
Kōdō – Its Spiritual and Game Elements and Its

Interrelations with the Japanese Literary Arts

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I. The Culture of *Dō* (道) ‘Way’

In Japan, there are many kinds of *dōs*. The term has diverse and profound meanings, making it a challenge to define. Simply speaking, *dō* is a way for people to train the spirit by following specific practices, with the purpose of mastering life. Prominent examples of *dōs* include *chadō* / *sadō*² (茶道) so-called “tea ceremony”, *kadō* (華道) so-called “flower arrangement”, *shodō* (calligraphy), and *bushidō* (the ethical code of the samurai). There are also sport practices such as *jūdō* (judo), *kendō* (kendo) and *aikidō* (aikido), all of which are also connected with the culture of *dō*.

The Japanese art of *kōdō* (香道) literally ‘incense *dō*’, or ‘the way of incense’³ focuses on the sense of smell. It means the ritual appreciation of fragrances that is practised together by following specific performance schemes. *Kōdō* was created in the latter part of the Muromachi period (1336–1573), along with *chadō*, which concentrated on taste, and *kadō*, which focused on sight. The materials and methods as such of appreciating these, concerning both *kōdō* and *chadō*, were not native to Japan, but were instead imported or adopted from abroad. In order to become *kōdō*, these practices of appreciating aromatic materials were refined in Japan from the Heian period (794–1185) on along with the local poetic arts, and as part

¹This English article about the author’s research was written with the substantial support of Dinah Jung, with the translation help of Yoko Shinohe, Stephanie Akiko Haschke and Mu Gan. I would like to thank her for editing the manuscript, tailoring it both to a western readership as well as to the western context of academic discourses on Japanese perfumery. Dinah Jung would like to express her gratitude to the people in Japan who introduced her to local perfumery traditions and specifically to *kōdō*, as well as to her team of assistants who made the intercultural project possible, and especially to the author himself for letting her and her team gather insights into his expertise and bibliographic studies.

²There are two pronunciations, either *chadō* or *sadō* depending on the school of thought.

³Often, the English expression “incense ceremony” is used to translate the Japanese word *kōdō*, in analogy to the expression “tea ceremony”, which has become popular in the English language in the 20th century to refer to the Japanese *chadō*. (For example, the English language introduction by the Grand Master *shōkō* (head or lemoto) of the Urasenke *chadō* tradition, Sen Soshitsu (千宗室), to Okakura’s *The Book of Tea* includes the statement “chadō – literally the way of tea – or chanoyu – widely known as the ‘tea ceremony’” <Okakura (1998), 9>).

However, it is problematic to use the expression “incense ceremony”. Using this term might be confused with ceremonial practices related with the use of aromatics other than *kōdō*, such as the modern *shōkō* (焼香) incense offering performed during the Buddhist memorial service). The expression “incense burning” is also unsuitable since in *kōdō* the incense is not burned as such, but only warmed.

Nevertheless, for lack of any better term, the expression ‘ceremony’ is used in this English article. Similar to this English word, the word ‘ritual’ in this essay also does not refer to a religious or solemn practice in the strict sense. These English words are simply used in order to give expression to the more or less loose series of actions, typical behaviour and meaning contexts that have – in variable character and intensity – become common and regularly followed up in the context of appreciating fragrances.

of aristocratic life. This paper focuses on the interrelations of *kōdō* with Japanese literature including its spiritual and game character by tracing the history from its precursors up to current practices of appreciating incense in modern ritual settings.

II. Historical Development of *Kōdō*

1. *The age of konkō* (〔混香〕 *potpourri of chopped dried aromatics*)

Kō (〔香〕) general term for ‘[the various kinds of mixed and/or individual] incense [material(s)]’ as well as ‘fragrance [i.e. the olfactory phenomenon]’ most probably arrived in Japan via the Korean peninsula in the middle of the sixth century.⁴ The incense meant a special mixture product, *konkō*. It consisted of materials such as *jinkō* (〔沈香〕 agarwood),⁵ sandalwood, cloves, turmeric, and musk. *Jinkō* was especially important, meaning the resin-impregnated wood of *Aquilaria* trees. Interestingly, non-resinous wood of *Aquilaria* trees is lighter than water, and it has almost no aromatic quality. In contrast, highly resin-impregnated *jinkō* is heavier than water. Hence the latter was given the name *jin sui kō* (〔沈水香〕 ‘sinking in water incense’), usually simply abbreviated as *jinkō* [沈香].

At that time the aromatics were used in the form of *funkō* (〔焚香〕 ‘incense to be put on glowing charcoal’), meaning that the aromatic wood was actually burned. The purpose of *funkō* was to dedicate the scent to Buddha and the various Buddhist and Shintoist deities.

It is believed that at the same time as *funkō* arrived in Japan, another kind of perfume product called *zūkō* (〔塗香〕 ‘perfume to be painted’ on a surface) was also imported. The materials of *zūkō* and *funkō* were similar. However, *zūkō* was prepared as a fine powder, while the materials used for *funkō* were only chopped. Even more important were their different uses. While *funkō* presented a kind of incense, the powdery *zūkō* was simply strewn over the hands and the body.⁶

Sankō (〔撒香〕 ‘perfume to distribute fragrance’ in the surrounding air) was employed at the same time as *funkō*. In contrast to the latter however, that was used in incense offerings on the altar in dedication for Buddha and the deities, *sankō* was placed in a censer with a handle so that it could be taken around and the air could be well-perfumed. Such a handle censer of that time is kept in the *Shōsōin* (〔正倉院〕 the National Treasure House in Nara). Exemplary usages are portrayed in the *Nihon shoki* [日本書紀]. The Minister Soga no Emishi [蘇我大臣蝦夷] used the handle censer in the Buddhist ceremony in the year

