



Lesson Plan: Understanding Tea Objects Through Sixteenth-Century Practitioner Diaries

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Handout 2

Object Handling Etiquette

When examining a tea utensil, whether it be made of ceramic, metal, wood, lacquer, silk, cotton, or paper, there are basic rules of etiquette that are essential to a safe handling session. These guidelines will ensure the proper care and preservation of the object that demonstrate respect and adhere to museum standards for object handling. Within the context of a tea gathering, all tea utensils are handled without the use of gloves. However, within a museum setting, each institution will have their own set of guidelines on what kinds of gloves to wear when handling specific objects. Please note that there may be other precautions and etiquette for different collections, archives, collectors, etc. When in doubt, it is always best to ask the collection manager/conservator/curator/collector/host about how to best handle an object.

1. Remove any rings and bracelets, as well as any necklaces, dangly earrings or scarves that may fall on or come into contact with the tea utensil when you handle it.
2. Pull any long hair away from your face and tie it back securely.
3. When possible, avoid long flowy sleeves that may come into contact with the tea utensil when you handle it.
4. Wash your hands with soap and dry them thoroughly.
5. Wear the appropriate/recommended glove when necessary before touching anything.
6. When picking up or holding an object, always use both hands, with your

palms acting as support for the base of the object.

7. For any vessels like a tea bowl, jar, or other container, never pick up or hold an object by its rim: this move can potentially damage or break the object. Gently feeling the thickness of the rim with your thumb and index finger while supporting the vessel with your other hand is acceptable.
8. Both of your elbows should always be in contact with the table surface. In the case of viewing an object in a room with tatami-mat flooring, your elbows should rest on your thighs.
9. When rotating an object to see the sides or the base, always use both hands to gently turn the object.
10. When you are done examining the object, gently place it on the table or tatami mat surface with both hands, making sure that your hand touches the surface first to act as a buffer, and ensure the stable placement of the object.