



Global Tea Hut

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

December 2015

古樹林六堡

"OLD GROVE" BLACK TEA

LIU BAO TEA
PRODUCTION,
HISTORY & SPIRIT

Contents

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GLOBAL TEA HUT
Tea & Tao Magazine



OLD GROVE

Liu Bao is a tea with a rich heritage that ultimately leads you to Malaysia, where our tradition of gongfu tea comes from. This is a special month for us, sharing our lineage and introducing many of you to a new tea! We're always talking about red vs. black tea, so it's about time we had a real black tea together.

*Love is
Changing the world
Bowl by bowl*

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Letter from the Editor

In December, the weather turns cold while the tea seems to grow warmer in proportion to the fading of the year, which dwindles like the light. With the holidays, there is a confluence of people that either results in wonderful memories or equally rewarding challenges. A nice bowl of tea can make all the difference—both in terms of one’s own peaceful state of mind and in helping us to have deeper connection with our loved ones. Try serving tea to your friends and family this holiday season and see if it doesn’t make your time together more heartfelt! I know from experience that a bit of tea goes a long way when it comes to family gatherings. Some heart-centered time together in silence is often the perfect antidote to the more challenging facets of the season.

Holidays at the center are joyful occasions. Everyone, including the guests, has to cook a special dish. We have a bountiful potluck that way, with tons of abundance to celebrate. There are usually gifts and good cheer as well, and the more heart you put into the occasion of celebrating old and new friends, the less cheesy the holiday spirit becomes. Many of our guests that have had the fortune to be here over the holidays have shared with us that it was one of the best holidays they’d ever celebrated. Of course, you will all be here with us in spirit this year. We’ll be sure to set out some cups and bowls for you all, and say prayers of gratitude at our feasts, wishing you all an abundant and happy holiday season and a very bright new year! In many ways, the figurative Hut that we all meet in each month—through these pages and sharing these teas—is also a reason to celebrate gratefully, for the global community and tea family this all represents.

The new year is going to bring some amazing improvements to Global Tea Hut. We hope to take a few more journalistic tea trips to help you learn about the history, folklore, farmers and, of course, share some organic tea from new regions. We are also working hard on some new and innovative ways to connect you all to each other, focusing on building an online platform that facilitates such communication, including posts, contact messages and local/international events. Like always, we have some really great teas in store as well!

We’re always reminding you that what is called “black tea” in the West is actually red tea; and that the mistake wouldn’t ordinarily be a problem if it weren’t for the fact that there is a whole other genre of tea that is the real black tea. So if you call red tea “black tea” then what do you call black tea? Well, we thought it was time that we revisited the topic of real black tea (not red tea), and not just in writing, but more importantly with our bowls and cups. Our favorite black tea is Liu Bao,



which is a place in Guangxi that literally translates to “Six Castles”. The traditional black tea from Liu Bao is rich in history, flavor and Qi and brews up a rewarding session, especially when it is cold outside.

As many of you know, the gongfu practice that we cultivate here at the center was taught to us by Master Lin Ping Xiang of Malaysia. Liu Bao tea is a lengthy chronicle, with Malaysia as one of its main characters, and is therefore a favorite tea of our teachers. In sharing it with you, we hope to connect you to that lineage and all the positive energy of our tea brothers and sisters there.

There is nothing more exciting for us than introducing people to new and wonderful teas, opening the door to whole new genres to explore—each one so rich and varied. For some of you, this will be the return of an old friend, for others one you’re getting to know better, though many of you are meeting for the first time. But whether you’ve known Liu Bao a long time or are just meeting now, you will find that cultivating a relationship to aged Liu Bao is life-changing.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Wu Fei". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Tea of the Month



2008 "OLD GROVE" LIU BAO BLACK TEA

This is one of the most exciting teas we've ever shared with you, because many of you have probably never tried a Liu Bao tea. It is one of our favorite genres of tea, especially in the winter. Also, this tea is special because it was donated by our tea brother Henry Yiow, which means it connects all of you to our lineage of gongfu tea. Henry is one of Master Lin's oldest and brightest students. He is generous and kind, and provided this wonderful tea with an open heart. Through it, may you find the sentiment of heritage it expresses from us; and may it be a newfound love at first sip, promising many more amazing cups of Liu Bao in the future!

