really like to thank Daisosho Genshitsu Sen for making it possible that we in Europe have the opportunity to get to know the spirit of Tea; and I would also like to thank Michiko Nojiri Sensei, who always teaches us "*Cha Zen Ichi Mi!*"—"Tea and Zen, one taste!"

The Way of Tea and Zen is a great help in my daily life!

Thank you!

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Thank you very much. Anyone else?

**Krissi Prahova (Bulgaria)**

From the sky to the earth—this is a way to express that something is infinite and can't be measured by ordinary earthly means. Such is our love and gratitude towards the people who have led us along the

Way of Tea, a way of beauty that counters everyday fatigue. For me the Way of Tea is an infinite universe that fills us simultaneously with a wide range of feelings: elation and ordinariness, strength and weakness, light and darkness. It makes us stronger and gives life to our hearts.

I am happy that I could make my humble contribution in Bulgaria to open the door for those who now follow the Way of Tea. As in any society, our group has gone through many changes and developments. I would like to share with you how our group copes with things and how relations with other European groups help us to keep alive the flame in our hearts that was ignited when we were students in Midorikai.

In Europe, Tea groups are organized in various different ways, from country to country. From the start of our group, in 1992, one of the most famous and well-established foundations in Bulgaria, "ST.ST Cyril and Methodius", believed in the ideas and principles of the Way of Tea and has been supporting us.

The members of our group are predominantly young people, which can be viewed as something positive. I have always believed that if we managed to cultivate harmony, respect and purity in the hearts of young people, they will carry these values with them when they grow up. On the other hand however, youth is unpredictable. More than 200 young people have practised with us and time and attention were given to each one of them. But when they grow up, they fly away like the birds. I am convinced that these young people who have learned about the Way of Tea will always carry in their hearts the values and principles that form the philosophy of Tea. That is why our work with young people is very important for us. Also very important is our participation in international seminars and events, which is yet another way of development.

For Urasenke Bulgaria Tankokai both practical and social experience is of great importance. Therefore seminars with Kimura Sensei, participation in European seminars organized by Nojiri Sensei, and visits to Bulgaria by friends from other Tea groups are all important, as they are a way to enrich our knowledge. For us,



these visits are the only chance to work and develop our knowledge under the guidance of talented teachers in Europe.

After meetings with other Tea people, Urasenke Bulgaria Tankokai becomes more enthusiastic, as if we have renewed our strength. We've had a number of international events, and for a long time afterwards we remember the wonderful days spent together. During my stay at Urasenke, I made many friends, and the times spent together there made us friends forever. Thierry Geerinckx of Belgium and Ursula Kohly of Switzerland were the first to come and help us to organize *chaji* together.

During the annual Japanese Culture Days in Bulgaria, we worked together with people from Japan, Russia, Belgium, and the Czech Republic. We hope that this year, with assistance from representatives from Cha No Yu International, we will successfully present the philosophy of Tea during the Japanese Culture Days in Bulgaria.

It is now an annual practice to organize *chakai* in the Botanic garden at Sofia. Last year, with our students and guests from Germany and Italy, we had a great event. This year, we expect representatives from Ibaraki as our guests. We would be happy if there are other people interested in participating and being our guests and working with us in future events and seminars. We believe that cooperation like this enhances the experience of the members of all Tea clubs.

The education I received in Midorikai and the teachers and friends I met during this program gave me more than I can express in words. During the program at Urasenke, we were taught to appreciate the art in its elegant simplicity and expressive clarity, where spirit is transformed into form. I was exposed to the philosophy of *wabi*, with its spiritual tranquility—tranquility that is not passive.

I learned humbleness without shyness, to be without being afraid to become. Our personality developed and expanded. Our love towards Tea, which was strengthened during the time spent in Urasenke, developed into friendships in which both we look for each others' help and advice and we are happy to give it. No matter how far away we are from each other we will always be one family. And

events like these bring us even closer together. Peace and friendship can be achieved in many ways, but I am sure the Way of Tea is one excellent way to reach others in the world. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Daisosho Genshitsu-sama for his concept of "Peacefulness through a bowl of tea" and, also, to all my teachers and friends for being part of my life.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Thank you very much. Anyone else?

