



# Global Tea Art

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE  
February 2015

內在徑

INNER PATH  
YIXING TEAPOTS  
MASTER ZHOU QI KUN



## INNER PATH

Happy Chinese New Year! What a time to celebrate renewal! We have a great issue in store. Last year, Wu De took a trip to Yixing to learn, taking us all with him on his journey. We'll also meet one of our favorite teaware makers in the world, Master Zhou Qi Kun. And yet another great, high-quality tea this month, which is the perfect follow-up to last month's amazing oolong!



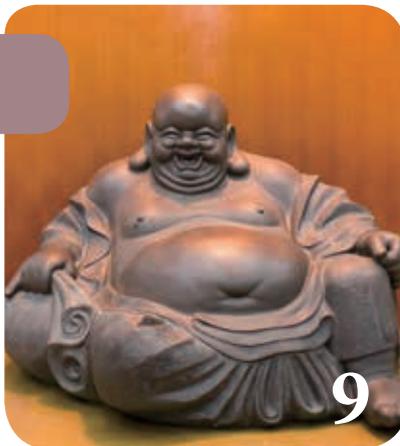
## FEATURES

09 THE FATHER OF TEA

17 THE PURPLE-SAND ROAD

27 WINTER WELLNESS

29 MASTER ZHOU QI KUN



## REGULARS

03 TEA OF THE MONTH

*Spring 2007 Shou Puerh  
Mengku/Jinggu, Yunnan, China*

15 GONGFU TEA TIPS

35 THE EIGHT BOWLS

37 TEA WAYFARER

*Frederic Ballario, France*



LOVE IS  
CHANGING THE WORLD  
BOWL BY BOWL

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# Letter from the Editor

**I**n February, we celebrate the most important holiday of the year: Chinese New Year. The lunar cycle comes full circle and we take joy in renewal, rebirth and give gratitude for all the abundance and love that surrounds us. It is a time for big meals, cleaning and looking back to honor those who have passed on their wisdom to us. Fireworks abound, resounding with reminders to be thankful and occasionally filling the sky with colored starlight that turns our glances Heavenward, where they belong. We get the far away look and think of our place in it all, remembering our mortality and therefore the preciousness of this fleeting life...

In Chinese medicine, almost all illness is thought to be a form of stagnation. Our bodies and spirits are moving, changing energies. The Sage's oft-quoted wisdom that dead things are rigid while living things remain flexible comes readily to mind in discussions of illness from a traditional perspective. In order to stay healthy, our system must move and change. When energy gets stuck, we fall ill. In a way, this is a fundamental truth that even Western modalities acknowledge: that if our digestive system stops absorbing energy and removing waste, we'll be unhealthy. Obviously, the circulatory system must circulate! While this may seem clear on the physical level, it is also important to remember that these principles apply just as poignantly to heart and soul; we must move and grow, lest we find ourselves stagnating spiritually. Actually, the idea that the mental/emotional, physical and spiritual should be compartmentalized is perhaps itself not the healthiest outlook, and definitely is antithetical to the wisdom of the old Chinese sages.

Chinese New Year is therefore always a time for renewal and change. Spring couplets are put on the door to welcome the new growing season—new life and inspiration to cover old trails and reveal new paths that lead to never-before-seen horizons... Taiwanese people buy new clothes and do a thorough cleaning of their homes to move energy around. Here at the center, we believe in the connection between outer and inner work. "After the ecstasy, the laundry", as the Zen saying goes. We must be healthy physically and spiritually to be *healthy*, in other words!

The space in which we live is a manifestation of our mind, and it encourages that kind of mind. A clean space comes out of a pure mind and succors further purification, while a cluttered mind creates a messy living space, which then incites more clutter, etc. Here at the center we take the invitation for change seriously, and use the New Year to clean more deeply—moving furniture and sweeping in those spots you rarely can



reach, dusting our shelves (which means taking down lots of tea jars and cleaning them one by one), and making significant changes to inspire transformation in the coming year. In that spirit, we asked a great friend and master woodworker to make a new central altar to hold a very special, antique Kuanyin we found in Japan. Our Ming Dynasty porcelain Kuanyin is difficult to move, but we feel that having her in a different spot for just one year will bring a lot of shifting, moving energy to this place. And the new one is just as special!

We'd like to pass on the invitation to clean your space more thoroughly and move your furniture around. Remember: it was all your old habits and last-year minds that organized your space, and did so in a way that furthers that kind of mind and life. If you are to make way for a year of new growth and experience, you'll also need new organization, both internally and in your physical life. What a great opportunity to see what your room looks like with things all re-organized. Why not? You can always move them back if you don't like the new configuration, and you'll then have had the chance to clean underneath, getting rid of all the stagnant energies in your place!

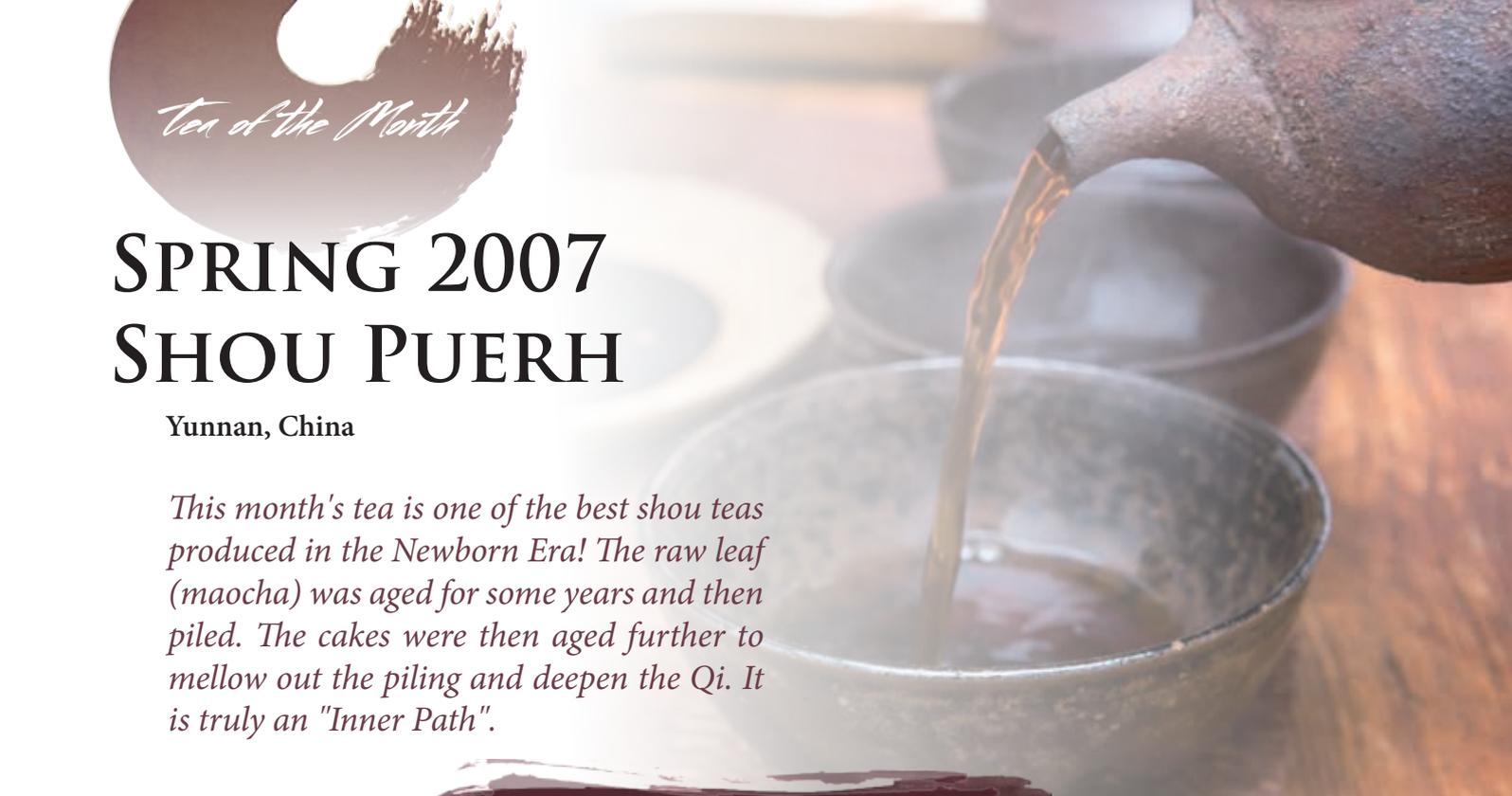
And as you may have noticed, we're doing that with Global Tea Hut as well: moving and changing, letting go of clutter and refining this magazine to be the best Tea magazine ever! This is our year, of abundance and restructuring both! We hope to spend this year building the right structures needed to hold larger amounts of energy!

Tea of the Month

# SPRING 2007 SHOU PUERH

Yunnan, China

*This month's tea is one of the best shou teas produced in the Newborn Era! The raw leaf (maocha) was aged for some years and then piled. The cakes were then aged further to mellow out the piling and deepen the Qi. It is truly an "Inner Path".*



茶道

For the last month of winter, we asked our beloved treasurer Shen Su to add a little extra to our tea budget for Global Tea Hut, and asked a dear tea merchant and friend to donate just a bit more, so that we could splurge and share with you one of our favorite Shou teas, and one we drink regularly at the Tea Sage Hut! In that way, you will all be joining us as we warm up through the holidays and into the first warming rays of spring, and the showers that follow. We are off to a great start this year, since January's tea was the most valuable tea ever donated to us and this month's is also a bit of a bonus for the whole community! Sharing this staple shou that we love also provides us with more than just the chance to share our hearts and life at the center with you all; it's also a great opportunity to explore shou puerh tea more deeply...

One of the most famous puerh magazines in China is called *Jianghu*, which literally translates to "rivers and lakes". It refers to the uncivilized wilds where gongfu masters meet to face one another in combat. "Jianghu" is a phrase used in many of the ways we say "wild west": to refer to lawless places

where you can't be sure if the sheriff himself is good or bad, and where information is all suspect and one must rely on one's own skills and intuition to navigate. The lawless world of martial artists depicted in stories, legends (and even "Kongfu Double Feature" films which used to show on Saturdays when some of us were young) is a world where the only thing that matters is a hero's skills. Talk is cheap. Tradition and practice are evident and real, as survival necessitates that it be so. In her recent English book, *Puerh Tea: Ancient Caravans and Urban Chic*, author Zhang Jing Hong explores the anthropological and sociological significance of puerh tea in light of this "wild west" filter. Like the magazine from which she got the idea, she suggests that the puerh market is saturated with contradictory opinions, misinformation, poor governmental regulation and all other kinds of chaos that make puerh tea difficult to study.

Much can be said for trusting in one's own skills and learning by drinking tea. As Master Lin always says: "If and until you try a fine tea, it is too hard to tell. Tasting is believing." At some point, how-

ever, we all need a teacher. To be unfounded is to float in this sea of misinformation and struggle with contradictory views. Almost ninety percent of the people in the puerh industry have joined in the last ten to fifteen years, enticed by financial prospects as opposed to a love for puerh. When we were in Yunnan last spring (which you all read about in July's issue) we saw that many farmers/vendors had started growing/selling South American herbs like *maca* instead of tea, following the market wherever it leads...

The confusion that resounds throughout the puerh world is much akin to trying to understand human health in this modern age: You can read articles, with tons of data and research suggesting that mushrooms are amazing for your health while other authors claim that they are a blight and that most diseases are, in fact, fungi! In such a milieu of different healing modalities—from herbs and acupuncture to Western medicine—you have to develop some sensitivity and a real ability to listen to your own body. However, that doesn't

mean you don't also need a doctor; *you do!* You need a healer in whom you can trust, no matter what his or her modality. Such a doctor will encourage you to develop your own intuition while at the same time counseling and examining you to help optimize your health, since they are the expert. Similarly, tea lovers should develop their own ability to evaluate tea and tea wisdom, but we all still need a teacher and tradition.

So much of what we know about tea couldn't have been figured out on our own because it is the result of hundreds, if not thousands of years of accumulated wisdom! Even

if we drank tea all day for the rest of our lives we'd never figure it out, just like none of us would ever have learned algebra on our own growing up on an island, no matter how interested in math we are! We need teachers and we need faith in our tradition. That has to come alongside personal exploration. A lot of tea vendors promote the "as you like it" brewing method, suggesting that there is no better or worse and you should just do whatever you like. Such tolerance is good business, and is a good character attribute in general. But tolerance is an attitude, not a Way (Dao). Brewing tea however it pleases you is fine for relaxing

and there is a certain truth in letting people be happy, despite their differences. If everyone in the world cultivated more patience for others' differences, this would be a merry world indeed. But such a practice doesn't really have a progress. It leads nowhere, in other words.

Discussing some of the philosophical basis for approaching puerh tea is a good introduction to some of the changes that have come to puerh in this modern, "New-born Era". If we learn from those who have come before us—who in turn learned from those before them—we can build on that wisdom in a secure and profound way.

