‘Domesticity, status and ritual: the role of tea’

‘Ritual’
Tea: A Chinese plant, of which the infusion has lately been much drunk in Europe.
- Johnson’s Dictionary (1755)

‘Evolving notion of ‘politeness’”
How pleasant a sight is it to behold parents and their children, brothers and sisters, friends, relations and strangers, mix round the Tea-Table; and, whenever they err against the rules of decency, blush as soon as they are put in mind of it.
- Preface to A New Tea-Table Miscellany (1750)

‘When you first enter the room with the tea, cast your eyes around the company to observe where the most elderly lady is seated, then proceed forward and help her first...When the ladies are all served, then proceed to help the gentlemen, beginning as with the ladies...When you have received all your empty cups, rinse them out, and proceed to serve round another course, as before, beginning at the same lady, and going all around, leaving the lady of the family to be the last lady that is served, as the strangers must always be served first.’
- Robert Roberts, The House Servant’s Directory (1809)

Questions:
1. Do these concepts differ within the space of the public coffee-house as opposed to the space of the smaller drawing room or parlour?
2. The study of Japanese ‘chado’ rituals began exclusively for men, and only opened up to women centuries later. When considering the Anglicised tea ritual’s foregrounding of the female as central to the tea-making process, can we make any comparative comments?
3. What does everyone think of the riddle? Are there any surprising phrases?

Riddle 103, The Muse in Masquerade: or, A Collection of Riddles, Serious and Comic (1745)