**Thierry Geerinckx (Belgium)**

Nojiri Sensei and all Sensei  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the past fifty years, Daisosho Genshitsu has spread "*Chado*"—the Way of Tea —throughout the world. His deepest desire is to reach "peace while sharing a bowl of tea". He wrote that a harmony is created between the host and his guest, *Hin Shu Go Kan*, an encounter between two minds blending with nature and generating inner peace. We warmly thank Daisosho Hounsai for permitting non-Japanese to learn the Tea Ceremony at Urasenke, through the Midorikai.

For over forty years, Michiko Nojiri Sensei has taught "*Zazen*" meditation and *Chado* throughout Europe. Her profound wish is that through our practice of *Chado*, we learn to open ourselves to one another, overcoming linguistic, cultural and religious boundaries.

Over the years, in seminars organised in Belgium, Germany and Italy, Michiko Nojiri Sensei has invited other Tea Masters, such as Kimura Sensei, Masako Sensei and Ulrich Haas Sensei. This has given students from all corners of Europe an enriching experience of exchange between themselves and with different teachers or Tea Masters. Inspired by the European integration, we have regularly invited students from the Czech Republic and Bulgaria to the seminars organized by Nojiri Sensei. The European Community is opening its boundaries and welcoming more and more countries, especially those of Eastern Europe. The mixing of nationalities

creates a formidable cultural exchange which goes beyond the limits of national boundaries.

We are, similarly, in developing our learning of the Tea Ceremony with different Sensei, or Masters, benefiting from this rich diversity in an enlarged Europe; practising and sharing with others while respecting their cultures in the spirit of the Way of Tea.

### **Chantal Verdoodt (Belgium)**

Nojiri Sensei and all Sensei,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Europe of "*Chado*", the Way of Tea without borders, is becoming a reality. We are creating it day by day, in response to the pressing needs of our changing world. This is contributing to a more humane, open and friendly society in the spirit of the philosophy of Soshitsu Sen XV. Peace can truly rule with a bowl of tea. Our desire is that this Europe of *Chado* can be created and continue to develop, permitting rich cultural exchanges, bringing to us and to the world around us, the inner peace that comes simply from the offering and sharing of a bowl of tea.

We both thank you for your attention.

### **Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Thank you very much. Anyone else?

### **Alberto Moro (Italy; translated from Italian)**

My name is Albero Moro, and I speak, here, on behalf of the Milan Group. I would like to share my group's experience with all of you. The Milan Group was formed in 1991, thanks to the strength and will of our current president, Mrs. Paola Benassi, who, along with a few Japanese women, started practicing the Tea Ceremony in Milan. The first place where they practiced Tea was in a private house, which, of course, had many limitations. Tea meetings had to be

arranged around the family's private schedule and it was difficult to introduce the Tea Ceremony to new, potentially-interested people.

Thanks to contributions by all of the people who were practicing Tea with us, but, most of all, thanks to the help of our teacher, Nojiri Sensei (who always supported us with her invaluable instruction, during the many intensive courses held at various time through the year), our group grew, both in terms of the number of members and, more importantly, in terms of experience. After 13 years of practicing always in private homes, we felt the need to take a significant step forward. We had a strong desire in our hearts to open a center that could also be open to anyone interested in getting to know this discipline of profound spirit and universal character. Another important necessity for us was to be able to deepen our sense of the practice, engaging ourselves in the welcoming of new students and in the maintenance of a property that houses many items owned in common by all of us.

We searched for a long time for a place that would allow us to embark on this important project. Finally, in a traditionally-Milanese-style building located in the particularly Milanese area called Navigli, we found the space that we transformed into a tea-practice room, with two arrangements of 4.5 tatami, and a kitchen in which to prepare and keep our objects and utensils. All of us contributed to the realization of this dream of ours, some by providing material assistance in the acquisition and renovation of the space and some by utilizing their professional skills to resolved various issues related to the founding of our new association. Our center was inaugurated on August 1, 2004. Present at the inauguration ceremony was Nojiri Sensei and two important invited guests—one from the Soto School of Zen and the other from the world of Catholicism in Japan. Every month, we all pay the rent for the center and all of the expenses related to the maintenance of our practice. This financial obligation, which is quite difficult for some of us, is nonetheless sustained by our enthusiasm for having a place dedicated exclusively to the practice of the Tea Ceremony.