Before we start discussing Liu Bao, we must once again drive home the difference between red tea and black tea. What is called "black tea" in the West is actually red tea (*hong cha*). Red tea is oxidized completely during production, whereas black tea is characterized by post-production artificial fermentation. Its liquor is actually

red—remember last month's tea, for example. Ordinarily, the mistake wouldn't be worth correcting, as it doesn't really matter what we call something. However, in this case calling red tea "black tea" is confusing, because there is another genre of tea called "black tea" in Chinese. So, if you call red tea "black tea" then what do you call the real black tea? The mistake began when Europeans first started trading with China and weren't allowed very far beyond the docks, learning most of what they knew about tea in broken Pidgin English from the dockside merchants. In those days, they also called oolong "black tea". (We know some of you are tired of hearing this, but repetition will help us correct the mistake, and there are many newcomers reading this as well.)

Liu Bao is a real black tea produced in Cangwu, Guangxi. The name "Liu Bao" literally translates to "Six Castles", which may refer to forts that existed in the area at some time in the distant past. The local mountains are full of canyons,

streams and waterfalls that are misty year-round. The loose, fertile soil, humidity and proper sunshine make it an excellent region for growing tea. The tea trees here are neither big nor small leaf varietals, which we have discussed extensively in past issues. To briefly summarize: the origin tea trees are all what has become known as *Camellia sinensis* var. *Assamica*. They can grow bigger leaves, and generally have a single trunk with roots that grow more downward. As tea moved northward, naturally or carried by people, it evolved into a small leaf varietal, known as *Camellia sinensis* var. *Sinensis*. These trees can't grow as large of leaves, are more bush-like with many trunks and roots that grow more outwards. Liu Bao is a bigger leaf tea, but not as big as puerh. Neither is it as small as small leaf tea—you could say that Liu Bao is "medium leaf", if you're willing to have a new category; otherwise, it's big leaf. Like puerh, the best quality Liu Bao tea is made from older tea trees.



"Old Grove"



Wuzhou, Cangwu, Guangxi



Liu Bao Black Tea



Han Chinese



~500 Meters





Top: Antique Era Liu Bao tea on its basket.

Bottom: A cup of Antique Era Liu Bao.

Right: Modern basket of Liu Bao processed traditionally.



Liu Bao tea is processed similar to shou puerh. In fact, when puerh manufacturers were developing the process of artificial fermentation used to create shou puerh in the 1960's and early 70's (officially licensed production began in 1973) they studied Liu Bao production, amongst other kinds of black tea. Ultimately, shou puerh production methodology is based on such teas, and owes its existence to them.

There are some variations in Liu Bao production, like all tea, so formulas can be a bit misleading, as they ignore the adaptations farmers make to suit the weather—different amounts of rainfall lead to different schedules and moisture content in the leaves, for example. Also, different factories/farmers have different recipes, even internally at different times or for variety.

Liu Bao was traditionally harvested in bud-sets of one bud and two leaves, though in modern times more leaves are sometimes picked to increase yield—a problematic trend in many tea-growing areas. There have been four general processing methods of Liu Bao tea throughout history. Though some scholars debate the dates and some of the details, we will present them as Master Lin taught us:

Lao Cha Po (Grandma Tea)

Since very ancient times, people in Guangxi have made very simple tea to drink. Long before tea looked like it does today, the villagers would cook the leaves in a wok with a tiny bit of water and then hang them up to dry from the rafters above their oven in the kitchen. The pinewood fires they cooked with would give the tea a smokey flavor. They would then boil this tea or serve it in bowls. Such tea is rare, but can still be found in some houses even today.

