



As early as the 4th century, Chinese Taoists were already using the leaves of the tea plant for the ceremonial preparation of beverages in their search for immortality. In the year 801, a Japanese monk brought tea seeds from China, which were then sown south of Kyoto. From the year 1191, Eisai the monk, who passed on the refined tea-making traditions of the Sung farm, was responsible for spreading throughout Japan the idea of refining the tea-making process by pulverizing the tea leaves. Initially, tea-drinking on farms and by the samurai was for the purposes of entertainment. In monasteries, thanks to its energising effect, green tea was used to stimulate the circulation during sustained meditation.

While in more elevated social circles tea was initially served in tea rooms, over time its preparation and serving became increasingly ritualised and moved to smaller spaces. This later gave rise to the detached teahouse, which usually formed part of the garden.

The further development of the tea ceremony culminated in the 16th century, when it was taken over by the tea master Sen no Rikyū (1521 -1591) in the so-called Way of Tea (*chadō*). The main objective of this Way is to carry out the ceremony in a quiet atmosphere as a type of contemplative art, surrounded by a reduction to elegant simplicity. Embedded in this idea is the goal of transforming life into a work of art through the philosophy of pared-down aesthetics.

For Sen no Rikyū, the Way of Tea is based on the four basic principles of:

**„wa” - harmony**  
Harmony is not only reflected in the design of the teahouse and tea garden, but also in the co-ordination of the tea-making implements, the attunement to the seasons, and last but not least the relationship between guest and host.

**„kei” - reverence, respect**  
Respect and consideration determine both the behaviour of the participants in a tea ceremony towards each other, and their interaction with the tea-making implements and the environment.

**„sei”- purity**  
Both the actual physical cleanliness and order of the teahouse and tea garden, as well as the symbolic cleansing of the guests and host, are intended to strengthen mindfulness and clean the participants' hearts of the “dust of everyday life”.

**„jaku” - silence**  
The outer silence of the teahouse goes hand-in-hand with the participants’ inner contemplation. In this atmosphere, the worries of everyday life fall away, and a mood of peace and serenity unfolds.

If these fundamental principles are applied to the Taoist Buddhist doctrine, “wa” stands for the connectedness of mankind and all living things in Buddhism, “kei” stands for the self-control to respect all beings, “sei” represents the inner purity required to dive from the transient world into the world of tea, and “jaku” the solitary detachment, the immersion into nothingness as the dissolution of space and time.

Zen Buddhism provides tea masters with a framework within which they can unfold the Way of Tea and the associated aesthetics of imperfection and simplicity. By “entering” a tea room according to Sen no Rikyū's requirements, each guest must move through the small opening which provides the only access. Regardless of social standing, everyone must subordinate themselves to the tea room. "Everyone who enters must bend their head, as if looking at their feet, and push the door aside. Just as all must leave their mother's body, at the moment of entering the tea room, all must return to their true nature, like a new-born baby." (Rikyū)

Despite the austerity and formality, the tea master gives the guests enough space to amuse themselves, and devote themselves to the details of the teahouse in silence and meditation. The charcoal ceremony precedes the actual tea ceremony. Water in a cast-iron kettle is heated over a hearth. Pieces of metal placed in the kettle add an acoustic element to the process. At the same time, incense is burned. The incense is taken from lacquer boxes and placed in special metal or ceramic incense containers. At the beginning of the actual tea ceremony, the tea bowl and the caddy containing the powdered tea are removed from their respective wooden box and cloth bag. The tea bowl is rinsed with hot water and dried with a cloth. Guests are served sweets to enhance the flavour of the powdered tea.

With a small teascoop, usually made of bamboo, the tea master takes some tea powder from the ceramic caddy and places it into the tea bowl. Water is taken from the kettle using a bamboo ladle and poured over the tea powder. A small bamboo whisk is used to whisk the tea until foam is formed in the middle of the bowl.

The tea is now served to the guests. The bowl is always turned before being given to a guest. There are many variations of the ritual for turning the tea bowl. In the Urasenke school of tea-making, as a form of homage the host offers the bowl to the guest with the most beautiful side of the bowl facing the guest. The guest then turns the bowl a little so as not to touch the most beautiful side of the bowl with their mouth. This shows the guests' deference to their host, and their respect for the tea bowl. Finally, the bowl is cleaned and filled with a thinner tea, which in turn is served to the guests. The host or tea master does not drink tea, merely prepares it. After drinking their tea, guests talk amongst themselves in a relaxed mood before leaving the room.



茶碗  
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茶筌  
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濃茶  
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# The wooden container

道具箱 [tomobako]

In the Japanese tradition, art objects were, and still are, kept in wooden containers made especially for them. The containers are often as valuable, both spiritually and financially, as the objects stored within; they accompany the art object and should not be separated from it. This togetherness is also expressed in the Japanese name for the containers: from the terms “*tomo*” = to accompany and

“*hako*” = box, container, emerges the term “*tomobako*”. The material most commonly used for *tomobako* is *kiri* wood, also known as Paulownia, princess tree, foxglove tree or empress tree. The wood is light yet strong. As the upper half of the trunk is knot-free, it can be utilised very effectively. *Kiri* trees can reach heights of up to 20 m, with trunk diameters of approx. 60 cm.







Originally found in Central China, this tree was introduced to Europe by Philipp Franz von Siebold in 1840. He named it after Anna Paulowna, the daughter of Tsar Paul I, who married into the Dutch royal family.

In Japan, a *kiri* tree was traditionally planted when a daughter was born. When the daughter eventually married, the wood from the tree would be used to make a kimono cabinet. In addition to its use in many types of furniture, *kiri* wood is also used to make stringed instruments.

Another purpose which should not be underestimated is the use of *kiri* wood *tomobako* to store art objects. Due to the high-density construction of wooden houses, fire was a constant threat to valuable objects. Thanks to the low density of *kiri* wood, *tomobako* containers very quickly became saturated with the water used to fight fires, thus offering temporary protection to the items inside. For this reason, particularly valuable objects were often stored inside two or more wooden containers.