I will conclude my comments by telling you about something something that happened, which effected all of us in a most profound way. Last year, we made the acquaintance of a young Tea

Master from Kyoto, who was in Milan for the annual furniture and design salone/exhibition. We invited him to our center, to share a bowl of tea together, before he returned to Japan. While he was at our center, he told us how deeply moved he was to see how, in a country like Italy, there were local people capable of and willing to create an authentic space for the practice of the Tea Ceremony. It is these kind of encounters, as well as the pleasure of now being able to welcome anyone who would like to share a bowl of tea with us, that help us continue on our this mission of ours—a mission that, despite the economic hardships and the time that is required, has given us and continues to give us profound satisfaction.

Thank you.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Thank you very much. Anyone else?

**Curt Yasuhara (U.S.A.)**

Hello. My name is Curt Yasuhara, and even though I look Japanese, or Asian, I'm 100% American and I don't practice Tea. However, my beautiful wife, Florizel, does practice Tea, and it's through her that I have been able to experience the beauty of the Tea Ceremony. Whenever she prepares me a bowl of tea, I feel so... *special*. I feel her love in that bowl of tea, and I feel and see her passion for Tea, and I am deeply moved. The experience is so wonderful. I look forward, always, to those moments. Well, that's all I really wanted to say. Thank you.

[Applause]

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

No matter whether you practice tea or not, is there anyone who would like to say something more? Or are there any questions for Haas Sensei or Mr. de Béthune?

**Rev. Glenn Webb (U.S.A.)**

I have been practicing Tea and Zen for 42 years, so I am not exactly what Nojiri Sensei is asking for. But what was just said brought tears to my eyes. This symposium has been very important for me. I am both a Christian minister—not a catholic priest, but a protestant minister—and also a Rinzai Zen priest. The idea is very important that, as you said, Westerners are coming to Tea, because Tea brings a religious dimension to our lives and because it reinforces our spiritual yearnings. This is so, very important. Living in Japan for long, my own impression is that Japanese and my Japanese friends in general come to Tea from a different perspective. They come to Tea as a cultural practice, somehow, and the religious dimension — whether it is Christian or Zen — may not be very clear for them. But from everything that has been said today in the talks and in the expressions from Bulgaria and from other places, it is clear to me that the Westerners are coming to Tea because something that they receive from Japan, from this practice of Tea, enhances their own cultural traditions in a religious and spiritual way. May I just say for all Americans who are working in Tea and who are practicing Tea, I think I can say without any question that they are grateful to Japan for this great gift. I sense that people in Europe who are practicing Tea are also very grateful to Japan for this great gift. I have to tell you that Suzuki Daisetsu Sensei, who was one of my teachers in the last two years in his life, always made me defend my Christian faith. Always. Even though he has written more on Zen than, perhaps, anybody else, and even though he was from a Pure Land Buddhist family. That kind of openness, the idea that Tea welcomes guests more than any other spiritual practice, resonates with me very deeply. I always tell my students, and I've been telling them for years any years, that Japan has been the greatest teacher in my life. I will always, *a/ways* be grateful.

### **Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Yes, please.

### **Man (Italy; translated from Italian)**

I would like to ask Father Pierre-François something. You talked about the Mass. I've been acquainted a little with Japan for many years, thanks to Nojiri Sensei. I don't practice the Tea Ceremony,

but I have taken part many times as a guest. I was even a Catholic missionary in Japan. I would appreciate it, right now, if you could possibly elaborate a little further about the relation between the Tea Ceremony and the Catholic Mass. Garasia Fujin, comes to my mind. She was the Christian woman who wrote on these theme in Japan. Anyway, would you be able to elaborate a little?

**Rev. Father Pierre-François de Béthune (Belgium; translated from Italian)**

I can't be very long, because we've already said alot. I would say, however, that the practice of gathering together is similar to the experience of the mass. In other words, having a bit of bread, a little wine, a little tea—this, I would say, is the human material, the concrete material, to which a Christian could give a more spiritual, religious and historic meaning, in memory of Jesus, and a Buddhist could give another meaning. But what is required are the gestures, that concrete human reality, full of "human-ness", that is the breaking of the bread. We must participate in this fundamentally human experience. This is much more important than is usually mentioned in the Christian tradition. This aspect of the mass has been neglected a little, because we would always go directly to the spiritual sense of the sacrifice. However, one must first be completely present in order to break the bread. If you would like, we can talk further, later, but I will stop here, now.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Now we would like to discuss how the various Tea groups can actually help each other. There are many groups in Europe that practice Tea. How can we help them get what they lack, what they need?