Antique Era Liu Bao

In the early days, before 1958, Liu Bao tea was steamed three times—once for de-enzyming (*sa qing*), then for piling and finally for compression. At that time, they didn't wither (oxidize) the tea. It was picked and directly sent to the "kill green (*sa qing*)" stage, which arrests oxidation and de-enzymes the tea, mak-



ing it less bitter. In those days, the *sa qing* was done by steaming the tea as opposed to wok-firing, as with most teas. Then it was left overnight to be finished the next day. Master Lin thinks that leaving the tea over night is maybe how they discovered piling, and the improvement it makes on this kind of tea. The next day, they would roll the tea and steam it once more for piling. In some cases, cultures from previous batches would have been introduced to promote fermentation. It was then dried in big bamboo baskets over pine-wood fires, which is one of the defining characteristics of Liu Bao processing in all times. After that, the tea was once again steamed in order to compress it into the large baskets, as we will discuss in a bit.

Vintage Liu Bao

After 1958, the farmers stopped using steam to de-enzyme the tea (*sa qing*) and started firing it in woks like other tea. They also stopped using steam to pile/ferment the tea. Instead, they began spraying the

tea with water and piling it, like the way shou puerh is fermented. Consequently, Liu Bao went from being processed with three stages of steaming to just one, the final steam for compression. In the vintage era, Liu Bao was: picked, fired/de-enzymed, left overnight, rolled, sprayed and piled, dried over pine-wood fire, steamed and compressed.

Aged to Modern Liu Bao

In the 1980's there was another slight shift in Liu Bao production that was most likely influenced by the prominence of shou puerh: the piling process was extended longer and the piles themselves formed deeper to increase fermentation. This often gives the Liu Bao from this era a camphor flavor, as well as a wetter profile.

In the last ten to fifteen years, factories have also started producing green, sheng Liu Bao to rival sheng puerh. This tea is often harsh and strange, and it is difficult to know how it will age, if at all.

Finishing the Tea

After fermentation (piling) and sorting, the leaves are steamed to re-moisten them and then pressed into large, bamboo baskets. The tea is packed down into these wicker baskets, pressed in tightly around the edges and more loosely in the middle, to facilitate the next phase of air-drying. The drying takes a few months, after which the tea is often aged.

In previous times, Liu Bao was only sold in large baskets weighing 40 to 50 kilograms. These large bundles were sometimes wrapped in huge bags for transportation, called “gunnies (*Bao Lan* 宝篮)” by Malaysian Chinese who spoke fluent English. In more recent times, Liu Bao has often been re-packaged after aging into smaller amounts. Modern Liu Bao is also produced in one-kilogram baskets, or into other amounts in boxes, bags, or even compressed into other shapes to hitch a ride on the bandwagon of puerh, as its neighbor has soared to great popularity and wealth.

When Liu Bao wasn't as famous, the baskets were aged for one to three years before even being sent to market. They were first put in air raid tunnels that are common in the area. These cool and moist wind tunnels were perfect for aging/fermenting the tea. After some period in the tunnels, the tea was then transported to wooden storage warehouses that had wet and dry rooms. They would be alternated between a drier space right after coming out of the moist tunnels, then to a wetter room. Drier spaces were often higher up, since humidity can differ a lot from the floor to the ceiling. This oscillation from wet to dry would continue until the masters felt the tea was fermented enough.

As we mentioned above, a lot of Liu Bao made these days is green and raw/sheng, so it doesn't have any piling or aging in the tunnels/warehouses. And even the tea that is

aged, is only done so for a very short time.