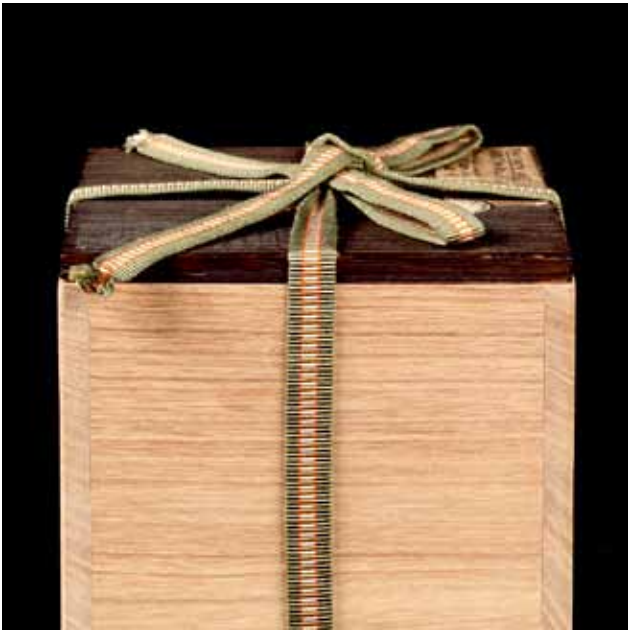
Due to the wood's superior strength, the surfaces of the *tomobako* can be planed very smooth. The resultant surface feels silky-smooth, and displays a simple elegance. This

image fits perfectly into the requirements of the tea ceremony, in which each object should be reduced to its most aesthetic minimum, without additional or exaggerated decoration. In addition, the smooth wood offers a surface which is particularly suitable for ink inscriptions. *Tomobako* containing significant items are inscribed and/or signed by the artist himself, or by an authorised person. These inscriptions serve both as a guarantee for the authenticity of the piece, and to provide a date. If there are important inscriptions on the outside of the lid, these are sometimes covered with a piece of paper to protect the calligraphy before securing the *tomobako* with a ribbon.



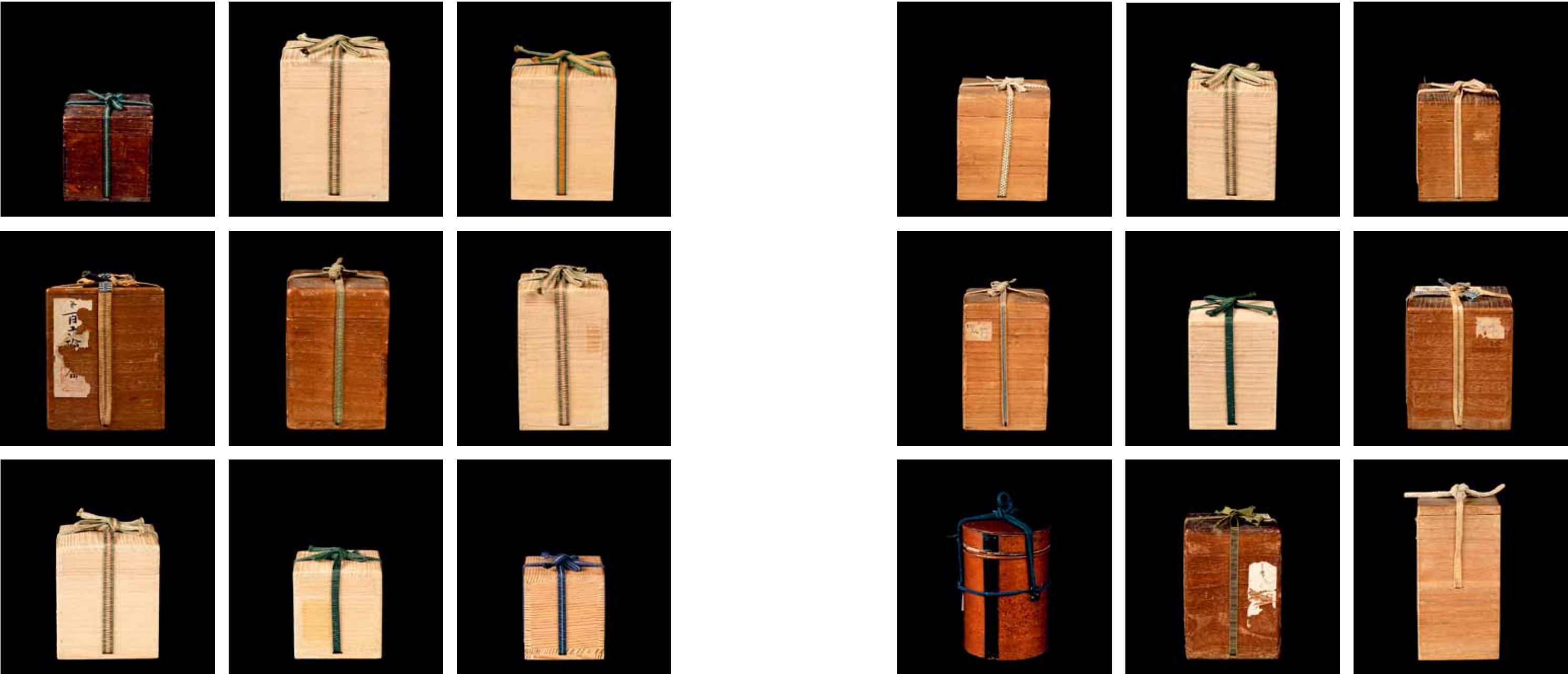


















The approximately 400 *meibutsu-gire* are divided into sub-groups, of which the three most commonly found are: gold brocade (*kinran*) made from gold-covered thread or gilt paper strips, satin (*donsu*), and striped silk or cotton (*kanto*). The introduction of *kanto* in the 16th century opened up a new world of diversity in tea ceremony textiles, which has continued up to the present day. For example, in order to refer to family traditions, *shifuku* were sometimes made from *obi*, kimono belts. These textiles were usually decorated with smaller motifs than the large surface area of the kimono, which facilitated the adoption of motifs

for *shifuku* and gave them a very personal note. As the ceramics generally did not have any graphic decorations, objects could be personalised for the recipient by adding *shifuku* with family crests, especially in the case of gifts.

