



Global Tea Hut

NEWSLETTER #21
OCTOBER 2013



WHO WE ARE

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, cultivating and expressing an awakening of harmony through tea. We believe that tea wisdom which has no connection to any financial motivation, good or bad, is very necessary in this modern world and therefore strive to build schools, centers and other tea spaces in the true, ancient spirit of tea—leaves, water and wisdom shared without any personal profit. There are several facets of what we do. Below are our main and current projects, branching from our roots outward:

Global Tea Hut

Global Tea Hut is one of our main sources of income, helping to support all of our projects. Members around the world donate money and then tea farmers, merchants or tea lovers donate tea. We connect the two gift-givers. For a minimum donation of twenty dollars a month, members receive a special tea, a newsletter and a gift. All the work involved is voluntary and the tea is donated, keeping expenses to a minimum. We have found that this Global Tea Hut connects tea lovers around the world, and that if you share in the tea with a desire to connect, you will clearly feel the community in the bowl. In joining Global Tea Hut, you can help support all our projects, drink a unique living tea each month, be a part of this community, read about the teas, this tradition and a life of tea and stay connected to our energy and activities here and abroad. For more information visit: www.globalteahut.org

The Leaf

Our free, online magazine about tea hasn't had a new issue in over a year, but it will be restarted very soon with an all-new ninth issue. The Leaf focuses more on tea information, differentiating it from these more casual/personal GTH newsletters. It is currently electronic only, though we offer free hard copies to the visually impaired. For more information visit: www.the-leaf.org

Tea Sage Hut

This is our current center, located in Miao Li, Taiwan. Each year, we host over one hundred visitors from all around the world. At the Tea Sage Hut, guests come and drink tea, eat vegetarian food and have a bed should they need it. We have weekly tea classes and daily meditation sessions each morning and evening. We also help coordinate travel around Taiwan and put guests in touch with tea farmers, tea and teaware shops and events. All instruction, room and board, and hugs are free. We operate on a donation basis, and guests are free to leave as much or as little as they like for future guests, knowing that their visit was supported by past guests and hoping to pay the experience forward. For more information visit: www.teasagehut.org

Light Meets Life

In December, we were donated three acres of gorgeous land in the mountains of Da Hu, Taiwan. The land has a waterfall, sakura trees, cliffs, views and abundant verdure. Light Meets Life will be the name of our future, expanded center. It will be a great place to learn about and drink tea as well as to meditate. We plan to have an ecological, organic tea garden for educational purposes and a communal farm to grow our own food. Our new center will be run on similar principals to that of the Tea Sage Hut, only on a larger scale.



October 2013

In October, the Korean monk clacked the bamboo three times, signifying the beginning of the tea session. He carefully poured us some Red Tea he had made by hand, using a rustic pot and five little cups. The awe-inspiring pot had an actual tree attached to the button on the lid, suggesting a bonsai bereft of its leaves, seeking winter's embrace. Each of us took a cup from the basket he handed around. When we all held our cup, he looked at us with a warm smile and with the utmost sincerity exclaimed, "Autumn has now arrived!"

That was at a tea gathering in Tainan this month, where tea lovers from all over Asia meet every year to discuss Oolong tea. It is a good chance to see good friends from afar, like the Korean master who served us tea this year. Since many of the topics at the forums and seminars are also about tea history, folklore, processing and appreciation, we also feel responsible to show up and speak for Tea herself, and for Mother Earth: reminding everyone that without any Tea there is no tea culture to speak of. Tainan is much hotter than Miao Li. The southern part of the island is in the tropics, and is also much flatter. Upon returning home, an autumn chill had set in and the breeze reminded us of what the Korean master had said.

Tea really does mark the seasons, especially for a tea lover. Spring officially began in ancient China when the emperor sipped the first cup of the first flush of that year's Green Tea. And even today, tea lovers shift their tea drinking to suit the seasons. We find ourselves inviting our adolescent Puerh, and more and more turning to gongfu tea in the autumn—perhaps our bodies yearn for smaller, more refined amounts of tea. As a result, we also tend to brew more Oolongs at this time of year, especially Wuyi Yancha and Phoenix Mt. Dancong teas. Despite the trend, there are still a few young Puerh teas that we brew nowadays, as you will see when you open this month's tea, but they grow fewer and farther between.

In October, we enter the ninth Chrysanthemum Moon. The ninth day of the ninth moon is an important day to pay respects to our elders. Nine is an important number in the I Ching, and in Chinese it is also a homophone for the word "forever"—so doubling the nine is like doubling forever. This day signifies longevity,

and a festival on this day dates back to the third century BCE. Traditionally, people drink Chrysanthemum wine or tea and pay respect to their oldest living relative. They also wear dogwood leaves to dispel misfortune. This day might also include a trip to the temple to pray for longevity themselves. Many Chinese people go hiking on this day, appreciate the chrysanthemums and eat rice cakes, often reciting poetry that was written for the holiday.

One story of this holiday's origin is about a legendary figure named Huan Jing. His parents died of the plague, so he traveled to Zhong Nan Shan to learn medicine and save others. While there, a Daoist immortal took pity on him and gave him a blue dragon sword that could dispel demons. The immortal said another plague demon would arrive on the ninth day of the ninth moon and urged him to gather the people of his village on a hill outside town, luring them with the promise of chrysanthemum wine. Huan Jing took the villagers outside town and gave them dogwood to protect them, though he himself stayed behind to combat the demon. He slayed the demon with his magic sword and was immediately a hero worth celebrating, then to now...

*Light mists; thick clouds
melancholy all day.
The burning incense
dissolves in the gold censer.
It's the good time of double yang.
Jade pillow, silk curtains, the furniture—
all are pierced by the midnight cold.
After drinking [tea] at the eastern hedge
during the yellow dusk,
some hidden fragrance overflows my sleeves.
There is no way that does not dissolve the soul.
The curtain swirls in the west wind:
I'm wasting like the yellow flowers.*

—Li Qingzhao



YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, OCTOBER 2013

Spring 2013, Purple-bud Sheng Puerh, De Hong, Yunnan, China

As we walk the trail, rounding corners and crossing streams, the quiet of the jungle slowly rises past the sounds of the birds and wind, past the distant monkeys to slowly steep your heart in its calm. The stillness envelops all the natural sounds, deepening rather than interrupting the quiet. A few hours further on and you begin to feel as if you're as much a part of it all as the insects, as the stillness. I point out a tea garden to you, but you can't help exclaiming, "Where?" We walk off the path and into the trees, surrounded by underbrush, leaves, loam and flowers. For the first time you realize that Living Tea *is* the forest, rather than just growing *in* it. You can't even see where the tea garden begins and the jungle ends; it looks like all the other views we've seen on our hike here—stream and hill, tree and flower. You understand more about the medicine of Tea, connecting the human to Tea, and through it to the whole forest it is not just a part of, but an embodiment of. The small plants' energy is eaten by bugs, which are taken by snakes and then excreted. Meters deep, the soil is digesting and churning minerals and fungi. Microbes cover the tea trees and moss grows on the trunks. The sun and moon, water and minerals are all living so vibrantly here. And everything thrums with the life of it all. "Tea is our contact point to communicate with this," you say scooping up a handful of loamy soil and smiling at me. I agree, we are as much the Earth as that...

In past issues, we have discussed what Living Tea is and why it has such healing potential. We talked about the four characteristics of Living Tea: Seed-propagated, room to grow, biodiversity and a healthy relationship to the humans who tend it. This month's tea is definitely a Living Tea, and through it we can discuss some of these issues more deeply.

Tea is a sexual plant, which means that it is cross-pollinated. A tremendous amount of natural energy goes into the creation of a Tea seed, including bugs and forest, sun and sky. Each one carries great energy within it. And no two Tea seeds are alike. They will each produce a completely unique Tea tree, which is why Tea has done so well traveling to different climates. If you plant a thousand seeds, the chances that one of them will survive are high. Unfortunately, very little Tea in the world is seed-propagated. The reason, of course, is industry and the commoditization of Tea. Sadly, Tea faces many of the problems that all agricultural products are haunted by. Most Tea plantations use cuttings from a tree, planted to produce another. They are in essence clones. They do this to achieve a uniformity of flavor. Also, with a few

hundred, or even thousands of different trees, all with different needs, the farmer would potentially have a lot more work to do.

It took millennia for trees like Tea to develop sexual cross-fertilization. It is also tremendously difficult for such trees to fertilize one another, since the mates cannot move towards embrace the way that animals and people can. As a result, plants have developed magnificent ways of fertilizing each other, enticing insects to pollinate them, using the wind, etc. There is a reason for all this. Carl Sagan said that the evolution from asexual to sexual reproduction on this planet was as significant as the beginning of life itself, as it allows for all the creative power in Nature to assert itself in such myriad forms. There is something deep and powerful missing when a plant is not allowed to cross-fertilize. The variety in Nature is magic, just as in humans. Every tree is then different. Sure, they share some similarities due to common genetic heritage and similar *terroir* (climate, soil, etc.), but like people they each have their own medicine, their own perspective, experience and wisdom.

The difference in power and healing between seed-propagated and cloned Tea is obvious. There are essentially two main varieties of Tea trees: what are called "Big Leaf Trees", which are the original, oldest Tea trees (which we're drinking this month). They have a single trunk, grow very tall and have roots that go straight down. As Tea moved north it evolved into "Small Leaf Trees", which are more bush-like. They have many trunks and roots that grow outwards. In fact, the leaves got smaller and smaller as Tea moved north, whether naturally or carried by man, until you get to Japan where the leaves are so small they look like needles after they're rolled. Big Leaf Tea trees can live thousands of years. The oldest one we've dated is 3,500 years old! It is about seven people around (I kissed it, and once for you). There are probably older ones out there, or at least were in the past. Small Leaf Tea Trees can live hundreds of years, and some are many centuries old. Here's the punch line: The clones on plantations typically live thirty to fifty years only. And more than a few farmers have told me that they aren't living as long anymore, sometimes as few as fifteen to twenty years.

There are several species of birds that love to eat Tea seeds. They are rich and oily and full of nutrients. Farmers make cooking oil out of them. It's delicious. Anyway, more than one farmer has told me that after the second generation of cloning, the birds will no longer eat the Tea seeds anymore.



Nature has been creating life for millennia, so it is very unhealthy for us to assume that we can improve or alter her designs. Our attempts to interfere with Nature rarely take into account all the biodiversity and infinite, immeasurable connections there are between species. We take control of an environment and monocrop it, controlling a few factors in a huge web of symmetry. As we've done this to larger and more diverse areas, our meddling has begun to have a global impact, changing the Environment (capital 'E') rather than just the places where we farm.

Actually, none of our creations ever come close to the power or beauty of Nature, especially since we too are one of her greater masterpieces—so all that we create also owes homage to Mother Earth, ultimately. Allowing her creative license is an important aspect of the diversity of life that sustains this planet, and any given environment. When tea is natural, and seed-propagated, every single tree is unique. Mutations arise. They each have a place and a hue, and in that way she can create more and varied medicine for us. It is presumptuous to assume that all the variety in tea is man made, and has to do exclu-

sively with processing, as some authors would suggest. A tremendous amount of variety is natural-born, and defies our limited categories.