Traditionally, Liu Bao tea was exported to Cantonese tea drinkers in Malaysia and Hong Kong. In Malaysia, it was often served to tin/pewter miners during their breaks. In mainstream Chinese culture in Malaysia, senior citizens refer to it simply as “big leaf (*Da Ye*)”. It always had a reputation for being cheaper tea, often boiled, dried and re-boiled in restaurants. A lot of famous old Liu Bao teas have survived in Malaysia—mostly left over from the large stocks that the mines had when they closed. Some of the most famous, most coveted vintages of Liu Bao Tea are:

茶 1950's “Joy to the World”, *Pu Tian Gong Qing* (普天共庆), which was a higher grade of Liu Bao reserved for the managers and owners of the mines.

茶 1970's *Shuang Xing Hao Yin* (双星号印 / SSHC Penang).

茶 Liu Bao in gunnies, like N152, LLLL367, NL229, etc.

茶 Some of the best/most famous vintages of Liu Bao teas are those produced by the Guangxi Wuzhou Tea Factory (广西梧州茶厂). They produced the famous “VIVE” in the 1980's (with two grades) and a famous 1990's Liu Bao as well.

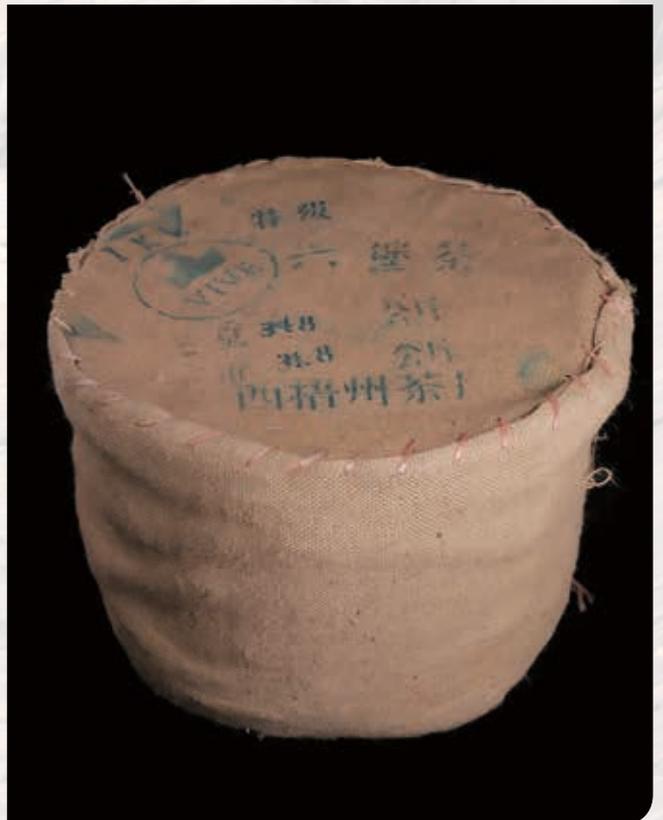
Master Lin ranks the five best Liu Bao teas in this order: 1930's Pu Tian Gong Qing, 1950's Zhong Cha, 1960's LLLL367 (which came from Hong Kong and has four “Ls” as grades from one to four. The “L” represents “orchid”—“lan” in Chinese—because this tea is Orchid brand, and “four orchids” was their highest grade), 1950's Da Xing Hang, and finally 1950's Fu Hua.

被遺忘的寶藏——整籃



Above: Considered the best Liu Bao tea in the world, Pu Tian Gong Qing or "Joy to the World". It was named by Master Lin himself.

Below: SSHC Penang (named after the port it came in through) and VIVE. These are 70's and 80's Liu Bao baskets, respectively.





It used to be that Liu Bao was a cheap alternative to aged puerh, often providing the same warming, deep and fragrant brews that settle the soul and aid in digestion. However, nowadays the more famous vintages of Liu Bao are also expensive. Aged Liu Bao is said to offer a dark red cup with mellow, thick liquor that tastes of betel nut. It is often regarded as the highest quality when covered with the spores of a certain yellow mold, which you will read about later on in this issue. In Traditional Chinese Medicine it is cooling or warming when needed, which is very unique, and also refreshing and good for dispelling dampness as well as detoxification.