*Shifuku* are closed by making a knot in the folded cloth, or sometimes with a cord knotted into an elaborate flower shape. To make the knots, special silk cords are used. The cords have to be very tightly woven so that they hold the shape of the knot.

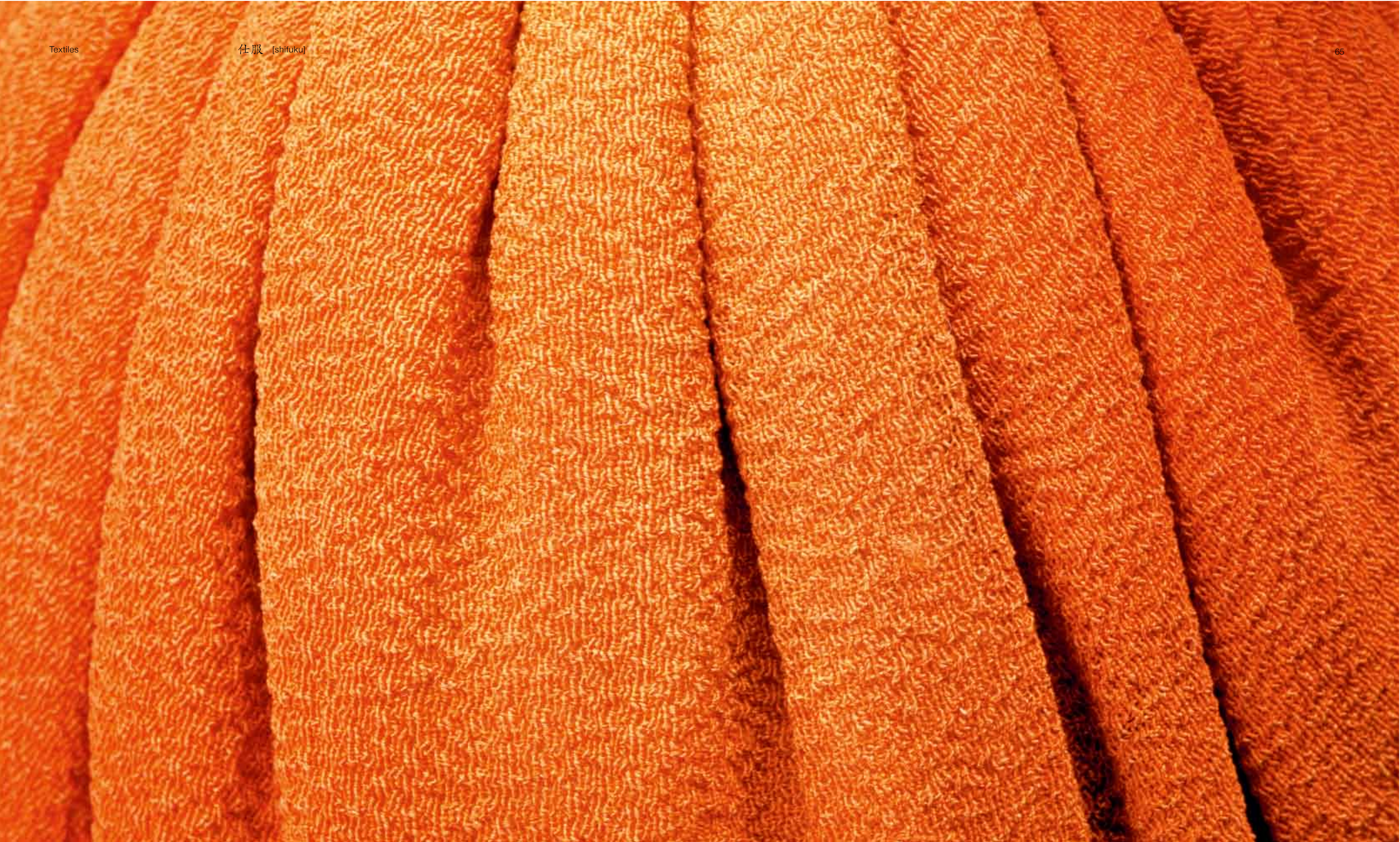




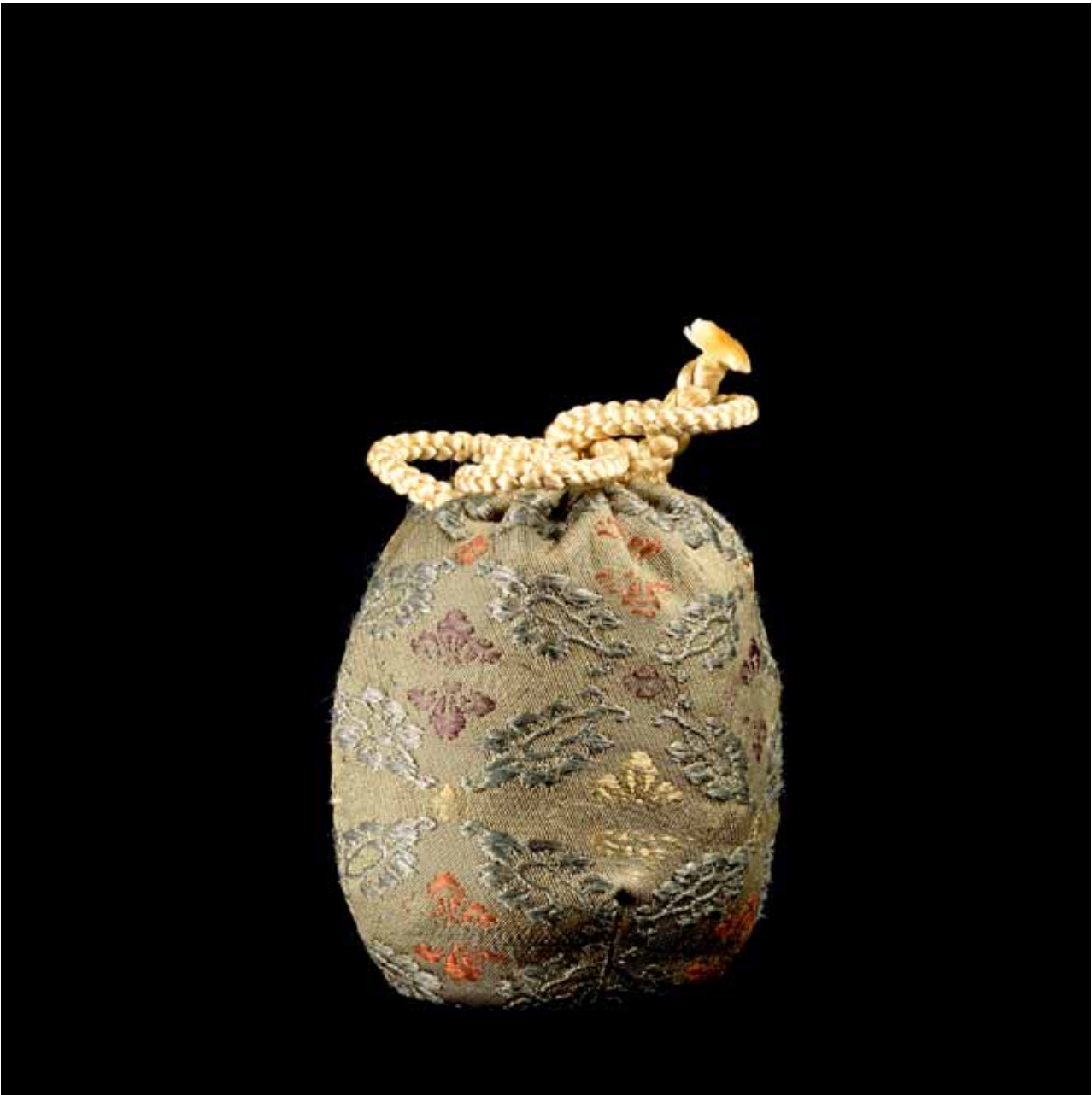


























# Tea caddy

茶入 [chaire]

When tea was introduced to Japan, the small ceramic caddies used for its storage were also adopted. From the 14th century, workshops in Japan, above all in Seto, began producing their own tea caddies or *chaire*. Seto maintained its primary position in the field of tea ceramics, based strongly on Chinese designs, until the beginning of the 17th century. After this, a growing number of individual styles and schools established themselves and spread throughout Japan.

One of the most famous pottery dynasties, also in the West, was founded in 1585 in Kyoto: the Raku school. It has retained its individual style for countless generations, right up to the present day, and for many connoisseurs its works correspond to the ideals of the tea ceremony. After the opening of Japan to the West, interest in ceramics waned slightly before reviving. It has since maintained an exalted position in Japanese art to the present day.





Satsuma, South-Kyushu  
early 19th century



Old rice pot  
China, 12/13th century  
Lid added in the 18th century



Kuro Raku  
Tannyū (1794 - 1850)  
10th generation



Aka Raku  
attributed to Ichinyu (1640 - 1696)  
4th generation





Seto ware  
19th century



Kyoto ware  
Aoki Mokubei  
(1766 - 1833)













