Japanese Garden
“Urakuen”

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This English-language text was created by the Japan Tourism Agency.

Welcome to Urakuen

This garden was created for a single purpose: to serve as the setting for Jo-an, a priceless seventeenth-century tea house. Jo-an is a masterwork of tea house architecture and one of only three tea houses recognized as National Treasures. In 1971, Jo-an was acquired by the Nagoya Railroad Company, Ltd. (also called "Meitetsu"), which moved the tea house from Ōiso, Kanagawa Prefecture, to the city of Inuyama, Aichi Prefecture, where the garden was built. In building Urakuen, Meitetsu planners sought to create a garden that would embody the tastes of Jo-an's architect, the tea master Oda Uraku (1547–1621). Even the name "Urakuen" literally means "Uraku's garden."

Jo-an, the Historic National Treasure at the Core of Urakuen

Oda Uraku was born in Owari Province (now western Aichi Prefecture) to the powerful Oda family, the samurai who built nearby Inuyama Castle. In 1618, Uraku withdrew from public life and constructed a residence, called the Shōdenin, on the grounds of Kenninji Temple in Kyoto. Uraku enjoyed holding tea gatherings, and he designed and built a tea house that adjoined his residence. The name he chose for this tea house was "Jo-an."

Jo-an and its surrounding structures remained in Kyoto until the Meiji era (1868–1912). Thereafter, the buildings changed ownership and were relocated several times. Jo-an and part of the Shōdenin were eventually acquired by the Mitsui family, who had the structures moved to their private residence in Ōiso, Kanagawa.

In 1969, the Mitsui family sold these buildings to Meitetsu, along with objects from Jo-an's tea garden (*roji*) and many other historical artifacts. Purchasing the buildings was the first step of Meitetsu's plan to create a garden where the historic structures could be preserved and their cultural legacy could be made available to the public.

Renowned architect and architectural historian Horiguchi Sutemi (1895–1984) was chosen to spearhead the garden project. Horiguchi had painstakingly collected old sketches, diagrams, and historical accounts related to Jo-an and other tea houses for decades prior to his appointment, and he had also authored several books on the topic. The chance to oversee the restoration of Jo-an and create a visionary garden to showcase it was the culmination of Horiguchi's life's work.

From "Miyako rinsen meishō zue"

Welcome to Urakuen

Construction of the Garden

Meitetsu chose to build Urakuen on the grounds of a former amusement park close to Inuyama Castle. Construction got off to a rocky start: on May 18, 1971, the day Horiguchi arrived in Nagoya, Meitetsu workers were on strike, and buses and trains had all stopped running. The trouble continued after Horiguchi arrived in Inuyama. On the morning of May 19, Horiguchi arrived to assess the site in the midst of a downpour. Workers had spent the past week laying string lines to mark the building locations based on plans Horiguchi had sent from Tokyo. After one look at the results, he flew into a rage, shouting that the lines were completely different from his design, and that the location for Jo-an was wrong. The next day, after some revisions, construction work began. Over the next year, a legion of restorers, masons, and carpenters under Horiguchi's direction reassembled and repaired the historic structures of Uraku, while gardeners crafted an intricate living landscape.

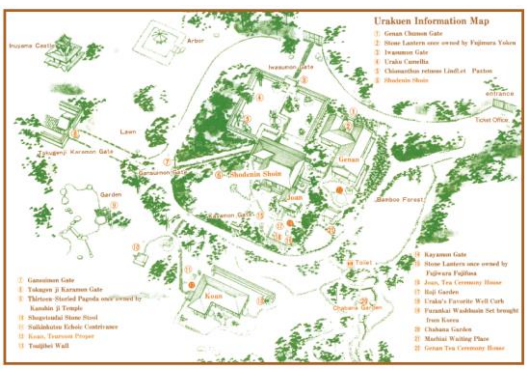
Despite being in his 70s, Horiguchi was a dedicated and tireless participant, often standing in the rain in a borrowed Meitetsu raincoat to oversee construction. He made a total of 21 trips to Inuyama, each time leaving a set of detailed instructions.

Achieving a Vision

Horiguchi Sutemi has been praised for his ability to incorporate the characteristics of natural materials into his designs. Rather than being bound by his initial vision of a garden, Horiguchi adapted his design to incorporate the individual qualities of each rock and tree. In developing his plan for the restoration of Jo-an and the creation of the garden, Horiguchi used historical descriptions and a drawing of Uraku's residence from 1799. Everything was determined through careful scrutiny of these sources—not just the building positions, but the styles of the fences, the arrangements of the stepping stones, the locations of the pine trees, and the types of bamboo were all selected to evoke Jo-an's original setting.

The 1799 drawing shows a low hill with a stone pagoda, and beside it, a pond spanned by a simple stone bridge. Instead of digging a pond, Horiguchi replicated the scene using a dry landscape garden (*karesansui*), in which water is represented by fine white gravel. He also recreated Uraku's square moon-viewing platform, called the Shōgetsudai. Throughout the garden, Horiguchi incorporated centuries-old gates, stone lanterns, and washbasins (*tsukubai*) and transplanted dozens of large trees and stones to imbue the garden with a sense of history.

Although Urakuen began as a simple relocation and restoration project, the garden as a whole grew into something much greater. Its design embodies the aesthetic sensibilities of a seventeenth-century tea master, the dedication and vision of a master architect, and the unflagging efforts of caretakers who preserve the garden's cultural heritage for generations to come.



The Life of Oda Uraku

Oda Nagamasu—more commonly known by his tea name, "Uraku"—was born in 1547 in Owari Province (now western Aichi Prefecture). He was the eleventh son of Oda Nobuhide (1511–1549), head of the powerful Oda samurai family that controlled the region. Uraku's older brother, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), later became the first of three great warlords whose campaigns to unify the country culminated in centralized rule under the Tokugawa government. Uraku also associated with the second and third of these unifying warlords, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616).