### *A Genre in Its Own Right*

**P**uerh tea is sometimes put into the black tea category (remember, this isn't red tea, which is mistakenly called "black tea" in the West), but it should actually have a category all its own. Traditionally, all puerh was fermented before consumption, whether artificially in the case of shou or naturally over time in the case of sheng. As we've mentioned elsewhere, tea lovers back in the day considered new, sheng puerh as "unfinished" and rarely drank it, except to see how it was aging. Therefore, all puerh tea was fermented and fit nicely into the black tea genre, which is categorized by post-production fermentation.

These days, however, much more sheng puerh is consumed young than old. And since sheng puerh vastly overshadows shou in quantity and in historicity (shou only dates back to the sixties or seventies), sheng obviously typifies puerh tea.

One solution to this change in tea production/consumption would be to put young, sheng puerh in the green tea category and aged sheng along with shou in the black tea category. But that seems much more confusing than just giving puerh tea its own genre. We think that since it's the oldest tea, and from the birthplace of all tea, puerh deserves its own genre!



As a result, we grow and develop new insights, but insights that are founded firmly on a deep understanding. First, we'd like to discuss the greatest change in puerh in general over the last fifteen or sixteen years since the beginning of the Newborn Era, and then we'll move on to some of the changes that have started in shou puerh specifically.

## **The Newborn Era**

As we have discussed briefly in previous issues, the greatest change in the puerh world in recent years has been the consumption of young sheng puerh. Young, raw puerh is astringent and bitter. It is often very strong for a lot of people. It is also cold in nature, which many Chinese people find to be unhealthy for their constitution. Overconsumption may also result in digestive and/or stomach issues for some people. For these reasons, it was never really drunk (other than to evaluate its aging potential). Puerh tea was considered a "black tea" (not red, which is called "black" in the West) because like all black tea, it underwent post-production fermentation—either naturally through aging in the case of sheng, or artificially through piling in the case of shou. All puerh tea was fermented, in other words. In fact, the data for puerh production from the early 2000's greatly underestimates production quantities by modern standards because young raw tea was not included in the government or factory surveys. The reported quantity of puerh produced in those years therefore only included shou tea. The raw tea was considered unfinished. Like "new-make spirit" in whiskey production, which isn't "whiskey" until it is aged (for at least three years by law), young raw tea was considered to need further processing in the form of aging to be defined as "puerh tea" at all.

Nowadays, the puerh world has changed. Aged teas grow rarer and

more expensive all the time, and more and more people are introduced to puerh through young sheng. And many Chinese only consume young, raw tea, preferring it to aged sheng or shou. For the old timers like us, this was a very hard change to make at first. We were amongst those shaking our fists at the new trend, and demanding that "real" puerh had to be aged. Though we've grown out of that fiery stage, it is still easy to understand why we thought that way: imagine if you'd been introduced to puerh at a time when full maturity meant seventy years, and such teas were cheap and abundant. After drinking such marvelous vintages every day for years, it wasn't easy to learn to appreciate the astringency and strength of a young sheng puerh. Nowadays, we've come to see puerh as its own genre of tea—neither green nor black tea—and to love the variety between young sheng, aged sheng, partially-aged sheng and great shou. Each of these kinds of teas has great examples, and is marvelous in its own way—good for certain seasons, times of day or even sentiments depending on the session!

## **Changes in Shou Puerh**

The changes in shou tea have also been great, especially in the last ten years. To understand the recent evolution of shou, we need to first discuss some of its background. In the sixties, the factories of Yunnan, which were controlled by the government through the CNNP (which stands for *China National Native Produce & Animal By-Products Import & Export Company*), hoped to reduce the aging period of puerh tea. Traditionally, aged sheng tea was considered fully mature at around seventy years. That age isn't arbitrary. The physical structure of puerh changes at such a slow rate by that time that it will take many decades to notice a difference. At around seventy years, the tea is dark



and fragrant and won't really change color, though it will continue to change energetically at a constant rate, and in flavor/aroma at a much slower rate. Over time, the aging process slows down, so the difference between a one and five-year-old sheng are great, a five and ten still so, while ten and fifteen not as much, and so on until the difference is measured in decades rather than years. Waiting seventy years is a long time. Even the thirty years which is considered to be "old" by younger puerh lovers is still a long time, so it is no wonder that factories sought out a way to artificially ferment puerh tea.

In the sixties, tea makers in Yunnan traveled to Hunnan and Liu Bao to learn about the artificial fermentation of other black teas, hop-



*Fermenting shou puerh under a thermal blanket.  
Other maocha is stored in sacks waiting to be piled.*

ing to apply that to puerh. They did many experimental batches, figuring out how to apply the process to Yunnan's unique tea and microbial terroir. After enough trial and error, they received license to begin shou production in 1973, which is almost always recorded as the starting date of shou tea in books. Of course, they weren't successful at mimicking aged sheng puerh, but did create a new kind of puerh to be appreciated and evaluated by its own criteria.

After the *maocha* arrives at the factory, it is piled, misted with water and covered with a thermal blanket. This process is called “wo dui (臥堆)” in Chinese. It is akin to composting. The wet, hot climate allows bacteria to flourish and ferments the tea at a much faster rate. Sometimes, bacteria colonies are

continued from batch to batch, and as with all fermented products, much of the quality of shou tea will depend on the vitality and quality of the bacteria!

The first of the two changes in recent shou production is to do with the skill to keep the bacteria thriving from batch to batch, understanding the role they play. The second, and more pronounced change in shou production over the years is a trend towards more full fermentation. Nowadays, most shou tea is fermented from fresh *maocha* for between forty-five and sixty days, fully fermenting the tea. Such tea has less capacity for aging, mellowing out over the years as opposed to real transformation. In order to achieve the quality and flavor of a well-aged shou tea, such teas will

have to be stored for decades. Traditionally, the piling process was done much more skillfully. It is easy to stir the pile and wet it and just wait until it is fully fermented. But in those days, the producers sought to halt the artificial fermentation at a certain degree, which was determined by the customers' order or the nature and grade (leaf size) of the *maocha* being used. As such, this method required a much greater understanding of tea and shou processing as well. It also allows the tea to age, changing and growing like sheng, though to a lesser extent. In fact, there are some 1980's shou puerhs that could easily be passed off as aged sheng to the uninitiated.

This trend towards easier, faster and more fully-fermented shou is not always good for tea. Back in the

day, the factories took great pride in their tea, and you could get tea that was aged, then fermented and compressed. You could find shou tea that was fermented more skillfully, and with a potential to age. Fortunately, such teas are still being produced nowadays, albeit in lesser quantities.

### *Tea of the Month*

Our tea of the month is a great blend of various teas from Mengku, Lincang, Yunnan. The tea was purchased by a small boutique for private production in 2007. The leaves were of various sizes, from grade three to nine. This large spectrum, from smaller buds to larger, old-growth leaves was common back in the day. (7572 is one famous example, which we have sent out in Global Tea Hut. It has an average leaf size of 7.) This *maocha* was aged in Jinggu for five years before it was piled, which is unique for modern shou tea. Jinggu is a decent place to age tea in Yunnan, as it is more

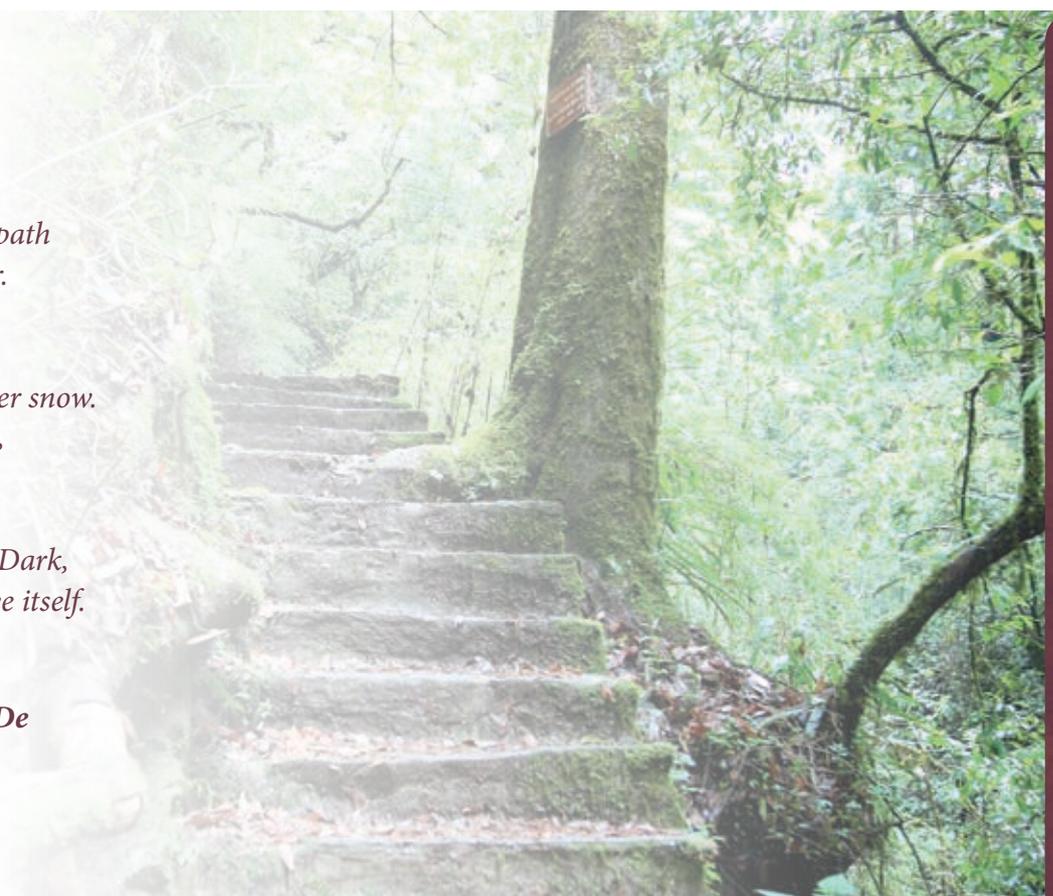
humid than the capital, or even Mengku where this tea originated.

The five-year-old *maocha* was fermented to a lesser degree than most shou teas nowadays, leaving room for change and growth. This also means that the process was watched and managed with more care and skill. Stopping the fermentation isn't always the best way to make shou, but it does ensure a greater degree of concern and care for the process, which has to be watched constantly as a result. Also, the reason that inferior, left-over, heavily blended teas have always been used to make shou puerh is that it is inferior to aged sheng. It lacks the vibrancy and Qi, and much of the healing medicine can be lost in the piling of puerh tea. Shou tea is therefore cheaper than young or especially aged sheng puerh. For that reason, good old-growth material is rarely used, since it would mean that a vendor had to sell their shou cakes for the same price as sheng, which few customers will pay. Some would also say it would be a waste of quality leaves to

pile them, as their potential is much greater as aged sheng.

It is also difficult to find truly clean, chemical-free shou puerh tea, since it is often made up of left-overs, and usually from various regions. The exceptions are always small productions made by tea lovers, like this month's tea. This month's shou is made from a small batch of better leaves, including old-growth, intentionally aged and intentionally piled. And aged in an environment that was suitable for their evolution.

While aged *maocha* can be piled to make shou, you have to compress the tea right after the piling. Aged loose-leaf shou couldn't be compressed, as the tea leaves would resist the steam and not hold shape. Our tea was aged in Jinggu for five years and then piled for around thirty days before compression, all in Jinggu County. Then, the tea lover producing these teas aged the cakes themselves for another two years before selling them and/or sharing them with friends. So the tea is seven or eight years old from



*I wander inwards  
And find an old forest path  
Ensorcelled with power.  
The roots whisper  
To distant streams  
That melt the last winter snow.  
Dancing with shadows,  
The sunlight glimmers  
Over the fallen leaves.  
The Light sees into the Dark,  
But the Dark doesn't see itself.  
Not Yet.*

— Wu De

one perspective—if you think of its birth in terms of harvest—or, only three years old if you count from when it was compressed. Either way, the whole process, from selecting and blending the teas to aging them in Jinggu, then in piling them with more intention and for only a month, and then in aging the cakes themselves for two years to allow them to mellow out and loose the piling flavors—all of this was done with a love for tea and a desire to make a great shou puerh. It's no wonder this is one of our favorites!

This magical tea lights up a winter day, with a sweet and thick liquor that tastes of camphor, mushrooms and Taiwanese black sugar. It is a great way to end the winter and celebrate the Chinese New Year. As we drink this tea, fireworks are exploding all over Taiwan. This year's lunar calendar ends quite late compared to the solar calendar, so Chinese New Year is in mid to late February. And “Inner Path”, as we call it, is the perfect tea for transitioning from winter to spring, for keeping warm and feeling renewed.