Tea of the Month

Our tea of the month, “Old Grove”, is a 2008 Liu Bao. It was aged by Henry in Malaysia, the most famous and best place to age Liu Bao tea. It is deep, dark and mellow and settles the soul. Our tea was produced in the traditional way, including one to three years aging in tunnels and warehouses, which makes it actually a slightly older tea.

Since Liu Bao is a black tea, characterized by post-production fermentation, storage plays a huge role in developing the character of the tea. When you drink a black tea, you are always drinking its storage as well. This tea was stored in Malaysia since 2008, which means it also carries a bit of the magic, history and heritage of our teachers there.

Liu Bao is one of our favorite teas, combining the power of big leaf, old-growth trees with the processing of man, the fermentation of Nature and the work of all the microorganisms that change the tea so magically over time. The Qi is deep and Yin, moving towards the center, carrying you inward as you drink. We hope it keeps you warm and brings joy to you and your loved ones this holiday season!



*We opened
A basket of history,
Kept by a friend
In some forgotten corner
Of a world moved on.*

*The treasure inside opened the years;
Sipping Time
Wobbled sideways
And fell over the brink
Of the Timeless...*

-Wu De

Left: Our tea of the month in the 50kg basket it fermented in.

Below: Henry opening your tea with love!



Brewing Tips for Old Grove

Try brewing this tea gongfu if you can. Liu Bao is much better when prepared in this way. If you do not have a gongfu set, go with a side-handle pot or a teapot, as this tea may not be that nice directly in the bowl since many of the leaves are small from the compression and subsequent breaking up of the tea.

Like shou puerh or aged puerh, aged Liu Bao is often better when it is a bit darker. Try adding a bit more leaf than you are used to, or steep the tea a bit longer. You want the liquor to be dark red or even black (like the name of the genre). When the steam swirls around the dark liquor, with shades that fade from black to browns, and then into maroons and reds with a gold ring around the edge, you will know you have got the perfect cup of aged tea. We have given you enough tea to have one very strong session or two moderate ones. It will be up to you to decide what the occasion calls for.

Liu Bao tea needs a higher temperature, as with all darker teas: aged or roasted oolongs, shou or aged puerh. The ideal is, of course, charcoal, but make sure your water is at a higher temperature no matter what kind of heat source you are using.

For this month, practice pouring the water into the teapot faster and with a greater force. Aged puerh or Liu Bao will be better this way. The quicker you fill up the pot the better. Also, make sure you shower the pot both before and after steeping in order to preserve the heat. These two steps will have great impact on the quality of the final cup.

This month's tea is very "patient", which means that you can get many steepings from it. Preserving the temperature in this way helps to make any tea more patient. Teas that are kept at a constant temperature release their essence slowly over time, allowing them to last longer. They are also steadier and more pleasant this way.

Liu Bao Tea

黄金花

GOLDEN FLOWERS

-Wu De

A lot of black tea that is fermented post-production will develop various kinds of mold. Sometimes this is a bit scary to Western tea lovers. But there's no need to be put off by certain kinds of mold in tea. Many of the molds in fermented teas are medicinal, and sometimes even sweeten the tea as well. No mold is as coveted or as rare as the elusive "Golden Flowers" that you sometimes find in black tea.

Some of the magic of post-production fermentation isn't in the tea leaves. Scientifically, little is known about many of the molds and bacteria that arise naturally in fermented teas like puerh, Liu Bao and other black teas. Most of these teas grow in humid areas, so molds, fungi and unique bacteria are present in and around the trees. As the tea is fermented, each cake, brick or batch of loose tea will be different. Even sheng puerh, aged naturally over time, is susceptible to mold and not all of it is bad for us.