Despite his ties to such powerful martial figures, Uraku is best remembered as a man of culture more than combat. He studied tea under the most influential tea master in Japanese history, Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591). During the tumultuous decades of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Uraku often used tea gatherings as a setting for brokering peace between warring factions. He eventually retired to the seclusion of a Buddhist temple in Kyoto, where he built his masterpiece, the tea house Jo-an.

Early Years

Relatively little is known about Uraku's youth. In 1567, at age 20, he joined his brother Nobunaga in the city of Gifu, which Nobunaga had just conquered. In 1581, Catholic missionaries came to the area and baptized several hundred people. Although no reliable records remain, anecdotal sources claim Uraku was among those baptized, and that he took the baptismal name "João" (Portuguese for "John"), which in Japanese is pronounced "Jo-an." He would later bestow this name on his tea house.

In 1582, disaster struck. While Uraku and Nobunaga were visiting Honnōji Temple in Kyoto, Nobunaga was betrayed by one of his generals, Akechi Mitsuhide (1528–1582), whose forces surrounded the temple. Rather than be captured, Nobunaga committed suicide. Reportedly, Nobunaga's eldest son, Oda Nobutada (1557–1582), was wavering over whether to join his father in suicide or to flee. At Uraku's advice, Nobutada remained and committed ritual suicide, but Uraku himself departed.

Mediation through Tea Gatherings

Uraku studied under tea master Sen no Rikyū during Rikyū's tenure as instructor to the Oda household, which lasted until the death of Oda Nobunaga. Uraku became Rikyū's student again some years later while the tea master was employed by the Toyotomi family. Some records even list Uraku as one of the "Seven Great Disciples" of Rikyū.

Uraku's study of tea played an important role in the political affairs of the time. As part of his wider peacemaking efforts, he attended tea gatherings in the role of mediator at several key points in the latter half of the sixteenth century. In 1585, he negotiated an accord between Nobunaga's former general Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Oda Nobukatsu (1558–1630), Nobunaga's second son and successor. Shortly thereafter, Uraku attended tea gatherings with Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, Hideyoshi's former lieutenant and advisor. Uraku achieved a peace agreement between the two rising warlords in 1586.

The Life of Oda Uraku

Conflicting Loyalties

When Hideyoshi died in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu moved to fill the power vacuum. A struggle began between Ieyasu and Hideyoshi's successors and retainers, and Ieyasu's decisive victory at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 secured his position as shogun. Uraku had acted as one of Ieyasu's generals at Sekigahara, and he was awarded sizeable landholdings for his participation.

By 1614, Ieyasu had subdued Hideyoshi's remaining allies, with the exceptions of Hideyoshi's consort, Yodo-dono (1567–1615), and his young heir, Hideyori (1593–1615). The two had encamped at Osaka Castle and had begun recruiting supporters. Uraku, who was Yodo-dono's uncle, repeatedly urged her to seek peace with Ieyasu. Finally, frustrated by the continuing hostilities, Uraku left Osaka in early 1615. That June, Ieyasu attacked the castle, and Yodo-dono and Hideyori committed suicide.

Retirement

Perhaps discouraged by his experience in Osaka, Uraku retired to Kyoto the same year. In 1617, he negotiated with Kenninji Temple for permission to rebuild one of its dilapidated worship halls and construct a residence in which to retire. He moved into the newly finished complex, called the Shōdenin, in 1618. Uraku died three years later, at age 75, and was buried on the grounds of his residence.

Uraku's Legacy

The school of tea carried on by Uraku's heirs and followers is known as Uraku-ryū, and it continues to be practiced today. The fifteenth head of the Uraku-ryū school, Oda Nagashige (1918–1992), came to see the construction of Urakuen on March 23, 1972.

For Uraku, the primary concern in tea practice (*chanoyu*) was heartfelt hospitality and the comfort of his guests. Uraku was critical of tea practitioners who copied what great tea masters did without truly understanding it or employing any thought or innovations of their own. Uraku's independence of spirit is evident in the design of Jo-an, which reflects the teachings of his mentor without being bound by them.

Oda Uraku image
(Shoudeneigeiin possession)

Jo-an

The creation of Jo-an is considered Oda Uraku's pinnacle achievement, and its design expresses both his personal tea aesthetic and his individuality of spirit. In many ways, Jo-an's design is a departure from the conventions of tea house architecture laid down by tea masters like Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591). But in spite of this (or perhaps because of it), Jo-an was considered a masterwork. The acclaimed artist Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716) so admired the tea house that he commissioned a copy for himself, which is now at Ninnaji Temple in Kyoto. It is said that Jo-an has been replicated more often than any other tea house in the world.

Early History

After Uraku's death in 1621, his estate ultimately passed into the care of Kenninji Temple. The temple maintained the estate through donations until 1872, when the new Meiji government took measures to decrease the power and influence of Buddhist institutions across the country. The temple's land and other holdings were forcibly auctioned off, and ownership of Uraku's residential complex—including the Shōdenin Shoin, Jo-an, and its attached tea garden (*roji*)—was transferred to Kyoto's Gion district. The complex was renamed "Urakukan" (literally, "Uraku Hall"), and its buildings were used for various purposes, such as processing tea leaves. In 1908, the district sold off the buildings to various buyers from different parts of the country. One of those buyers was a man named Mitsui Takamine.

The Mitsui Family

Mitsui Takamine (1857–1948) was the tenth-generation head of the lead branch of the Mitsui family, one of the most prominent and wealthy merchant families of the late nineteenth century. Mitsui was a lifelong student of tea and a connoisseur of traditional architecture. He purchased the Shōdenin Shoin along with Jo-an and its tea garden, and in 1908 he had them moved to his residence in the Azabu neighborhood of Tokyo. In 1938, Mitsui decided to retire to the family villa at Ōiso, in Kanagawa Prefecture, and he had the structures moved there. Mitsui wished to devote more of his time to the study of tea during retirement, and he was worried about the ever-present danger of fire amid the densely clustered neighborhoods of Tokyo. Thanks to him, the buildings were no longer in Tokyo when the city was leveled by firebombing during World War II.