⁴ Jinbo states, “according to the *Nihon shoki* (〔日本書紀〕 *The Chronicles of Japan*) [Sakamoto (1965), p. 174] aromatic wood was brought [to Japan] in the year 595 for the first time. However, I believe that this date has to be set back considerably, before the year 595. The practice of using perfumes spread to Japan as an offering to Buddha, and Buddhism spread to Japan in 552 according to public record. Buddhism was transmitted [from China] to Kudara [Paekche, a kingdom on the Korean peninsula] in the 4th century. [Considering this date and the early connections between Korean and Japanese people] the aromatic wood had surely been given to some powerful [Japanese] clans before it officially arrived in Japan.” <(2003), 11>. There is one plausible theory that dates the year of the spread of Buddhism to Japan as 538. Note: All quotations of Japanese sources in this article were translated by the author, in the case of the poems with the assistance of the Heidelberg team.

⁵ The Japanese term *jinkō* is not completely identical with “agarwood”, so that the Japanese term is used in the following. This choice may put an emphasis on the distinction of the various qualities and kinds of agarwood in Japanese language and culture, among which *jinkō* is only one – while all these definitions are additionally embedded in various cultural concepts.

⁶ *Zūkō* and *funkō* (also called *shōkō* (〔燒香〕) are still used nowadays for worshipping Buddha and the ancestors.

642, when he offered Buddha the aromatic good.⁷ This report confirms that a non-clerical used the censer in order to create fragrance.

Another example of an emerging use of aromatics beyond a mere religious context can be found in the case of Prince Ōtomo [大友皇子]. For introducing his new reign in the year 671, he gathered five elder statesmen. The prince took the handle censer and his vow of obedience to Buddha and the deities before the five statesmen took over the censer and pledged loyalty to Prince Ōtomo. The fragrance was intended to unify the collective spirit and mind of all participants and thus to strengthen the new rule.⁸

2. Renkō (煉香) kneaded incense blends) and the culture of takimono (薫物) the products and culture of performing their fragrance for purposes of delight)

The production of *renkō*⁹ (kneaded incense blends, also known as ‘balls of blended incense’)¹⁰ dates back to the Tang dynasty of seventh to eighth century China.¹¹ A powder made of *jinkō*, cloves, shell opercula, sandalwood, musk, turmeric, and other aromatics, was solidified with *amazura* (甘葛, an ancient Japanese sweetener), honey and other ingredients.¹² It is widely acknowledged that the famous monk Ganjin (鑑真) (688–763) introduced *renkō* in Japan.¹³

With the development of *renkō*, Japanese perfumery changed. Concerning the kind of products, the carved aromatic objects of earlier times had led – via the step of refined powdery perfumes – to the more difficult to be produced solid perfumery goods. Moreover, the method of creating fragrances had changed by that time. The incense was not put directly on the glowing charcoal in the *kōro* (香炉) a standing censer) anymore. Instead it was often protected from the fire by an ash layer in between, so that it was only warmed without being actually burned (Fig. 1). In this way it became possible to make primarily the essential oils included in the aromatic materials evaporate, and consequently to create a fragrance with only few undesirable incidental notes otherwise caused by the material’s incineration.

⁷ <Sakamoto (1965), p. 240>.

⁸ <Sakamoto (1965), p. 380>.

⁹ There are two ways to pronounce 煉香, “*renkō*” and “*nerikō*”. In accordance with general phonetic reading, *renkō* is used in the following.

¹⁰ The shape of *renkō* – balls – is often used to explain this incense product, but it was not only produced in spherical shapes. For example, “its form is like the seed of a jujube” <Tanaka (2006), p. 107>, further described by this author, “a jujube seed is of slender elliptical form stretching over two centimeter” <Tanaka (2010), p. 267>. Another example is given in the *Go-Fushimi-in shinkan takimono hō*: “Concerning the production of *renkō*, it is not recommended to create very thin layers of incense cake. When the diameter of a *renkō* is five *bu* (分), this incense piece should be little more than two *bu* (分) high; and when the diameter of a *renkō* is one *sun* (寸) (= ten *bu*), the piece should be made as high as five *bu*.” <Hanawa (1977b), p. 568>.

¹¹ <Hong 1937, vol. 2, pp. 44–46, “Xiang zhi fa [香之法] [The Production of Incense Blends]”>. See also <Yamada (1979), p. 43; (1982), p. 13>, <Matsubara (2012), p. 84>.

¹² Sugar was used in addition to *amazura* and honey <Tanaka (2006), p. 114>. It is also thought by some that *bainiku* (梅肉) Japanese plum meat) was used <Jinbo (2003), p. 383>.

¹³ Ganjin prepared a considerable amount of *renkō* for his second attempt to visit Japan <Ōmi (2010), p. 7>. However, the crossing failed, and Ganjin arrived in Japan only with his sixth attempt in 753.

There is one minor source, *Go-Fushimi-in shinkan takimono hō*, which hints that Sangi Kimitaka (参議きみたか) (date of birth and death unknown), a member of the Japanese envoy to China during the Tang Dynasty, may have brought *renkō* to Japan. “It is said that Sangi Kimitaka went to China and he brought *renkō* back to Japan” <Hanawa (1977b), p. 562>.



Fig. 1. and 2. Prepared censers for appreciating fragrances.

Fig. 1. *Hitorigōro* [火取香炉] including a *kōro* (香炉) censer, with an ash (灰) *hai* layer between the glowing charcoal and the incense on top).

