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Kyoto Blog: 87 Days in Kyoto

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Turtle's Pace **Sunday, March 29, 2009**

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http://www.oriellis.com/loriellis.com/Kyoto_blog/Kyoto_blog.html

I've been giving a bit of thought to how and how fast people move through the city. Native Kyotoites have a relatively relaxed gait that takes them through daily travels whether walking downtown, in neighborhood streets, in the grocery store or to the bus stop. The pace picks up a bit in the subway at rush hour, but much less so than in New York. Contrary to that, it seems to be standard to walk/jog from place to place while involved in certain work activities.

An entirely different pace is practiced in restaurant service where movement is extraordinarily graceful and harmonious. During a tea ceremony or in a traditional restaurant there is yet another pace; tiny graceful steps, kneel on the tatami, put down items, slide open the shoji door, enter with tiny steps, kneel again, take items from outside to inside, close shoji, pick up items, walk with tiny steps, kneel on tatami, deliver items, etc.

Both national and international tourists seem to move according to their camera's pace. Walk quick, stop, photo; walk quick, stop, photo; walk quick, wait for someone else to finish photo; walk quick to next photo. It would be interesting to make a

map of a place based on where tourists stop for photos. Or to see if you could change established pathways by creating a photo-op. (I'm sure tourist boards all over the world are ahead of me on this one).

Historically, Kyoto's garden designers have used a number of strategies to control the movements of their viewers. Like the dry landscape gardens, there are living gardens that are meant to be seen from a single seated position. The elements in these gardens are revealed by time. Like in two-dimensional art, the most contrasting elements are the first to be seen; the more subtle elements reward a patient observer. There are also layers of meaning for the well-educated viewer such as literary or spiritual references (I'm still trying to unravel these). There are also many types of stroll gardens where the viewer's attention is directed so that through time and movement, elements of the garden are hidden and then revealed. The walking pace is controlled by direction, pathway materials, and intentional pathway obstructions.