I know, for example, that there is a big problem in obtaining charcoal that is necessary for the Tea Ceremony. In Rome, fortunately, we are able to always start our Tea Ceremony practice with *sumidema*, using charcoal. In Italy, we found someone who makes good charcoal; but there are a lot of groups that don't have or can't find appropriate charcoal. How we can share what we find, not only regarding charcoal, but also regarding practicing the Tea

Ceremony? How can we help beginners? We at Urasenke tend to think that someone who does not have an official document allowing them to teach cannot teach the Tea Ceremony. But this is not the way. I believe that if we know something a little more than others, we can, we *must* help other people. It does not depend on whether or not you have a piece of paper that says you can be a teacher. Those who know more can help other people who want to practice. There are so many places that need help. I would like to discuss this.

### **Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

I think that, as we have already heard from other Tea groups here in Europe, cooperation between groups here works pretty well. Compared to Japan, the difference is probably because almost all the teachers in Europe encourage their students to also go to other places to study. Nojiri Sensei comes to my place, my students go to her seminars, and some of her students come to my place and study. So, we have constant exchange.

I think it is very beneficial for the students, because they have so many different teachers, and of course, the teachers are all different. It is quite fascinating. The students can also choose their teachers easily, according to their needs. They can just travel around and go to the different teachers. All the doors are open, already. Everything pretty much works. I think it can still be improved, without question. And we are working on it.

I also encourage everybody to help to form a kind of European unity -- not only for Europeans, of course. We always include our Japanese guests. I often have Japanese guests, as do other teachers, and our Japanese guests practice with us, Europeans. We have American guests, too. And I go to U.S., when I am invited, and we share tea and it is always wonderful.

Most of the most wonderful, dearest friends in my life I met through Tea, I must say. It is one of the most wonderful things that has ever happened to me. I am extremely grateful for that, to have friends in Tea who I can always rely on. It is important, as you all know, to have friends who you can always rely on.



Actually we have a lot of Japanese guests tonight. I would also be interested to hear how they feel being in Europe and how they are experiencing this event, which we are sharing, with Daisosho. It would be interesting for us Europeans to know how you feel here and how you see what happens here.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

As Ulrich Haas Sensei said, we can help and collaborate in the future, so that many more people can practice the Tea Ceremony. I don't mean to propagandize the Tea Ceremony, but to develop it amongst ourselves, to develop ourselves. I consider this very important. But this is also an economical question. In order to practice the Tea Ceremony, a certain amount of funds is required. East Europe, for example, is much less economically developed than Western Europe. There are some countries which are very poor. How can we help them, when they want to practice, when they want to move ahead? I would like everyone in Europe to improve, together. Well, is there anyone else who would like to express their opinion?

**Man (Italy; translated from Italian)**

This won't be a question, but only an observation. The fact that we are here together, and so happy to be here together, is a response to the question posed by Nojiri Sensei. We now know each other, and we can exchange our addresses. So, I think that we can already make a great leap forward. We can make good use of this opportunity that we have received.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Thank You.

**Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

I'm still waiting for a response from our Japanese visitors [audience laughter]. Anyway, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to be here and to be a guest in Italy. Fortunately, we also have many

guests not only from Europe but also from overseas, from many different countries. I hope that we have the chance more often to come together and share Tea in the way that we have these past few days. It would be wonderful. Thank you very much.

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Please.

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

I have two questions. First, Rev. Hass, you said that "Tea without Zazen is just like a flower without scent". If that's the case, it would seem then that the majority of the practice of Tea in Japan is a "flower without scent", because very few people practice Zazen. Do you think that we cannot reach the spirit and the essence of Tea without practicing Zazen?

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

First of all, I talked tonight specifically from the point of view of Zen.

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

Yes.