Seto ware  
Ninsei style  
18th century



Kuro Raku  
Ichinyū (1640 - 1696)  
4th generation



Shigaraki ware  
19th century



Shigaraki-ware  
18th century





Seto-Oribe ware  
18th century



Seto-Owari ware  
attributed Hanshichi  
17th century



Satsuma, Chosa ware  
17/18th century  
used as a brazier



Shino ware  
signature: Ameyu  
18th century



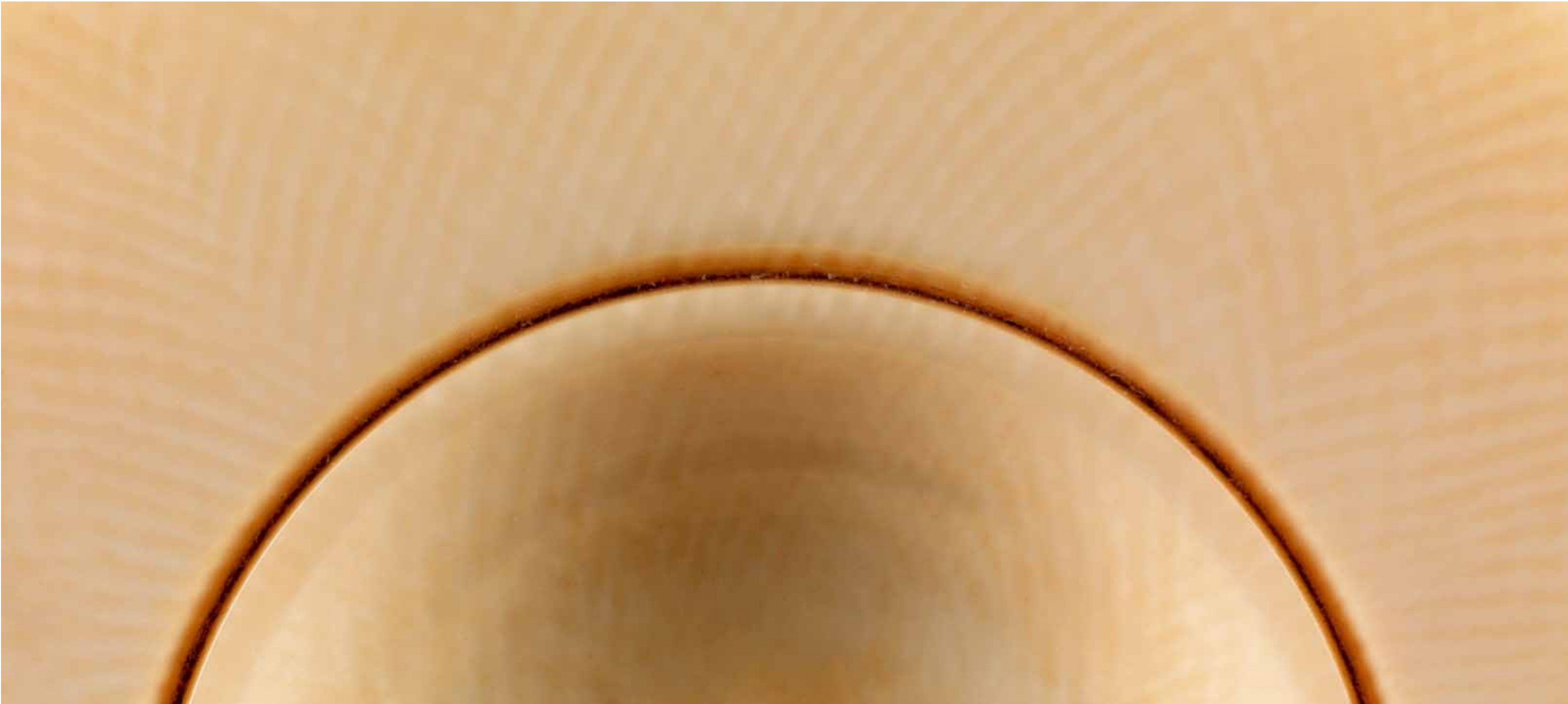


# The chaire lid

蓋 [futa]

Ivory is only rarely used in tea ceremony utensils. Teascoops were rarely made from ivory, and larger ivory containers for storing *chaire* were only turned for very important ceramics. Most often, ivory was used for *futa*, the *chaire* lids. When dried tea was introduced to Japan, small ceramic and porcelain containers from China were initially used for storage. As ivory was a rare and precious material, ivory offcuts were used instead of

discs to make the lids. This included pieces of ivory not suitable for turning into valuable artifacts, for example ivory showing the opening of the nerve canal, or with external damage and pitting. In *futa*, the opening of the nerve channel is perfect for fashioning the knob of the lid. Additionally, damaged ivory corresponds to the Japanese ideal of perfection through imperfection.