We find the Qi of this magical tea to be surprisingly uplifting for a shou, though we still feel grounded. It isn't as Yin as most shou. It is great in the afternoon or early evening, helping transition from day to night just as we find ourselves drinking it more in late winter. We hope that this great tea finds you surrounded by your own kind of fireworks, reminding you how precious the moment is—each blaze a smile of someone you love, a favorite incense or the smell of an evergreen you pass even when it is snowing. Share in our celebrations with us and help us work towards renewal and growth in the coming year! Let us all toast the growth of this beautiful community in sharing one of our favorite teas!



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## *Brewing Tips for This Month's Tea*

This month's tea could be served in a side-handle pot or prepared gongfu. Don't be afraid to make it strong. Shou puerh responds well to a bit more leaf, especially when it is cold outside. This tea is nice when brewed a bit stronger. The larger leaves make it difficult to oversteep. You'll find the liquor is clear and bright no matter how much leaf you use or how long you steep it.

Try putting your hand on your pot and see if you can feel when the tea is ready. Learning to use your senses to hone your tea brewing skills is the only way to mastery. You cannot achieve mastery in tea brewing by using timers, thermometers or scales. While such devices can help us learn, we have to set them down like the crutches they are and learn to gauge the amount of leaf by appearance, and know the temperature of the water from the sound or vibration of the kettle. Similarly, try placing your hands

on or near your pot and see if you can sense when it is time to pour. Start with the gross and move to the subtle: feel the temperature of the pot and see if you can detect any change. Then focus on the frequency of its Qi, feeling for an increase in pitch as more and more of the water fills with Tea essence.

At first this may seem esoteric, but that's only because it is difficult to describe in words. As you begin to really feel the changes in frequency from moment to moment, you will also begin to sense when it is time to pour. In gongfu tea, a general rule is that the first rinse is slightly longer, followed by a flash steeping and then the steepings slowly increase in duration. With fine teas, you can have two or three flash steepings in the middle. But this is only a general formula, and can't be substituted for real experience brewing a tea!

# YIXING

# THE FATHER OF TEA

Wu De

*Whenever anyone asks Master Lin what kind of teaware to use, he always responds, "There is purple-sand and there is no second." Yixing teapots have been married to Tea for five hundred years. Water is the "Mother of Tea" and purple-sand pots the "Father". Together, they have brought countless smiles of joy, healing of enemies and celebration of friends. There is also a magic in a well-seasoned purple-sand pot that suggests something which is so simple, and yet transcends the ordinary.*

There is perhaps no art form that has married itself to Tea and tea culture more passionately than the purple-sand teapots from Yixing, the "Pottery City". The teapots made in Yixing often capture all the elegance and simplicity of the tea ceremony, while at the same time, hinting ever so slightly at the transcendence the ceremony can inspire. When artists master the craft, Yixing teapots can encourage us to find the harmony we are seeking when we sit for tea; for they bring with them the spirit of the Earth, the art of tea and the simplicity of true living. The best teapots are the ones where the decoration is so subtle, beckoning almost, as one holds them in the palm.

There is no ceramic art in the world quite like Yixing purple-sand teapots, for they aren't just pieces

of art meant to sit on the shelf and be admired. The beauty of tea art is only expressed properly as a living art. The pots want to be used. They develop a soft, silky sheen over time the more they find themselves in the company of good leaves and water—becoming more and more beautiful as they are used. In fact, finding a way to balance the elegance and function of a teapot is what mastery of Yixing art is all about. It is not enough that an Yixing teapot be inspiring to look at; it must also improve our tea as well as summon a second glance even when it sits on a shelf amongst others. Furthermore, the art of Yixing isn't just about the sense of sight; it involves all the senses. We evaluate and appreciate these teapots by touching them, feeling their tex-

ture and form; we even ding them to hear the sound they make. Thus, the space around and between the teapots becomes just as important to the composition of the piece—the balance between the button and lid, the mouth, spout, the handle and base are all important features when crafting an Yixing teapot.

Echoing the favorite analogy of our eldest teacher Lao Tzu, the usefulness of the teapot also lies in its space—the tea flows *through* it, just as the Dao flows through us when we are clean and pure. And then, when we brew our teas, the improvement in aroma and flavor will help us judge our friendship with any given pot. Because of this combination of function and design, Yixing teapots have achieved a leg-



acy of their own, finding a central place in the story of tea.

### ***Some Background***

During most of the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 CE) popular tea was boiled in cauldrons with other ingredients and then ladled out. The tea itself was compressed into cakes that were then ground into powder before being thrown into the cauldron. Later, Lu Yu promoted the drinking of just the pure leaf, calling the liquor mixed with fruits or flowers “gutter water.” In the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279 CE) the real art of tea would begin in the monasteries, as the monks sought to refine the peacefulness and connection to tea, by crafting bowls, whisks, grinders and other imple-

ments that lent the ceremony an artistic expression like never before. For the first time, the tea ceremony was being expressed both spiritually and aesthetically, attracting more people over time.

During these two dynasties, tea would find its way to the royal court and beyond to the literati, who of course took to the new art with all the verve that such artists, authors and scholars could bring to a passion that incorporated their daily habits and deepest inspirations both. They, too, wanted to express the peace and serenity they had found on the mountain while visiting the monastery, to recapture it in some measure each day while they were at home. They wrote poems, calligraphy, books, painted pictures and of course made ceramics, like

Song bowls to hold their beautifully whisked teas.

In the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644 CE), the emperor would ban the use of powdered teas and all the art surrounding it would slowly die in China, though it was fortunately preserved, adapted and further explored in Japan. Instead, he promoted the use of whole-leaf teas, like the ancestors of long ago. All of the artistic intention was shifted towards this new form of tea preparation. Even before that, the town of Yixing, which was then called Yan Xian, was a pottery town, making all kinds of cheap household items for commoners, like jugs, plates, etc. It would very soon change to the teapot capital of the world, though.

According to ancient legend, there was a monk named

Ding Shu who walked through the town shouting, “Honor and virtue for sale!” They say that all the villagers laughed at him, thinking him mad until a few weeks later when he changed his pitch to, “Riches for sale!” Some people then followed him and he led them to the iron-rich deposits of clay ore that would make the town famous for all the centuries to come.

During the reign of the Ming Emperor Zheng De (1505 – 1521 CE), Yixing teapots were elevated into an art form. Historians often attribute these changes to the now-legendary figure of Gong Chuan. Not much is known about Gong Chuan, as he was but the humble servant of a government officer. There are many versions of his story, though, and most of them involve some kind of trip where he accompanied his master to the neighboring city of Yixing. In his free time, he visited the Jing Sha Temple and drank tea with a monk there. The monk was an artist and had crafted all his teaware himself. Gong Chuan was amazed at the elegance and serenity expressed in the work and asked the monk to teach him. Over the coming years, Gong Chuan would return whenever he got the chance and try his hand at making the rustic teapots, using only his hand and a wooden spoon to form them. He had a natural affinity for clay, and soon started producing excellent teapots that were not only beautiful, but produced better tea. He gifted one to his master, who was also a tea lover. As his master shared tea with friends and family, they would all ask where he got the special teapot. In no time, all the government officials, artists and scholars in the town were feverishly collecting Gong Chuan’s teapots. He became famous, quickly earning enough to support himself. His master gladly released him from service and he devoted the rest of his life to making teapots that expressed his understanding of Cha Dao. From that point on, the art of pur-

ple-sand teapots evolved and grew, spreading throughout China and beyond.

### *A Magic Clay*

A big part of what makes Yixing teaware so special is the clay itself. The Chinese were master potters long before many Western peoples, having developed stoneware and porcelain many centuries earlier. The clay used in Yixing teapots is mined from the local Yellow Dragon, Zhao Zuang, Shao Mei Yao and Hu Fu mountains and their surroundings, for it, too, is stoneware. Because the clay is naturally lead-free, it can be used for food and

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*“The art of purple-sand teaware is used to express the feelings the craftsman has for the Earth, and then to transcend them, so that people can feel the softness and freedom revealed in the Earth.”*  
—Ke Tao Chung

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drink even after the initial firing, without the need for a glaze. Without glaze, the clay remains porous and sand-like.

“Zisha” or “purple-sand” clay is composed of quartz remains, isinglass, kaolinite, mica, hematite, iron and several other trace elements. It is fired at a temperature of around 1100- 1800 degrees Celsius, and the quartz and isinglass remains create what potters call a “double pore structure”, which ultimately was the ring that sealed its marriage to Tea. Examination under a microscope allows one to see the deep chambers of pores that actually run from inside to outside in an Yixing teapot. Because of that, the oils in the tea are absorbed into the tea-

pot itself and over time the pot gets “seasoned”, as tea lovers say. In other words, it absorbs the fragrance and depth of all the teas it has met in its time. Also, the composite structure of Yixing clay makes it resilient to radical temperature changes, so that teapots can be covered with boiling water even in the cold of winter; and what could be a more elegant image than winter-plums covered in a light snow, perhaps pine-covered mountains in the distance beyond a frozen pond, as seen over the rim of a steaming Yixing pot?

After the clay is mined it looks like a block of stone, with a flaky consistency. It is then allowed to rest in the air for weeks or even years, called “corrosion”, as it breaks down into small, soybean-sized pebbles. These small chunks are then ground into sand and allowed to “ferment” in water for a period. The duration depends on the ore and the master overseeing the process, though most of the old masters I’ve met seemed to have a “the longer the better” philosophy when it comes to airing/storing the ore. More water and sifting produces smoother clay, whereas leaving more sand creates textured clay that is often more porous when fired. Sifters of various sizes are used to create these different textures. Then, after the clay is slabbed, it is pounded with a large wooden mallet, sometimes blending colors in this way, until the putty is of the desired color and consistency.

### *Varieties of Ore*

The variety of colors in Yixing relate to where in the strata the ore was mined, how long it was allowed to “ferment” in air over time, as well as the firing temperature and occasional mixture of iron to redden the clay. Hotter temperatures will produce darker purple colors. Traditionally, the clay was categorized as purple (*zini*), red (*hongni*), green (*luni*), black (*heini*) or gray/yellow (*huangni/duanni*). Some scholars



and Yixing collectors, however, suggest that the clays should be classified by what mountain they were mined from, rather than the color. In recent years, there has been the addition of a variety of other colors—green, yellow, blue, black and red in myriad hues—some of which may be due to natural or manmade additives, like iron for example. Some pots even include mixtures of one or more of these spectacular clays.

The *zhuni* red clay pots, especially antique ones, are the most expensive because this ore is virtually non-existent in its natural form. Furthermore, the greater shrinkage and more delicate consistency of these *zhuni* pots make the success rate lower, as many won't match

their lid or get broken in the process. All *zhuni* pots are at least in part blended with some other kind of clay to increase their stability.

Despite the cost and rarity of *zhuni* pots, Yixing is famous as the “Purple-sand City” because it is the purple-sand (*zini*) which is the oldest and most common clay/ore. It was the purple-sand clay pots that became known as the “Father of Tea”, marrying Yixing forever to tea brewing. Real Purple-sand pots have a magical effect on tea liquor that can only be tasted and felt in the mouth.

Yixing clay has almost perfect plasticity. It also has one of the lowest shrinkage rates of any clay, on average ten to twenty-five percent from production to firing, depend-

ing on the type of clay, the processing and the temperature of the kiln. This allows for the perfect fit of the lid and pot, as well as the porous texture that makes them so perfect for brewing tea. Moreover, the quartz and other metallic elements in the clay lend it a natural, simple color. The great potter Gao Zhuang once said that what he loved most about Yixing art was that the appearance couldn't show its value, but rather its nature.

### *Earth Dreaming of Tea*

The Earth couldn't have dreamed of a clay more suited for Tea, for Yixing clay comes from deep mines, bringing that spirit and joy with it to the tea ceremony. One of the

brightest masters in the Pottery City today, Ke Tao Chung, says, "The art of purple-sand teaware is used to express the feelings the craftsman has for the Earth, and then to transcend them, so that people can feel the softness and freedom revealed in the Earth." I also have found such artistic, spiritual and even elemental grandeur in holding Yixing pots—they are wise and kind, and the way they improve our tea, by absorbing its essence and power and bringing it to all our future sessions, is nothing shy of miraculous.

They say that a Ming Emperor liked to leave the palace incognito and wander the cities, going to teahouses and other places to share in the conversations of the times. On one such excursion, dressed as a humble peasant, the emperor was walking down a quiet street. Through the window he saw an old farmer preparing tea. The ceremony looked so harmonious and pleasant, the emperor couldn't resist and knocked lightly at the door. He politely asked the farmer if he could join him and the farmer smilingly acquiesced. The liquor was dark and deep, amazing the emperor. For several hours they sat in calm joy, content to just relax, basking in the peace the dark tea inspired. When the time came to leave, the emperor asked the farmer where he got such amazing tea. The farmer replied, "I'm sorry sir, I am but a poor farmer and can't afford any tea at all; I have only this old Yixing pot used by my father and his father before him." Holding the empty pot up for the emperor's inspection, he saw that the pot was seasoned enough to create such deep liquor with just water alone. The next day, the emperor sent a bag of gold coins to the farmer's house and arranged a caravan to leave for Yixing!