Jo-an

The Move to Inuyama

In 1951, not long after Mitsui Takamine's death, Jo-an was designated a National Treasure. In 1969, Meitetsu (Nagoya Railroad Company, Ltd.) acquired rights to the Mitsui family's Ōiso estate along with many of the structures and artifacts there. This set the stage for the creation of Urakuen.

The preparations to move Jo-an to Inuyama began in early 1971. First, the building was closely studied. Its walls and supports were X-rayed to determine their condition—an innovative technique at the time. As disassembly began, careful drawings and measurements were taken, and the pieces were numbered. Each piece was wrapped in padding and waterproof coverings, and the entryway section (the earthen vestibule and its surrounding walls) was then set inside a timber framework for further structural support. Workers loaded the sections onto large trucks equipped with vibration-dampening devices. At 1:30 a.m. on March 31, 1971, Jo-an departed Ōiso with NHK reporters in tow.

The journey had one notable incident: at a highway toll gate along the way, one of the trucks was stopped because the top of its cargo had very slightly grazed the clearance barrier. No harm was done to the tea house, but the toll gate employee refused to let the truck through until one frustrated Meitetsu employee finally persuaded him.

Reconstruction and Restoration

Jo-an arrived safely in Inuyama, and restorers began the work of reassembling it. Some repairs to the tea house were necessary, primarily due to water damage from roof leaks, but great effort went into preserving the original building. Damaged structural components, like the partially rotted support posts, were reinforced with synthetic resin that was textured and painted to look like wood. Anything that had to be replaced, such as the roof's shingles, was remade using the same methods and materials as the original.

Restorers took the opportunity to undo changes that had been made to Jo-an over the years. In contrast to how the buildings had been positioned at Ōiso, Jo-an and the Shōdenin Shoin were rejoined in accordance with historical accounts of how they had been arranged at Uraku's Kyoto residence. At Ōiso, the buildings had been connected by an exterior walkway that extended from the southeast corner of the Shoin. At Urakuen, workers removed this walkway and positioned the buildings close enough that Jo-an could be entered directly from the veranda of the Shoin.

Jo-an

Architectural Features

Guests attending a tea gathering at Jo-an would enter from the covered vestibule on the building's southwest side. Before entering, samurai would remove their long swords and place them on a rack in the alcove behind the papered sliding doors. All guests would remove their footwear and crawl through the small, low entrance (*nijiriguchi*) into a narrow room. Jo-an's main room has only 3.5 tatami mats of floor space (about 6.2 m^2). This is larger than the two-mat rooms Sen no Rikyū is said to have favored, but still within the limit of 4.5 mats that defines a "small" tea room (*koma*). Uraku's emphasis on the comfort of the guests can be seen in the more spacious design of his tea houses.

Uraku also preferred tea rooms to be comparatively well lit. To this end, Jo-an has a hinged panel in the roof that can be propped open like a skylight. It also has two windows on the eastern wall called *urakumado*, or "Uraku windows," that are unique to Jo-an. The windows have square, semi-translucent panels made of thin, vertical bamboo branches that are closely spaced together. When the windows are open, light enters through the space between the branches, and sliding the paper shoji closed produces an elegant shadow effect on the paper.

Another type of window can be seen on the front wall and opposite the low *nijiriguchi* entrance. These are *shitajimado*, meaning "understructure windows." These windows are made by leaving a section of the wall unplastered, exposing the bamboo-and-reed lattice underneath.

One highly unusual feature of Jo-an's decoration is not visible from the outside. The bottom third of the tea house's walls are papered in old calendars, some of which date back as far as 1629. This decorative technique, called *koyomibari*, is intended to evoke the rustic simplicity of a hermitage, where common objects are repurposed and nothing is wasted.

shitajimado

nijiriguchi

urakumado

koyomibari

Shōdenin Shoin

Like Jo-an, the Shōdenin Shoin was constructed in 1618 as part of Oda Uraku's residence at Kenninji Temple. It is only one part of the original whole, which was called the Shōdenin. The Shōdenin complex functioned as a sub-temple within the larger Kenninji grounds, and it contained a Buddhist worship hall in addition to Uraku's private chambers, gardens, and tea house. The Shoin, or "study," of the Shōdenin was a part of the residence where Uraku could entertain guests, read, or relax.

Different parts of the Shōdenin complex were sold to various buyers in 1908. The Shoin was sold to Mitsui Takamine, who also acquired Jo-an. As part of the creation of Urakuen, both buildings were relocated to Inuyama and restored to look as they did in Uraku's day. Even the relative positions of the buildings are faithful to the initial layout of Uraku's residential complex.

Restorations

During the 1971 reconstruction, architect Horiguchi Sutemi relied upon a 1799 illustration of Uraku's residence to restore the Shoin to its original appearance. He removed the covered walkway that the Mitsui family had added between the Shoin and the tea house, and he restored the low handrail on the Shoin's south veranda. Horiguchi also commissioned an unusually long, rectangular stone step for the south side. Next came the roof: when Meitetsu acquired the Shoin, it was roofed with ceramic tiles set in a wave pattern, but the old drawing showed flat wooden shingles. Horiguchi opted to use copper shingles that were similar in shape but far more durable.

Architectural Features

The main entrance of the Shōdenin Shoin is on the north side, beneath a gently curving eave (*karahafu*) that is traditionally associated with refinement and prestige. In addition to the tiled entryway, the building contains six rooms and a kitchen-like area called a *mizuya* on the western side. It is likely that in Uraku's day this room was not a *mizuya* but part of a hallway that connected the Shoin to the Shōdenin's worship hall.