As ivory became increasingly available over the decades, lids were also turned in the direction of the grain in order to emphasise the beauty of the grain. The implementation of Japanese ideals even went so far as to include “artificial damage” by cutting worm grooves into the *futa*. Neither was the use of deer antlers due to a lack of material; it reflected the style of *netsuke* carvers from the Asakusa school from the 19th century onwards. Lids worked from the cross-section of the tusk deformed more easily than later ones turned in the direction of the grain. Due to their imperfect fit, however, they were increasingly accepted as “elegant” because this “imperfection” also corresponded to the ideals of the tea ceremony. This is also the reason that, even in contemporary *chaire*, *futa* are still consciously worked from the cross-section.

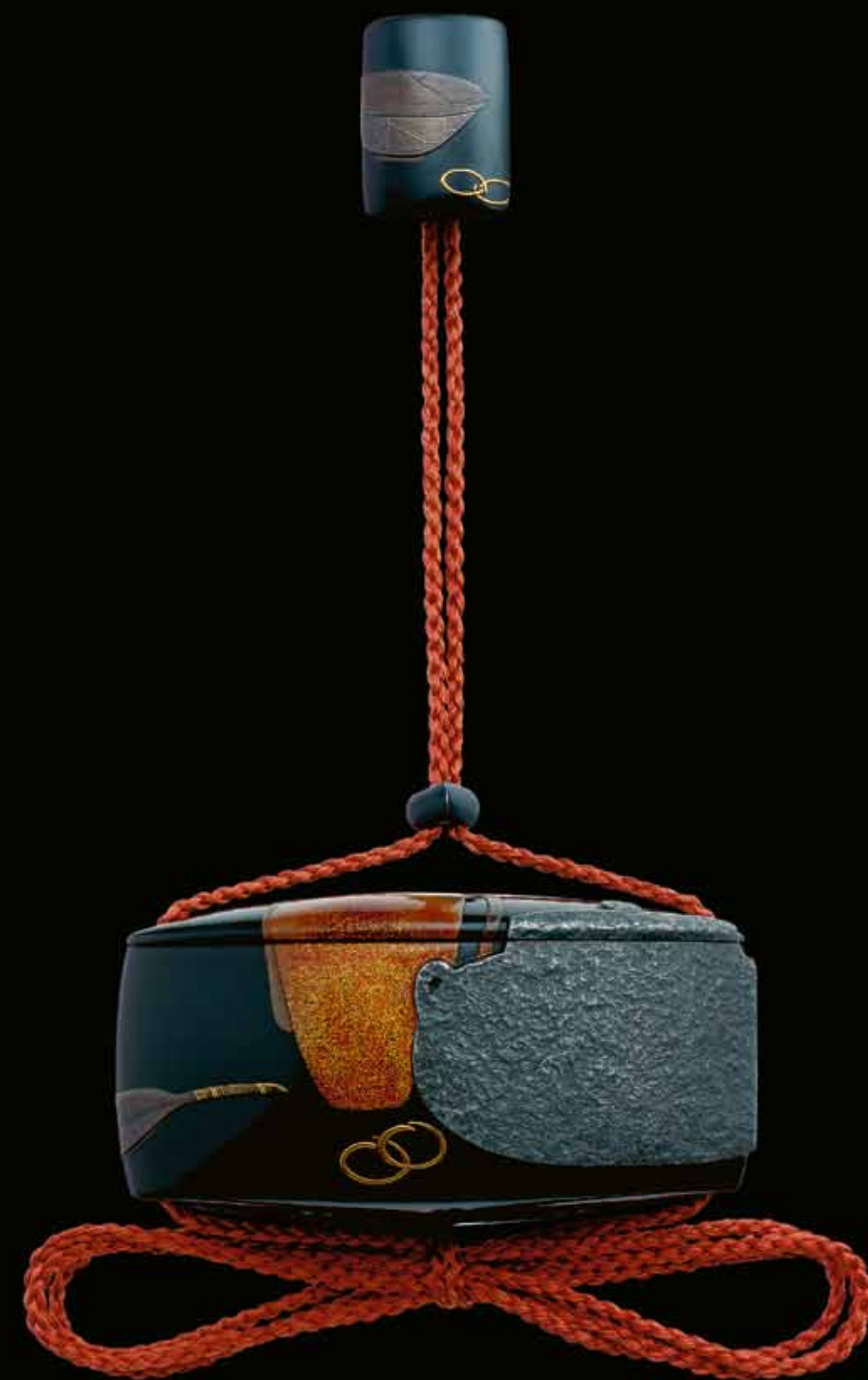




In most *futa*, a thin piece of paper is placed on the inside of the lid, with a piece of gilt paper over the top. The gold layer and the wood cells serve as a barrier against moisture, protecting the tea's intense aroma and taste. In the case of tea powder, these are particularly pronounced due to the significantly enlarged surface area of the tea. According to unconfirmed statements, gold powder, as well as gold lacquer retouches on ceramics, were the only way of giving a tiny hint of exclusivity to tea ceremony utensils, designed for their pared-back simplicity, while at the same time honouring the contents of the container, the tea.