This month's tea is one such tea. It is an incredibly fantastic raw Puerh made from wild tree leaves that have a dark purple color. This varietal is called "*Camellia sinensis* (L.) Kuntze var. *Assamica Kitam*". It is primeval and actually pre-dates *Camellia Sinensis* var. *Assamica*. It is a naturally occurring non-hybridized varietal. Its potency in *Cha Qi* arises from its unadulterated Nature. It is naturally bug repellent, and grows wild in the forests of Yunnan at an altitude of 1600-2200 meters.

That it predates the varietal of *Camellia* that we normally assume to be "Tea" raises interesting questions about what it even means to say that something is tea. The categories we use to separate these varietals are, of course, arbitrary. Still, this lineage of trees is unique enough that it is considered by biologists to be a separate varietal altogether. Curiously, it is an older cousin of the modern tea tree, but with all the force and power we love. This suggests that the lines between what this medicinal herb actually is and when it began aren't as clear

Tea of the Month

as we've thought. Recently, several new varieties have been discovered and named, some of which are—like this month's tea—a rediscovery of something older than our modern tea trees.

This confuses things a bit, as perhaps they should be. On the external level, I wouldn't say that any herb infused in water is "Tea", but on a deeper level, the fact that many of the varieties of *Camellia sinensis* are medicinal, and barely distinguishable reminds us that the forest is Tea and Tea is the forest. The boundaries we draw are merely semantic, used to communicate categories and concepts, and have no place in the real world—where life and energy moves throughout all species, and from the so-called "inorganic" to the "organic". The sun and moon, rocks and waters flow powerfully through these tea leaves.

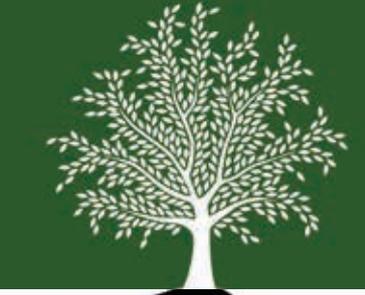
The infused liquor is bright and is almost completely without bitterness. There is a strong full taste and a warm stimulating feel in the mouth and body after drinking this tea. It is composed of spring 2013 raw material from the north-western area of Dehong County, Yunnan. This is the forest where the Purple-bud Red Tea we sent earlier this year also came from. This older cousin is wilder, stronger and more vibrant.

Try drinking this tea in the afternoon or early morning. Let it infuse you with the depth and power of a hike through the jungle from whence it came. It will open your day to new possibilities, and allow you to appreciate more of the amazing connections you already have with the Sky and Earth, as well as the people around you. We find this tea to be very healing, attuning us spiritually to the natural rhythms, which start to make sense after a few bowls of this delicious tea—the last of the Sheng Puerhs we will drink together this year...

As we mentioned in previous months, we recommend letting the tea get over its jet lag. Let it sit a week or two and become acclimatized.







TWO HANDS AND TEA

Article by Shane Marrs

How do you embrace a loved one? How do you hold a baby? How do you pick up an antique or reach for the sky? And how do you as a *Chajin* (tea person) hold your tea bowl?

We hug and embrace with two arms and hands. We cradle a child with two gentle and caring hands. We cautiously handle the antique, reach toward the blue beyond, and hold our tea bowl—all with two hands.

During one of our talks at the tea table in our main tea hall, I was reminded of the Five General Brewing Principles. Without going into any detail, they are; first, divide the table in half, the right hand manages the right side of the table and the left hand, the left side; second, hand motions in preparing and serving tea should be towards your center, that is, when possible the right hand moves counterclockwise while the left hand moves in a clockwise direction; third, the off hand holds the kettle and the dominant hand holds the tea pot; fourth, *never, ever* lift the kettle until your heart is still; and fifth, stay with your tea *completely*, from the time you lift the kettle to the time you serve your guest.

To better understand these principles, among other aspects of a life of tea, I was given some homework: *my master asked that I use two hands wherever possible for one full day*. Using my hands in unison to perform multiple tasks was still considered using both hands. And for all practical purposes, tasks like brushing my teeth didn't require two hands physically on the toothbrush itself, but at least the off-hand could in some way be in contact with the motions of the brushing hand. Holding my wrist, for example. It wasn't meant to be a burdensome task, but a simple, practical experiment. While the results of my homework were insightful for life at large, I'll keep things tea-related because, ultimately, I was asking myself how this applies to the above-mentioned principles. How will this bring me closer to Tea? And how will this experiment deepen my connection with the Leaf?

I was surprised right from the beginning. Simply put, I had to invoke more awareness in almost everything I did. Full stop. That immediately lent itself to greater respect; and so the teachings of this homework conveniently started with one of the four virtues of Tea: Reverence. As a result of using two hands, there was automatically an increased degree of respect in my life. Even if I wasn't using two hands, I had to keep it in mind that soon I would be doing something where normally one hand would be enough, as it were, but where two hands could be engaged. Opening a door, brushing my teeth, picking something up or putting something

down, reaching for the kettle, pouring tea, etc. That alone raised my state of consciousness and set the bar for my entire day. Unexpectedly, I became much more inwardly focused.

When you have to go out of your way to engage two hands in an activity, necessary or not, I realized there was a shift in consciousness towards greater awareness, focus, attention, and respect. I also found that most activities required slightly more time, which added up over the course of the day. When I spent more time doing things, I didn't lose my patience though, because the increased level of respect and awareness far outweighed that mundane habit. Things actually became more enjoyable. I became slower and calmer. The essence of tea and meditation can both be described as calm and aware. I was seeing for myself the essence of tea and respect as a virtue of tea in virtually all things I did. Calm, aware, reverential...

I'd ask that you watch our video on Youtube: Side-handle Pot Tea Brewing. You may have already done so, but watch again and pay particular attention to how Wu De rests the teapot, the tea bowls, and the water basin on the table. When he's not physically using two hands on the teaware itself, his off-hand gestures speak volumes. It reveals a love and respect for what is being done. It brings more meaning to the interaction between host and guest, leaf and human.

The interesting thing I found while brewing tea on this day was that there wasn't so much of a difference in the actual preparation and serving of tea as where I focused my attention. Very often I am already using two hands to prepare and serve tea; ladling water into the kettle, cleaning and warming the bowls, guiding tea leaves into the pot, gesturing with open hands for everyone to drink, etc. But now there was an increased awareness in these actions. And where there was once only mechanical flow between two hands in unison there was now awareness of it. Why is this important? Consider that before humans, flowers were still and beautiful, but our awareness allows beauty to know it's beautiful—flowers know they are beautiful—and beauty that knows it's beautiful is more powerful than beauty alone. Two hands that know they are graceful at the tea table are more powerful than graceful hands alone.

I was reminded of a guest who inquired about using two hands to hold their tea bowl. In fact, our guest went on to suggest that the same mind-set could be achieved while only using one hand to hold the bowl. Beyond the experience of my homework, I can only ponder the truth in what was said that day. After all, in one very blunt sense, who is to say an individual with only one arm couldn't invoke just as much calm, respect, and awareness in any



activity of their life, let alone drinking tea? What the guest said was actually very deep. It suggested that my homework is at least twofold because the homework itself was simply a pointer towards the act of using two hands, and the act of using two hands is also a pointer, a signpost if you will, pointing towards the shift in consciousness that is always readily available to us. Of course, in that sense, two hands are not necessary to hold your tea bowl with reverence. The action is not so important as the intention behind the action itself. It really is a state of mind, and the act of using two hands is simply a tool, revealing to us a path to get there, which is really right where you are. But, in the meantime, until I have mastered the ability to shift my consciousness in this way at a moment's notice, the tool serves an important role and should not be overlooked because one intellectually understands the essence of it. As I mentioned in last month's article, you are already enlightened, but that doesn't mean you don't need to meditate. In another example, when you start to understand the rules, does that mean you know

when not to follow them? So long as you have to ask yourself, do I need to meditate? Should I break the rules? Keep meditating, keep following the rules, and keep using two hands as a tool to bring about more reverence, awareness, and meaning to your life of tea. When you've really reached the point at which you no longer need to use two hands when holding a tea bowl, you'll not have to ask whether to do it or not because you'll already be in that state of mind. When you're in the "right" state of mind there is no need to ask if what you are doing is right. That would be like consciously asking yourself, "Am I conscious?" You'll already be there and you'll no longer need the service the tool once provided.

You can see for yourself; it's a simple enough experiment: compare holding the bowl with two hands versus one hand. If there's any sense of what I've described in this article or if any question arises as to why there is a difference, continue using two hands! The tool is serving a purpose. If you're honest with yourself and you notice no

Two Hands and Tea

difference at all, this could mean one of two things: you've got it (and all the more power to you! I celebrate that in you); or you could possibly cultivate an increased level of sensitivity.

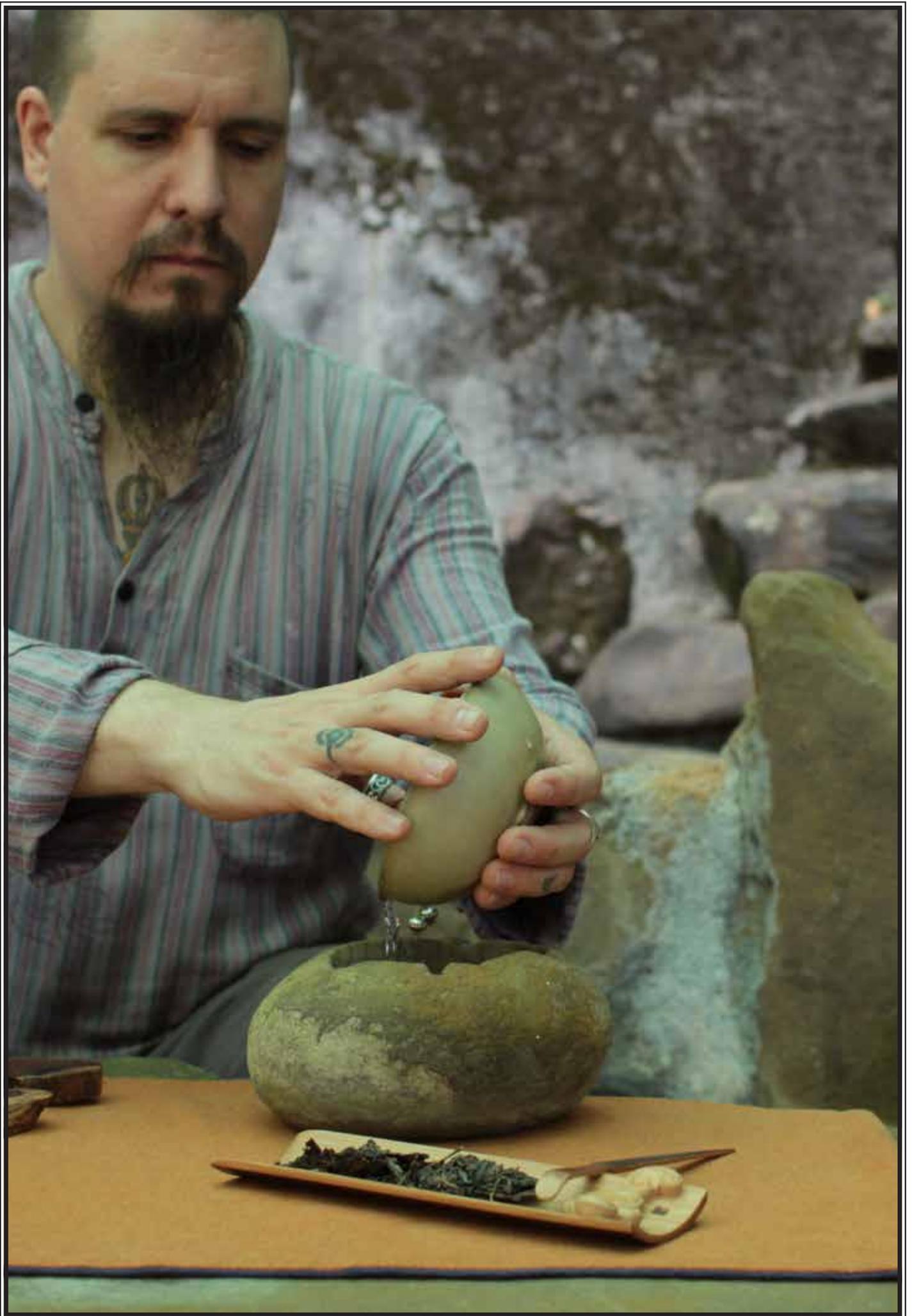
As a former tree planter in British Columbia, I fully appreciate balance! For anyone who hasn't tree planted before, the dominant hand usually holds the spade and the off hand, the treelet. Tens of thousands of planted trees later, imbalance manifests in myriad ways. Tendonitis in the wrist, damaged planting fingers, back cramps, etc. Most disturbing is the 'claw,' a clenching of the hands as a result of holding the shovel too much and too taught. Switching hands and 'planting amby' as they say, though slow and clumsy in the beginning, evenly distributes wear and tear over the course of a season. This style of planting brings about mechanical balance, relieving and even preventing much of the physical stress associated with tree planting, and ultimately leads to more graceful movements, improving your economy of motion.