Over the years, the art of Yixing would evolve, incorporating all the other art forms in the Middle Kingdom. Since most artists, of any kind, were also tea lovers, pots soon had calligraphy, painting, seal-carv-

ing and even poetry on their sides as ornamentation. Some of the most sought after teapots were ones made by famous potters and artists together, one creating the pot and the other painting it or carving the calligraphy.

Eventually, two main styles would develop based on the differences in the tea art of the North and South. In the northern cities, near the capital, it was mostly government officials that collected teapots. They wanted larger pots to serve many guests, with a lot of ornamentation to show off their power and affluence. In the South, businessmen and commoners alike all drank tea

every day. They preferred simple, small pots to make tea for themselves and their friends. There were regional exceptions to these trends. Though not associated with North, South or any particular region, these styles continue even today, and have diversified, as generations of potters have innovated and creatively expanded the art and its expression, technique and method. I have found that the so-called "southern style pots" are often more conducive to a harmonious gongfu tea ceremony. Serving tea to large groups is usually better suited to bowl tea.

Over the years, potters would develop new clay compositions



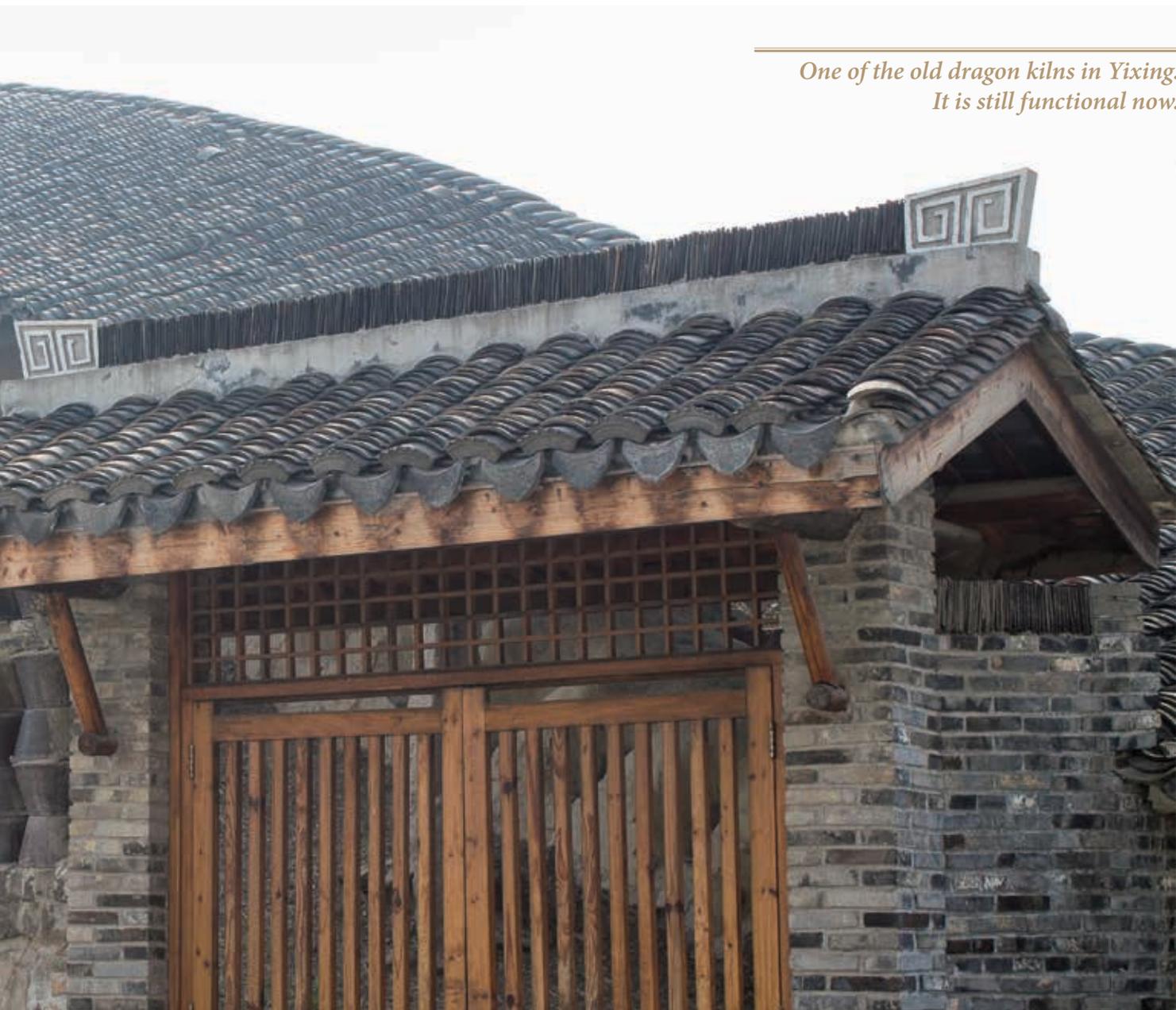
and formulas, refining the process so much that a whole class of “clay masters” would develop. These men didn’t actually make teapots, they just refined the clay with enough mastery to surpass what the potters themselves could do. And the potters, then, were free to develop new techniques and methods of expressing the many sentiments of Tea.

Much like the aged and wise tea leaves, Yixing pots have a kind of consciousness and even destiny. They seem to have a bond with their owners, as they are passed down through time. Walking into a store full of teapots, five separate tea lovers will be drawn to five separate

pots without being able to explain why. These pots then become like dear friends, traveling with us over time as we progress. There are times when I enter the center’s tea room undecided about which tea to drink and find myself choosing not based on which leaf I think suits the day, but which teapot I wish to hold. A simple Yixing pot resting on a small plate, framed by mountains, is an image that for me carries all the peace and bliss of the tea ceremony with it.

I imagine myself living in some rural town long ago, with three Yixing pots and three jars of tea. After a hard day’s work, I can’t wait to

return home to these friends each night. I spend the evenings drunk on old teas, poured from small Yixing pots that have been in my family for generations, watching the sun set behind the abundance of distant peaks...



*One of the old dragon kilns in Yixing.  
It is still functional now.*

# EVERYTHING FINISHED IN ONE BREATH

Wu De

*This is the final article in this series of discussions about the poem that preserves the gongfu wisdom of our tradition. It's worthwhile to read through the previous issues and also explore the poem's personal meanings, and experiential practice.*



工夫

For a few months now, we've had some rather profound discussions about the poem that transmits our tradition of gongfu brewing. We encourage you to look back at the previous issues before we conclude our exploration here, with the final line. There is so much more than we could discuss in these brief articles, as each line really expresses enough to discuss and practice for months if not years. Many of the deeper truths this poem hints at are only relevant to us when we cultivate a gongfu practice for some time. For those of you beginning such a path, we hope this poem inspires you to delve deeper into the magic of gongfu tea.

This month, we want to expand upon the final, and perhaps deepest of the lines of our poem, "Everything is finished in one breath". In this case, a lot of the depth and presence of the poem is lost in the translation. Actually, the line reads, "Everything is finished in one Qi." Here, "Qi" could be translated as breath, which is very significant, as we soon shall see, but it can also

refer to energy. And that is a better place to begin our discussion of this line.

When we say that everything is finished in one Qi, we mean that the whole brewing process must be one movement. So many of the little details of where we place our teaware and how we implement it relate to this truth, for if the ceremony flows smoothly as one movement from kettle to cup the dif-

*Preserve the heat and begin to absorb peace,  
With slow, gentle and graceful movements,  
And a heart free of obstructions,  
Everything is finished in one breath.*

ference in the tea is tremendous. When the brewing is smooth and uninterrupted, there is a grace that transcends the ordinary. Even on the physical level, the flavor, aroma and mouthfeel of a tea are greatly impacted by the one brewing, as we have experimented with in the past. And much of that impact comes from the way in which the elements are introduced to one another—the water meeting the fire, meeting the

leaves and into the pot and cups, etc. When that process occurs with grace and fluidity, there is of course a greater fluency between all the elements that results in a better cup of tea in every possible way; one that tastes and smells better, feels better in the mouth and enters the subtle body so much more smoothly.

Much of the truth of finishing in one movement is relevant to all Chinese and Japanese art, which values spontaneity, selflessness and fluidity. When I am painting, I try to channel as much Tea spirit into my paintings as possible, and thereby leave out as much of

my ego and intellect as I can. If you pause when painting with ink and rice paper, the ink begins to spread and blot. Worse, your mind starts to get involved. I then begin to think about what I am doing and what "I" want to create, as opposed to what Tea wants to paint. Such scrolls are always inferior and most often end up as blotting paper for other paintings...

These principles apply to anything that requires mastery, from athletics to the arts. The best musical performances are fluid and free and force the artist(s) and the listeners out of the jaiyard of personal routine. Similarly, when an athlete has something on his or her mind, they rarely perform well. It is only when he is “in the zone” that the great runner runs so extraordinarily.

Pauses are often a sign of trepidation, lack of confidence or surety, the absence of which will translate to the finished art—in this case the final cup of tea. When tea is prepared smoothly and calmly, without any break between the steps, there is a combining of elements and energies that creates harmony and depth.

There is also a lot that can be said for looking at this in terms of “...finished in one *breath*”. Our breath is a magical source of insight, focus and concentration— one-pointedness of mind (*Samadhi*). The breath is one of the only bodily functions that can be controlled consciously or allowed to return to a natural rhythm that can be observed objectively by the mind, making it a powerful meditative tool for thousands of years. Any time I am upset or flustered in any way, my breath invariably changes. It is, therefore, also a gauge of my mind. Clearing the breath is clearing the mind, allowing us to brew tea from a place

of Stillness beyond the mind. And when our efforts come out of such Stillness, then they of course invite our guests to find that Stillness in themselves. When any art, or even teaching, comes from a Still heart, it will also lead to that place in us when we view or listen to it.

Finishing the brewing in one breath can be literal. If we calm down and center ourselves, our breathing slows down and deepens. It is said that the best calligraphy is always brushed in a single breath. When one is very, very calm the movement from kettle to cup can happen in a single breath. But this cannot be forced. The poem is not referring to some kind of breathing exercise (other than perhaps using some breaths to calm down before lifting the kettle, as we discussed in previous articles in this series). When you are truly calm and centered, and all the movements are deft and graceful, happening without obstructions in the heart or hands, you will occasionally experience a steeping that aligns itself with a single inhalation/exhalation. The result is magical...

In trying to move towards finishing everything in one energy, one movement, we can begin to pay attention to the placement of our teaware and how we handle it in relation to such fluency. For example, if you haven't already, make a

practice of always holding the kettle in the off-hand (viz., the left hand if you are right-handed). In that way, you can pour water over the leaves, shower the pot and then pick it up directly—in one single movement—as opposed to pouring and then setting the kettle down so that you can pick the pot up with the same hand, which is clunky and counterproductive to fluency. As you can see, the ability to “finish in one breath” is dependent upon ambidexterity. We must learn to center our body and use both hands equally if we are to master tea preparation with gongfu. Putting the largest of our tools in the off-hand also helps to facilitate strengthening it and balancing the two.

This month, try practicing using both hands more. Try keeping the kettle in the off-hand and then switch so that you can notice the difference. Hopefully, you will recognize how much more smooth, graceful and fluid tea brewing becomes when you use both hands. This also serves to preserve temperature, as the first line suggests, since brewing is quicker, and the whole process is a single movement. Over time, this frees the mind and opens the heart—completing much of the spirit the poem is pointing towards. As always, email us with your insights as a result of trying these experiments!



# THE PURPLE-SAND ROAD

Wu De

*Wu De had the fortune to go on an amazing journey to Yixing last year and learn from Master Lin, Henry Yiow and Master Zhou. Long before he left, he knew he'd write this article, and so prayed to carry us all along on the trip in spirit.*

Months before flying to Yixing, I knew it was going to be one of the most important trips I'd ever take. This wasn't the ordinary tourist stint, poking my head into ceramicists' workshops, sniffing through shelves of pots and sculptures in the market or taking photos with friendly locals. At the station waiting for me, down a long and drab corridor, was my own master Lin Ping Xiang, a dear brother and mentor Henry Yiow and Master Zhou Qi Kun. Master Zhou is one of the best teaware makers alive, and certainly my favorite person in Yixing! I was being welcomed by the best possible guides one could ask for: My master has decades of experience studying Yixing teaware and traveling there, and so does Henry, and Master Zhou is one of the most knowledgeable experts on Yixing history, art and production in the world. And so the hugs at the end of that corridor were the culmination of a long-standing dream—one that I'd spent months preparing for, emptying myself in a

readiness to absorb and learn all that I could about my favorite teapots. Yixing pots have taught me so much, and are some of my oldest and most precious friends and teachers on my journey. So before I left Taiwan, I held an old pot and smiled, imagining the trip to come...