The *hitorigōro* was originally used for the incensation of *renkō* products. Nowadays it serves to keep burning charcoal.

Fig. 2. *Kikigōro* (聞香炉), also pronounced *monkōro* including a *kōro*, *hai*, *ginyō* (銀葉) silver plate), and a piece of *jinkō*.

The *monkōro* is nowadays used for *monkō*.

In addition, the purpose of making use of perfumes took on a new character. Perfumes that had before been used as a dedication to Buddha and the deities, or to purify the persons who served those, were used increasingly by aristocrats for pleasure. In other words, perfumes started to be used for more generic purposes.¹⁴ Aristocrats in the Heian period gradually called *renkō* (the kneaded incense blends) *takimono* (薰物) ‘to perform fragrance’, and used it to perfume rooms or the air (a practice called *soradakimono* [空薰物]) or else wafted it over their clothes (called *oikaze* [追風], literally ‘tailwind’). Following these practices, the term “*takimono*” no longer only referred to the perfume material as such, but became connected with these usages.

The more *takimono* established itself in Japan, the more the people acquired perfumery expertise, since they had to learn about the qualities and properties of aromatic materials in order to produce the necessary goods. The selection and the mixing ratio of ingredients were varied in producing *renkō*, and so the products could become more diverse; people were able to create goods of new olfactory character.¹⁵

In addition to the technical improvements, perfumery became increasingly connected with poetics. Names such as “梅花 (*baika*, Japanese plum blossoms)”, “荷葉 (*kayō*, lotus leaf)”, “落葉 (*rakuyō*, fall foliage)”, “侍従 (*jijū*, chamberlain), “菊花 (*kikka*, chrysanthemum flower)”, and “黒方 (*kurobō*, ancient method of blending perfumes)” were attributed to the different products.¹⁶

¹⁴ <Tanaka (2006), pp. 77–116; (2007), pp. 39–89>.

¹⁵ *Jinkō*, cloves, and shell opercula were mainly used for producing *takimono* which the aristocrats did themselves. An example of a *renkō* mixture in the *Kunjū nuishō* [Incense Production Manual] included *jinkō*, *sentō* (古唐) (citrus species-like), shell opercula (甲香), spikenard (甘松), sandalwood (白檀), cloves (丁子), musk (麝香), and frankincense (乳香) <Tanaka (2006), p. 86>.

¹⁶ The *Mugusa no tane* informs that each name referred to a different season – *baika* (‘Japanese plum blossoms’) to spring, *kayō* (‘lotus leaf’) to summer, *kikka* (‘chrysanthemum flowers’) to autumn, *rakuyō* (‘fall foliage’) to winter, and

3. The popularisation of *ichibokudaki* (一木炷) the exclusive use of one kind of wood in incensation)

3.1. The historical development of *ichibokudaki*

By the twelfth century the use of blended incense mixtures was no longer universally employed in Chinese perfume and incense making. Rather, *one* kind of wood instead of aromatic blends was actively pursued in incense preparation – a practice called *ichibokudaki*.¹⁷ Moreover, China invented a plate called *ginyō* (銀葉) silver plate) which would be placed on top of the heated ash in the *kōro*.¹⁸ The wood piece would then be placed over the *ginyō*. Using the *ginyō* meant that the wood piece could be better protected from the fire than ever before, in the case of *jinkō* allowing for an exceptionally mild and pure aroma, by making only the essential oil of the resin vaporise (Fig. 2).

Although aristocrats in Japan continued to practice *takimono*, the incense culture gradually moved away from kneaded incense blends towards the exclusive use of *jinkō* during the Kamakura period (1192–1333); *ichibokudaki* spread to Japan by the fourteenth century at the latest.¹⁹



Fig. 3. *Monkō* (‘listening to fragrance’).

jijū (‘chamberlain’) and *kurobō* (‘ancient method of blending perfumes’) to the period of frost and snow. <Hanawa (1977c), p. 575>.

¹⁷The expression of *isshu* (一炷), [Chinese. *yizhu*], ‘to appreciate only one kind of aromatic wood at any one time’) appears in China in the poetic works of Bai Juyi (白居易) (772–846, Tang dynasty) and Su Shi (蘇軾) (1036–1101). Lu You (陸游) (1125–1210) of the Song dynasty often uses the word *issu* in his poetic work.” <Matsubara (2012), p. 55>.

¹⁸The production and employment of the *ginyō* was for the first time explained by Yan Te Yao (願特約) in his *Xiang shi* (香史) [*The history of Incense*] which is quoted by Chen Jing in *Xin Zhuan Xiang Pu* [*New Manual of Perfumery*] <Chen (1730?), p. 90>. See also <Yamada (1979), p. 54; (1982), pp. 23–24>, <Matsubara (2012), pp. 38, 84>.

¹⁹According to Seki Shinkyō (関親卿) and Seki Hōkyō (関芳卿), a person named Sekikō (石公) has already brought the knowledge about *ichibokudaki* from China (or Goryeo, i.e. Korea) to Japan during the reign of Emperor Kazan [花山天皇] (984–986). <Horiguchi (2012), p. 14; (2009), pp. 140, 165> However, this historically early indication is special and affords verification. For example, Matsubara interprets the expression *ichi-ichi-shu/chū* (一々炷) used by the Chinese Zen monk Mugaku Sogen (無学祖元) [Chinese. Wuxue Zuyuan, 1226–1286] who visited Japan and reported 1283 in a letter on it, as “an early example of *ichibokudaki* in Japan” <(2012), p. 55>.