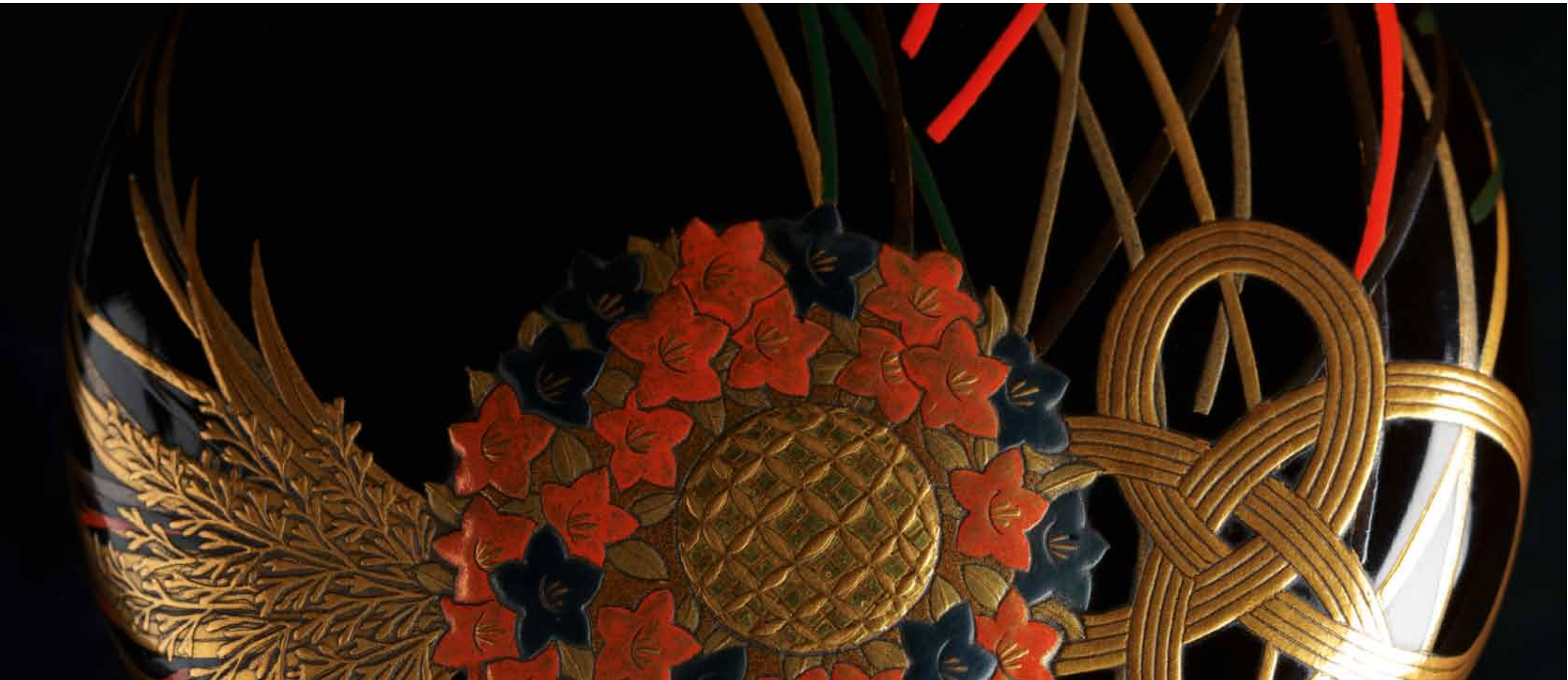


# Lacquer

漆 [urushi]

Apart from the ceramic, Japanese lacquer art plays an important role in the tea ceremony. Apart from the ceramic dishes, tea for the ceremony is often stored in *natsume*, tea caddies with very thin walls and elaborately embellished with Japanese lacquer. The sweets offered before and during the tea ceremony are kept in dishes specially made

for this purpose (*kashibako*) and presented on plates (*kosara*). While the medical dish *inrō* is not used for the tea ceremony, it is a traditional embellishment for Japanese men and often decorated with elements from the tea ceremony, thus elegantly reflecting its deference and importance.







*hiramakie* technique  
19th century



*hiramakie* technique  
19th century



Koma Koryū  
different lacquer techniques  
18th century



## The kettle

茶釜 [chagama]

The Japanese term for the Way of Tea, “*chanoyu*”, literally means “hot water for tea”. This water is heated in a cast-iron kettle which, together with the necessary utensils, plays a central role in the ceremony. In addition to the picture niche with scroll and decorated vase, the kettle is the only item already in the tea room when the first guests enter, thus attracting their gaze. The heating of the water is acoustically amplified

by placing pieces of metal inside the kettle, and serves as the first meditative sound to encourage guests to relax. It is supposed to be reminiscent of the wind in the pines, or the gentle lapping of waves on the shore. Other metal objects used during the tea ceremony include rings for lifting and moving the kettle, a tripod which stands in the ash basin, and occasionally flower vases and tea spoons.