From the entryway, dramatic bars of white can be seen on the interior walls. These lighter places show the locations of the building's wooden beams and support posts. Over time, manganese (which is naturally present in the mud plaster) leaches to the wall's surface. There it oxidizes, staining the outermost layer a brownish black. This effect is reduced, however, in areas where there is wood framing inside the walls.

Shōdenin Shoin

Fusuma Paintings

The rooms of the Shoin are separated by large, decorative sliding panels called fusuma. Like folding screens, fusuma are often decorated with landscape paintings that span multiple panels. The Shoin's fusuma were decorated by some of the most skilled painters of Uraku's day. The central room once had fusuma paintings by Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539–1610), the founder of the eminent Hasegawa school. Each of the eight panels was decorated with a painting of one of four flowers—lotus, orchid, chrysanthemum, and plum blossom—that are a common theme in classical Chinese painting. The trees, rocks, and figures in the paintings all display Hasegawa's distinctive style, and the fusuma were likely painted during his middle years. (This would have been before the Shōdenin was constructed, so the paintings were likely brought from one of Uraku's previous residences.)

Other fusuma in the Shoin were painted with ink landscapes (*sansui*) by several members of the Kanō school—perhaps the most famous school in the history of Japanese painting. Due to the extreme age and fragility of the paintings, most of the fusuma have been removed from the Shoin for preservation. The two chrysanthemum panels by Hasegawa are not owned by Urakuen, but are thought to be in a private collection.

fusuma

Gen-an

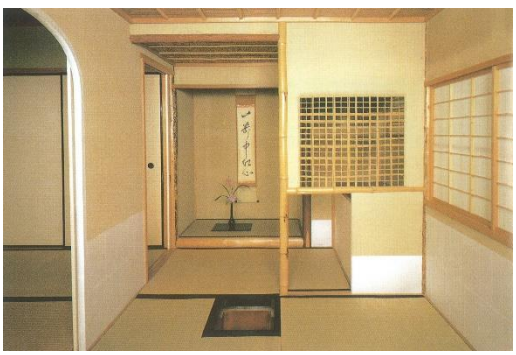
The tea house called Gen-an is a modern reconstruction. It is based on surviving plans for a tea house Uraku built at his earlier residence in Osaka—one which Horiguchi Sutemi believed may also have been called “Jo-an.” During the construction of Urakuen, an official name was needed for the tea house that would be built using these plans. Horiguchi suggested the name “Gen-an,” which means “original hermitage.”

To piece together the history of this earlier tea house, Horiguchi used a clue hidden on one of the artifacts now associated with Jo-an: the name plaque that hangs on its southern side. Although this plaque is inscribed with the name “Jo-an,” it is dated 1599—long before the Shōdenin and Jo-an were built in Kyoto. Horiguchi concluded that the plaque must have been created for an earlier tea house with the same name, and that Uraku took the plaque with him when he left Osaka. Presumably, Uraku then reused it and the name for the new tea house he built in Kyoto.

Uraku lived in the Tenma area of Osaka, just northwest of Osaka Castle, until the winter of 1614. Three years later, Uraku’s former residence was absorbed by the newly founded Kawasaki Tōshōgū Shrine. His tea house was preserved as part of the shrine until both were destroyed by fire in 1837. In 1871, the newly founded Japan Mint was built on the site. A single part of the original tea house survives in one corner of the mint grounds: the *kutsunugi-ishi* (“shoe-removal rock”), where guests would pause to remove their shoes before entering. During the reconstruction of Gen-an, Horiguchi negotiated to have this rock relocated to Urakuen, but he was unsuccessful.

When the reconstruction of Gen-an was complete, it needed a name plaque. Rather than use new materials, Horiguchi selected wood with a distinguished pedigree: a door panel that had once hung in Kikōji Temple in Nara and had been reused in the Mitsui family villa in Ōiso. Urakuen officials took the wood to Kyoto and presented it to Mujin Sōsa (1901–1979), the thirteenth head of the Omotesenke school of tea. Mujin inscribed the plaque with the chosen name and officially bestowed the name “Gen-an” on the newly finished tea house.

Gen-an is larger than Jo-an, and many of its interior features are equally unconventional. Several show Uraku’s clear departure from the preferences of his mentor, Sen no Rikyū. For example, Uraku used bamboo—a material Rikyū disdained—for many of the finishings in the room, such as the wooden frames of the *shōji* windows. There is also a bamboo pillar that separates the host’s seating area from the guests. Furthermore, Rikyū preferred to give the guests a direct view of the scroll and flower arrangements chosen for the gathering, but for Gen-an, Uraku positioned the tokonoma alcove behind the host instead.



teishudoko

Kō-an

Unlike Jo-an and Gen-an, the tea house called Kō-an was not designed by Oda Uraku. Rather, it is a modern design by Masao Nakamura and the Kyoto Traditional Building Technology Association, and it was built in 1986, more than a decade after Urakuen opened. Although the two historical tea houses are usually closed to visitors, Kō-an is the venue for Urakuen's tea service and regularly hosts large tea gatherings of up to 20 people.

Kō-an was named in honor of Meitetsu's president at the time, Takeda Kōtarō (1916–1991). The name plaque that hangs in the building's entryway was created by Jimyōsai (1938–), the fourteenth head of the Omotesenke school of tea and successor to the man who inscribed the plaque for Gen-an.

Kō-an has two reception rooms. The main room (*hiroma*) has an area of 15 tatami mats, or roughly 24 square meters—quite large when compared to intimate tea houses like Jo-an. One part of its large, central tokonoma alcove bears special mention: the ceiling of the alcove is made of reused planks of cedar that date to the early eighth century.

The smaller room (*yoritsuki*) is 8 tatami mats (13 m^2) in size and is used primarily as the waiting area for tea gatherings held in the main room. Although gatherings are not usually held in the smaller room, it has the necessary features: a sunken hearth (*ro*) and a tokonoma alcove. Compared to the tokonoma in the main room, the one in the small room has a rustic air. The right-hand pillar is crafted from a log of red pine that retains its bark except for a small wedge carved from the bottom. This triangular slice is a decorative touch called a "bamboo face" (*takenomen*) because it is shaped like a fresh bamboo shoot. One of the alcoves in Gen-an also has this feature.