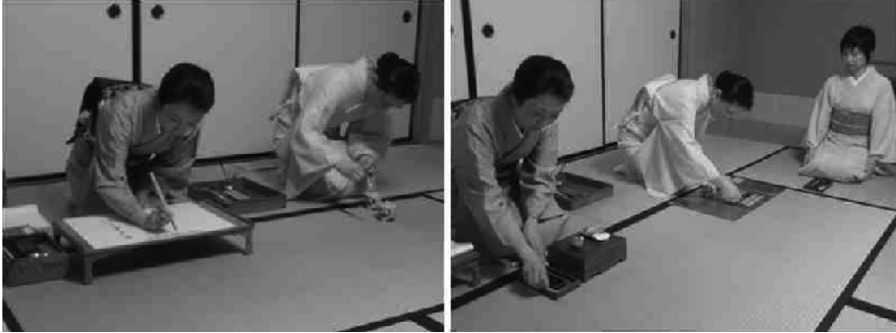


Fig. 4. and 5. *Kōseki* (session of ceremonial incense appreciation)

Left: *hissha* (筆者) keeper of the *kōseki* minutes; also called *shippitsu* (執筆).

Centre: *kōmoto* (香元) the person who tenders the *kōro*.

Right: *kyaku* (客) 'guest', participant of the ceremony).



Fig. 6. Tools for *kumikō* (組香).

Actually, the knowledge and awareness of the different kinds of *jinkō* was not new. Their different fragrance qualities had been judged since the Heian period. While producing *renkō*, aristocrats at that time discovered and learned to distinguish the various qualities of *jinkō*.²⁰ However, appreciating solely *jinkō* in its pure form became a regular pastime in Japan only during the Kamakura period, by using the *ginyō* method. People called this new method of appreciating fragrances *monkō* (聞香), from Chinese *wen xiang*, 'to listen to incense' or 'to smell incense').

As people became more sensitive to the various qualities of fragrances, they realised that there was a kind of *jinkō* whose fragrance was more splendid and delicate than that of other kinds of *jinkō*. This type was called *kyara* (伽羅). The Chinese had already acknowledged its existence since the middle of the twelfth century,²¹ before it began to be appreciated in

²⁰ <Jinbo (2003), p. 28>.

²¹ The *Song Hui Yao* (宋会要) [*History Book of the Song Dynasty*] (a record on the politics, economy, and society of the Song dynasty) includes a description of *jia nan xiang* (加南香) [later on also called *qi nan* and similarly, in

Japan after the middle of the fourteenth century.²² It gave birth to a unique culture, one which would make it necessary to distinguish the superior quality *jinkō* from other more common *jinkō* types. Accordingly, the tradition of giving names to selected pieces of *jinkō* of exclusive quality started. Many superior pieces of *jinkō* have been named since then, using elegant words from *waka* (和歌) Japanese poems), *monogatari* (物語) Japanese prose narrative tales), and *kanshi* (漢詩) Chinese and Chinese-style poems). Pieces of *jinkō* have names such as “菖蒲 (Shōbu, ‘Iris’), “立田 (Tatsuta, a place in the Nara Prefecture which is famous for autumn colours), “雲居 (Kumoi, ‘Cloudy Sky’), “八橋 (Yatsubashi, a place mentioned in *The Tales of Ise*, i.e. a collection of poems and associated narratives dating from the first half of the Heian period or before), “花散里 (Hanachirusato, the name of a character in, and also of a chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, i.e. a literary work whose sources stem from the years around 1008) and “楊貴妃 (Yōkihi, Yang Gui-fei, a historical person and character of Chinese poetry)”. The eminent General Sasaki Dōyo (佐々木道誉) (1296–1373) is said to have named many pieces of *jinkō* for which he gained a special reputation in the context of *kōdō*.²³

3.2. Early forms of incense appreciation games – *jisshukō* (十種香) ‘ten kinds of incense’)

More and more, the appreciation of *jinkō* took on a social frame and character. Historically, the earliest appreciations in game form were called *jisshukō* (‘ten kinds of incense’) or *jūchūkō* (十炷香) ‘ten incense’). The game of enjoying the diversity of different types of *jinkō* gradually assumed a competitive character, in which the winner would receive a prize. Such competitions, called *tōkō* (鬪香) incense recognition competitions), became popular at the same time with *tōcha* (鬪茶) tea recognition competitions). The emphasis on competition however, turned the incense culture into a somewhat uncouth form of recreation.²⁴

3.3. The age of *takigumikō* (たき組香) ‘linked *kō* ceremony’)

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, *takigumikō*²⁵ emerged from among several other fine art forms, and cultural practices arising from them, that are referred to as “*dō*” (as mentioned above). Different ones were established under General Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490), such as the sophisticated appreciation of tea, flowers, perfumes, and *renga* (連歌) ‘linked

Japanese *kyara*]. <Xu (1957), 7864>. According to the current state of knowledge, this is the oldest description of *kyara*. See also <Yamada (1979), p. 27; (1982), p. 68>; consider also <Matsubara (2012), p. 90>.

²²The *Isei teikin ōrai* 異制庭訓往来 refers to *kyaraboku* (伽藍木) and *tokyara* (妬伽羅) <Hanawa (1977a), p. 475>. *Tōkyara* (妬伽藍) is also cited in the *Yūgaku ōrai* 遊学往来 <Hanawa and Ōta (1959a), p. 1151>. See also <Yamada (1979), p. 79>, <Matsubara (2012), p. 91>.

²³<Midorikawa and Yamane (2005), p. 122>, <Horiguchi (2009), p. 165>. However, Matsubara differs from this opinion: “It is impossible that Sasaki Dōyo collected and named 178 kinds of *jinkō*.” <(2012), p. 65>.