Everything in life is about balance. We inevitably sway this way and that along the tightrope of life, only to achieve a moment's balance in which we can take the next step forward and the process continues. Of course, tea is also about balance, both inner and outer. That's what so much of the five brewing principles are about. They remind us that the body, heart, and mind should all be balanced, centered, focused and poised at the tea table. If we mainly use our dominant hand at the neglect of our off hand, we lose the fluidity, grace, and skill achieved when both hands work in

unison. Since external actions are a reflection of one's inner state of being, she who brews tea with great skill has also cultivated herself with great skill. A balanced brew reflects a balanced heart. This is one reason tea is such a powerful medium for transmitting wisdom between guest and host, student and teacher. Whatever expression of balance or imbalance, of the body or the mind, will come through in the tea.

One more experiment that I'll suggest to further articulate the simple joy of using two hands and the benefits it has to offer is that of shaking hands in introduction. The next time you encounter someone for the first time, which just so happens to be every time at the tea table, use both hands to introduce yourself. Notice how much more connected you feel; how much quicker the onset of brotherhood or sisterhood courses over you. And in respect, I'll take this opportunity, as you read this article which has been passed on from my hands to yours, to bring my hands together once again and bid farewell in a deep, reverential bowl...





GONGFU TEA TIPS

October 2013



Over the last twenty-one issues, we've covered a lot of gongfu experiments, from water to heat to teapots. Learning to prepare better and more refined tea is a lifetime of joy, with endless subtleties to master. And which you choose to focus on and develop is also up to you. Some degree of mastery will heighten your sensitivity and deepen your relationship to Tea, as well as making you a better servant of Tea. A lot of people are introduced to tea by the magic of its preparation, and the amazing tastes and aromas it provides us. From there, we learn to drink tea with the whole body, rather than just the mouth and nose.

This month, we would like to remind you about the importance of these experiments as part of a tea practice. It is essential to understand why we include this section in each month's newsletter, as it will motivate you to actually try the experiments.

Tea is inside of us. It isn't something we can learn from a classroom, a teacher or a newsletter. Your skills must be within you, and not as a list of information in your mind, but actually in your hands, your breath and your life. You must live tea. The best tea isn't brewed by formula. There isn't any pattern. Every single tea session is unique, and so all the ways of brewing are only foundations to build upon and adapt from each and every time you sit down to prepare tea. A master isn't thinking when she makes tea. Her tea flows naturally, and the brewing method is within her, like any good art. A famous ballet dancer once said that when she dances there is no music and no her, only dance. Similarly, great athletes don't have time to think about what they are doing as they do it. In sports, things are often happening way too quickly to think about, and they would, therefore, miss their chance if they had to stop to think. Their bodies must be in complete unison with what they are doing, and respond automatically. When an athlete has something on his mind, he performs poorly. His skills are in his make-up—honed to the point that they can respond spontaneously. Mastery of tea brewing is like that as well, and that's why it's called "gongfu tea", which means "tea with mastery".

In order for your brewing skills to be inherent in such a way, you will have to cultivate an experiential relationship to your tea brewing. It is not enough to brew tea in a certain way because that is the traditional method. You must understand *why* the teachers before you chose that method. If it was just personal preference, then why not *your* preference as well? Most always, there is an outer, practical reason

why things are done and an inner, spiritual reason as well. And you'll need to experience these differences in order to fully embody the teachings.

The Buddha taught three kinds of wisdom: the wisdom of learning, the wisdom of rationality and the wisdom of experience. We can learn from others' experience by attending workshops, lectures or by reading books. Then, we must use our minds to think about our understanding—rewording our lessons in our own articulation, which deepens our insights and enhances our relationship to the teaching. Finally, however, we must experience the difference in order for it to become a part of our lives, effecting change in who we are.

Doing these experiments will enhance your relationship to tea by opening up your sensitivity. We try, as much as possible, to hold back on presenting you with conclusions, so that the experiment stands on its own and you can approach it on your terms. It helps to do some of these experiments in groups, sharing your experience and confirming the conclusions with others. As you do this, you will begin to define what actually makes better tea and why. You will also begin to experience the factors that go into a more fragrant, delicious cup of tea, as well as what is needed to enhance the experience of sharing tea in general.

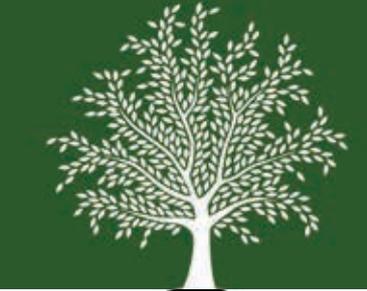
Have fun doing these experiments and sharing the results with each other. In the least, they are a wonderful excuse to get together and share some tea, discussing the differences brewing methods have on this tea liquor...

*If and until you have tried a fine cup of tea,
it is too hard to tell.*

—Master Lin Ping Xiang







INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE ERAS OF PUERH TEA

Article by Wu De

It should be noted that most all the terms used to identify the families and eras of Puerh tea began for the most part with the scholarship of the 1990's. During their own times, these teas were everyday commodities—names and trends always changed with the times. Also, one should remember that the lines between these eras, while based on reason, are ultimately arbitrary. Though most scholars agree in general, certain vintages right near the boundaries might slip into either age depending on what one reads.

The Antique Age

This era of tea includes all the tea that was produced prior to the formation of Communist China in 1949. All of the factories from that time were private businesses and none had anywhere near the output of those today. Many of these trading firms also dealt in other goods as well, like rice and other agricultural products. Puerh tea was just one commodity amongst others. Some of them were even owned by single families, like the legendary Song Ping Hao and Tong Qing Hao. They were often small, rural houses where tea and other products were all processed completely by hand. The demand of the market at that time was small and annual production in numbers that would make even the state-owned factories of later years scoff. Old tea house owners in Hong Kong have reported that 10 *jian* (or “baskets”, each with 84 cakes, therefore equaling 840 cakes) was enough for the entire island for one year. The demand for Puerh was low because the retail price was relatively high compared to other teas. Nevertheless, many would argue that the cleaner and more natural farming methods and environment lent these cakes a certain majesty not found in any of their descendants. The fact that many of these teas are now 70 or more years old, coupled with the fact that very few were produced to begin with, makes them extremely rare and valuable—sometimes costing more than a hundred thousand USD per cake.

The cakes from the Antique Era were never wrapped with an outer wrapping paper. Perhaps it was considered too costly at the time; and preservation wasn't as much of an issue. However, all the cakes did have a *nei fei* or “inner trademark ticket” embedded into the tea just like the ones of today. Many also had a *nei piao* or “stack ticket” that rested in each stack of seven cakes (*tong*). Other than the leaves themselves, these trademarks are really the only way that

collectors can tell cakes apart, especially ones from the same factory, like for example the Red and Blue Mark Song Ping Hao cakes. The leaves in these ancient cakes were larger-leaf blends, and were harvested completely from old-growth trees.

When the “New China” was established in 1949, the central government declared that all industry belonged to the people. Even the tea industry was handed over to the local government. These changes closed these family-run, private businesses in the 1950's and the Antique Era came to an end.