When it comes to black tea, Chinese people have always determined the quality of many teas by how much "Golden Flowers (*huang jing hua*, 黄金花)" they have. This is especially true of the brick teas of Hunan, where such mold is most desirable. In fact, Hunnanese brick tea is intentionally fermented in conditions favorable to this mold, and any brick without it is considered lower quality. Traditionally, Liu

Bao tea was not characterized in this way, though it is sometimes found with this mold on it. For some reason, this particular mold very rarely grows on puerh (aged sheng or shou), though puerh has many other kinds of molds and fungi.

Also known as *Eurotium Cristatum*, most of the golden bunches are actually spores. In recent times, black tea has started to grow in popularity and some Liu Bao and Liu An teas are also fermented under conditions that promote Golden Flowers.

There have been medical studies in China suggesting that *Eurotium Cristatum* can be effective in treating diabetes, promoting metabolism and used as a digestive aid, and even potentially assisting in the treatment of cancer patients. Though Golden Flowers have been used medicinally in China, Mongolia and Tibet for centuries—where most brick black tea was exported to—further research is still needed.

Beyond the more scientific approach to health, we would also like to offer a different approach that focuses on trusting our bodies, Nature and life, looking to our own connection to our self and plant medicines instead of waiting for a lab report to tell us what is going on inside of us. Perhaps the combination of these approaches results in a more holistic health and healing.

There is some debate about the molds that develop in fermented teas like puerh and black tea. There aren't any known cases of mycotoxins in these teas, but the possibility is there. Some white spores on puerh tea will give it a musty flavor, which people may or may not appreciate. Traditionally, most all aged puerh was musty, having been stored in Southeast Asia. The tea wasn't as valuable as it is today, and was often left to age naturally, with little human intervention. As puerh has increased in value, however, tea lovers are more concerned with



how their tea will age, putting more effort into controlling the storage environment. In the future, we will be able to share more experiments and results, as tea is aged in new environments around the world, some conducive to better aging and some not so nice.

Although many people think of mold as bad for us, it isn't inherently so. Our bodies are full of microorganisms. We need them to survive. There are bacteria all around and throughout our bodies, and by number they account for the majority of cells in us. While we find that the presence of certain white and yellow molds on aged sheng and other black teas enhances their Qi, and in the case of Golden Flowers makes them sweeter, we aren't doctors and wouldn't recommend using this tea to treat any illness. You need to take responsibility for your own health, consulting physicians, Western or Chinese.

Putting aside disclaimers about how we won't be responsible for your health, we drink such tea a lot and it is great. As we mentioned above, there are no known cases of mycotoxins released from Golden Flowers—to the contrary, there are several studies promoting their medicinal benefits, Western and Chinese. Also, there is research which demonstrates that the molds and bacteria in most teas are mitigated by the temperature of water used in tea preparation.

There is a magic in the relationship between the millions of microorganisms in fermented teas and our bodies. This is a big part of what makes puerh and aged teas, like this month's Liu Bao, special teas. We have talked here a lot about the scientific aspects of these molds, but we should also recognize that it is hard to say how much of the Qi in any aged tea is from the leaves and how much from the microorganisms. Without humidity, puerh

and black teas don't ferment. The changes they go through over time are related to the presence of bacteria, itself the defining characteristic of fermentation—in anything from cheese and yogurt to kombucha.

The mold adds a deepening to the Qi, making it more Yin, while sweetening the tea, bringing a longer-lasting aftertaste. Microorganisms—molds and bacteria—are part of what makes tea and the world alive.

We have Liu Bao teas from all different ages, some of which are fifty or sixty years old, some from the 1980's, 90's and early 2000's. Very few of them have Golden Flowers, so count yourself lucky if you find one! This month's tea has little to no Golden Flowers, as Malaysia is not really humid enough to encourage them. Still, learning about them is a part of understanding black teas like Liu Bao.



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DO YOU REALLY NEED TO WARM THOSE CUPS?