²⁴Nowadays, *jūchūkō* is classified as a type of *kumikō* in modern *kō* ceremony. But at that earlier time, the concept of *kumikō* probably did not exist. The *Sōshin hikki* and *Takakatsu hikki* include descriptions about *takigumikō*, but neither the word *kumikō* nor a description of such a practice. <Midorikawa and Yamane (2005), pp. 4–95>, <Horiguchi (2009), pp. 13–126>, in reference to the historical manuscripts by Shino Sōshin (1501) and Takebe Takakatsu (1573, according to another opinion 1575).

²⁵*Takigumikō* (たき組香) was later also called *tsugikō* (継香) <Horiguchi (2012), pp. 26–28>, or also *takitsugikō* (炷継香) <Sanjōnishi (1984), p. 37>.

verse poetry'). These arts were related to each other. Specifically *takigumikō* was invented by combining earlier practices of appreciating fragrances with the methods of creating and enjoying *renga* poetry.

Renga counts as one traditional style of Japanese poetry that developed in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and reached the height of its popularity during the Sengoku period (1467–1568).²⁶ As is usually the case in Japanese poetry, its poems are made of 31 syllables that are allocated over two parts. The first consists of three phrases of 5, 7 and 5 syllables, while the second is made of two phrases of 7 syllables each. In comparison with most Japanese poems, however, 'linked verse poetry' is special, as several poets contribute to the poetic creation. For example, Poet A writes a 5–7–5 verse, to which Poet B responds with a 7–7 verse. Then, Poet C will compose a 5–7–5 verse that will link to what Poet B has written. The style continues with contributions from different poets, creating 'linked verse', or a 'linked poem'. The following example may illustrate the collaborative process and the poetic linkages in thematic regards that are established by the poets:²⁷

A (Sōgi): *yuki nagara / yamamoto kasumu / yūbe kana* (5–7–5)

B (Shōhaku): *yuku mizu tōku / ume niou sato* (7–7)

B (Shōhaku): *yuku mizu tōku / ume niou sato* (7–7)

C (Sōchō): *kawa kaze ni / hito mura yanagi / haru miete* (5–7–5)

C (Sōchō): *kawa kaze ni / hito mura yanagi / haru miete* (5–7–5)

D (Sōgi): *fune sasu oto mo / shiruki akegata* (7–7)

A:

雪ながら山本霞む夕べかな

yuki nagara / yamamoto kasumu / yūbe kana

It has become evening [in spring] when layers of haze settle despite the snow at the foot of the mountain.

by Sōgi [宗祇] (1421–1502)

B:

yuku mizu tōku / ume niou sato

行く水遠く梅匂ふ里

The river flows far, and the air is redolent [in spring] of the plum blossoms' scent in the countryside.

by Shōhaku [肖柏] (1443–1527)

²⁶Before the Meiji period (1868–1911), Japanese poems had almost always been composed on a basis of 5 or 7 syllables. For example, a *waka* has 5–7–5–7–7 syllables and a *haikai hokku* (俳諧発句) the beginning part of *haikai renga* (俳諧連歌) or casual style of *renga* has 5–7–5 syllables. Only after the Meiji period, Japanese poetry changed and poetic forms became more manifold, like in colloquialism poetry, or *Vers libre*.

²⁷<Ichiji (1960), pp. 345–346>.

C:

川風に一群柳春見えて

kawa kaze ni / hito mura yanagi / haru miete

The willow branches bending with the breeze towards the river make me feel the beginning of spring.

by Sōchō (宗長) (1448–1532)

D:

船さす音もしるき明け方

fune sasu oto mo / shiruki akegata

The sound of a ship makes me realize that morning has broken.

by Sōgi (宗祇)

Similarly to the procedure of creating and enjoying linked *renga* poems, pieces of incense become linked to each other during a *takigumikō* session, by valuing the *jinkōs*' poetic names and relating these to each other. More specifically, the participants bring with them their personal collections of superior (named) *jinkō* pieces, and a noble person among the group will offer to give one of the precious pieces as the first piece for this occasion. This first *jinkō* of the day could be any. For example, it might be one which is known as “雲居 (*Kumoi*, ‘Cloudy Sky’)”. The choice of the following *jinkōs* is no longer arbitrary. Instead, it is expected that each ensuing piece always relates to the directly foregoing one. Thus, for the next round of appreciating incense, a piece could be chosen that is known as “月 (*Tsuki*, ‘Moon’)”. Like the name of the *jinkō* piece before, the name of this ensuing *jinkō* stems from *gago* (雅語) elegant words used in Japanese poems) about the weather and the landscape of the sky. The next participant may then choose a *jinkō* piece called “秋風 (*Akikaze*, ‘Autumn Wind’)”. This name connects with “*Tsuki*” (‘Moon’) – the *jinkō* piece from before – in seasonal regards, as autumn presents the season of the annual moon feast. Like in *renga* poetry, a chiming line would so be established, in the case of *takigumikō* along the poesy of the *jinkō* pieces' names.

Other *gago* that lend their names to *jinkō* pieces refer to such topics as love, celebration, and the scenery of a particular place.