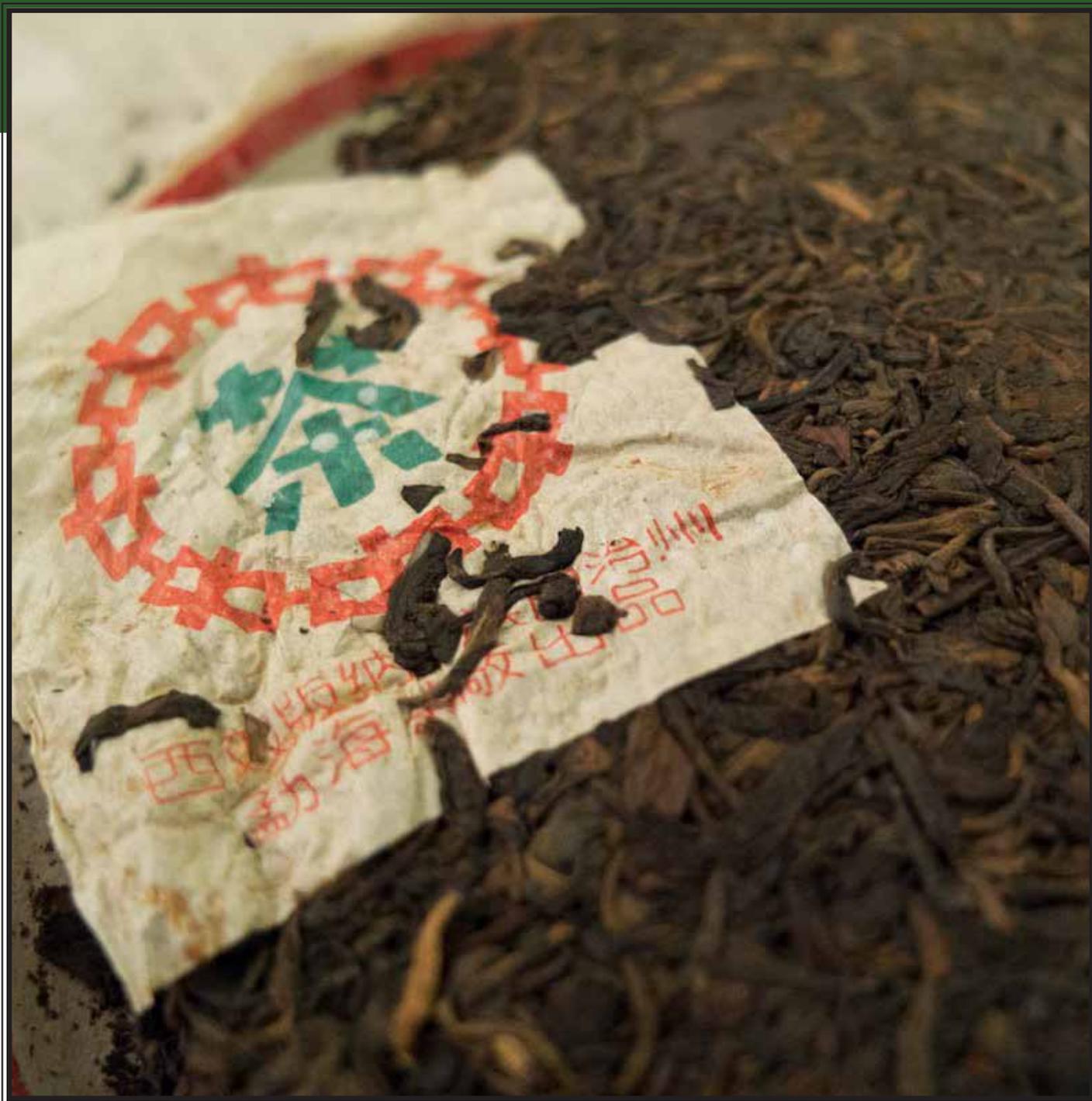
The Masterpiece Era

The start of the Masterpiece Era began with the creation of the state-run factories, like Menghai, which is still in existence today. In order to control and stabilize the production of tea in Yunnan, the “China Tea Corporation, Yunnan Branch” was created. They had their own logo, brand and trademark—established in 1950, and registered with the central government in 1951. This trademark is the now famous “8-Zhong Tea” character that is in the center of all the cakes from the Masterpiece and later Seven Sons eras. The character “*zhong* (中)” means “middle” or “Middle Kingdom”, viz. China. Eight of them surround the character for tea, “*cha* (茶)”, since that number was considered lucky. It also symbolized the goal of distributing Chinese tea to all eight directions of the world.

Red and Blue Mark teas, as well as others from the Masterpiece Era, are now also very rare. While they aren't as expensive or as difficult to find as Antique Age teas, many vintages are quickly approaching comparative values. Like the older teas, these too are treasures.

Tea cakes in the Masterpiece Era are distinguished from earlier ones by the obvious change to using outer wrapping paper. All these cakes were wrapped in handmade papers with the “8-*Zhong*” trademark in the center. The name of the “China Tea Corporation, Yunnan Province Branch Company” was printed in a ring around the central character, and read from right to left (which helps distinguish these cakes from later ones produced in the Seven Sons Era). The style and methods used to wrap seven cakes into tongs didn't change in the Masterpiece Era: they still used bamboo bark with soft bamboo twine to hold the *tong* closed.

The Masterpiece Era is considered to be the 1950's and 60's, and characterizes by four main categories of tea. Some authors subdivide these cakes into more varieties.



This list is, therefore, a gross simplification, as most Chinese anthologies will include some later teas in this era, as well as sub-divide these categories into many cakes. Nevertheless, this is a start to understanding the Masterpiece Era:

1. Red Mark Round Cake
2. Red Mark Tie Bing (iron discuss)
3. Grade A and B Blue Mark Round Cake
4. Artistic Font Blue Mark Tie Bing (iron discuss)

The Seven Sons Era (Chi Tse Bing)

The Seven Sons Era began in 1972 with the formation of the now-famous “China National Native produce & Animal By-product Import & Export Company”, referred to so often as the “CNNP”. The new agency would take control over all the Puerh production during the period. The three main factories of the time period were Menghai, Xiaguan and Kunming. During this time, the production of Puerh tea increased as a result of a growing foreign market. More tea was exported than ever before. As a result, more of these teas are floating around the vintage market than their predecessors, though some of these

The Eras of Puerh Tea

famous vintages are also now starting to become rarer and more expensive. Some of the earliest cakes from this era are just now starting to reach maturity, and connoisseurs are all interested in tasting these vintages as well as the earlier ones.

When the CNNP took over the production of Puerh in Yunnan they changed several aspects of the design used to package tea, as well as the blends and raw materials. Consequently, besides the change in management, these changes justify the demarcation of two eras of tea at this time. Firstly, all the teas were no longer called “*Yuan Cha*” or “Round Tea Cakes”; instead, they were all now called “*Chi Tse Bing Cha*”, which literally means “Seven-sons Tea Cake”. As mentioned before, the characters on these cakes all also changed from ‘right to left’ to ‘left to right.’ The cakes made by Menghai also began using Roman Pinyin font beneath the Chinese for the purpose of exportation. (Xiaguan and Kunming factories were slower in making this change). Menghai also began adding a *nei piao* between every cake and outer wrapping. Scholars often differentiate these *nei piao* tickets from the ones used in the Antique age by calling them “Description Tickets” and the latter “Stack Tickets”. The *nei piao* from the Seven Sons Era were called “Description Tickets” because they contained short descriptions of the tea inside, sometimes with the region, product information or even marketing about the health benefits of Puerh tea. Again, Xiaguan and Kunming’s early Seven Sons Era cakes didn’t have these *nei piao*s inside. Of course, the name around the “8-*Zhong* Tea” was also changed from the China Tea Corporation to the CNNP. There were several other

changes in packaging at this time, like the use of metal wires to tie tongs, factory and batch codes and even changes to the design of the *nei fei* tickets compressed into the tea.

Newborn Era

Different authors end the Seven Sons Era at different times. Many modern factories are still producing cakes with the same packaging designs as those made during this era, and the continuous production of that design makes the delineation between the Seven Sons Era and what scholars call the “Modern” or “Newborn Era” difficult indeed. However, most all Puerh historians end the Seven Sons Era sometime in the mid to late 1990’s. For us, 1997 is a good time to mark the end of this era because the private orders made by tea merchants to the national factories increased drastically after 1997. In addition, different kinds of wrapping styles emerged alongside the Seven Sons style. Since the beginning of the Newborn Era, the production and variation of Puerh tea has increased in a whirlwind of volume.



茶

法淨室

美潤

武夷

慧苑茶

慧苑禪寺

石貪負美
味依仰
煇
體

慧苑法華

法



Light Meets Life

光壽無量

A lot of work has been done on our land, removing some undergrowth and making a path, building a temporary structure to help change the zoning laws and to house tools in, and even some cultivation of ginger, herbs and fruits. Each season brings its own beauty to the mountains here, though we don't have such dramatic changes as some parts of the world.

We recently went up to the land and walked around with a feng shui master, who mentioned that our space was perfect for spiritual work and that it would be safe from earthquakes and typhoons. The waterfall was blazing and all of us got our feet wet in the river, sitting on stones and talking about the inspiring views. On the way home, we cut two huge bunches of wild, ripe bananas and took them home. They went into delicious smoothies over the course of the next two weeks.

Aside from getting non-profit status, the most important things you can do to help us build this amazing center are to promote awareness and help us fill up this Global Tea Hut to capacity. Also, we still have quite a bit of the Light Meets Life Puerh cakes that you can order. They can be shipped from the States or from Taiwan, whichever is most convenient. A single cake could easily fit in your GTH envelope, saving shipping. The minimum donation for each cake is twenty dollars.

As this is the chrysanthemum month, you might want to consider boiling up the Shou we created. Your help in promoting these cakes will bring us an important abundance. We plan to do this once a year, but we will need to sell them out in order to do so. As a result, we plan to include the cake descriptions in the next few months' newsletters.

Shen Nong's Brew

Shen Nong means "Divine Farmer" in Chinese. He is the legendary emperor who ruled China for a thousand years, teaching the people to farm, boil water and the use of medicinal herbs—bringing them civilization. He most likely represents the collective wisdom of all the tribal chiefs and shamans of pre-civilized China. They say he discovered tea while meditating in the forest. A single leaf fell into his boiling pot of water, and he exclaimed: "This is the ruler of all medicinal herbs!"

The first cake is a 2007 organic Lin Cang Shou Puerh blended with Kun Lun snow chrysanthemums. It is very rare to find a shou Puerh that is organic and has some old-growth raw material, especially since the price of such old tree tea has gone up recently. In 2007, however, it was still possible. The five years have also helped to mellow out the tea, adding depth. Snow Chrysanthemum tea is a rare and highly sought-after high altitude flower tea from Kunlun Mountain, Gansu Province, China. The flowers are picked and sun-dried once a year (late summer), then hand-sorted into various grades. This is the highest grade available, and it brews a lovely liquor with a strong sweet and spicy flavor. It is thought that properties within the chrysanthemum flower have a calming effect that aids sleep. In the Traditional Chinese Materia Medica, Snow Chrysanthemum is said to restore respiratory fitness, regulate blood pressure and prevent cancer.

Lu Yu's Classic

Lu Yu wrote the oldest known book on tea, called simply “The Classics of Tea”. In it he extolled the virtues of tea, discussed water and fire, processing and preparation methods and a deep and spiritual love of tea. One of the most poignant aspects of the book was when he declared that tea was the only time of day that he could rest assured that at that very moment he was sharing the same activity with the august emperor himself—ultimately, expressing the equality inherent in a life of tea. The tea space is one where we leave behind the dust of the ego: our names, our jobs, our social or economic status, our gender—none of it matters in a space of one heart!

This cake is a 2013 Wu Liang. The Wu Liang Mountains peak out at about 3300 meters, making them the tallest mountains in Simao prefecture. The Wu Liang mountain range is in the county of Jing Dong, which borders both Lin Cang and Da Li prefectures. This tea is grown in the area of Wu Liang known as Zhong Cang village at an altitude of 2300 meters. The trees are around 200 years old. These tea gardens are remote and pristine, untouched by any of the environmental problems that other parts of Yunnan face.

Even when young this tea is full in the mouth giving the drinker a persistent warmth and lubricated mouth feel. It's never harsh and never drops off suddenly, thus revealing the healthy characteristics of the trees and environment from which it came. This tea will develop gracefully through years building its character and providing the drinker with ever more complex textures as it ages.

This tea was compressed with traditional stone presses in a small tea factory near Kunming. The tea was also sun-dried according to ancient ways.