Two weeks is a long time to spend in the small town of Yixing, but I was no ordinary tourist. Sure, there's not a lot to see by way of attraction, and most people can learn what they need to about teapots from just a few days. But I wanted a deep immersion, especially given the opportunity to do so at a time in my life when my Chinese has reached a decent fluency and I would be surrounded by such amazing wisdom in the form of the generation of tea brothers above me. I also had a second, more heartfelt reason for going: to bond with a dear brother and friend.

It always takes a while to get used to the overwhelming kindness and hospitality of a Chinese friend.

Master Zhou and I had spent time together in Wuyi and at tea events, always joking back and forth that the flight to or from Taiwan is so short: "Why haven't you visited?" and then lovingly, "No, why haven't *you* visited?" And so, this trip was a great opportunity to get to know him, his family and to see the way he lives. We had three days with my master and Henry, followed by around ten days together alone. They surrounded me with delicious vegetarian food, great tea, put me up in a nice hotel and made sure I wanted for nothing. When I look back on how much love Master Zhou and his family showered on me, making me feel at home and taking me around to learn about the history and production of traditional Yixing crafts, my eyes moisten with nostalgia and love. Such generosity is rarely met with in this world, and worthy of a deep bow.

I tried to go there without a notebook—without any plan or pre-determined idea about what I



could or should learn. I knew there were some gaps in my knowledge, but I didn't want to approach the trip as if I were some kind of expert with a solid understanding of Yixing that only needed patching up here or there. Rather, I wanted to show up with a beginner's mind: knowing nothing, receptive and ready to be guided to the lessons I need, and ready to renew my contract with things I think I know. My cup was empty, in other words. And over hundreds of cups of strong "Yixing Gongfu Red Tea", the lessons started unfolding each day...

Master Zhou was the best teacher I could hope for. He genuinely loves tea and teapots. With true tea spirit, his eyes beamed with glee whenever I'd ask him about anything that came up. He'd immediately dive into the topic with enthusiasm, talking slowly when necessary, or repeating himself, to make sure I understood. Like any good teacher, he also knows that real understanding can't be just intellec-

tual. We would talk and drink tea at his house—me asking questions and him answering in greater depth than I could have possibly imagined over cups of tea. Then as we talked about clay, for example, at some point in the teaching, he would put his cup down and smile at me, emphatically grabbing his keys: "Let's go!" And off we'd go to one of his many, many friends' or students' places to see whatever we'd been discussing in person and get our hands into the matter.

In going around to hundreds of the pottery studios of Master Zhou's students, ore collectors, clay makers, kiln workers, wood-fired kiln workers, teapot collectors/vendors, etc., it became very clear to me that all the loving-kindness that Master Zhou was showing me day after day wasn't for me alone. Everywhere we went, eyes lit up and people expressed honor at the visit. I could tell that the deep and vast knowledge he was sharing with me wasn't coming from a dammed up and protected reser-

voir, but rather a flowing river of Tea wisdom that he shares with passion and love to anyone who asks. I saw the respect, gratitude and love I felt for him mirrored in every one of the people we visited.

Long before I went to Yixing, I knew that I would write an article like this, sharing some of what I learned with all of you. As a result, you all traveled there with me. You were in my heart, and even discussed at length with Master Zhou, who now understands more of what our community is about. He expressed a pride to be involved.

In the end, I felt like I successfully deepened a lifelong friendship and bond with Master Zhou and his family and also made some new friends as well. Beyond that, I learned more than I could ever type in a few hours (more than just filling in the gaps of my understanding of Yixing, I feel a bit more experienced). Despite finding my cup so very full by the end of the trip, the encounter with Master Zhou's end-

less treasury of knowledge, both information and experience, definitely left me feeling like there are lifetimes more to learn when it comes to Yixing teaware and Tea in general! But we have to start somewhere, so why not here. I thought I would share with you some of the things I learned on my trip as well as some of the experiential highlights, thereby fulfilling my earnest desire to take you all with me in spirit...

### Episode IV, A New Hope

Like anything in this modern world, you can find all the conditions for a positive or negative experience within the experience itself—dependent on your orientation. I usually take a balanced approach, exploring the truth in both the problems/challenges and the active, as well as potential solutions. That is Zen.

As we've discussed in the article introducing Yixing, it is a magical ore found only in Yixing. It's marriage to Tea dates back five hundred years. At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the empire was financially destitute. The first Ming emperor came from a humble background, and was therefore committed to economic reform. At the time, it was popular to drink powdered tea, which required a greater investment of labor for a lower yield. Therefore, the emperor outlawed such tea, and inspired people to return to steeping their tea.

In those days, pottery towns were called "kilns" since wood firing is very labor-intensive and also expensive. This meant that ceramics were not fired by individual potters, like today, but rather as a village—in large kilns that were operated by kiln masters. With the new style of brewing, the kilns of course began making new kinds of teaware to sell to tea lovers around the empire. The amazing thing is that in a very short time, most the other kilns went back to making what they had before: a

balance of plates, bowls, vases and some teaware. One city, on the other hand, very quickly got busy making teapots. And when I say busy, I mean every man, woman and child in the town were somehow involved in mining the ore, refining the clay, making pots or selling them! Artists from far afield also moved there to help carve calligraphy or designs into teapots, paint on them with glaze, etc. That town was Yixing, the teapot capital of the world.

There are many reasons for Yixing teapots' success. While the aesthetics of purple-sand teaware may be on that list, it is nowhere near the top. Most Chajin definitely gravitate towards simplicity in their tea journey, and the subtle decorations of Yixing ware very much suit a *wabi* tea spirit. But many people gravitate towards more elegant and refined teaware. Of course, Yixing masters can also make refined and decorative ware, but it's doubtful that

their skills would really set the town apart from say porcelain teaware from Jing De Zhen, which can be painted with glazes of so many colors and refined to its own great elegance. Purple-sand teaware has great aesthetic value, but that is not what married it to Tea, nor the reason why it eclipsed all other kilns in the production of teapots for tea lovers throughout the empire and eventually beyond in export to other countries. For that we have to turn to the ore.

There is a magic relationship between the ore from Yellow Dragon Mountain and its surroundings that changes the nature of tea liquor. This is incredibly obvious to almost anyone, no matter how far they have progressed in their tea journey. If you but take three grams of a tea you are familiar with and put it into a purple-sand teapot alongside another clay, like porcelain, the difference is obvious—



especially in the mouthfeel and Qi. As Chajin progress in learning and mastering gongfu tea, we usually move more and more towards drinking structure, as opposed to flavor and aroma. The structure of tea influences its integration into our bodies and then subtle bodies (Qi) much more, and is therefore of growing concern to a tea lover over time. And on the level of structure, the influence of real *Zisha* (purple-sand) is magical and awe-some! It makes the tea smoother, more rounded and “real”. Even the flavors and aromas distill and become subtler, rounded and more long-lasting—getting Tea to release its essence slowly, subtly and smoothly

over many more steepings is at the core of what gongfu tea is all about. No words can substitute for experiencing the effects Yixing ore/clay has on water/tea liquor. There is a sign when you come to Yellow Dragon Mountain that reads: "There's only one ceramic teapot in the world and her name is Yixing."

All good teaware is completely or at least in part “stoneware”, which we define here as clay that is produced from ore mined in the earth, as opposed to river/lake clay. Traditionally, the ore in Yixing was mined from deep in the earth, where it has slowly formed over hundreds of millions of years. It is then weathered outside, which also activates organ-

ics and therefore fermentation. The rain and wind break the ore down into pebbles. These pebbles are then stone-ground into a powder, which is mixed with good spring water to make clay. The clay is then pounded and shaped into bricks. These bricks are then further aged. Like puerh, the older the better. They are full of microbes and actively ferment. We have some bricks of nice, old *Zisha* clay aging in our center for future pots!

The problem/challenge is that the mines in Yixing have been closed, and for good reason. Voracious demand and unscrupulous, unregulated business in China had the potential to cause drastic envi-

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*Below: The closed gate to the mines.*

*Right: Non-local ore from Anhui weathering outdoors.*



ronmental issues. Almost all mining had run down to a trickle by the 1990's, and then stopped complete in the early 2000's. The bad news is that most of the pottery coming from Yixing nowadays is not made from local ore, but rather ore imported from outside—almost all from Gong De and other places in Anhui province. This ore lacks many of the qualities that married Yixing teapots to Tea. In fact, it bears little resemblance to the energy/structure of real Yixing ore/clay/teapots, and really only matches in appearance (to the untrained eye; Master Zhou and Master Lin can of course tell the difference). There are shared mineral content between them (hence the similar appearance), and others are added later; but that is obviously not the same as what Nature herself created over hundreds of millions of years! As it turns out, ore for teapots, like tea, has a terroir all its own.

It is certain that like food, Tea or any other industry in the world, the cheaper products suffer most from inauthenticity. This is the first time in history, for example, that poor people are often more obese/unhealthy than rich people, as the cheaper foods contain the most chemicals and are the most nutrient deficient. Similarly, the greater mass of Yixing goods, from teapots to “tea critters (*cha chong*, 茶寵)” are all made from inauthentic ore.

The secondary challenge that results from this is that tea lovers aren't as certain of the magic of purple-sand, the way they were in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Nowadays, people experiment with an Yixing pot and find little to no difference from other clays. Some even say that their pot seemingly produces lower quality tea. Such experimentation can be complicated by the fact that there are many kinds of authentic Yixing ore, organized into the categories we discussed in our introductory article. But the real reason that most tea lovers don't notice a positive influence, or even

find a negative one, is that the pot they are using is not made from authentic Yellow Dragon Mountain or other local ores. This, of course, complicates the tea world/market and extends the learning curve for us all...

After the bad news, there is the good news: When the government factories closed in the 1980's they had tons (literally) of ore breaking down outside and tons (again, literally) of clay fermenting inside. It was distributed amongst the employees based on time of service and seniority. Consequently, there is quite a bit of real clay around, and many of it is good and old. While there is not much English litera-

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***“It is certain that like food, Tea or any other industry in the world, the cheaper products suffer most from inauthenticity.”***

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ture on authentic ore yet, there are some great Chinese resources. If you come to the center, we can show you some great books (full of pictures), as well as some old shards and pieces of ore so you can begin to resonate with the energy of this most magical rock. And as a glimpse of some real magic to come in 2015, we are very close to releasing a magical way for you to support the building of our new center, Light Meets Life, and get a hold of some authentic *Zisha* teaware in doing so! More on that soon...

One of the many reasons Master Zhou commands such a powerful understanding of Yixing tea art is that he has access to a large supply of gorgeous clay that was passed down to him from his father. His relationship to that real clay over decades helped him cultivate a deeper and more refined relationship to the tradition of Yixing teapots that dates back five hundred

years. He's not the only one, but the spirit that relationship awoke in him makes him very unique indeed. And that is the second topic I'd like to explore...

### **Art or Function**

My master told me that when he first started collecting Yixing pots and going there many decades ago, he was very confused about something: The ore has been in the Earth for hundreds of millions of years, so why would a hundred years matter at all in terms of teapots? Through years of practice brewing gongfu, he knew that the pots from the Qing Dynasty made magical tea. Of course, this had to be the clay. But a hundred years seems but a blink in the life of something so old. Was it the processing of the clay? The teapot art?

At a gathering, he finally got to ask some masters this question. At first, he thought that they didn't even answer his question, but after he got home and thought about it more, he realized they had. He asked them why Qing pots are better, since the ore is so old. One of the masters said that he was wrong, continuing: “In those days they had rudimentary handmade tools, mostly made of bamboo. We have precision instruments of many kinds. And they didn't understand so much of the chemistry and make-up of the clay. We have a detailed and thorough knowledge of this, so we can combine colors and clays in new and unique ways. Long ago, they had to wood-fire everything, which isn't very precise. With electric kilns, we can control temperature to a degree.” Then he raised his voice in triumphant conclusion, “In those days they just made *teapots*. We make *works of art!*”

You can see why my teacher was a bit confused at first. Later, he realized that they had in fact answered his question: *they don't make teapots*. Of course what they make is worse



for tea, because they don't see it as a teapot. Ultimately, this story is a bit cartoonish and over-simplifies a point. Also, there is nothing wrong with being an artist. Paintings are less functional than teapots made as objects of art, but I still paint. Art has its own function. Yixing is a marvelous art form. The pieces that masters create are profound and gorgeous. Even a mold-made pot can take one to three days to complete, and is no trifle. There is a lot of skill and beauty in Yixing pots, and to many people they are worth collecting. However, they started out functionally. *They started out as teapots.* That is their origin and heritage. No one would argue that there is a mid-

dle ground—where form and function meet. In that space, the best pots are made. Pots that both make wonderful tea and are also gorgeous. Most seasoned tea lovers, however, know that carvings, designs and elegant shapes rarely make the best tea. The best pots for brewing are always simple, in other words.