The path that leads to Kō-an passes a stone washbasin with a hidden musical device known as a *suikinkutsu*. The pebbles surrounding the washbasin conceal a buried ceramic jar that creates a hollow space in the earth. When water is poured from the dipper onto the pebbles, droplets drain through and fall into the jar, resonating like the notes of a koto.

hiroma

suikinkutsu

Building a Hermit's Retreat: Tea Houses and *Roji*

Wabi-cha: An Aesthetic of Simplicity

In the sixteenth century, Japan's most powerful elite began to use the narrow, rustic confines of tea houses to meet with fellow warlords and broker alliances. Men who could afford every luxury crawled through low doorways and sat around tiny hearths inside rooms built to resemble the crude huts of woodland hermits. These powerful leaders were pursuing an aesthetic called *wabi-cha*.

Until the sixteenth century, the ritualized drinking of tea was mainly practiced by priests, aristocrats, and high-ranking samurai. Tea gatherings were held in the luxurious reception rooms of high-class residences or in temple halls, and the preference was for ornate tea utensils imported from China. *Wabi-cha,* however, emphasized simplicity and austere refinement—humble craftsmanship using plain materials and minimal ornamentation.

The movement first arose with a priest named Murata Jukō (1423–1502), whose ideas were adopted by the wealthy Osaka merchant Takeno Jō-ō (1502–1555) and passed on to his student, Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591), who would go on to become one of the most influential tea masters in history. Perhaps through Rikyū's powerful samurai patrons, the popularity of *wabi-cha* spread to the samurai class and today it is the dominant aesthetic in the practice of tea.

Tea Houses: Rikyū's Ideal

Rikyū and other tea masters believed that a tea house should evoke the atmosphere of a cottage in the mountains. For this reason, the suffix *-an* (庵), meaning "retreat" or "hermitage," is used in the names of many tea houses. Rikyū favored a design concept called *yamazato*, or "mountain hamlet." To replicate this rustic setting, Rikyū created tea gardens that would surround his tea houses, integrating the two as a single conceptual space.

Rikyū's ideal tea house was a tiny, free-standing hut. Guests entered by crawling through a small, square opening. Inside, the low-ceilinged room was unfurnished and minimally decorated. The entire structure was made of largely unprocessed natural materials, and the roof was humble thatch.

The garden, too, played a role in Rikyū's aesthetic vision. He believed that detached tea houses should have a *roji*—a small garden with a path of stepping stones. Before the start of a tea gathering, which in formal settings would follow a multicourse kaiseki meal, guests would assemble in the outer area of the garden beneath a covered waiting area called a *machiai*. Once it was announced that the host was ready to begin (often with the sound of a gong or another signal), the guests would approach the tea house along the *roji* path. The path typically led past a washbasin (*tsukubai*) where they would stop and rinse their hands.

Uraku's Tea Houses

As a student of Rikyū, Uraku was influenced by his mentor's preference for *wabi-cha* and small, detached tea houses. On the other hand, Uraku's style retains some of the hints of luxury that are associated with tea styles practiced by samurai. In addition to being larger than many of Rikyū's tea houses, Jo-an and Gen-an are roofed with shingles, not thatch. Inside, the tokonoma alcoves of both tea houses have black-lacquered framing that Rikyū would have considered too ornate.

Building a Hermit's Retreat: Tea Houses and *Roji*

Jo-an's *Roji*

The stepping stones, washbasin, well cover, stone lanterns, and other substantive parts of the *roji* were sold to the Mitsui family together with Jo-an in 1908. Architect Horiguchi Sutemi used a 1799 illustration of the Shōdenin complex to reconstruct the position of each element. He also planted black pines and Japanese maples to match trees shown in the drawing.

The round well cover in the southwestern corner was made as an homage to one owned by *wabi-cha* progenitor Murata Jukō (also known as "Shukō"). Uraku greatly admired Jukō, and he had helped to restore Jukō's original well cover; afterward, he created a replica for his own garden and inscribed it "1615, ninth month, second day, Uraku."

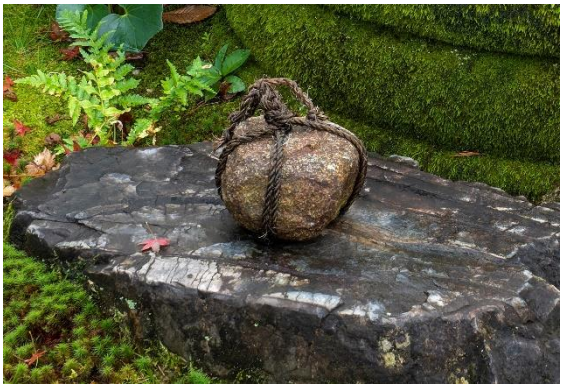
Another notable object in the *roji* at Jo-an is the stone *tsukubai*, or washbasin, which is named Fuzankai—the Japanese name for the Sea of Busan. The name comes from the stone's origin, the coast of Busan (southern South Korea). In 1592, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi's forces invaded Korea, the unusual stone was brought back and given to Hideyoshi, who then gave it to Uraku. The central hollow in the stone was formed naturally by waves, making it an ideal washbasin in the *wabi-cha* aesthetic.

Gen-an's *Roji*

The *roji* at Gen-an was reconstructed based on a diagram from the mid-Edo period (1603–1867). It has a covered waiting area (*machiai*) south of the tea house. From there, stepping stones lead to a small, cubic washbasin. According to the diagram, the original washbasin was carved with images of the Buddha on each side. Washbasins of this type were called "four-sided Buddha washbasins" (*yohō-butsu-chōzubachi*) and were made from the bases of disassembled stone pagodas. Horiguchi was unable to find a suitable washbasin of this type for Gen-an, so he chose one that was simply cube-shaped. He also surrounded the basin with small oak trees and nandina, as it was in Uraku's day.