3.4. *Kōawase* (香合せ) incense evaluation ceremony)

Parallel to the development of *takigumikō*, *kōawase* (香合せ) incense evaluation ceremony) established at the beginning of the Sengoku period (1467–1568). The goal was to evaluate the fragrances of *jinkō* pieces; the ceremonial practice presented a type of *awase mono* (合わせ物) literally ‘bringing together’, i.e. all guests bring with them samples of a specific kind of material or intangible product in order to enjoy the comparison between those).²⁸ These had started after the Heian period with the ceremonial consideration of Japanese poems. Two teams submitted a poem, these were then considered in terms of their relative aesthetic superiority or inferiority. Ceremonial appraisals of pieces of *jinkō* in the Sengoku period

²⁸Other examples of such playful competitions include *uta awase* (歌合わせ) competition with Japanese poems), *shi awase* (詩合わせ) competition with Chinese poems), *ōgi awase* (扇合わせ) competition with folding fans), and *kai awase* (貝合わせ) competition with ornamented shells).

followed the same pattern, with the fragrances of the named *jinkō* pieces being evaluated as aesthetically superior or inferior in comparison.²⁹ It is thought that the invention of *kōawase* was an attempt to relate the contemporary incense culture of that time to the valued culture of the earlier Heian period, and thereby to dignify the appreciation of perfumes.

A well-known ceremony was the Higashiyamadono rokuban *kōawase* [東山殿六番香合], which took place in 1479 with Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa [足利義政] (1436–1490).³⁰ The most famous *kōawase* however, was the Shino Sōshinke meikō *awase* [志野宗信家名香合], with the participation of Shino Sōshin (1443–1523), in 1501.³¹

3.5. The origin of *kōdō* and *kumikō* (組香) incense appreciation games based on various defined rules)

There are various theories as to who the initiator of *kōdō* was. People such as Sasaki Dōyo (1296–1373), Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436–1490), Sanjōnishi Sanetaka (1455–1537) and Shino Sōshin (1443–1523) are among those named. However, Shino Sōshin is widely considered to have introduced this new form of incense appreciation.

Notably, the ritual performance and character of appreciating incense changed with the development of *kōdō*. The technique to appreciate the pure fragrance of *jinkō*, introduced above as *monkō* (‘listening to fragrance’), together with the traditions of *takigumikō* and *kōawase*, paved the way for the development of *kumikōs* [組香], meaning defined games of incense appreciation. Their first basis was gradually created over three generations of *sōshōs* (宗匠) master). Shino Sōshin’s son Sōon (宗温) and grandson Shino Shōha/ Syōha (省巴) straightened the form and the content of the loose games. Their base became completed by Hachiya Sōgo (宗悟) (d. 1584/1588), after he had taken over the *kōdō* tradition from the Shino family.³² Rules were defined that one had to observe in order to play these games, and which were written down over the course of the following decades. These rules determined in which way and procedure pieces of different *jinkō* kinds are passed around during the ceremonial session. The task for the participants was to recognise the pieces by their fragrances.

3.6. *Kumikō* in the Edo period

During the Edo period (1600–1868), the *kumikōs* became more refined. Playing *kumikō* became a method by which participants cultivated their knowledge and improved their

²⁹ *Takimono awase* (薫物合せ) competition with *takimono* samples) existed as a predecessor of *kōawase*. In comparison with the latter however, *takimono awase* refers to the comparative appreciation of different samples of *renkō* instead of *jinkō* pieces. According to the *Samidare no nikki* <Hanawa (1977d), 579>, *takimono awase* was possibly practiced as early as the Engi Tenryaku (延喜天曆) era (901–956) in Heian times. This hypothesis is partly supported by the use of the expression “*takimono awase*” in the *Genji monogatari* (源氏物語) (Chapter 32 “Umegae [梅枝] 卷”) <Yanai, vol. 3, (1995), pp. 152–156>. However, there are very few records concerning *takimono awase* at that time known so far, which implies that it cannot have been popular. Instead of a ritual practice, the expression “*takimono awase*” as used in the *Genji monogatari* likely alludes to the blending of perfumes.

³⁰ <Hanawa (1977d), pp. 582–586>.

³¹ <Horiguchi (2009), pp. 73–75>.

³² Shino Sōshin wrote the famous *kōdō* manuscript *Shino Sōshin hikki* (志野宗信筆記) (also *Sōshin hikki*) <Horiguchi (2009), pp. 13–76>, <Midorikawa and Yamane (2005), pp. 4–49>. Hachiya Sōgo is the author of *Kōdō kihan* (香道規範) <Jimbo (2003), pp. 197–281>.

spirits. In other words, *kumikō* is not just a game for appreciating scents. Rather, the olfactory experience is combined with the poetic experience of the four seasons, as these play an important part in the theme of many *kumikōs*. More generally, a large number of *kumikōs* that were created between the end of the Muromachi period and up to the Edo period, take up motifs of classical literature from the Heian and the Kamakura periods, meaning of *waka* (classical Japanese poetry),³³ *monogatari* (Japanese prose narrative tales),³⁴ and *kanshi* (Chinese and Chinese-like poetry).³⁵

The literary component makes *kōdō* special in comparison with all other *dōs*. Following the connection of *kumikōs* with literary models, this pursuit took on an exceptional artistic character. The participants were able to appreciate classical literature at the same time and aesthetically intertwined with the appreciation of the *jinkō* fragrance.

III. Contemporary *kōseki* (*kōseki* [香席] ritualised incense appreciation session)

Nowadays, people also meet with the purpose of appreciating fragrances ceremonially. *Kōseki* is one such kind of such gathering. *Seki* means ‘seat’ or ‘place’, – thus *kōseki* literally denotes the session as such. Two types are popular.

One of them is the *meikōseki* (名香席), session for appreciating famous incense pieces, also called (名香聞) *meikōgiki*. *Meikō* are those exclusive *jinkō* pieces that have been given a name.³⁶ The *meikōseki* is practiced with the purpose of appreciating the fragrance of these exclusive *jinkō* pieces and thereby commemorating their specific history, like their origin and the eponym of their name and the historical personalities who chose the name. While doing so, the participants are able to sense the typical experience of deliberate incense appreciation. They feel emotional healing and the lifting of their spirit.