Kettles made of metal are mentioned in Japan as early as the Nara period (645-794). It must, however, be assumed that kettles specifically for the preparation of tea first came into use in the late Kamakura period (1186-1336). Within a short time, two centres for the production of kettles were established, Ashiya in the present-day Fukuoka Prefecture, and Sann Temmyō in the Tochigi Prefecture. Kettles made in Ashiya were based on earlier models from China, whereas Temmyō kettles imitated the Korean originals. While the tops of Ashiya kettles were often decorated with finely detailed landscapes, Temmyō pieces were impressive in their undecorated simplicity, pared down to the surface structures. For this reason, tea masters preferred Temmyō kettles for strict ritual ceremonies, since they were a perfect match for the minimalist ambience of the tea room. Until the mid-17th century, the bulk of production took place in Ashiya and

Sano, until demand from Kyoto rose sharply, and local production became increasingly prominent. Kettles produced in the Kyoto metropolitan area went through a range of design variations, as they were influenced by the respective tea ceremony trends and the masters performing them. The works were given the name “Kyo” for Kyoto.

When the government relocated from Kyoto to current-day capital Tokyo, the metal manufacturing industry also moved to the new capital. A large number of family businesses moved their workshops, which led to a further fragmentation of artists' styles. Over the course of time a great number of styles developed, which increasingly hampered the assignment of kettles to a specific date or school, especially as former masterpieces were also copied or reworked, and important signatures were falsified.



Chagama, Ashiya type  
17.-18th century





Tetsubin  
around 1800



# Bamboo

竹 [take ]

One of Japan's best known symbols, and also one of the most versatile materials in Japanese craftwork, is bamboo. Its characteristics make it apt for use in a variety of areas, which is also evident in the utensils from the tea ceremony. It is interesting that two of the objects most central to the ceremony, the tea whisk and the ladle, are not highly regarded in Japan. Although the tea whisk can be regarded as a masterpiece of craftsmanship, and the ladle

as pure aesthetics, both are seen as tools to be disposed of after repeated use. Highly collectible, on the other hand, are the Ikebana vases from the picture recesses and, above all, the *chashaku*, the tea scoops used to place tea powder in the bowl. In contrast to most other utensils, the tea scoops were often made by the tea masters themselves, and reflected their ideas of form and handling.













Tea scoops were taken from China to Japan together with the tea. In higher aristocratic circles, scoops were initially made of ivory, since bamboo seemed to be too light to use. In other social strata, scoops were made of metal or hardwood. It was not until the middle of the sixteenth century that tea masters began to carry out the ceremony with bamboo scoops, which on the one hand were more difficult to use because of their negligible weight, but enabled a more elegant use on the other. Through this personal connection to the tea masters, and due to the fact that they were increasingly made by the tea masters themselves, tea scoops began to be revered in a way which still holds true today. This was sometimes reflected in ritual ceremonies by the gifting of the tea scoop itself, or of its first use in the teahouse. This was true above all for the scoops of Sen no Rikyū, which still influence the shape of tea

scoops to this day. By placing the bamboo node in the middle, the scoop's function is relegated to the background, while the eye concentrates on its shape. In the case of scoop without nodes, or where the nodes are at the end of the handle, the optical focus falls on the tip of the s with the tea powder on it, bringing the scoop's function to the foreground. Important *chashaku* are stored in a bamboo tube, which in turn is placed inside a small *tomobako*. Both containers are often signed, and labelled with further details about the tea scoop. Poems about the seasons written on the *tomobako* also show that, in the strictest forms of the tradition, certain scoops may only be used for ceremonies in the corresponding seasons.

Sō style  
conifer wood



Shin style  
ebony



Oribe style  
bamboo



Shin style  
tin



Oribe style  
bamboo







Shin style  
ebony





Oribe style  
bamboo









# The tea bowl

茶碗 [chawan]

The tea bowl, or *chawan*, is at the heart of every ceremony. More so than any other object, it embodies the thoughts and aesthetic aspirations of the tea master; it is the most personal object. Tea bowls were also imported from China in their original form. Their shape and glaze were perfected in the 14th century by Japanese potters. It was only from the 17th century onwards that contemporary tastes changed to reflect a new aesthetic sensitivity for domestic tea ceramics. Craftsmen followed

the ideas of their tea masters and developed new designs, based on the unchanging fundamental principles of simplicity and beauty. A present-day viewer can rarely understand the true value of a good tea bowl: this comes from its personal connection to the person who commissioned it, its use according to the season, its being handed down from generation to generation, or simply its unique formation in the heat of fire.







Shino ware  
18th century









Shino ware  
19th century



Hagi ware  
18/19th century





In close collaboration with tea master Sen no Rikyū, in 1586 Korean ceramist Chōjiro (?-1592) began work on his tea bowls, which he made without a potter's wheel. As his base material, Chōjiro used a sandy clay found in Kyoto, which is particularly suitable for shaping into thin, elegant walls by hand, and cannot be worked on a wheel. After this clay has been prepared, even today it is still stored for decades before it is worked on by later masters. Due to this long period of storage, organic substances mix with the clay, making the material very malleable and easy to shape, yet still very strong. As these substances are burnt out during the firing process, the ceramic becomes very light. In addition, Raku-style pieces are chilled in water immediately after firing, which prevents the completion of the sintering process and makes the items softer. The clay is worked by pulling a flat disc of clay upwards. As a result, the material is not formed in the classical way from inside to outside, but from outside to inside. Not only is the clay shaped with the thumbs, it is held in both hands and embraced, in the same way as the finished tea bowl will later be held during the tea ceremony. In most other Japanese

ceramics, the foot of the tea bowl is not glazed, so that you can see the clay from which the object was made. In contrast to this, except for a few exceptions, Raku bowls are completely glazed.

Red Raku is obtained by coating the item with a thin layer of strongly diluted iron-based clay. This layer is then covered with a thin transparent glaze made from quartzite and feldspar, which forms a crackle glaze due to its high alkali content. Black Raku is obtained by applying a glaze made from ground black pebbles with added lead. As tea is alkaline and cannot dissolve the lead in the glaze, there have been no health concerns regarding its later use. Red Raku is fired at a temperature of approximately 1000° C, black at about 1200° C. In contrast to other methods, the clay vessels are not heated slowly, but introduced directly into the hot furnace. To ensure that the iron oxide in the black-glazed objects does not absorb too much oxygen and turn brown again during cooling, they are cooled in water immediately after firing. The hardened glaze does not absorb oxygen, and thus remains black.