Please note: In some areas of the garden, pathways may be blocked by rocks tied with black rope. These are *tome-ishi* ("stop stones"), and they indicate that the area beyond is off-limits to visitors.

tsukubai "Fuzankai"



tome-ishi

Iwasumon and Gansuimon Gates

Iwasumon Gate

The elegant main gate of Urakuen dates to the early seventeenth century. Like the other gates at Urakuen, it was previously owned by the Mitsui family and stood in the garden of their Ōiso villa. It was relocated to Urakuen along with Jo-an.

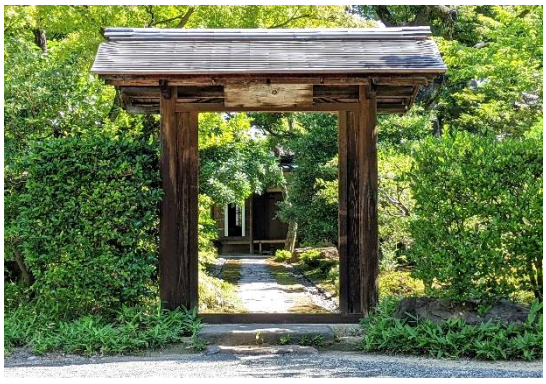
The gate's roof has a bell-like curve that is most visible from the side. Gates with this type of curved roof are called *karamon*, and this gate is a *hira karamon*, meaning that the roof's central ridgeline runs perpendicular to the direction of entry.

The gate is roofed with cypress bark and has a "boat-bottom ceiling" (*funazoko tenjō*), so called because the wooden planks form a concave curve that resembles an inverted boat.

Gansuimon Gate

Little is known about the age and origin of the Gansuimon Gate, but it was also owned by the Mitsui family. In choosing where to place the gate at Urakuen, Horiguchi Sutemi made use of its clean, geometric lines—like the borders of a hanging picture scroll—to create a framed view of the inner garden. As seen through the gate, a long, straight path of neatly fitted cobblestones leads through a tunnel of trees and lush moss to the western side of the Shoin, which peeks out from the foliage at the far end of the path.

Iwasumon



Gansuimon

Tokugenji Karamon and Kayamon Gates

Tokugenji Karamon Gate

This gate was once part of Tokugenji Temple, a Zen temple near Nara. The temple was built in 1632 by Oda Takanaga (1590–1674), Uraku's grandnephew, for private use by the Oda family. Eventually, Tokugenji fell into disrepair, and by the start of the Meiji era (1868–1912), only this gate remained. It was purchased by the Mitsui family in 1941.

The ceiling of the gate has carvings of peonies, and the door panels are ornamented with an unusual ribbed pattern. The gate is thought to be made of zelkova wood, a material which—along with the *karamon* shape itself—was generally associated with refinement and nobility.

Like the Iwasumon Gate, this imposing wooden entrance is a *karamon*. Specifically, it is a *mukai karamon*, meaning that the roof has broad, bell-shaped gables, and its central ridgeline runs parallel to the direction in which someone would pass through the gate.

Kayamon Gate

This rustic gate differs markedly from the other gates at Urakuen. Its pillars are roughly worked tree trunks, and its roof is covered with thatch instead of cypress bark. The lintel is low, requiring visitors to lower their heads modestly as they enter.

Both the gate's simple construction and low entryway express the *wabi* aesthetic established by Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591). As it happens, the Kayamon Gate is a replica of a gate owned by the Sen family. The replica was commissioned by Mitsui Takamine (1857–1948), who practiced the Rikyū-derived Omotesenke style of tea.

The gate has an additional feature that is not readily apparent when the large wooden door stands open: a second, much smaller door called a *kugurido*. When the main door is shut, this smaller door can be opened, compelling guests to stoop even lower to enter. The *kugurido* would have been used during tea gatherings to remind guests that they were entering a different, humbler world.

Karamon

Kayamon

Tea Utensils

The bowls, water containers, kettles, and other items used in serving tea are collectively called *chadōgu*, meaning "tea implements." The tea utensils used at a gathering may vary considerably depending on the tea school, the type of tea gathering, and the time of year. Even so, nearly all procedures for serving matcha-based tea involve the following items.

Tea Bowls (*Chawan*)

The host at a tea gathering prepares matcha in a bowl called a *chawan*. Prior to the sixteenth century, most tea bowls were elegant pieces imported from China. By the early sixteenth century, Japanese tea masters had begun to prefer the more rustic look of vessels from Korea (*kōrai*). These bowls, particularly the type called *ido-jawan*, exemplified an aesthetic of tranquil simplicity (*wabi*) that would come to dominate the practice of tea. In fact, some of today's most priceless tea bowls began as inexpensive dishes for daily use. Over the course of the sixteenth century, Japanese kilns began to produce their own tea ware, which Sen no Rikyū and his student Furuta Oribe (1544–1615) helped to popularize.

Tea bowls often have a "front" side that is determined by the bowl's form, shape, or primary decoration (anything from an intricately painted flower to an eye-catching aspect of the glaze). Tea bowls come in a great range of shapes, designs, and sizes. Those intended for use in winter are often thick-walled and deep, to maintain the warmth of the tea. Summer bowls, on the other hand, are often broad and shallow so that the tea cools more quickly.

Containers for Thin Tea (*Usuchaki*)

At tea gatherings, guests are served what is called "thin tea" (*usucha*). The powdered gree n tea, or matcha, used to make *usucha* is stored in an airtight vessel until just before the gathering, when an appropriate amount is transferred to a tea container called an *usuchaki*. When making tea, the host scoops matcha powder from the tea container into the tea bowl. Tea containers can be highly decorative and are often made of lacquered wood. They come in a variety of shapes, the most common of which is called *natsume*, meaning "jujube fruit." This name reflects the vessels' similar shape: rounded cylinders that taper at the bottom.