The other kind of *kōseki* is based on *kumikō* and presents the incense appreciation session that is most often held nowadays. At the so-called *kumikōseki* (組香席) session of playing *kumikō*, the participants try to distinguish the different fragrances of several *jinkō* types. Though the participants somehow compete with each other concerning the recognition of

³³For example, the *kumikōs* “宇治山香 (Ujiyamakō, ‘Kumikō of Mount Uji’), “古今香 (Kokinō, ‘Kumikō of Kokin wakashū’)” and “鳥合香 (Toriawasekō, ‘Kumikō of a Group of Birds’)” <Kōdō Bunka Kenkyū Kai (2012), pp. 226–227, pp. 238–239, pp. 274–276>, refer to poems of the *Kokin wakashū* (古今和歌集), an anthology of *waka* poems from the Heian period <Kojima and Arai (1989), pp. 295, 4, 26, 75, 27>.

The *kumikō* “三夕香 (Sasekikō, ‘Kumikō of Three Evenings’)” finds its literary source in the *Shin kokin wakashū* (新古今和歌集), an addendum of new poems to earlier *waka* collections from 1205 <Tanaka and Akase (1992), p. 117>.

³⁴Two examples are the *kumikōs* “源氏香 (Genjikō, ‘Kumikō of the Genji Monogatari’) and “空蟬香 (Utsusemikō, ‘Kumikō of Utsusemi [a literary character in the Genji monogatari]’)” <Kōdō Bunka Kenkyū Kai (2012), pp. 234–235, pp. 244–246>. Similarly, the *kumikō* “系図香 (Keizukō, ‘Kumikō of a Family Tree’)” refers to the *Tales of Ise* (伊勢物語) *Ise monogatari* <Horiuchi and Akiyama (1997)>.

³⁵For example, the *kumikō* “賈嶋香 (Katōkō, ‘Kumikō of Katō’)” refers to the poem “題李凝幽居 (Japanese 李凝の幽居に題す)” by the Tang poet Jia Dao (賈島), in Japanese known as Katō (賈嶋), 780–843 <Kōdō Bunka Kenkyū Kai (2012), pp. 247–249>.

³⁶In the Shino school of *kōdō*, high quality *jinkō* is divided into two types. Both are called *meikō*. One of them is written (名香), and presents famous pieces whose origin often dates back a few centuries. These pieces were of such high quality wood that they were given names by authorities already at that time, and have been well guarded since then.

The other type is written (銘香). The *sōshōs* (宗匠) *kōdō* master value them because of the high quality of their wood. Thus, these too will be well-cared for and handed over to subsequent generations. In comparison with the first kind of *meikōs* however, these wood pieces need not be as old, but could be discovered by *sōshōs* even nowadays and are consequently associated with these *kōdō* schools.

the scents, the emphasis is on enjoying harmony with all *kōseki* fellows while appreciating the fragrance. The challenge of whether or not one is able to determine the different scents makes the sensory appreciation somewhat more interesting.

It is worth noting that the sensory task is not that easy. The fragrance of *jinkō*, which presents the incense that is mainly used in the various *kō* ceremonies of today, varies considerably. The botanical origin influences its olfactory character among other natural factors. Also the condition of one's nose as well as the combination of fragrances can affect whether or not one can distinguish the fragrances.³⁷

IV. Komadomekō (駒止香) ‘Kō of Stopping the Horse’ – an exemplary *kumikō*

There are more than two hundred types of *kumikō* games that have been handed down from past generations.³⁸ One among them is called “駒止香 (Komadomekō, ‘Kō of Stopping the Horse’), which will be exemplarily explained in further detail.³⁹

Three kinds of *jinkō* are used for playing this game, which are named “Ide no Tamagawa”, “Sano no watari”, and “Uji yori wataru”, in reference to the so-titled Japanese poems cited in the following. These poems stem from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and were composed by three generations of poets – Fujiwara no Shunzei, his eldest son Fujiwara no Teika, and his eldest grandson Fujiwara no Tameie. While each of the poems is distinguished by its unique character, the structure and topics of each nonetheless relate to each other. All three *wakas* poetise on the identical expression “駒とめて (*koma tomete*, stopping my horse)”. In the same manner, the fragrances of the chosen three *jinkō* pieces offer similar notes, yet they are unique, so that they contribute to the poem on one topic – the “Stopping of the Horse”. The olfactory nuances are intended to echo the nuances of the poems.

井出の玉川 – *Ide no tamagawa* (“The Tama River at Ide”)

駒とめてな お水かはむ山吹の花の露そふ井手の玉川

koma tomete / nao mizu kahan / yamabuki no / hana no tsuyu sou / Ide no Tamagawa

I stop my horse and give it water, admiring the dewdrops on the Yamabuki rose petals at Ide's Tama River.⁴⁰

by Fujiwara no Shunzei (藤原俊成) (1114–1204)⁴¹

佐野の渡 – *Sano no watari* (“The Sano Ferry Crossing”)

駒とめて袖うちはらふかげもなし佐野のわたりの雪の夕暮れ

koma tomete / sode uchiharau / kagemo nashi / Sano no watari no / yuki no yūgure

³⁷ *Kōdō* knows more methods of ritually appreciating fragrances than *kumikō* and *meikōseki*. They are omitted in this article.

³⁸ There are no sources with information about why and by whom *kumikō*s were created. Thus, the author(s) of the *kumikō* Komadomekō is/ are unknown.

³⁹ Other examples of *kumikō*s can be found in: <Morita (1992), pp. 81–95>.