Baisao's Single Bowl

Baisao was an eighteenth century tea sage whose bright spirit illuminates our tradition in more than name alone. A Zen monk for most of his life, at the age of forty-nine he traded in his robes for what was paradoxically the more Zen-infused life of a roadside peddler of tea. His bowls were steeped in the ancient and priceless Spirit of Tea, unclouded by money, theory, ritual or even mind itself—a spirit from before the first fingers plucked the first leaves. And those who came by his wayside hut just might have passed by the old man so strangely donning the crane robes of an ancient Taoist hermit, but for the way the spirit twinkled invitingly in his eyes or the softness of his hands as he poured his tea into worn and cracked bowls... And after such a bowl, the passerby left changed somehow, though perhaps not able to grasp the importance of what exactly had shifted their perspective. Commenting on the famous poem by the tea saint Lu Tong called “Seven Bowls” in which Lu Tong describes the higher and higher

reaches of each successive bowl of fine tea, Baisao cheekily declared that “Old Lu Tong needed seven bowls to get there, but you'll only need the one of mine...”

The last cake is an Ai Lao. These mountains rise to about 3200 meters, making them second only to Wu Liang Shan as the highest mountains in Simao prefecture. The Ai Lao mountain range is in the county of Jing Dong, which borders Chu Xiong prefecture. This tea is grown in the area of Ai Lao known as Wang Jia village at an altitude of 2200 meters, making this some of the highest altitude Puerh in existence. The trees are healthy 200-year-old trees growing naturally on steep hillsides and ridges. These tea gardens are arguably some of the remotest tea gardens in all of Yunnan. Lack of roads and access has kept the environment of this area in good condition.

The tea itself is filled with hints of an orchid aroma, and a strong mouth-feel. Honey and grass essences are also present in this thick, soupy tea. This tea (in its young age) is subtler than the Wu Liang Lan Xiang cake, with less bitterness and a stronger aroma. The leaves are fatter and burlier than our Wu Liang tea. It features lots of hairy buds that make it somewhat resemble its close neighbors, Jing Gu Mountain teas.

Like the Wu Liang, this tea was also compressed with traditional stone presses in a small tea factory near Kunming. The tea was also sun-dried according to ancient ways.

If you want to purchase any of the cakes, contact us at: globalteahut@gmail.com

Should any of you wish to contribute or have any ideas for ways to help us realize this vibrant dream of Light Meets Life, please contact us. You can donate at the Center page of our GTH website or send a check to:

Global Tea Hut West
2441 Beverley Ave. #6
Santa Monica, CA 90405
United States

Or [contact](#) us for other ways to support.



THE SOURCE OF OUR ACTIONS

Article by Steve Kokker

On impulse, I decided recently to participate in a weekend workshop on yoga and meditation. I was interested in the particular approach of the instructor, whose impressive history of having spent most of his 20s and 30s studying with various Kriya yoga and Eastern tantric gurus aroused my curiosity. Not only did I feel like spending time with a wise person as a way of further cultivating (unleashing?) my own inner wisdom, but his teaching of how specific yoga asanas are inextricably linked with consciousness-expansion was of particular interest to me.

Many yoga schools emphasise physical poses and stretches, add in some peace-of-mind *sivasana* at the end and treat yoga as a sub-branch of athletics, as opposed to as an extension of meditation. However, yoga poses seem to have been developed mainly for strengthening the alignment with the higher self, to use the physical to go beyond the physical. The word 'yoga' itself, Wikipedia tells me in black and white, is Sanskrit for 'union with the divine'.

I was also hoping for an event (like this workshop) to kick-start my own dedication to meditation. While I have incorporated quiet time, mostly with a bowl of tea, into almost each morning's practices, they are often neither rooting/grounding nor, thanks to streams of mind noise, pathways to Source. (Something tells me that if I continue rushing about some 14 hours a day, simply adding on 30 minutes of quiet time won't quite do the trick!) Many practitioners of meditation at some point get discouraged as initial mini-satoris and waves of deep peace get eventually replaced with the usual streams of mind noise; incorporating quiet time into everyday schedule does offer innumerable beneficial effects to be sure, but without occasional guidelines, reminders and pointers, not to mention strict commitment to regular practise, long-term benefits are questionable—at least they are less than they could be. This is part of a disappointment many encounter after long bouts of trying to achieve what they had seemingly been promised: Peace!

Yet the point of this already-rambling tale is about our daily selves/*ego*/Little Me/Monkey Mind (take your pick) versus our higher selves/Source/love & compassion (take your pick, and let's forget for a moment that there is ultimately no difference between them, thus no 'versus'). It's about the struggle we all encounter as we try to act from a source of 'higher self', and the erroneous judgments we make about others on the same path.

When I met the aforementioned yoga teacher a few days before the workshop, I found my mind going into analysis mode; my years of psychology training and observation

of human behaviour instantly picked up on several traits which were less than masterly, less heavenly and perfect than what seemed to be hinted at in his biography (or what I had let my mind expect after reading his impressive biography). I tried to observe the judging mind from a little distance, to wedge in some space between Me and my judgements, and followed an intuition to attend the workshop nonetheless.

Of course, those aspects of personality I picked up on were present indeed in the workshop, but so was a lot of the richness, wisdom and depth hinted at by the biography. I was reminded (once again!) of how we are all struggling on this road to self improvement, how we are all fragile humans who will make mistakes, stumble and trip back into reaction, into Little-Meness. Why expect perfection in others (actually why expect anything at all from others?) when it is so far off in ourselves? We are all trying in our own fallible ways.

Wu De once mentioned that it's not about being perfect all the time, it's about always making the proper adjustments. Like a tightrope-walker: he doesn't sprint across the rope in some perfect, flawless single ballet move. Instead he takes a few steps, wobbles, then adjusts, keeps going, loses balance, adjusts immediately, keeps going... This is an apt analogy to our own personal development and it does no one much good to harp on the times we or others lose balance or stumble, or to see their entire selves as comprised of that stumble and trip. Yes that might be the lower self, the Little Me in free-fall, but let's instead pay more attention to the re-adjustment—that's the Higher Self in action, and what beauty in those moves!

So back at the yoga seminar, this teacher had many moments of truly inspired Higher Self, when the brain was successfully turned down a notch and he was speaking, sharing not from a space of ego or from the personality of this lifetime, but from a deeper wisdom. And in these moments I, as well as the others I'm sure, listened and responded from a higher source as well. That higher self resonates and responds to the higher self exhibited in others. What a gift!

I was asked to serve tea at this workshop, a nice challenge of coordination and organization for me as it was the first time I alone served so many (16) others at one time. There was some silence in the tea drinking, but a number of questions were directed my way, and I found myself responding to them with words I had never really spoken before, very calmly and with sounds seemingly not being actively spoken by me, or anyone in specific. I was not nervous, uninterested in making any kind of appearance or impression and this cleared the way for some amount of depth to be shared.



I later reflected that within the space of an hour, I myself had acted first out of Little Self (forming mental judgements about the teacher, analyzing, complaining that I should have done something else with my rare free time than be there in the class) and then after, apparently, out of Higher Self. All that had changed was an opportunity and space to act from that higher realm, which I had given myself through this opportunity to serve tea. This contrast in states of mind was so sharp I felt ashamed that I had not given the teacher the space and opportunity to act from his higher self by relating to him only as one ego to another, personality to personality, body to body. When spirit meets spirit, what heights can be attained! Even when spirit meets ego/personality, the spirit gives an opportunity for the ego to transcend,

and most will rise to the occasion. This is among the deepest gifts we can offer others through tea service. Only through tea? No, basically it is through presence, Calm Being and recognition in others of that same Calm Being. However, as we all know, serving tea helps us cultivate that.

So, to whom do I offer this next steaming cup...?





MAKING THINGS FOR TEA

Article by Lindsey Goodwin

Recently, I've been deeply immersing myself in the two great joys of the tea lover: seasoning teaware and converting things that have nothing to do with tea into tools for preparing and serving tea.

The first of these is a gradual process, one that unfolds slowly over time. The role of the tea lover is primarily to observe and enjoy. We let the brewing and the Tea do most of the work with regards to seasoning teaware.

The second is a more active process, and one which extends far beyond the tea table, out into the world of daily life. Making 'non-tea' things into 'tea things' is an act which I have been delving into more and more since this spring.

As a hobby, making non-tea things into tea things has brought me great joy. But moreover, as a practice, it has helped me increase my awareness and expand Tea into all realms of my life. Yesterday, I reorganized my chaxi drawers. Reflecting upon the many beautiful and personally meaningful items I've converted into tea things, I decided to share glimpses into the act of making that which is 'not Tea' into 'Tea' through a few of these objects.

(As an aside, I use words like 'things' and 'objects' to describe the chaxi below. However, I've ultimately found them to be far more than that. They are useful tools, yes, but over time each one becomes a kind of helper-friend who supports the serving of tea. Each one has its own strengths and personality. As you get to know your own 'tea things,' you may also find that they become tea friends.)

Rocks & Stones

Some of my very favorite 'converted' tea things are rocks and stones.

All of the rocks I use for chaxi were found in Nature, and still carry a vivid sense of where they originated. For example, there are some richly colored, brittle sedimentary rocks that I like to use as lid rests, tea pillows and decorative items for the tea table (depending on their sizes and shapes). They range a thin, flat, shimmery gray stone speckled with near-black dots to a chunky, multi-hued rock with color changes reminiscent of oil hovering on the surface of water, yet they all came from the same place.

I found them along with Skylar, Shane and Wu De while visiting the higher reaches of Li Shan (Pear Mountain) on the way back from Taiwan's famous Taroko Gorge. Driving through the misty, winding roads of Li Shan, we reached

a peak that was made up entirely of rocks like these. The rocks were so abundant that they were spilling out onto the road, and we couldn't help but stop five times or more to collect rocks. We found a couple huge ones for the main tea table at the Center, and some smaller ones for personal use. They retain the essence of the mountain from which they came, and provide a tranquil and elevated-yet-grounded feeling on the tea table.

The smooth river rocks I use as tea pillows and matcha whisk rests are similarly calm and grounding, as well as very cooling. These were found in a stream on San Lin Xi, a mountain in Nantou County famed for tea, bamboo and beautiful views, and they still hold a sense of the sound of wind soughing the bamboo groves when I place them on the tea table. Perhaps because they spent so long in a bubbling brook near a butterfly filled forest, they work well in more joyful tea sessions.

And the stone 'tea pillow' I found on a shore not too far from Miaoli feels like something that has spent plenty of time deep in the ocean and brought great wisdom with it when it finally came up for air. Accordingly, I use it in more meditative tea sessions.

The gemstones that sometimes adorn my tea table were not items that I found in Nature, but rather in Yingge (Taiwan's pottery town). On trips there, we often stop into a gemstone shop for 'water crystals,' and I always like to keep an eye out for unusually shaped stones that might work well as tea things. The best ones I've found so far are small, rectangular stones that have a flat bottom and a top with a natural indentation. They make wonderful rests for tea utensils. The type of stone matters too, both in its appearance (soothing green versus invigorating red, for example) and in its energetic effects (heart-balancing jade, energy-focusing amethyst, clarifying quartz), so I try to choose them carefully when buying them and when placing them on the tea table.