-Sam Gibb

In Sam's first ever experiment, he reinforces what we always say in this section of the magazine: experiential understanding is necessary to make progress in mastery of gongfu tea. Preserving the heat is the most important practical aspect of tea brewing, and therefore worth testing and retesting in its every facet.

I have allowed myself to cultivate a few bad habits over the course of my life. Some that know me a little better might say 'a few' would be an understatement, perhaps some people that don't know me so well would also agree with that. One of the broader categories that affects many aspects of my life, shifting form to suit the occasion, would be laziness. It often comes in the guise of approaching things in my life with the aim of just completing them, without attention to the *how* I finish, just the desire *to* finish. Obviously, this is not a path to any sort of mastery; and well, the road can get pretty bumpy to say the least.

The issue with allowing this mindset to exist is that it seeps into all aspects of your life, including your Tea practice! The path of Cha Dao is about realizing that ultimately there is no separation between any elements of your life. We bring our whole selves to the tea table. Thus a tea session never really begins or ends, but merely flows from one session to the next. Our lives become our tea practice, so tea becomes a Way, and upon finding 'a Way', we find 'The Way'.

The reason for this long-winded introduction is that I realized this

was the first experiment I have ever done by myself... Because I live in an environment where experiments are constantly happening and I have a teacher that has undertaken all these experiments before, I guess my underlying assumption was, why bother? I trust that others have done the work for me, and beyond that, it takes effort. But here we come to an important crossroad in all spiritual cultivation. To use my teachers words: "The Buddha's enlightenment is not your own. To truly grow we must step out of the comfortable shelter of those who came before us. By stepping into the elements we find our own home, our own truth." It is in this spirit that I introduce my first gongfu experiment: "Do you really need to warm those cups?"

When we brew gongfu tea, we seem to be constantly warming things. The pot, the cups—well, just the pot and cups, but we do it constantly. We shower the pot before pouring the water inside and after the pot is full. We also warm the cups in between each brew by filling them part way from the kettle. I decided to see what the difference would be between warming and not warming the cups, and especially

the influence this would have on the tea. This experiment is relatively easy to do, and as one of the guests here put it, "The difference is shockingly obvious."

What you will need:

This experiment is fairly basic in terms of what you will need. Two identical porcelain cups are ideal. You'll want to try and limit the influencing factors as much as possible. You can do another experiment to see the affect of using different cups, but for the sake of this experiment try to use identical cups. You will also need an Yixing pot, ideally. However, if you do not have one you could use a different brewing vessel. Another key element to this experiment (and Cha Dao in general) is some tea. We used a lightly oxidized oolong and brewed it very lightly. This makes it easier to spot the differences, especially in the mouthfeel. You could use any tea you like, but it is recommended to brew it lightly. In fact, you could even try this experiment without tea! Last, but certainly not least, you will need water. As many of you know, both experientially and

from reading this magazine, we collect water from a mountain spring weekly. Clean, well-structured water will make the experiment much easier to conduct. The differences in mouthfeel will be much more pronounced. I used a clay kettle and an infrared burner to heat my water, but any source of heat will work for this experiment as long as it is consistent.

How I undertook this experiment:

The procedure is very simple: You start with your cups and teapot as usual. Clean your cups and heat the pot before you rinse your tea leaves as you normally would. Before steeping your first infusion, add water from the kettle to one of your cups and not the other. Then add water to your teapot. This will warm the cup as the tea steeps. When you (or the tea) are ready,

empty the cup and pour between the heated and non-heated cups. Try to distribute the tea evenly, not only in the amount but also in where in the teapot it comes from. The tea liquor from the bottom of the pot has steeped longer than the tea that pours out initially. Move back and forth between the cups, trying to get the same color and amount of tea in both cups.