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

I think that it is of no importance whether you practice Zazen, or do Christian contemplation, or any other meditation practice. I strongly believe, just from my own experience, and I can only speak from my experience, that any meditation practice whatsoever, is essential for Tea. I practiced Zazen even before I went to Japan. But when I came to Japan, I was so disappointed that everybody was talking about Zen but nobody was doing it.

[audience laughter]

**Masako Xxxxx Sensei (U.S.A.)**

Right.

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

Of course, later I got deeper inside, I saw that there are many different ways to practice Zazen. Tea, for me, is a spiritual practice. It goes so well with a meditation practice. A meditation practice is needed, or at least it is very helpful. I always notice that with my students. Of course it does not have to be Zazen. It can be any other practice.

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

Tea and Zen are one taste. By seriously practicing Tea, one could eventually reach same summit, I hope.

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

Yes, that is what I was thinking of.

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

The other thing I wanted to ask is not really a question, but something that I was wondering. You mentioned about cooperating with each other.

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

Yes.

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

In Europe, Ms. Nojiri has been promoting cooperation for so many years, and it is producing wonderful effects. But the traditional Japanese idea is that students have only one teacher, whether it's for practicing Tea or learning other things. It is part of our culture that if you change teachers or go to another teacher, sometimes people think that you are being disloyal to your first teacher. How to break through that kind of wall is, I think, a big issue. How could we do that?

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

[To Nojiri Sensei: "Can I Answer this one?"]

This is a very interesting question. Having lived in Japan, I very often encountered this, as a problem. I did change teachers in Japan, and it was... pretty bad, actually.

[Audience laughter]

But I am glad that I did it. I was no longer young, and I thought I was quite capable of making such decisions. I can also understand the point of view of the Japanese tradition, because it is a tradition orally handed down, from teachers to students. But I have little problem with the word "loyalty", because, to me, being loyal does not mean that my students always have to study only with *me*. Loyalty, for me, is a little bit more open and has a little bit different significance. Loyalty, to me, is when students come to my place and study seriously. That is loyal.

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

I had an interesting experience in Kyoto, Japan. When you study at the Iemoto, you end up learning from many Gyotei sensei. One day, a Gyotei sensei said, "If you are learning from many teachers, you must be confused." But my answer was, "No", because each teacher has a different approach, a slightly different way of thinking. I learned so much from having many different teachers.

**Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

My students are always confused.

[Audience laughter]

**Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

Even though there is confusion, there are always certain essential things, which every teacher teaches the same. Personally, I really

enjoyed learning from many teachers. Like Ms. Nojiri mentioned, cooperation by means of exchanging teachers or going to different teachers is wonderful for the real good study of Tea. I hope we can continue it.

### **Rev. Ulrich Haas Sensei (Germany)**

Yes, I think so! We are fortunate enough that in Europe all the teachers are that open so that we can share. And most of the teachers we have are Japanese, There are some students who have already reached to the teaching license in Europe. In Germany we have only two representatives, Kuramoto Sensei and myself. In most other countries the representatives are all Japanese, and every teacher is open fortunately so anybody can come and study.

I would like to quickly comment to the questions from the beginning. I also think, when you begin to study Tea, it is necessary to stay with one teacher for a while, so you don't get too much confused. But when once you advanced a little bit, it is good to have the confusion time to time, because it keeps you alive.

[Audience laughter and applause]

### **Masako Miyahara Sensei (U.S.A.)**

I agree.

### **Woman (Holland)**

I am from Holland. I encountered Tea in the Canadian Academy, where they started a new Japanese Cultural Center in 1978. After my first lesson, I was hooked on Tea. When I went back to Holland, I took everything necessary to start doing Tea — a little bit of *dogu* and four-and-a-half tatami, and some other things. What I wanted to say, however, is that I wish to thank Urasenke — through *you* [indicating Nojiri Sensei] — for the continuous support they have given me ever since 1982, when I opened my *chashitu*. I would like to share with you how grateful I am for the continuous support from Urasenke. Thank you.

[Audience applause]

**Michiko Nojiri Sensei (Italy)**

Thank you.

Unfortunately, it is approaching eight o'clock, so we must finish, now. I would like to emphasize how helping one another and collaborating helps all of us move forward in our practice. That is what I wanted to say here.

[Audience applause]

Thank you very much for all of your participation. Let's move forward together! Thank you.

[Audience applause.....]

\*\*\* END \*\*\*