In traveling around to dozens and dozens of shops and artists' workshops, I quickly realized that there are tons of artists and no teapot makers anymore. With the economic boom in China, master potters have all moved into mansions. Their pots are worth a fortune, and unless you are rich enough to not care, spending so much money

makes it hard to use them for tea every day. What was simple is now pretentious. And the fear of breaking such an expensive treasure seems to limit their use.

As financial success has become a real possibility for unique artists, master potters have slowly lost the skill and knowledge of pairing this magical ore/clay with Tea. They have started choosing colors based on design and appearance, almost always adding chemicals to the original clay to make brighter greens, blues, reds, etc. While many of them drink tea, it is usually very casually, always Yixing red tea and always beneath many cigarettes. And without the guidance of cus-

tomers like Master Lin to steer them towards better clay for tea, Yixing teaware has polarized into two main varieties: 1) cheap, mass-produced goods which represent most of the actual Yixing teapots for brewing tea that are used in the world; and 2) masterpieces that are meant to highlight design skill and/or innovation and are sold for very high prices to art collectors who may or may not use them to brew tea. In the end, the proof is in the trip: I explored all the markets thoroughly and met tons of potters, and did so with a very open mind, and I didn't see a single pot that I would use for tea brewing that the center could afford!

The good news is that Master Zhou and Master Lin have been working together for more than a decade to create new kinds of clay that make great tea! Master Lin has brought many Qing and Ming pots to Yixing so that he and Master Zhou can explore the relationship of the clay to Tea. Master Zhou also knows where to find Qing and Ming shards, which was one of the great highlights of my trip. We spent an hour or so hunting through the ground for old teapot shards, and finding several. Master Lin can feel them, and I was able to successfully feel a buried half of a lid from a Ming pot that even had the button intact! It was a happy moment, indeed... Anyway, with these pots and shards and Master Zhou's knowledge of Yixing history, they have been hard at work experimenting with ore/clay refining methodologies that enhance the clay/Tea relationship. After a few years of trial and error—firing different pieces of clay as well as whole pots—they have made some great pots with the old clay Master Zhou has on hand.

Master Zhou is of course not the only one in Yixing with old clay, or with pots that make great tea. But he loves tea and practices gongfu tea every day, drinking lots of Wuyi Cliff Tea as well as the local red tea. He also makes masterpieces which sell for a pretty penny, and rightly

so. They are gorgeous. As we will discuss later, in an article devoted to him, he is famous for inlaying gold flecks into teapots. His artwork is as well-crafted as any of his peers. But he understands that alongside 'Yixing as art' there must also be 'Yixing as teapot'; and the latter must be affordable. It must be a part of the daily lives of tea lovers who brew tea. The mastery of the art is in the elegance and innovation and the mastery of the teapot is in simplicity that is so refined and detailed when you look closer. Master Zhou's studio produces a fair number of both.

It wasn't that I wished the mass-produced cheap stuff or masterpieces would all go away. I just

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*“Yixing teaware is not thrown on a wheel, but rather hand built by pounding. This is mostly due to the plasticity of the clay. It also is a tick on the long list of reasons why purple-sand teapots make such great tea.”*

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felt, exploring the city, that the market was off balance. There was no middle ground. The mass-produced stuff obviously serves a function, being so cheap and easy to use. And the teapots that fell into that category a hundred years ago are the tea lover's treasure today. Back then, such pots were made by students on their way to mastery. And they put their heart and soul into what they did, hoping to achieve mastery one day. Nowadays, the cheapest pots aren't even made from local ore, and lack the power to make fine tea. On the other extreme, you have the collector's items that are well-crafted but are mostly for looking at. While there were a few pieces in the middle, there was a stark absence of well-made affordable pots that are made solely for the purpose of brew-

ing fine tea! And in order to get something like that, one would have to find the right potter and commission such works, which explains why such pots are more easily found elsewhere.

## *Making a Pot Together*

I am amazed at how much skill and mastery goes into the simplest of teapots. There is a tremendous amount of knowledge and heritage behind every Yixing pot—thousands of years' worth. I spent a long time watching Master Zhou's students making pots from molds over the course of the ten days I was there. You would think that making a pot from a molded body, molded spout, lid and handle would be easy. It's not! It often took them three days to finish a single pot! Beyond that, in one of his rushes of excitement, he took me to the masters who make the molds. Their workshop had three stations. The first, and hardest, involved carving a likeness of the pot in question. Then the mold was made and finished by others. It can take the entire day to make a single mold! Once at the teapot makers' workshop, it is then another two to three days to finish a pot—at least for a student who has only a few years under his belt. (Master Zhou can finish a molded pot in two to three hours, but he doesn't make such pots, except to teach.) I consequently left re-inspired by the effort and sacrifice that goes into the simplest of pots...

Yixing teaware is not thrown on a wheel, but rather hand built by pounding. This is mostly due to the plasticity of the clay. It also is a tick on the long list of reasons why purple-sand teapots make such great tea. By not throwing the pots on a wheel, the walls of the teapot maintain an energetic structure which is closer to what the ore would be in Nature, in the Earth.

Master Zhou offered me the opportunity to, as much as possible,

*MAKING A TEAPOT FROM SCRATCH*



make my own pot from scratch. We went to see his friend and bought some beautiful ore. The most unique piece, though not the best for tea, was some bright white clay. This began our journey. We were going to do this in the old way, and the only step we'd skip would be mining the ore, because we couldn't, of course. So we bought some old ores and took them home.

After I choose the white/*duanni* ore, we spent some time breaking it into pieces with a hammer. We obviously wouldn't have time to go about this in the right way, which would mean weathering the ore outside for months, if not years until it was reduced to small pebbles. After breaking the ore into pebbles, we ground them by hand in an old stone mill that Master Zhou has kept as an heirloom of the olden days. I was pretty good at this, since

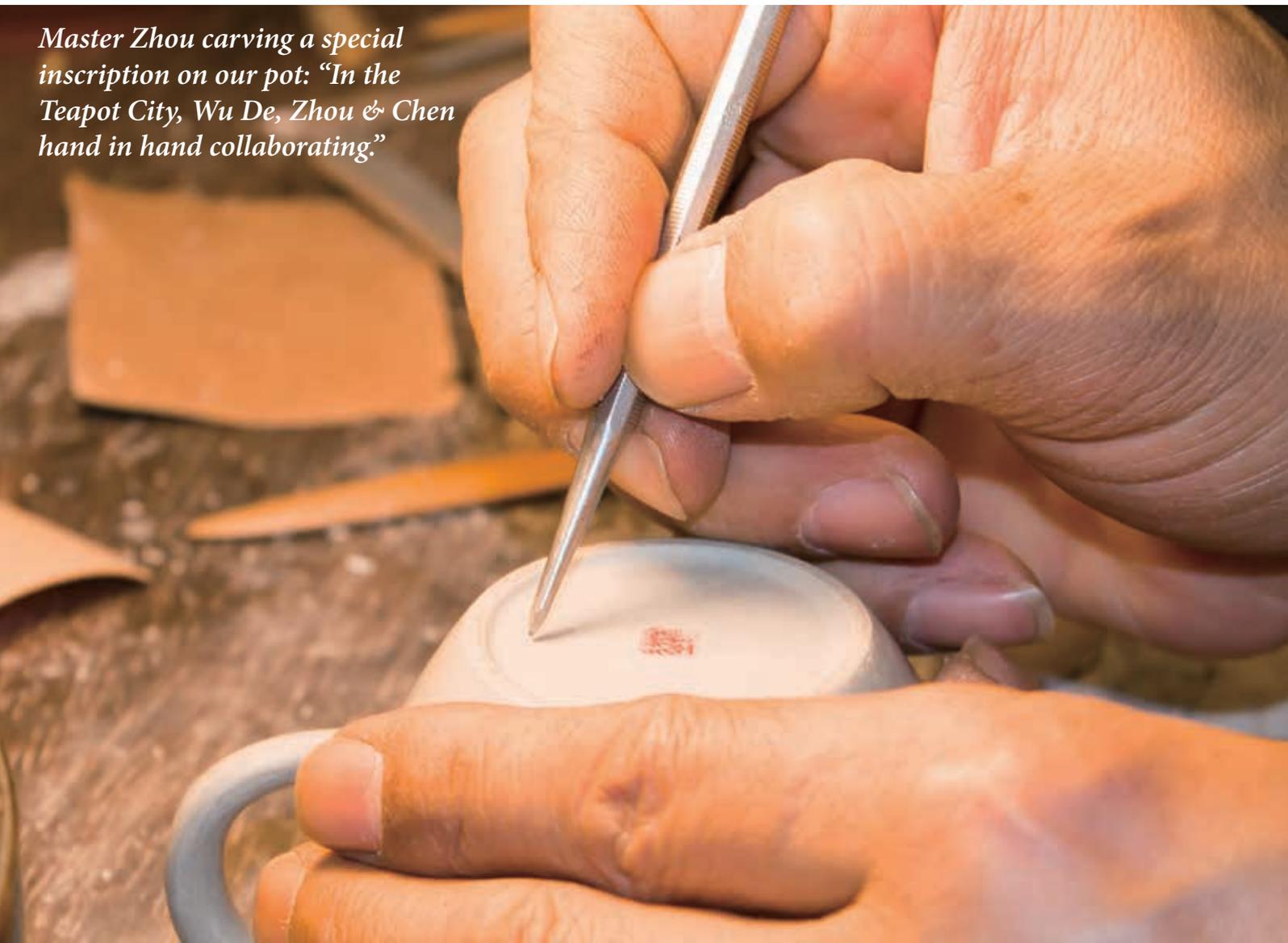
we regularly grind many kinds of tea at the center. The movements were similar, and I quickly got the hang of adding pebbles to the rhythm of the wheel. Like the teas we grind, Master Zhou and I had to grind the ore several times through to get it into a powder, taking a few hours. His students all watched wide-eyed. I was amazed to learn that many of them had never seen this process done in the old way. Master Zhou promised me, though, that he is trying to inspire them to love purple-sand art and heritage, and to love tea brewing as well. He hopes to pass on his wisdom to the next generation. And this was a great opportunity for all of us to learn.

After the ore was ground into a powder, we ran magnets through it to pull out any bits of iron that would make black spots on the fired pot. This process wasn't done

long ago, which is one reason old pots often have such iron spots on them (some black spots are due to firing). Then we mixed the powder with good spring water and made clay. The clay is then pounded with a wooden mallet to get out any air bubbles and to thoroughly blend it. At this point, it would be best to age the clay, letting it ferment. Master Zhou separated the clay into two bricks, one for our pot and one for aging, which I would take back to the center with me. Master Zhou said we could make another, similar pot in ten or twenty years and see how they compare. Fun!

After letting the clay sit over night, we got started making our pot. We decided to use a mold, due to time constraints. I had been playing with clay all week, not with the intention of finishing anything, but rather just to see exactly how hard

*Master Zhou carving a special inscription on our pot: "In the Teapot City, Wu De, Zhou & Chen hand in hand collaborating."*



it was to make a pot from scratch. Even with lots of help, I'd hardly finished the body after hours and hours of straining. It is much harder than you'd think! We had decided to make one of my favorite teapot shapes: "Wagon's Wheel (*ju lun zhu*, 巨輪珠)", named for its large, flat button. Many of these pots were exported to Japan, where they were treasured and preserved well. This means that most of them are around nowadays, as opposed to Chinese antiques, which were ill-treated, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Also, the simple design and cannon spout make them appealing to gongfu practitioners. Even getting the clay properly into the body, spout and lid molds is difficult.

After letting the clay sit for a while in the molds, we spent a bit of time here and there finishing the pot over the next two days. Mas-

ter Zhou, his amazing wife Master Chen and I worked on it together. They helped guide me through attaching the pieces and then aligning and finishing them. Steps that these masters could do in minutes took me hours, but they were patient and kind as in all matters. Eventually we finished our glorious pot. Master Zhou carved an inscription on the bottom, which reads: "In the Teapot City, Wu De, Zhou & Chen hand in hand collaborating."

As we fired the pot for eighteen hours, I was left humbled by the amount of devotion that goes into this craft. I have fallen in love again. I feel like someone whose marriage has been given a renewed boost of passion. An amazing amount of knowledge, skill, culture, heritage and history surrounds these amazing pots. Master Zhou so wisely

articulated that all of that work culminates in a fine cup of tea, which then becomes us. "A love for Tea inspired this centuries-long journey!" he exclaimed. With moist eyes, I reminded Master Chen and Master Zhou that their pots are in my life every day, which means that they are with me all the time—in all the tea I share. And after their amazing hospitality, and all that I had learned and experienced, those pots would never be the same again... Sure enough, when I got back to the center, one of my favorite pots—a piece by Master Chen—glowed like never before, beckoning me to brew some Cliff Tea. As I sat down to drink, the pot connected to my hand better than before. And I knew that it was my hand that had changed...