Tea Scoops (*Chashaku*)

Tea scoops are thin, flat utensils with a gentle curve on one end. They are used by the host to scoop matcha powder from the tea container into the tea bowl—usually two scoops per serving. Most tea scoops are made of bamboo, but they may also be made of other types of wood, ivory, tortoiseshell, or even precious metals.

Tea Whisk (*Chasen*)

Prepared matcha is often whisked with a bamboo tea whisk to give it a frothy, airy texture. After adding matcha powder and hot water to the tea bowl, the host whisks the mixture briskly until the powder is completely dissolved and foam gathers on the surface of the tea.

Different tea schools prefer tea whisks with straighter or more rounded tines.

Tea Utensils

Uraku's Tea Utensils

Oda Uraku had one of the most valuable collections of tea utensils of his day, and much of it is now kept in museums and private collections. After Uraku's death, some prized items were entrusted to his friends, and some were given to Kenninji Temple to pay for future memorial services. Uraku also created his own tea utensils, including nearly a dozen *chashaku* tea scoops.

Tea utensils are often given poetic names that reflect their creators or famous owners. One *ōido*-style tea bowl that bears Uraku's name inspired a particularly fierce bidding war in 1937. It is now in the Tokyo National Museum.

Another of Uraku's utensils was a valuable *chaire*, a type of tea container used in making thick tea. Uraku gave the *chaire* to Toyotomi Hideyori (1598–1615), Hideyoshi's heir, in 1612. After Osaka Castle was attacked and burned in 1615, Tokugawa Ieyasu ordered the *chaire* recovered from the ashes, and it became an heirloom of the Tokugawa family.

Idochawan Known as "Uraku"
（Tokyo National Museum possession）

chadōgu

A Taste of *Chanoyu*: Tea Service at Urakuen

Visitors to Urakuen can experience a traditional-style tea service at Kō-an. Tea is served in the main reception room, which looks out at a secluded garden of moss and artfully placed stepping stones. The tea service at Urakuen is an abbreviated version of a tea gathering, and certain steps, such as the preparation of the tea, are omitted. The service at Kō-an includes only the receiving and drinking of tea, which is done using the same ritualized gestures of a formal tea gathering.

Each step of the tea service is given below, along with a short explanation.

1. **Take your seat.**
Guests at tea gatherings typically sit on their feet with their legs folded underneath them (a position called *seiza*). However, it is also acceptable to sit cross-legged or with legs to one side.

2. **A staff member will offer you a plate with a traditional sweet.**
The sweet will come with a wooden pick (*kuromoji*).

3. **With your left hand, lift the plate. Then use the pick in your right hand to cut the sweet into bite-sized pieces before eating it.**
The sweet is intended to balance the flavor of the matcha to come; try to finish it before the tea arrives.

4. **A staff member will place a bowl of matcha in front you, then bow. Place the fingertips of both hands together on the floor in front of your knees and return the bow.**
During a formal tea gathering, you would also bow to your neighboring guest (who has not yet received tea) and apologize for drinking first.

5. **Lift the bowl with your right hand, with your thumb against the rim and fingers near the base, then place the bowl in the palm of your left hand.**

6. **Hold the bowl at waist height and turn it 90 degrees clockwise.**
At a formal tea gathering, the host places each bowl so that its "front" (usually the side with the main decorative element) faces the guest. This is a sign of respect. In return, the guests show humility by not drinking directly from the front side of the bowl.

7. **Drink.**
This preparation of matcha, called *usucha* ("thin tea"), is made using less tea powder than *koicha* ("thick tea"). *Koicha* is generally served only after a meal at full-length tea gatherings, where multiple bowls of tea are served.

8. **Once you have finished, use the index finger and thumb of your right hand to wipe the rim of the bowl where you drank.**
Wiping the tea bowl is a symbolic gesture of cleansing. It arose from styles in which participants drink sequentially from the same bowl.

9. **Rotate the bowl counterclockwise so that the front faces fully away from you, then place it back on the floor.**
Some guests use this time to look closely at the bowl and admire its shape or decoration. Because many of the bowls used in tea gatherings are quite valuable, hold the bowl close to the floor while examining it.

10. **After you have finished your tea, a staff member will explain the meaning of the scroll and flower arrangement in the room's tokonoma alcove.**
Each of these decorative elements is specially chosen for the season, and they often convey a mood or message that the host of the tea gathering wishes to share.

Inuyama Ware

At Urakuen, tea is served in fine ceramic bowls of Inuyama ware, a local ceramic lineage with over 200 years of history. In the early nineteenth century, the lords of Inuyama Castle supported the founding of local kilns and began to attract skilled potters to the area. Various styles and methods have evolved over the subsequent centuries, but three Inuyama kilns continue to produce tea bowls, cups, and vases using traditional techniques and traditional designs.

Early Modern Inuyama Ware

Pottery was first produced in the Imai area of Inuyama in the mid- to late eighteenth century. Okumura Denzaburō, the founder of the first kiln, used techniques he had learned in Mino Province (now southern Gifu Prefecture). His pottery—called Imai ware—consisted of simple pieces for daily use finished with a glossy brown glaze. Okumura's successors maintained the Imai kiln until 1781, when the third owner died.

In 1810, a local merchant named Shimaya Sōkurō (dates unknown) worked to revitalize ceramic production in the area. He petitioned the lord of Inuyama Castle, Naruse Masanaga (1782–1838), and was granted permission to open a kiln in the Maruyama district. This marked the beginning of what is now called Inuyama ware.

There are few surviving records of the first decade, but it is known that in 1817 a new kiln master took over, and by 1822 potters had arrived from other regions, bringing techniques from the nearby areas of Seto and Shidami. By 1831, local artists had begun making both blue underglaze pottery (*sometsuke*) and red-enameled overglaze pottery (*aka-e*).