Driftwood

Every now and then, Wu De used to mention that there's a place near Miaoli where you can find driftwood. Recently, when Wu De was in America, Merlin and I decided to go on a little adventure and find this driftwood spot. Using intuition, guesswork and Google Maps, we found the mouth of an estuary that was littered with driftwood (and, unfortunately, with plenty of debris that had washed up from China). Picking through the rocks and refuse, we found a segment of bamboo root that makes and incredible



lid rest, pieces of water-smoothed wood that are flat and large enough to hold a side-handle pot or a few teacups, longer stretches of root and branch that work well as tea utensils, and other pieces of driftwood that are more for look and feel than actual 'use.'

I find that driftwood has spent so much time in water that it resonates with Tea in a different way from regular wood. Also, its colors tend to be especially muted and serene, and its very nature has a certain 'accepting all that is' vibe to it. I usually use it for silent tea sessions.

You have to be careful with tea and driftwood, though, as the brine smell/flavor is often strong and will take months if not years to dissipate. You can try soaking the wood in hot water, even with a dash of non-toxic bleach. Alternatively, you can soak it in distilled water for two weeks, changing the water regularly.

Shells & Coral

While in Okinawa for my brother's wedding, I managed to find a few gorgeous seashells. Two of the large, flat shells I use as tea scoops. They display the tea in such a natural way, and can be flipped over after the tea is in the pot, making them doubly beautiful in many cases. And the smaller or spiraled shells make (depending on their shapes) good tea utensil rests or decorative items for the tea table.

They are very well suited for summer, but one shell seems as though it will work for cooler weather, too. (It has a spire-like appearance, and is opalescent off-white, making it appear almost like a snow-covered mountain.) I especially appreciate these shells because they lend a sort of harmonizing effect to the overall feel of the *chaxi* and the tea sessions they grace (and also because they remind me of my brother and his lovely wife... though I try not to let that personal sentiment influence my choice in when to use the shells too much).

The coral is a contribution I have to credit to Nick. One day in Yingge, we visited one of our dear tea friends, who was making necklaces with red coral beads. I saw the light flash on in his head immediately. The perfect lid rests! His discovery inspired me to keep my eyes roving for potential tea things everywhere I look, and the coral lid rest I use today is a great reminder of that. It lends warmth and seems to get creativity and Tea wisdom flowing in tea sessions.

Human-Made Objects

Although things from Nature can make magnificent additions to the tea table, objects that were fashioned by human hands in order to be used for things other than tea can also have their place.

Making Things for Tea

As someone who loves fabric, I often keep an eye out for cloth (especially handmade or hand-dyed cloth) that can be used as a table runner, a surface for teacups or wrapping for teaware. These materials can bring softness and a certain cohesiveness to a chaxi arrangement, and can also serve as protection for your teaware. Beyond looking for new cloth, I have plans for a vintage *obi* (a kimono 'belt'), which I aim to have made into a table runner and a cloth case for my matcha set (*chabako*).

Speaking of vintage things, it seems that the passage of time makes certain objects especially worth using for tea. There's something about their ability to accumulate energy from human usage and the passage of time that makes them really special. So vintage cloth and antiques in general are often prized by tea lovers as converted tea items.

We use old wine cups as tea cups and saucers as coasters, for example. This is such a common practice now that most of the ones you can buy have already been used as tea things for quite some time. There are many items you can find that have yet to be used as tea things, and are awaiting the keen eye of a tea lover to merge them with Tea. (Be sure to ask Wu De about his antique telephone wire next time you see him!)

One antique item that's used for tea here in Taiwan is a kind of old-fashioned washing board. It's a wide, flat strip of wood with ridges running perpendicular to its length. Over time, the ridges wear down, so they are smooth enough to allow teaware to rest on the washing board gently, yet they retain these little gullies that carry off excess

water from rinsing Yixing teapots. A few tea shops I've seen sell them, but usually for a pretty penny, as they are hard to come by these days. Incredibly, Merlin and I recently found one while scoping out an abandoned Japanese house here in Miaoli. We discovered it on the ground, under a pile of leaves, with a few roots growing along it and with one side bearing many more signs of exposure to the weather than the other. It was sheltered a bit by an awning, and had fared much better than a second washing board that had been without cover all those years, and had broken down into pieces over time. The surviving washing board is out in the garden right now as I type, and it will live there with the rain, the sun, the moon, the wind and the local tomcat until the one side is as weathered as the other. Perhaps it will be ready by the time you arrive to visit us here. If so, let's share a tea session over it and talk about chaxi. Until then, may you enjoy many tea sessions filled with connection to yourself, to others and to the tea things that enhance your tea table.





A SELF-COURSE TOWARDS DEEPER TEA

Article by Kaiya



Whether you have a meditation practice and want to strengthen it, or simply want to set aside a day to go deeper into your tea practice, a one or two-day self-course is a great way to do it, and best of all, you can do it right at home, no matter where you live!

I thought I would let you all in on how I've done mine and what I've learned, in the hopes that you may find inspiration and encouragement to make a course of your own. The advantages of a self-course are obvious, in that you are the one setting all the boundaries. You get to make the schedule. You can tailor the 'rules'. And you can include special tools and aspects of your own inner work.

On the other hand, if you want to sleep until 9am, pop into the refrigerator for an unscheduled evening snack, check your email, or just quit altogether and turn on the TV, it's all sitting right there before you. And if someone gets it into their head that they want to come and bug you, well there isn't a fence or guards at the door to stop them. Hopefully, this article will help to guide you towards making the most of a one or two-day tea and meditation course.

Let's start off with the schedule I used most recently:

Schedule

4am	Wake up, shower, stretch, etc.
4:30-5:00	Matcha/whisked tea
5:00-6:30	Meditation
6:30-8:00	Breakfast
8:00-10:00	Tea (bowl)
10:00-11:00	Meditation
11:00-1:00	Lunch, rest
1:00-3:00	Meditate
3:00-6:00	Tea (gongfu)
6:00-7:00	Meditate
7:00-8:00	Spiritual reading/audio discourse
8:00-9:00	Final meditation

First of all, yes, 4am! It's great. Everything is so still at this hour, there is no better time to meditate. Sitting at this magical hour, steeped in the gently rising energy of the planet as you are carried upwards into the dawn, is the highlight of a self-course. I wouldn't miss it if I were you.

Secondly, I want to point out that although I'm writing from the perspective of a meditation practice, that

needn't discourage those of you who haven't got one. By all means, tailor your own program. Although I would be most delighted indeed if this article motivated someone to seek out their first meditation instruction, it isn't necessary. You could do any number of other things besides meditation in the time between teas. You could practice yoga, sacred dance, pray, listen to all nine of your favorite symphonies from start to finish, or even just drink tea from morning to night... Whatever suits you. However, I would certainly choose something that leads you towards stillness of mind. For that reason, I also recommend that you make a strong determination to practice silence throughout your course.

Tea time, meditation time

Before moving on to how to prepare for your course, I do want to talk about the schedule a bit. For me, a small bowl of matcha is a really nice way to raise my alertness and energy for that early morning sit, and it doesn't bother my stomach. But many people can only drink matcha after eating. You might instead wish to enjoy a bowl of tea with a single leaf or two of red tea to energize you. Even plain hot water is quite invigorating. I have found that having tea rather than meditation directly after breakfast is best, because I haven't had quite as long to digest my food, as I will have at lunchtime, which interferes with meditation. Also, properly chosen tea will help my digestion along as well, which is more important on a day when I am going to be so sedentary.

In the evening, I have tried several different schedules between 1:00 and 7:00. I've tried three hours of meditation followed by three hours of tea and vice-versa, or two shorter tea sessions around a big meditation session, and so on. Of course, this period is six hours of meditation no matter how you 'divide' it, but at the same time you can in a sense shift the focus between meditation and tea. I have found that the schedule above has the smoothest, most natural flow, especially for a one-day course. It's a nice pace, and I am well-prepared to really get the most out of those three hours with one tea after a two hour sit.

The final decision to make here is to make gongfu tea or not. Remember that gongfu tea preparation is more challenging and active than bowl tea. For a longer course I drink all bowl-tea the first day, and save a really fine and patient gongfu tea for when I'm more settled down. For the same reason, if I do drink gongfu tea on a one day course, I will save it for this last tea session. You will also take in less



liquid if you drink gongfu tea, so if you have to be careful about how much you drink in the evening to avoid visiting the bathroom all night, that might also be a factor to consider.

Write out the schedule

I write or print a piece of paper with the schedule on it, but for me this can be one of the pitfalls of a self-course. I am, in a sense, the “director” of the day, so it’s easy for that habitual “what’s next” mentality to sneak its way into my course through the form of the schedule, because I have to make whatever is next happen and happen on time, as it were. I have enough of this mentality in daily life and want to work on dropping it at least for today. I also find myself wanting to simply look at the schedule over and over. So, I do my best to pretend it doesn’t exist until it’s time for the next event.

I have found two tricks that really help me with this. One is that I write the schedule well in advance, so that I’ve forgotten it. Another is that I literally write events on the paper spaced out and then folded in such a way that I only see the current event and its time slot. Then when it’s time, I get to watch with childlike wonder as the next event literally unfolds before my eyes. It’s actually fun, and believe it or not, it was a vehicle for some deep insights for me in my most recent course.

Tea IS cleaning

There is a saying in this tradition that Cha Dao is 80% cleaning, both inside and outside. I always thoroughly clean the house the day before I begin. It’s a good way to prepare yourself internally as well as externally, as cultivating a pure environment is always beneficial to the cultivation of a pure mind. I also try to begin to enter into the space I am creating for my course, by doing my cleaning as mindfully as possible, thereby beginning my internal cleaning as well.

By keeping my tea area clean (define this as you wish, but for me it’s really the whole house) I demonstrate my respect and gratitude for my tea, and begin to prepare for the tea session just as much as I do when I light the fire. As the years have gone by, I more and more palpably feel the two as one action. I can honestly say that cleaning is no longer any more of a “chore” or something I have to do before I can start drinking tea than preparing *chaxi* or washing the teapot are. When the cleaning commences, so has the tea preparation.

If you haven’t paid much attention to the effect that your cleaning (both before and after a tea session) has on both yourself and your tea, make sure to pay close attention from now on. Take the time to reflect on how much nicer your tea will be tomorrow in a bright clean uncluttered home where nothing has been left undone. We all know that feeling, when we are trying to relax in the face of some put-off responsibility; it just doesn’t work, you can’t

A Self-Course

settle into it. Similarly, if we don't take the time to prepare for our session as we would to welcome a guest into our homes, our sessions will be lacking in depth.

I also include smudging, and play sacred music throughout the house the day before, even while I'm at work, to pump some extra energy into the space that will help the day go well. Naturally, you will want to turn off all your "Googles", as we like to refer to any communication/entertainment devices around here. Bury them if you have to, but eliminate them from your reality. You will probably survive without them. Use a clock or a watch, not your phone, to check the time.

What to listen to?