### *Antique Purple-sand*

**A**ntique pots make better tea for four main reasons. The first one is discussed in the article: they were made to brew tea. There were more functional pots back in the day, before the growing trend of making objects of art which began in the late Qing Dynasty. Secondly, the men who made pots long ago lived in a different time. In those days, a teapot maker would do nothing else in life. As a young child, he would sweep up in the studio. Later, he'd learn about the ore and clay, before going on to make his first pot—probably in his teenage years. He would never study anything else. His whole life would be devoted to teapots. Furthermore, he would eat only organic vegetables, etc. And his mind wasn't distracted by computers or cell phones. Teapots were everything to him. The third reason is that the effort and patience, as well as the tools used to refine the ore, make clay, build the pots and fire them all required many different people with specialized skills—much of which has been lost today. In those days, there were master miners, ore evaluators, clay makers and kiln masters. Finally, there is something to the age of the pots. This has to do with the energy of the Five Elements. In Tea, the teaware is the Earth energy. When it is fired, however, a pot turns into Fire. All the particles erupt in heat, whizzing around at great velocities. Therefore, the further in time we get from the firing, the more the energetic structure of the pot returns to Earth—reorganizing itself to be as it was when it was ore deep in the ground.

# WINTER WELLNESS

Andrew Taylor

*We asked our center doctor, Andy, to share some of his Winter wisdom to help us all pass through the season healthy of body, mind and spirit. He has a wealth of information on how the seasons relate us to the cosmos, which herbs to take and even how we can find our heart-minds and spirits as we move into Spring!*



The Daoist philosophical concepts of the Five Phases, Yin and Yang, and Qi were first recorded and compiled in the *Huang Di Nei Jing (Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon)* during the first to third centuries CE. This seminal text explained the correspondence of naturally occurring phenomena by systematic relationships on microcosmic and macrocosmic levels that can be applied to anything from lifestyle, diet, environment, emotions or even to life itself. For those who wish to live more in harmony with the ways of Nature and Dao, the *Nei Jing* acts as a guide for us to remain in that balance.

The five elements, or five phases, in Chinese philosophy rests in the observation of all phenomena, natural and human, and the cyclical nature, transformation and interaction of energies. Used as a device to associate the character of these energies, colors, sounds, smells, flavors, emotions, directions, seasons, and climates can be defined in a more active and influential way within the natural world. The five phases have been used to explain the relationship between many aspects of Chinese society, from medicinal herbs and human physiology to Daoist Geomancy (*feng shui*) and astrology. The first phase begins with the Wood 木 (spring) element, which feeds and generates Fire 火 (summer), becoming ash and turning into Earth 土 (late summer), bearing Metal 金 (autumn) functioning to collect

Water 水 (winter) the essential element to nourish Wood.

Before we move down into the depths of winter and the Water phase, let us look at the *Nei Jing* Chapter 2, "Discourse on Regulating the *Shen* (Spirit) According to the Four Seasons".

*The three months of winter,  
they denote securing and storing.  
The water is frozen and the earth breaks open.  
Do not disturb the Yang.  
Go to rest early and rise late.  
You must wait for the sun to shine.  
Let the mind enter a state as if hidden,  
as if you had secret intentions,  
as if you had already made gains.*

Thus, the sages in spring and summer nourish the Yang, and in autumn and winter nourish the Yin, and this way they follow their roots."

The essence of the Water phase is pervaded by rest, stillness, storage, and conservation. Just as animals survive the harsh winter weather through slowed breathing and decreased physical activity in hibernation, we humans also must conserve our energies and adjust our lifestyles towards a congruence with the season. The harsh nature of winter weather causes us to be less inclined to go out or engage in physical or social activities. In contrast to beautiful spring or summer

days that invite us to be active outdoors, the cold, dark days of winter beg us to stay inside and reside in warmth and quiet. Take full advantage of this inactive and dormant period of the year to replenish the mind and spirit. Do as the *Nei Jing* states, retire to bed earlier, sit lon-

ger on your meditation cushion, read a book that feeds your soul, and spend more time in the kitchen making a hearty meal that warms your belly. Though persisting in storage and conservation, this time of stillness and rest serves not just to turn off our energies, but as an opportunity to recharge and replenish our reserves and develop growth within the structures of our mind, body and Spirit. We do this to prepare ourselves for the transition into the new cycle of generation and transformation that begins anew with the coming of spring.

The characteristics of Yin and Water are prevalent in the teas we choose to brew during this season.

Water, being the most Yin of the five elements, contains the attributes of cold, darkness, slowness, softness, wetness, the feminine, dormancy and a direction moving inward and downward. Teas that are darker in color, contain Qi that penetrates into the deeper regions of the body and warm us from head to toe are most appropriate during these cold winter months. Our young sheng puerh cakes and lighter oolongs are put in storage, waiting for the warmer months ahead to be taken off the shelf again. She hibernates peacefully in our tea cabinets, and like us, will also experience structural and energetic transformations that we will share in our next meeting. Now on the front of our shelves, we keep our best aged shou puerh, black teas, red teas, roasted and aged oolongs, and snow chrysanthemums.

To prevent adverse effects from the harsh cold of winter, preservation of the body's deep seated warmth and heat will keep us healthy and in balance for the year to come. In Chinese Medicine, an excess of cold energy in the body is one way that allows disease to develop. Women especially can be affected by this cold "evil" and should take extra caution by protecting their Yang energy. This can be done with a diet of foods whose

character is Yang in nature and functions to warm the body and/or helps to expel cold. Many medicinal herbs used in Chinese Medicine from the *Materia Medica* are actually ingredients most of us may have in our kitchen cabinets. The herbs and spices that are commonly used for winter cooking are warming in nature, such as cumin, clove, nutmeg, rosemary, cardamom, black pepper, cinnamon and ginger. Not only are these ingredients essential to increasing our warming Yang energy of the body, but they taste great too! Other foods that are warming include fennel, star anise, sweet basil, dates, vinegar and mustard seeds. These ingredients are easy to include for making delicious stews and soups or pickling vegetables.

Here in Taiwan, believe it or not, the winter is quite chilly and brings heavy winds and rain with it. Simply staying inside does not allow one to avoid the cold as most houses are not equipped with heat or insulation, and the floors are made of concrete or tile. Preservation of our body temperature while inside remains important throughout the winter, so our favorite activity at the Tea Sage Hut this time of year is our weekly trip to the local hot springs. The high mineral content and 42-degree water leave us in

a deep state of warmth, relaxation and quiet contention for the whole day. Bathing in hot springs was traditionally an essential part of Buddhist and Daoist monks' lives, as a way to cleanse and purify the body by the divine water. Just ask Wu De about his favorite places in Taiwan, and he will most certainly recount his experiences at the transcendental geothermal springs at Yang Ming Mountain National Park. Even if you do not live nearby heavenly waters like us, do yourself a favor by taking a hot bath with some added mineral salts and enjoy a few hours of wintertime in warm stillness and quietude.

The winter provides a great environment and opportunity to slow down, regenerate ourselves and dive deeper into the depths of Spirit. Taking time now for longer tea sessions or meditation will create lasting habits for the year to come. The warmth, brightness and luminance of summer cease to exist without these cold and dark days of winter. Let us be grateful for the dualities of life, the extremes of the seasons, the times for action and inaction and fully celebrate the changing ways of Nature. I raise a steaming bowl with you, in warmth of heart and spirit!



# MASTER ZHOU QI KUN

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Wu De

*Master Zhou is one of the greatest living teaware artisans. He is an amazing artist and a great soul. He has a wealth of knowledge about purple-sand lore and shares it freely. It's an honor to introduce him in these pages. His work has influenced our tea journey in too many ways to discuss, though we should still try...*



The best teaware artisans love tea. Of course they do. At first, this statement may seem too obvious to mention, let alone to start an article with. But even a cursory survey of the tea world shows just how much soulless junk and gimmicks are made in the name of Tea. Sometimes beginners who are just starting out on their tea journey realize that a teapot or tea set doesn't function, which makes you wonder about the makers. On the lower end of the spectrum there are mass-produced factory tea sets, as well as potters that make teaware only because that is what sells. In the middle ground you have those who have some skill and also drink tea casually, in a day-to-day, "kitchen" kind of way, and therefore make decent teaware, but it lacks the spirit or functional grace of the wares made by a master who also cultivates a tea practice. And if ever there was a mas-

ter worthy of this last category of 'tea lover and master craftsman', there couldn't be a better candidate than Zhou Qi Kun.

Only when a teapot is created by the hands of one who brews tea with love and devotion will it inspire such love in the Chajin who takes it home. The one who brews tea every day, and not out of habit or lifestyle, but rather out of passion—such a one will make pots that other tea lovers will want to use. When you combine skill with soul, you get mastery. This is true of every art. When a song, poem or painting comes out of the heart and soul—or even better, the Stillness beyond—it encourages a movement towards that same place in the witness. When you love Tea and devote yourself to it, you will understand not only the spirit that informs Tea, but also all of the functional nuances that will make beginner and

master appreciate your craft all the more.

My teacher, Master Lin Ping Xiang, traveled to Yixing over and over for years looking for a teapot maker that had a deep love for tea and teaware, as well as a desire to improve his tea brewing skills and to explore the relationship between purple-sand ore/clay and Tea. You would think that in the "Teapot City" this would be as easy as picking a direction and going, but it's not. Not nowadays, at least (if it ever was). And then, just when he'd almost given up hope, Master Lin and Henry met Zhou Qi Kun. Magic was about to happen...

Master Zhou was born in 1963 in Zhao Zhuang Village, Yixing. He was a smart and precocious boy who was interested in all things. Tea and teapots were a part of everyone's life here, and it's hard to find anyone in the area, even today, whose life



hasn't been influenced by teaware. Master Zhou's wife is named Chen Ju Fang. She was born one year later, in 1964. They were classmates growing up, and when you ask them about growing up together and eventually falling in love, they both smile in a very sweet way. Though they say that it wasn't until they were much older that they noticed each other in a romantic way, you get the sense that there is a strong destiny flowing throughout their story—weaving through the present time as well. It's in the way they effortlessly get along, as if support and strength were second nature.

When I sat down to talk with Master Zhou and Master Chen about the past, they both shared a lot about the suffering of living through the Cultural Revolution. Their stories evoked a feeling of fear and suspicion that pitted neighbor against neighbor. They also shared a lot about the poverty and simplicity of growing up in those times, demonstrating real life wisdom along with their narrative. Despite their success, they still live modestly and are not materialistic. They recognize the value of happiness, hard work and devotion and treat their guests with selfless honor. I wasn't the only guest to pass through during the ten days I was with them, and so any notion that I was VIP or special because I was foreign was thrown out as others came and went. I realized that they treat all their friends and guests with the love, generosity and hospitality which I received. (And that is saying a lot!)

After being a carpenter for some years, Master Zhou made the decision to begin making teapots. He went to school, studying the history and lore of Yixing ware as well as the chemistry and science of pottery. He was an apprentice to Yang Qing Fang, who is one of the ten grandmasters of Yixing, and eventually became his top student. In fact, it was through Master Yang that Master Lin and Zhou met.

I could write another few articles about Master Zhou's accolades—which awards he's won and where (and he has won them), his press, etc.—but that would betray everything that he is as a man and as a master. Though he knows more about Yixing lore and craft than anyone I've ever met, he is humble and will listen to every insight offered, even from a foreign friend. He is modest about his work, as well. He has a very strict and disciplined nature, and demands much of himself as a person and as an artist. You'll know more about him if I tell you about his approach to teaware as opposed to listing his tributes.

Master Zhou loves tea and he loves teapots! That can't be overstated. Even in ancient times, it was rare for someone to know so much

about the entire process of Yixing production, from ore to fired pot. Even today, most of the workers specialize in their own niche: from making molds to mining ore, refining clay to making pots. Others sell pots and understand them from a collector's viewpoint, studying the history and authenticity of antiques for example. Master Zhou hasn't just dabbled in all these fields, he understands them in great detail. I was amazed that even his students didn't really have a desire to engage in our conversations about Ming Dynasty pots or wood firing, focusing on their jobs as teapot makers instead. And as we traveled around to ore collectors, clay refiners, mold makers, teapot makers and vendors, and both gas and wood-fired kilns, I realized that most all the masters in these fields were enthusiastic to





# 陳菊芳

Master Chen

Chen Ju Fang was born in 1964. A member of the *Chinese Arts and Crafts Society*, she now works at the pottery studio “Wu Xing Shan Fang”. She specializes in making strong and sturdy *Guang Hu* (light pots) and *Zhu Hu* (bamboo pots).

learn from Master Zhou, often listening as aptly as I was.

I am also always mystified by how easily Master Zhou navigates the scientific, experiential, aesthetic and even spiritual aspects of Tea. He can discuss the energy of the kiln and then with the same bright smile move on to discuss all the chemical reactions happening at any given time, rattling off compounds as he does so. All told, I hope you get a sense for him as a master and a person, because both are worth knowing.