Lord Masanaga was pleased, and in 1836 he increased funding to the local kilns. Masanaga died two years later, but his successor, Naruse Masazumi (1812–1857), continued the patronage. He also requested the production of what would become one of Inuyama ware's most popular and characteristic designs: the combination of cherry blossoms and red maple leaves known as *unkin-de* (cloud-brocade style).

Inuyama ware continued to thrive as new kilns were opened and ceramicists refined their painting methods and designs. However, production of ceramics came to a stop in the early 1870s, following the abolition of the samurai class and the transition to the Meiji era (1868–1912).

Modern Inuyama Ware

Despite this lull, the production of Inuyama ware resumed roughly a decade later. Many of the same craftsmen took up their work (sometimes even at the same kilns) in 1883 under the auspices of the Inuyama Pottery Company. The company was dissolved when the kilns were severely damaged in the Nobi Earthquake of 1891, but several potters continued to produce Inuyama ware. During the early twentieth century, some kilns were forced to temporarily switch to making roof tiles to stay in business. However, a rise in the popularity of tea in the late twentieth century helped spark a renewed interest in fine ceramics.

Three kilns in Inuyama—Ozeki Sakujūrō Tōbō, Gotō Tōitsu Tōen, and Ōsawa Kyūjirō Tōen—continue to produce traditionally designed tea bowls, vases, teacups, wind chimes, and many other ceramic creations. Complex *aka-e* (red and green) designs and the *unkin-de* motif still feature prominently alongside pieces with highlights of gold, iridescent metallic swirls, or textured glazes. The shop at Urakuen offers a selection of fine Inuyama-ware tea bowls in a variety of designs, and a much broader range of pieces is sold at the kilns themselves.

The Seasons at Urakuen

As in many traditional arts, the seasons are an important element of tea practice. Tea gatherings are often held to mark seasonal events, and seasonal symbolism dictates the host's selection of decorations and tea utensils. Likewise, Japanese gardens are designed to show the beauty of the changing seasons throughout the year. At Urakuen, the seasons are expressed in ways as subtle as the color of a bean-paste sweet or as stunning as a cherry tree in full bloom.

In the conventions of traditional Japanese poetry, the year is divided not just into four seasons but also into 24 separate periods, each with its own seasonal flower, fruit, bird, or other hallmark of that time of year. For instance, plum blossoms and Japanese bush warblers are associated with early spring; the full moon and waving tufts of silvergrass are symbols of early autumn. At a tea gathering, these symbols appear most prominently in the hanging scroll and flower arrangement displayed in the tokonoma alcove. The scroll may be a painting that depicts a seasonal image, or it may be calligraphy that references a seasonal event. The flower arrangement will include a flower or other plant that reflects the time of year.

The Chabana-en, or "Tea-Flower Garden," of Urakuen is a special area where tea flowers bloom year-round. This secluded area of the outer garden lies east of Kō-an, where a shaded path crosses a stone bridge and passes a waterfall. The water flows from the top of an artificial hill, which gives a sense of depth to the landscape. The garden is planted with many varieties of camellia—Uraku's favorite—as well as fragrant snowbell, wintersweet, and bridal wreath spirea.

During tea gatherings, more subtle reflections of the season can be seen in the kimonos worn by hosts and guests, the shape and decoration of the tea bowls, and the types of sweet served with the tea. At Urakuen, guests receive sweets with borders lightly tinted in one of four colors: pink in spring, green in summer, orange in autumn, and white in winter.

Notable Plant Life of Urakuen

Urakuen is a living monument to Oda Uraku (1547–1621) and the beauty of Japanese tea gardens. Each of its trees, shrubs, grasses, and mosses was carefully selected, arranged, and cultivated by Horiguchi Sutemi and a landscaping company to create a garden that Uraku would have admired. Its flowering cherry trees and camellias add splashes of color, its stands of tall bamboo screen out the surrounding city, and its ferns and mosses lend a sense of age and dignity to the stonework. Every plant in the garden contributes to the whole, but a few of them are worthy of special note.

Uraku Camellias

The Uraku camellia (*Camellia uraku*) is a hybrid of the Japanese camellia (*Camellia japonica*) and camellias introduced from China between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Uraku had a particular fondness for camellias, and he is said to have cultivated and planted these hybrids near Jo-an. Uraku camellias have medium-sized pink blooms with a single layer of petals surrounding prominent yellow centers. They bloom in March and April and are widely used in flower arrangements for tea gatherings. At Urakuen, they grow along the western wall of the northern Shoin's garden.

Chinese Fringetree

The Chinese fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*) produces clusters of lacy, fragrant, white blooms in mid-May. The species is relatively rare in Japan, and the Ministry of the Environment's Red Data Book of Endangered Species lists the fringetree's status as Vulnerable (VU). A grove of wild fringetrees that grows just outside of Inuyama was designated a Natural Monument in 1923.

The species has several names in Japanese, including *nanjamonja*, a name that tickled Horiguchi so much that he gave the tree a prominent place in the northern Shoin garden.

Tortoiseshell Bamboo

Tortoiseshell bamboo (*Phyllostachys heterocycla* f. *heterocycla*) is a tall, thick-walled bamboo with nodes that slant in alternating directions, creating a zig-zag pattern reminiscent of tortoiseshell. It is a natural variant of moso bamboo (*Phyllostachys edulis*). Historical accounts and illustrations of Uraku's residence indicate that it was surrounded by moso bamboo, so the species was planted throughout Urakuen. The tortoiseshell variant grows in a single patch near the entrance to Gen-an.

Living *Unkin* (Cherry and Maple)

The *unkin* ("cloud-brocade") motif seen in Inuyama ware has a living counterpart at Urakuen. Just north of the white plaster wall near Kō-an, a cherry tree is growing by the path. Its trunk splits into several branches at roughly head height, and in their midst—growing out of the trunk of the cherry—is a Japanese maple tree.