You may be tempted to leave the discourse out, wanting more tea, or an earlier bedtime perhaps. Or maybe it just sounds out of sync in a day of silence. But I have found that it's quite important for me. For one thing, it scratches that "mind itch" a little bit. It gives my mind something to feed on, as it were. But instead of the rubbish my mind probably wanted to feed on all day, I'm feeding it something healthy instead; and if I have another day ahead of me, that energy carries into my sleep and is still there the next day, leaving me more attuned and prepared. It guides my thoughts and insights in a good direction, and can motivate me with a greater sense of purpose as well.

Even in a one-day course though, the discourse period is important because I have very much been cultivating myself to receive spiritual insight all day, and I will absorb any teaching more deeply than I might have otherwise. This is also a big part of why practicing silence throughout the day is crucial. So be sure to choose appropriate reading(s) or audio recording(s) for this important period each day.

Tea for dinner!

You may have noticed, there is no dinner listed in the schedule above. One of the powerful medicinal properties of tea is that it cleanses the body of impurities. Fasting has been an aspect of spiritual and physical cleansing as long as humans have existed, and tea has the ability to accelerate both the spiritual and physical benefits fasting has to offer. In light of that, I would also encourage those of you who aren't strict vegetarians to make the effort during your course.

We often challenge guests to at least try a vegetarian lifestyle for a period of time, just to see if it's really as bad as they think. After all, meat will still be there, so it's not as though there is anything to lose beyond a little discomfort. If nothing else, it's always good to take a stand and face down anything outside of us that we give power to, such as the feeling that we "have" to eat meat to avoid discomfort.

An average person will notice a big difference in their sensitivity and energy levels increasing within three

months or so, but if you also drink tea every day as part of the shift, pretty much everyone will realize huge differences within a month or even less! So even if it's only for a day, this is a good chance to witness this powerful property of tea for yourself, and being so light and clean inside will greatly increase your appreciation for your evening tea session. I bet you will notice a big difference. It also doesn't hurt to reflect on how fortunate we are that we can skip a meal as a choice, when so many others alive today are struggling to eat.

At first I reacted to the idea of needing to prepare meals during a self-course as though it was a disturbance, but it isn't really a big deal at all, it just calls for a bit of preparation. The one important factor to consider, besides eating vegetarian food, is that you also choose meals that are relatively bland. Don't torture yourself; just avoid strong spices and things like garlic, or soda, because it will really get in the way of your tea. You should know exactly what you are going to eat for each meal in advance, and make sure the ingredients are all bought. You can go further, and do the prep before you start so you can just throw it in the pan. Or even avoid cooking altogether and go raw.

There are plenty of healthy and appropriate meals that can be made entirely in advance, depending on the length of the course. I once made a large container of a hearty salad with nuts and beans and such and had that for lunch each day. Another time I prepared a few vegetable wraps. Shane suggests making a variety of veggie burritos and freezing them. There are lots of good options. On the other hand, why not have freshly prepared food every day instead? Don't forget, after all, that we are making tea!

One of the integral reasons we practice tea in addition to meditation is the realization that my practice is somewhat useless if I can only find peace when I am sitting down in meditation. And this is a tradition of service to others, so use the power of intention that lies behind a day like this to fill all your slicing and dicing with mindfulness and presence. There are tons of other things you have to do like make the bed and get dressed and shower and brush your teeth—chopping a bit of food isn't that much more complicated. Prepare your day's tea with each chop and brush!

Friends and family

Obviously, it's quite rude to just suddenly stop talking to everyone without notice, and if you have roommates this can be a big challenge. Of course explain what you are doing, give them your schedule, and discuss any compromises that might need to happen. Then remind everyone again soon before, asking them to save anything less than very unexpected and important for when you are finished. Do your best to tie up any loose-ends and affairs that might require your input or communication, especially with roommates or significant others.

It's important not to be too overbearing and attached to the 'rules' in this area. That said, I have always



scheduled my courses at a time when the house will naturally be empty. If that won't be possible, then be sure to be respectful of the fact that other people are *not* practicing silence, and *not* meditating (probably). They are just living their daily lives, as they have a right to. I am the one who is importuning. This puts the responsibility on me, not them.

I would do my best to schedule around their day to minimize contact naturally, and not be demanding about their behavior. My state of mind is my responsibility, not theirs, and whatever arises is my practice. I have informed them about what I am doing; what they do with that is not my responsibility. If I live with the kind of person who is going to watch a Die Hard marathon that night, well, I did choose that roommate, so trying to meditate to the sound of grenades must be what I need!

The course

Now that everything is in perfect order, we are ready to begin! And naturally, with everything in its proper place, there is only one thing that can happen. It begins to unravel, of course! In spite of all preparations, it happens to me every time. It will probably happen to you. A friend came and intruded on my course.

They *knew* I was meditating and practicing silence, but they asked me to speak! Worst of all, it was not an emergency. It was an unnecessary intrusion, was *not* even really my business, and it could have been handled without

bothering me. Nobody really *needed* to bother me, but they did anyway! It was horrible! I actually had no choice but to open my mouth and speak, when I'm not *supposed* to be speaking! There I was, developing equanimity and compassion for my fellow man, and this inconsiderate, unthinking *jerk*... Ah, wait a minute... Back to equanimity practice.

Nothing has stopped me from getting the most out of meditation more than too much rigidity. Of course many people may find that looseness is their tendency, so look for that too. As the famous adage says, too loose and the string makes no sound, too tight and it breaks. This won't be a structured, volunteer-run facility with rigidly defined boundaries, rules, and a fence running around it, as it would be at a meditation center. This has its pros and cons, but make full use of the advantages. Then make full use of the so-called disadvantages as well! The only alternative is to complain about them, which is pointless. Trying to pick and choose what you are willing to work with or accept just results in slower growth and progress. Everything is an opportunity for growth.

Meditating with a friend

I won't say too much about this, as I've only sat with another person once. We split the chores of the day, with one of us cooking a meal and the other one cleaning it up, and took turns preparing tea. If you anticipate strug-

A Self-Course

gling to stay out of the fridge, off the TV, actually waking up at 4am and so on, it could be a great idea to have the moral support. There is no doubt that doing this entirely on your own requires more discipline than if you have a partner. Make sure though, that you are both committed to supporting each other in creating a distraction-free space. Be sure you both agree on what this means and that it is well and clearly communicated in advance. This can be tricky with a romantic partner especially.

Tea

As for considerations that are more specifically tea-related, there are a few things I have found which really enhance the course. When we make tea for guests, we ensure that as soon as one kettle is finished, there is always a new one ready to go, so the flow of tea is constant. I don't drink tea this way alone, and definitely not during a self-course. For one thing, I might explode from drinking so much tea. But besides that, those ten or fifteen minute breaks waiting for the water to boil are really nice pauses in which to simply sit with the tea. I also like to use this time to acquaint myself more intimately with the nuances of my kettle, as I can listen to it progress from start to finish as the water boils without the distraction of brewing tea at the same time.

I've also found that this is a good opportunity to use subtler brewing techniques, such as making water gong-fu, without the tea, or drinking bowl tea with one to three leaves of tea in the bowl. Sometimes I will burn a bit of subtle incense such as Aloeswood as well. As for music, it's the one potential exception as far as maintaining silence goes. For my first course, Wu De suggested playing a recorded series of sacred Tibetan bells throughout the tea sessions of the day. But unless you have something with a very specific purpose such as this in mind, it's best to drink in quiet. I definitely wouldn't practice pairing music and tea during a course, or listening simply for pleasure.

Lastly, I love to change the *chaxi* for each and every tea session. It's a beautiful practice to keep normally as well. I like to limit the changes I make to small and subtle ones that are still enough to produce an impact, as setting up a nice *chaxi* can take too long and be too distracting. I might switch scoops, or the tea boat, or the flower on the table only. I may even change two or three things, but I will maintain the fundamental theme I started with, or grow it into another one, as it were (perhaps a cool *chaxi* transitions towards warmth, for example). For a longer course, I might change the whole thing before going to sleep last thing at night. During a day of meditation and awareness of the temporary nature of reality, it is rewarding to actively participate in that energy by renewing the tea space and reflecting on this integral principal of tea.

Every course a tea-seed

I hope this article is useful to some of you, and that you will take the time for a course of your own soon. The most important thing is to be sure that this is a day of enjoyment, in spite of the discipline and work that are involved. I often feel as though I have never worked as hard in my life as I did during a course, yet at the same time no vacation has ever left me feeling so rested or refreshed.

Performing a course like this on your own is actually something really very special. There are meditation centers and tea centers, but we are a part of a unique tradition, which combines the two and creates tea-meditation centers. In creating and partaking in your own tea-meditation courses now, you are helping us to energetically pave the way towards our mountain retreat. You are demonstrating to the Universe that there is both the need and the willingness to heed the call for an awakening of harmony through tea.

Your self-courses will be the first manifestations of that space we are all creating together, the first flush, the Spring buds of tea-light opening for the first time in the same spirit of community with which we share these monthly bowls of tea. These openings and manifestations may be small and spread out across the world now, but the day is coming when they will be unified under one roof at Light Meets Life, which will offer nothing less than long-term dedicated tea-meditation courses where we can all sit together under one roof, complete with guaranteed "needless question protection", prepared meals, and everything else you'll need to have a productive course!



禪



茶
禪
一
味





MEDITATION PART II: THE BODY

Article by Nick Dilks

It is getting increasingly difficult in this crazy world of ours to reclaim the balance between body and mind. Think about it for a minute. Most people feel it is normal and healthy to send their children to pre-school at around two or three years old, and keep them studying until they graduate at 18. Then it's off to University for another few years before finally being 'released' into a job. We do this out of love, of course: we want our kids to be able to compete with other kids, to get a good education, then get a job that they are happy with and earn a decent living. And this is how society is. This is its priority: to produce useful citizens who can contribute to the needs of the populous. But is it really necessary for a happy and balanced life to have our heads stuffed in books for over 90% of our first 21 years? This society seems to think so, and don't get me wrong; school can be cool. It was for me, and I am very grateful for (some of) my education. It was the foundation for the best studies in my life: those that began after school! It is awesome to be able to reflect on life the way that I do. But the sheer domination of education in our early lives points to an over-privileging of thought and reason in Western society.

So, what about the body? What are we taught about the body in our educational system—apart how to hone it for sports events or its scientific nomenclature in Biology labs? Some schools are more progressive of course but there is a glaring absence of any instruction on how to relate to this lump of Latin names that carries us around while we are busy memorizing all these facts about it. For instance, schools could help children learn to relax their body, to notice the emotions that arise within it and process them healthily, or how to balance their awareness of body/mind, so that consciousness does not reside solely in the cramped walnut of the cerebrum! Nowadays, some schools in the UK are actually doing 'Emotional Intelligence' courses that touch on these areas, but not many. Such things are very new. I was in my mid-twenties before I walked into a Buddhist meditation class and realized such things were possible! If we add to all of this the modern tendency to rush around doing important things and the gadgets and distractions that keep us locked in our heads, it's easy to see why the relationship between body and mind is so skewed in our times.

