

John Vetterli

*Lessons from the Martial Arts*

# Japanese Tea Ceremony and The Art of Archery

*In ninth century Japan, the art of Chado or the Way Of Tea began to formulate into a purely Japanese cultural art. In the mid sixteenth century Sen No Rikyu came along and refined Chado into what it is today some 500 years later. Tea Ceremony is steeped in cultural traditions and the ceremonies are designed to provide a neutral territory where all participants are equal regardless of status or rank in society. The total focus of the tea master is to create a perfect environment and cup of tea for his guests.*

ters is the arrow on the string. Not the one you just shot or the shot following. You just have to put all your energy and focus into the shot at the moment.

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I began the study of this art about two years ago and I have to tell you that this is the most difficult course of instruction I have ever pursued. When people ask me what it is like to study Chado, I can only relate it to the martial arts because that is my background. It is the most difficult martial art I have learned. I classify it as a martial art because it embodies all of the best qualities of martial arts training: discipline, duty, honor, respect, humility, focus, and awareness.

Just recently during a Chado lesson I began to draw parallels with archery.

Tea Ceremony is a very mental art. It is about existing in the moment. Not dwelling on the past (like the baggage of everything that has followed you into the tea hut). You cannot have anxiety about things that have not happened yet. You just have to let go of the burdens of your life and just focus on the preparation of the tea.

It is just like shooting the bow. All that mat-



a r c h e r y   f o c u s

Every movement of the body and the tools used for preparing and serving the tea are strictly controlled and these proscribed movements regulate the rhythm of the ceremony. In archery, you develop your shot routine and it sets the pace and rhythm of your shot sequence. The shot routine is what provides consistency from shot to shot and helps to maximize your effectiveness. In tea ceremony the following of the form and structure insure that nothing is forgotten or done incorrectly. The goal is the same for both arts—consistency of performance.

So Grasshopper, are you telling me that if I find a Chado teacher and pursue the art of the Tea Ceremony I will become a better archer?

All I can say to you is this; it is up to you to decide if Chado will make you a better archer. It seems to be a natural progression of martial artists since the dawn of the Samurai to modern day artists like myself to following the Way of Tea. It is a study based on peace. Peace in society, peace in the soul, peace in action. It provides balance in one's life. If all you do is prepare for war, you have no peace in your soul. You have to have balance to be a complete person. If you train for competition and all of your focus is on victory it can create the same trap as the warrior preparing for war. Eventually that competitive drive will bring you out of balance and you will someday become a very unhappy, unfulfilled person with a huge collection of medals and titles on the outside and completely hollow on the inside. No depth, just empty, completely out of balance.

So whether you study Tea Ceremony, violin, or painting, some type of activity that stimulates the soul into self development and fulfillment that is just yours, something that you can have just for yourself that provides you with internal reward then, yes, you will become a better archer and the side effect of becoming a better person in general.

Tea Ceremony is essentially about harmony, peace, beauty, and balance.

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It is about Yin and Yang, hard and soft, light and dark, strong and supple, and peace and war.

Does your competitive drive which is Yang, have its counterpart?

Is your life in balance? Balance in family, balance in work, balance in play, balance in the soul? This precious balance in all things is very hard to attain and maintain. It is as Rikyu said: “Life in every breath, life in every bowl of tea; it is all precious and perilous.”

**John Vetterli** says, “I live in Salt Lake City, Utah. I have been a professional Firefighter since 1987. I am married and have a daughter and son. My martial arts history began in 1984 with Osaka Sensei in the Karate form of Wado Ryu (the way of peace or harmony). Osaka Sensei instilled in me the desire to always know why we do things not how. I began the study of Eishin Ryu Iaido (the art of the Japanese sword) in 1998 with Harris Sensei. A Zen Buddhist Priest who finally taught me how to focus. This has been a profoundly life changing experience. I am a partner in the Zen Bu Kan Dojo with my two friends Dick and Jason. We teach Iaido and Kendo.”