He has studied Qing and Ming pots for over twenty years, making him the perfect candidate for researching the effects of clay on tea with Master Lin. Of course, as a gongfu master and collector of many decades, Master Lin has access to many antique pots that aren't around in Yixing. He also has an unparalleled sensitivity to Tea and a mastery of tea brewing. His knowledge of tea lore in general is beyond belief, spanning languages and regions. The two of them were obviously born to do great work

together. And they have. They have worked hard to create some of the best modern pots in the world, and not just in elegance and craft, but also in a refinement of clay and design that makes a finer cup of tea.

Master Zhou and Chen are both members of the *Chinese Industrial Art Society* and *Jiangsu Province Zisha Ceramics Arts and Crafts Society*, where they participate in meetings and research. Master Zhou continues to hone his craft and innovate new pots that satisfy his artistic bent, while at the same time researching improvements in ore/clay production, teapot making and firing in terms of tea brewing. His research results in more affordable pots in a sliding scale produced by him, his wife and his students at the “Wu Xin Shan Fang” studio. Through trial and error, Master Lin, Henry and Master Zhou have successfully created some of the best modern pots for tea brewing in existence.

Master Zhou has mastered the art of inlaying gold onto pots, like a starry sky, and is considered the best

in that design. His starred pots are so refined. The grace and movement of the gold highlights all the subtle elegance of a traditional teapot shape, and each speck of light seems to shine from its own space. They all also are seemingly equidistant from the rest, which reminds me of Indra's Net—in which every jewel, at every joint, contains a reflection of all the rest.

I feel honored to share a bit about Master Zhou Qi Kun with all of you. He has been one of the great teachers of my life. I've always had a passion for purple-sand teaware, and have learned tons from the amazing pots I have brewed with—everything from better gongfu to spiritual lessons. And there isn't any aspect of what I know about Yixing pots that hasn't been refined by Master Zhou. It's hard to write an article like this, about someone you consider a brother. Master Zhou is not a story or an article to me. He is my friend.



*MASTER ZHOU'S GORGEOUS TEAPOTS*





# THE FOURTH BOWL PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Shen Su

*Continuing his discussion of the Eight Bowls of our tradition, Shen here explores the fourth bowl, which is all about diet and movement. He elucidates the ways in which our diet and exercise affect our tea practice and overall health.*

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Joyously, we receive now the fifth bowl of warming tea. With open palms, we stretch forth towards the full bowl. Each infusion offering a slight difference in aroma and flavor, mouthfeel and body, as well as wisdom and insight. With this bowl, the very boundaries of reality begin to blur: Where the tea begins and we end becomes less and less apparent, and the movement and dance of Qi is now much more noticeable. Is it the Qi of the tea, or our own inherent Qi within that we feel? Or some combination of the two? Regardless, there is a flow of energy on the subtle and gross level that feels natural and graceful.

Brewing at the tea table requires balance, focus, groundedness, and dexterity. There is more at work than what is simply seen on the surface, and even then, the keen eye can perceive a complex, yet graceful flow stemming from the motions of the true master. Though the movements are complex and many, there is an obvious ease with which each motion is carried out. Just as the true *Chajin* drinks tea with the entire body, so too she brews in the same manner. As in Aikido, brewing motions come from and are refined

from a deep connection to the center of the body (*dan tian*, 丹田). This is often a source upon which to draw balance, connection to Earth, and power. I am reminded of my time tree planting many years ago, watching some of the experienced planters move effortlessly, even slowly it seemed. Yet, at the end of the day, their numbers put mine to shame. Though I felt I had worked harder and faster, it was a combination of experience, efficiency and consistency that lent them their relaxed demeanor and high output. Ultimately, those balanced, full-bodied motions manifest from a balanced, disciplined, and trained mind. What is on the mind will end up in the cup, but not first without traversing the ligaments and limbs of the body. For these reasons, it is important to properly acknowledge and fuel both the body and mind.

Outside of the tea table, it is then important for the person of Tea to further refine and train the body and mind through exercises such as Tai Qi, Qi Gong or Yoga. In these ways, we support our physical body through controlled, subtle movements, increasing our flexibility, range of motion and motor control.

As well, we promote our energetic bodies by moving in a natural way conducive to the flow of Qi—Qi coming in from our external environment, blending into our internal environment, and then expressed in a way that's transformed altogether.

Because the foods and thoughts we consume greatly affect our ability to serve tea, it is then very important to also monitor what type of fuel we put into our bodies. A poor quality tea brewed with the best of intentions will yield a better experience than the highest quality tea brewed with the worst of intentions. Ideally, the best tea is brewed with the best of intentions! But when doing without, we must learn to do within. In the same way, the intention we give our food has an incredible affect on the food itself and the way in which our body handles it. To a large extent, what you think about your food is more important than the food itself. For that reason, our attitude in preparing our meals is highly important, which is also why you'll see us dancing and laughing in the kitchen during meal preparation at the Hut!

Any food given with pure intention and received with a pure

heart will transcend all negativities attached to it. The ideal, of course, is to consume the best and freshest food with the best of intentions. In my experience, pure foods found in vegetarian and vegan diets suit the person of Tea quite well. Here at the center, we eat a vegetarian diet and always pray as a group over our meals. We feel lighter and more sensitive as a result, ready to approach each day with clarity of mind, levity of heart and health of body. In a similar fashion, we also pay careful attention to the diet of our mind. With daily meditation to quiet the mind, Tea to balance it and humor to stimulate levity, our mind also maintains a light and healthy figure. Though we don't have any say in what we perceive, one our greatest human traits is that we can cultivate the ability to control how we orient ourselves towards the things we perceive. Which is to say that when we can't control the diet of our mind, we can control how it is mentally ingested and used, just like how our thoughts about the food we eat can control, to a degree, how the body will use it.

In the bigger picture, physical wellbeing and diet can no longer be isolated as an individual aim. It must be considered on a larger scale—a scale where seven billion

other people karmically connect. *Physical wellbeing and diet are global concepts...* Of course the foods we eat, which billions of other people also want to eat, will have a global impact. Therefore, we have to make conscious decisions surrounding the foods we eat and the products we buy, rather than choosing based on impulse and/or a false sense of security that this way of life is permanent, let alone sustainable! Choosing a plant-based diet, for example, automatically addresses issues such as climate change, natural resource conservation, and human health epidemics. In general, I dislike making arguments either for or against plant-based diets because no matter how obvious one side of the argument may seem, an equally persuasive counterargument can be made. Rather than pushing on the issue, (which only fuels the issue itself!) I personally make the decision, as a person of Tea (*Chajin*), to eat a plant-based diet (vegetarian or vegan) for my own well-being, which I experience myself, and for the well-being of all life on this planet.

How does Tea contribute to our physical wellbeing and diet? What we're talking about is health, and as our teacher so often says, "Health to us is anything which puts you in

harmony with Spirit and all life on Earth". Tea has always been known as the "Great Connector", connecting us to ourselves, to one another, and to Nature. She promotes conscious awakening and presence in every sip. When we share Tea in this spirit, we automatically subscribe to our own wellbeing and thus the wellbeing of those we serve.

For all practical purposes, it is important for the person of Tea to consider what foods and thoughts we consume and don't consume, and how we move and don't move our physical bodies and the energy within our bodies. All of these inputs will greatly affect our ability to serve and live a balanced life. And so, we remember to sit upright at the tea table, to maintain focus, and move with our entire being, connected to the Earth. We engage in exercises that support our life of Tea, and because we value our bodies, we carefully monitor what we put into them, and with what intention. We adopt a holistic and flexible point of view, seeing our bodies and minds as mirrors of one another, giving us real feedback in a real world, indicating our progress and development. We see this not only reflected in our ability to serve tea, but in all aspects of life...



# Tea Wayfarer

*Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in these magazines in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. 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 share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month we would like to introduce Frederic Ballario:*

**M**y first taste of real Tea was offered to me by my special friend, Roch, a few years ago somewhere in California. It was not a life-changing experience, as I was not ready yet to have my life changed. But a seed was planted...

Later, after going through my badly needed mid-life crisis, and starting my healing and “spiritual” journey, the seed of Tea sprouted when I found my way to the Tea Sage Hut in Miao Li, Taiwan. There, I found a home. I found brothers and sisters. I found a Teacher. I found inspiration.

I have to share that I was born and raised in France and moved to California in my late twenties. It so happens that my passion and gift in this world is through wine. I speak its language. I know how to serve it, and how to pair it with food. I know how to grow the fruit and turn them into wine. I just love wine (even though I don't “drink” it anymore). Wine, speaks to me like Tea does to the residents of the Hut. When I arrived at the Hut for the first time, though, I was questioning that gift. I doubted everything in my life. I had lost the sacred connection.

I sat in the meditation hall, and around the table where Tea is offered daily from the Heart. The silence that filled the room allowed for some deep journeys and realizations. I listened to the teachings and it became clear that what was to be doubted was not my passion, but my relationship to it. I had to go deeper. I had to let go. I had to go beyond the visible and accept the intangible—bypass the mind and let the soul hear and speak. For a French-manufactured mind, that was not such an easy task. Descartes' “I think therefore I am” is what has defined French philosophy for centuries. But the fact that this truth could be smelled, put in your mouth and swallowed was an advantage for a French-raised being!

Tea and wine have so much in common. They both are the result of the fermentation of parts of a plant. They express a unique sense of place and time. They can, when produced with the utmost ecological respect, translate the perfection of Nature. And, when the perfection of your body and soul get in touch with such medicine, veils are lifted and realizations made.

The way Tea and this tradition are revered, practiced and transmitted at the Hut is such an inspiration



for anyone who gets to experience it. I am so grateful to have found a new friend and teacher through the Leaf. I am also thankful to have come upon the Tea Sage Hut where Truth can be drunk everyday in such deep and loving company.

Brothers and sisters, I cannot invite you to my home to share a bowl as I don't have a permanent roof over my head. I have chosen the life of a gypsy, going from vineyard to vineyard, season after season. But I know I will meet you, either at the Hut or on the road somewhere. I look forward to dancing with you all in the bowl soon...

Roch, thank you my friend.

# Inside the Hut

 In Los Angeles, there are Global Tea Hut events every Thursday at 6 PM and Sunday at 9:30 AM. To reserve a spot, email Colin at [livingteas@gmail.com](mailto:livingteas@gmail.com). The community in LA also has a new meet up page: (<http://www.meetup.com/Los-Angeles-Tea-Ceremony-Meetup/>).

 In Barcelona, Spain, Global Tea Hut member Antonio holds tea events each month at Caj Chai Teahouse. Contact him at [info@cajchai.com](mailto:info@cajchai.com) for more info.

 In Moscow, Russia, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at [teeabai@gmail.com](mailto:teeabai@gmail.com) or Denis at [chikchik25@gmail.com](mailto:chikchik25@gmail.com) for details.

 In Nice, France, GTH member Sabine holds regular tea events at the Museum of Asiatic Arts. You can email her at [sabine@letempsdunthe.com](mailto:sabine@letempsdunthe.com).

 In Melbourne, Australia, Lindsey hosts Friday night tea sessions at 7/7:30pm. Contact her at [lindseylou31@gmail.com](mailto:lindseylou31@gmail.com)

 In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact [events@firstflush.ee](mailto:events@firstflush.ee) for more details. Also, Timo Einpaul and Herkko Labi both hold small weekly tea events in their homes in Tartu, Estonia and Tallinn, Estonia (respectively), on Wednesdays at 6 PM. You can email Timo at [timo@sygis.net](mailto:timo@sygis.net) and Herkko at [herkots@gmail.com](mailto:herkots@gmail.com).

 In England, Prabhasvara (Nick Dilks) holds regular Tea events all around the UK including a weekly Tea Club in Birmingham. For more information, please contact him at [livingteauk@gmail.com](mailto:livingteauk@gmail.com).

 In Almere, The Netherlands, GTH member Jasper holds tea events every 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:45 PM. Email him at [hermansjasper@gmail.com](mailto:hermansjasper@gmail.com).



## Center News

 Before you visit, check out the center's *new* website ([www.teasagehut.org](http://www.teasagehut.org)) to read about the schedule, food, what you should bring, etc. We've had a big increase in our number of guests lately, so if possible please contact us well in advance to arrange a visit.

 If you are interested in one of the 2014 cakes you should order one soon. There are very few left of all three! Check out our website for details: [www.globalteahut.org](http://www.globalteahut.org)

 Our doctor finally had his initiation. It got put off due to guests' ceremonies for some time. Congratulations to Andy!

 The center will be closed from April 18 to May 18 for our annual GTH trip and all the work that goes into and follows it!

 Wu De's new book is out and ready to be purchased. Check our site for details!

## FEBRUARY AFFIRMATION

*I am committed to renewal*

*In what ways am I adapting and changing my lifestyle and habits to suit the person I'd like to be? In what ways do I need to let go?*

*Gentle friend,*

*May your stream never end,*

*Changing generations of leaves and water*

*to golden cups of tranquility,*

*long after I am gone.*