I mention all of this because the ability to balance body and mind is key to mindfully drinking tea. Of course, for some this balance may be natural. With a bit of luck, you may even be wondering what I'm going on about. If so, then good for you. But for the rest of us there may be some work to do in this area. Personally, I do a lot of bodywork in meditation. I have had sciatica for eight years now, and

this pain has forced me to pay attention to my body more. I can't, for instance, slouch or I am immediately in agony. I also must continually monitor painful areas and relax them or it becomes downright unbearable. You could say Fate has decided to be a rather harsh Alexander of an instructor! As I deepen my relationship to Tea, I have found that some meditation techniques really transpose well into enhancing my tea experience too. The bottom line is that if I am too in my head, then my tea experience is at the mercy of whatever mental states and thought patterns I am experiencing. This can be cramped and agitating, and too much of my attention drains away, so that only a small part of me is left to appreciate the tea. However, the more I can bring awareness into my body, the more spacious and relaxed I feel. I am then more fully able to experience the myriad effects that the tea has on me. Of course, even without personal effort, tea will probably have this spacious effect. This is partly why we drink it: Tea is medicine. But, as Wu De says, these days now that the really powerful teas of yore have disappeared (or are too expensive), we must more than ever meet tea halfway to enjoy its full rewards.

What can we do to bring our bodies more into our tea drinking? The first thing that I do after setting up the tea space and collecting water is to sit down and scan through the body while the kettle is boiling. This can be done both alone or in a silent, mindful group of tea drinkers fairly easily, though it takes a bit more skill in a more chatty informal session! If I'm alone, I close my eyes and allow awareness to flow through the body, part by part, acknowledging any areas that feel tight or blocked, and letting go of any tension I am able to—sending kindness to the rest. It really is quite simple. You can either start at the top and work down or vice versa. The key is to *directly* experience your body, not experience the thought-about-it. This means that we do not think about say our foot and connect solely to the mental image we have of it stored in our brains. Rather, the body scan is about moving awareness to directly experience sensations in the foot: feelings of warmth or coldness, flow or stagnation, pressure from contact with the floor, tension or relaxation: the bare energy of that space. There really is a whole world in your foot when you take the time to explore. In fact, the deeper you go, the more difficult it is to even find this thing we call a foot, to locate this 'hermetically sealed silhouette' we call the body. More on this later. Be careful, though, not to drift off and let your kettle boil over. Don't be like the Tibetan guru who sat down to a meal with his followers and decided they should say a quick prayer before they ate. He then drifted into meditative absorption for 5 days and awoke to scold everyone for serving him food with maggots crawling in it! Learning to listen to the



*The summer soft surrenders
To the Autumn's cooler breeze,
But I'm too caught in mundane thought
To spot such things as these.*

emerging 'wind soughing the pines' whilst scanning can be a delightful process, rather like watching spring snow for the first signs of green tips of grass poking through. One moment there is silence and emptiness, the next moment, form. Focusing in this way really helps us to get out of our heads and emerge from the tyranny of thoughts. The key to doing this is to become more interested in something else, and the sensations of the body along with listening for the nascent sounds of the kettle are a great way to do this.

Whether I am alone or in a group, I keep returning to my body as the tea session progresses. Obviously, more of my attention will gravitate towards the mouth sensations as I start to drink the tea. This is a whole other topic that is covered in many of the gongfu experiments in back issues of this newsletter or *The Leaf*. But it is not just about flavors and aromas. Scanning through the body really helps me to connect to the tea's Qi too. The more I am aware of my body, the more aware I am of the tea's energy flowing through me. This is something that I really enjoy exploring, and if I'm alone, I'll often have a few drinks and then take the kettle off the burner while I close my eyes and explore this world. What changes have happened energetically as the tea diffuses through my being? Is it a gentle, Yin energy or Yang? Constant or wave-like? Superficial or deep within my body? Mainly in the limbs or in my torso? Radiating outwards or towards the core, and so on? By doing this, I am deepening my connection to Tea. I am not just coming away from a session with some vague sense that something has shifted for the better; I am actually exploring the energetic changes directly in my body. By doing this I feel that I am meeting tea halfway and opening myself to its healing

energy. Tea can open blockages. It can release traumas held in the body, and so much more. But I think it is much less likely to do so, if I am stuck in my thoughts and mental states a short distance away from my body.

The great thing about tuning into the body is that bodily sensations always happen *now!* If we are present in this way, it is much more difficult to drift off into past and future—away from Life. Too many people, myself included, are guilty of John Lennon's famous admonishment that 'Life is what happens while we are busy making other plans'. I, for one, use my tea drinking sessions to practice returning to the present when my mind drifts off. Tea is an awesome aid for this practice. This is why the Zen monks of old took tea onto their *zafus* with such zeal. I hope this article acts as inspiration for some of you to more consciously bring the body into your tea, as well as tea into your body. At the very least, it should help to make your tea more spacious and enjoyable. Even if you just pay more attention to your posture and keep that spine alert, you will notice the benefits. But the body is more than a mindfulness tool. It is also a gateway to vastness. As we explore, where does it really end? Is our assumption of a mental outline to the body real or just mind-made? Why not drink some tea, close your eyes and have a look for yourself?



TEA WAYFARER

Each month we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and tea are becoming, as the tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. This month we thought you should meet the talented, sparkly and incredibly positive beam of light we call Season Cole.

This is a love story that defies convention and stretches the well hydrated and aromatically steeped threads of imagination. A magical tale of 'Tea meets Girl'. A debriefing of the nurturing friendship that has blossomed between a wise old beverage and a picaro changing. Let's begin at the latest conveniently designated beginning...

Ave Global Tea Brethren and Sister-Kin! Meet Season (which is I), a poet and performance artist, devotee of synchronicity, boogie dervish, and mixtress of mystical pixie sauce. Two years ago I began a daily recitation of a mantra that was, in essence, an invitation for Divine sanctuary to be delivered to me as well as a declaration of my body and all that I do as deliverances of such. Two weeks later... Enter: The Way of the Tea.

Upon my first tasting with Taylor and Colin at their Tea temple in Venice Beach, California, I was guided by Colin to connect with the tree from which the leaves came and the land on which that tree grew. Cue: Major Epiphany! I was immediately transported through time and space to a foreign landscape. I could tangibly feel the plant's roots reaching spindly appendages deep into the earth below and the nutritive pulsations of Nature corraling upward through its trunk. I was tickled by gentle breezes in Her branches and serenaded by the subtle song of soft rustling and the delicate applause of leaves. I was welcomed into the globoid embrace of exotic atmosphere, the convex curvature of mildly complexioned skies above an especially salient feature, with the stable presence of bulbous hills overlooking the scene from a polite distance in the backdrop... and this was all just within the first ten minutes of the first date! I quickly made ample room for Tea in my life and in return, Tea has ever since been Teaching and talking to me, taking me to transcendent astral parties and imperial other worlds on Her coiling sTeamy coat-tails.

Each day I meet with many facets of this dynamic spirit, from Her serene awakenings in mornings as we drift in a crisp waning daze through the ebbing tides of dreamland and in the afternoons surfing alpha waves, to Her more playful and adventurous incarnations which love to bibulously conspire on art projects and wax philosophical under full moons. Tea is now the trustee accomplice and co-conspirator of all that I write. She mingles with my mind in metaphor and lacquers my tongue with

Her clarifying liquor as I rap and rhyme. I've become a bit of a Mad-Hattered-Italian-mother with Tea, officiously providing a bottomless bowl for all who visit.

Tea creates an energetic quality standard and is a barometer of purity in my life, where ever She goes must be up to her preferences par and is instantly designated sacred space. She is the soothing guru shrub, so generously aiding and abetting many meditative and conscious explorations. She has transformed the way I relate with my food and drink and the way I commune with the vegetal realms.

I feel right at home wherever I go where there is Tea; she is my trustee travel companion and faithful co-inhabitant. I just recently moved to Portland Oregon from Southern California, and am cozied up in an underground forest adjacent faery alcove, sitting with innumerable bowls of Tea's kind brew each day, watching small parades of deer graze and raid the fruit trees in the yard. If any of you Tea-familia find yourselves in the rainy City of Roses, you're invited...

Until then, farewell for now fellow wayfarers!
Bowl bottoms up! Cha Dao Cheers and out!



The Global Tea Hut website has a forum, where we can all discuss this month's tea and ask or answer questions, as well as share our experiences. It is a great way to meet some of your brothers and sisters in the hut. Come and join us:

www.globalteahut.org/forum

(We are also on Facebook and Twitter now!)



We have a great video series online now. There are many videos about this tradition, tea brewing, the center and Wu De's travels and work. They are all very inspiring to watch. You can visit our Youtube channel via the GTH website or watch the video on the new page at our site. We will be launching regular videos all the time so check back!



There are currently 200 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world: countries including Spain, Thailand, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. Our accountant, Kaiya the Magnificent (and Merciful) says that things are abundant nowadays so we should all live happily everafter, forever and ever! Membership will be limited to 250ish members!



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in full color, you can read them on the Internet at the GTH website, under the link for 'newsletters'. Some of the photography is worth taking a peek at.



You are all welcome to visit our center in Taiwan. All classes, as well as room and board are completely free of charge. We have tons going on. You can read more at:

www.teasagehut.org

We may have changed all the shipping to unregistered post due to an inflation in the cost of Taiwanese shipping. What this means is that you won't have to sign for GTH anymore; it will just be left on your door or in your mailbox. This may mean that some get lost, and we can't track them, so you will have to let us know if you don't get your GTH.



Wu De is traveling to Estonia and the Ukraine in mid-October for around three weeks, until early November. There will be workshops, interviews, lectures and ceremonies in Tallinn, Tartu, Southern Estonia and Kiev. For information contact Steve: maadlus@infonet.ee



As you can see we are shifting our GTH services around: changing the format of these newsletters and the printer. (Hopefully you see this as improvement—we do!) We also had to switch envelopes, as the post office doesn't make the old ones anymore (but that means we can draw on the new ones). Please contact us or use the forums and let us know what you think!



Our center here in Miao Li, Tea Sage Hut, has a new kitchen (now with a Vitamix thanks to Mia!). As many of you know, this was a long time coming. The new kitchen is gorgeous, complete with a kitchen god, new cupboards, stone counters, a Kuanyin and much more.

www.globalteahut.org

www.teasagehut.org

www.the-leaf.org

Be happy!



OUR PROJECTS

Our Center (Tea Sage Hut)

- Food and entertainment, trips and gas for visitors who wish to see Taiwan
- Bowls and tea for every guest to take home
- A Puerh storage “cave” on the third floor
- A library of vintage teas for future students to study from
- A large collection of various teawares to learn from

Future Center (Light Meets Life)

- **Mountain land (We got it! Check this one off)**
- Building (we will need from between 1,000,000-2,000,000 USD)
- Gardening (Including landscaping, Tea and vegetables for eating)

Publications

- *The Leaf, Tea & Tao Magazine* (Online and free at: www.the-leaf.org)
- Translations of some Chinese texts for free distribution
- Printing of pamphlets and introductions for free distribution
- The purchase of copies of Wu De’s books: *Faces of the Master*, *Tea Wisdom*, *Way of Tea* and *Zen & Tea, One Flavor* for free distribution at our center

Videos

- We need around 500 USD worth of equipment (Contact us if you have some equipment to donate)
- We are also looking for alternative ways to better host/share our videos online