Karatsu ware  
16th century  
restored by Raku Keinyū





The concept of Karatsu ceramics comes from the city of Karatsu, located on the north coast of the South Island of Kyushu. From very early on, it gained importance as a port city and gateway to the Asian continent, as it is separated from the mainland merely by a strait. The name of the city comes from “*Kara*” = China and “*tsu*” = port. In addition to Kyoto and Mino, Karatsu was the most important centre for ceramics production from the 16th century onwards. Pieces created here were strongly influenced by Korean styles, as many Korean ceramists had taken up residence in the region, some of them forcibly so, after two major military campaigns. As many as 70,000 Koreans may have relocated to Japan, and settled throughout the country. This underlines the importance of Korean techniques and shapes on Japanese tea ceramics. There are two general tendencies in Karatsu ceramics: Ko-Karatsu and E-Karatsu. Ko-Karatsu stands for early pieces made from very sandy clay with a high iron content, with simple transparent feldspar and ash glaze decorations. In E-Karatsu, images were painted onto the piece using an iron-based underglaze. Characteristic of Karatsu goods: locally sourced clay, which was worked without any type of preparation or storage, the almost exclusive

shaping of the objects on potters’ wheels, the unglazed pedestals, and the stylised natural motifs with no local references. Thanks to their simplicity, for many tea masters Karatsu pieces corresponded to the pared-down ideals of the highly ritualised tea ceremony, and over generations they came to be very highly valued. A market rapidly developed for vessels of every kind, as a result of which, over time, the chawan made up just a small part of the total output.

The *chawan* shown here is a very important example from the second half of the 16th century. The piece was damaged twice, but was not restored with gold lacquer in the traditional manner. The imperfections were filled in using ceramics, and only the fracture lines were retouched in gold lacquer. The restorations were carried out by the 11th Raku Master Keinyū (1817-1902) and marked with his seal. One of the marks was used by Keinyū as a young artist, the other when he was an old man. This *chawan* is the only one known so far to have had its importance underscored through its restoration and branding by a Raku master, who valued the object for a very long period of time, and which for him was worth repairing twice in this extraordinary manner.

The works of the Shino school originated in the 16th century in the traditional kilns of Seto and Mini, located north-east of Kyoto. The glaze consists predominantly of the silicate mineral feldspar mixed with small amounts of clay and ash. It was the first white glaze in Japanese ceramic art. When producing Shino works, the blanks are fired at lower temperatures for a prolonged period of time, then slowly cooled. As a result, the glaze does not melt completely, creating a thicker white surface with “crawling” run marks and small holes. If a thin layer of the glaze is applied, it becomes transparent and allows decorations applied using iron oxide to show through. Reducing the ash content in the glaze also increases the transparency. Thanks to the slow cooling process over many days, the ceramic becomes completely sintered, meaning that the crystalline elements solidify. As a result, Shino ware is considerably harder than ceramics cooled in water directly after firing, such as Raku ware, and it also feels heavier. By controlling the temperature during the firing process, both the transparency and the colour of the glaze can be influenced. The higher the temperature, the darker the glaze, and the more it runs. An iron oxide underglaze only becomes noticeable at higher

temperatures, whereby the decoration and the surface are directly dependent on each other. Objects with this requirement cannot be manufactured in bulk in a large kiln; they are individual pieces.

The item shown has been manufactured in the so-called shoe shape (*kutsugata*). The bowl was not shaped on a potter's wheel, but by hand alone. In the top view, the shape is reminiscent of a shoe or footprint in the sand, and symbolises all that is transient in nature. Making a bowl without the use of a potter's wheel is often considered to be “more personal”, as the potter is able to give the piece a very individual touch. Through being shaped solely by the potter's fingers, the bowl is shaped to fit a pair of hands from the very first stages of its creation. This means that it already “feels” good before firing, and thus fulfils one of the basic criteria for a good *chawan*, its handling. A tea bowl can still be beautiful, pared-down or decorated, but the feel is essential. The holding, turning, and passing on of the bowl during the ceremony is its real meaning, as its reduction to the essentials should not be impaired by the smallest unpleasant feeling.



Shino ware  
early 17th century











1875

to the

South

of the

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the  
the



Aka Raku  
18th century  
with old gold lacquer repair



Shigaraki is one of the oldest ceramic kilns in Japan, dating back to the year 742. The then Emperor Shomu was building a palace in Shigaraki, and needed roofing tiles and vessels. Due to its geographically convenient location in Central Japan and the good quality of the local clay, which had a very high quartz content, a centre for manufacturing ceramics was soon established. When tea ceramics were first produced, they were characterised by their rustic, very unobtrusive appearance, which was in demand for ritual tea ceremonies. The warm, reddish tone was produced by the very sandy clay, obtained from the banks of Lake Biwa. In the wood-burning kilns, which were heated exclusively with wood, oxygen was added at selected points to keep the heat high. Depending where the piece was placed in the oven, the respective sides would have a very different final appearance due to ash becoming trapped, or the iron content. Due to the growing popularity of the tea ceremony and the increasing popularity of Shigaraki products, goods were manufactured for every

conceivable use and marketed throughout Japan. During the Edo period (1603 - 1867), techniques were increasingly enriched with very bright, colour-intensive glazes. In the Meiji period (1868 -1912), Shigaraki was particularly renowned for its blue charcoal braziers, which reached up to 90% market share in Japan. The extremely thick glazes were controlled during the firing process through the targeted reduction of oxygen, leading to minimal bubble formation in the clay fragments, thus avoiding crater-like openings in the surface. Due to a high feldspar content, the flow behaviour of the glaze during firing could be influenced, leading to the formation of pronounced droplets, as can be seen in the adjacent tea bowl. Due to the thick application of this glaze with added cobalt and lead, items underwent less shrinkage, and there was also little to no crackle in the glaze. Particularly interesting is the combination of this glaze with rustic, open-pored objects, where only parts of the item were decorated with the non-porous glaze.



Shigaraki ware  
19th century  
with old gold lacquer repair







Shino ware  
19th century





Sawankhalok ware  
produced in Thailand for the  
Japanese market