⁴⁰ Explanation: It is late spring in Ide. When the narrator arrives at the Tama river, he is overwhelmed by the beauty of the yellow Japanese roses in full bloom. The location of Ide no Tamagawa has been renowned as a viewpoint for enjoying the bloom of these flowers.

⁴¹ <Tanaka and Akase (1992), p. 62>.

There is no shelter to give my horse a rest, and to brush off the snow from my sleeves, aside the Sano crossing, in this snowy evening.⁴²

Fujiwara no Teika (藤原定家) (1162–1241)⁴³

宇治より渡る – *Uji yori wataru* (“Crossing the River at Uji”)

駒とめて宇治より渡る木幡川思いならずと浮名ながすな

*koma tomete / Uji yori wataru / kohatagawa / omoi narazuto / ukina nagasuna*⁴⁴

I stop my horse at Uji to cross the Kohata river on foot, as possibly she will not return my feelings, and my pursuit should not get around.⁴⁵

Fujiwara no Tameie (藤原為家) (1198–1275)⁴⁶

The exercise for all participants of the *kumikō* is to identify the fine differences and affinities between the fragrances in relation with the poetic references. In order to initiate the play, two pieces of each of the three types of *jinkō* are necessary. The first piece is generally called *shikō* (試香) the piece that is used to introduce the olfactory quality of this type of *jinkō* before the judging starts; also called *kokoromikō* and *tameshikō*, while the other one is known as *honkō* (本香) the piece used in the conundrum part of the game; it is taken from the same wood as the *shikō*, so that their fragrance is identical).

First, the *kōmoto* (香元) the person who prepares and serves the *kōros* prepares three *kōros* for the incensation of the three *shikō* pieces, and tenders them to the Komadomekō participants in a decided order, while reciting the three poems. The poetic association serves to distinguish the character and memorise the different fragrances.

Having introduced the three kinds of *jinkō* to the participants, the three *honkō* pieces are then placed by the *kōmoto* over the glow in another three *kōros*, and tendered in random order, with the aim of starting with the conundrum part of the *kumikō*. The participants attempt to recognise the three different fragrances, by assigning them to the *shikō* samples that were passed around before. They then write the name of the poem for each *jinkō* sample – “*Ide no tamagawa*”, “*Sano no watari*, or “*Uji yori wataru*” – on the *kigami* (記紙) answer sheet, also known as *nanorigami* (名乗り紙). The *shippitsu* (執筆) record keeper, also *hissha* (筆者) notes down all answers of each participant, and will finally announce the correct answer to the conundrum and report on which of the participants could recognise the fragrances.

⁴²Explanation: It is winter. A man is riding in the snow when he reaches the Sano ferry crossing and thinks about taking a rest. However, there is no house, nor tree to see, to provide shelter. The landscape that the river flows through shines in bright white instead, being completely covered by snow.

⁴³<Tanaka and Akase (1992), p. 199>.

⁴⁴There is an alternative version, included in the *Hōji hyakushu waka* (宝治百首和歌) a collection of one hundred *wakas* composed in the Hōji era, created as such in 1247) and in the *Jū ni yoseru koi* (寄獣恋) love poems on the basis of metaphoric descriptions of animals), “駒とめてかちより渡る木幡川思いあまると浮名ながすな *koma tomete / kachi yori wataru / kohatagawa / omoi amaruto / ukina nagasuna*” <Satō (2002), pp. 329–330>. This version uses the word “かち (*kachi*, on foot)” instead of “うち (Uji, i.e. the location of Uji)”. In the cursive style of Japanese writing before modern ages, the character for “u” (nowadays [う]) might have been similar to the character for “ka” (nowadays [か]). Further examination is required to determine which text is correct.

⁴⁵Explanation: A man comes to Uji to visit the house of his intended bride. He gets off his horse and takes a ship over the Kohatariver, while his horse rests to avoid drawing public attention. Uji is a neighbourhood of stately mansions along the riverside on the outskirts of Kyoto. <Kōdō Bunka Kenkyū Kai (2012), pp. 256–257>.

⁴⁶<Kōdō Bunka Kenkyū Kai (2012), pp. 256–257>.

In any case, the scoring is of minor significance. Instead, the intertwined experience and appreciation of the scents and the poems is of primary importance. Matching the poetic subtleties given in each poem's individual composition and each *jinkō*'s individual fragrance make up the exercise and the aesthetic delicacy of the *kumikō*. Playing *kumikō*s thus provides a possibility to express and experience the multifaceted characters and atmospheres of fragrances and poetry.

V. Conclusion

The culture of appreciating fragrances has a long history in Japan. It is characterised by an aesthetic development, not only in regard to the types of aromatic materials used, but also in regard to how the fragrances were appreciated. This paper placed a special focus on the unique relationship between sensory experience and the enjoyment of literary arts, which developed in Japan some time after the material incense had been introduced.

It is not unusual for fragrances to be mentioned in written work in various literary cultures. In Japanese culture, fragrances frequently appear in poetry or prose, as well; meaning is thus attributed to the poem or the story. However, the relationship between the literary and the perfumery arts that is typical of *kōdō*, which is discussed here, is of another kind. The participant of a *kō* ceremony simultaneously appreciates the literary poesy and the poesy of the scents. In other words, the olfactory experience is not only imagined, but paves the way towards the literary experience. Through the poetic names of perfumes and the allusion to poetic works as in the cases of *meikōiki*, *takigumikō* and *kōawase*, or via the recitation of poems in a large number of *kumikō*s, the association with these literary expressions strengthens the various associations of fragrances with sceneries and seasons and with the emotions of their authors. Thus, in practicing *kōdō*, the literary and the olfactory experiences complement each other and merge in harmony.

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