With a cup in each hand, taste back and forth between the two cups, starting with the non-heated cup. Note any differences in mouthfeel, aroma, taste and Qi. Pay the most attention to the mouthfeel initially. Try to notice if there is any difference in the temperature, the way the tea coats the mouth, the structure of the water (does it stay together in your mouth?), where the tea sits in your mouth, how it swallows and so on. Simply put, is it comfortable in your mouth? It helps to have a notebook on hand to write down your experiences. Try this for

at least three steepings to consolidate what you have found. It can be helpful to do this experiment with someone else in silence and then compare your findings afterwards.

Experiments are an important part of progressing in Cha Dao. Without our experiential understanding of tea, we are merely reciting the words and experiences of others. Remember that refinement in tea is ultimately about the refinement of ourselves, and there are no shortcuts in this process. So, I encourage you to take the time this month to refine your tea and yourself!

We would love to hear how you went with this experiment. Don't be lazy like I have been! Share your results with us, either via our discussion board, on our website or by writing to us at:

globalteahut@gmail.com.





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TEA WITH FAIRIES

-Steve Kokker

Don't let the title, or Steve's casual tone fool you: this article touches on some very profound topics! How and in what ways are we connected to the important people in our lives when they aren't present? Do our thoughts, or even prayers, influence their lives? Beneath these depths there are actually darker waters below: How and in what way are we connected to everything in the Universe?

We all had imaginary friends as children: Beings to speak to before falling asleep, or while feeling nervous at school. Losing them is a bittersweet lesson in growing up: in “knowing better”. Maybe we all know too much. Sure, these companions never existed in the reality we call “real”, but perhaps logical, linear thinking like that killed some of the magic and joy those fantasies brought us. Maybe, just maybe, it's high time to revive them in our lives. We in this tea tradition are used to talking about shamans, fairies and spirits, about goddesses, Qi and other beings which cannot be thoroughly touched, seen or smelled. So, it's just a short step away from beginning once again to interact with them.

Most of us have set out bowls or cups in honor of those who are not physically present. This is a lovely gesture which expands our tea space, sometimes setting a theme to our sessions, which sends a deep bow of gratitude, love or tribute to those who could not for whatever reason be there with us.

I have in the past set tea out for my dear departed Dad, to Wu De as a thanks for everything he has transmitted to me, to a distant friend whose birthday it was or who had wanted but couldn't attend, and to someone dear to my heart on that particular day.

This morning I had a transcendent tea session with my pals Timo and Jasper, neither of whom were actually here. I found that there are

many unexpected ways to expand the already lovely gesture of setting a cup for an absent friend, so as to truly engage with loved ones in unique ways. As we know, most communication goes on in non-verbal ways, and so why couldn't connections between persons be deepened even in their absence from one another?

I set up a simple *chaxi*, played some delicate, non-obtrusive Kip Mazuy music, and steeped some mystery sheng I was presented by Mr. Liang on last year's Global Tea Hut trip to Yunnan. I started to vividly imagine that both Timo and Jasper were there in front of me as I poured tea into their cups, and spoke their names softly like a whispered incantation, as I passed the



cups towards them. On this day it was Timo's birthday (he was celebrating in his hometown several hours away), and Jasper was having a momentous day serving tea to a large group of people at a *sangha* meeting in Amsterdam. I closed my eyes and wished them well as I let the wild mountain nectar drift down my throat.

I'm certain it had nothing to do with the Autumn sun streaming through my open windows at the time, but when I closed my eyes, I had distinct impressions of both of these fellow tea lovers and fine friends sitting there, in their effortless cross-legged levitation poses, smiling and glowing as if bathed in soft light. I didn't actually see them reach for and raise their cups, and

I was secretly glad of that, as I was using those 100 year old ceramic ones I paid half a fortune for and wouldn't have cared much for mishaps, even imaginary ones...

I continued for a few moments to sit with this rather peaceful, still image of those two sitting/float-ing there with me, in a rather harmonious silence. After only a very brief moment, I began to feel as if there was some form of connection occurring between us. Something along the lines of the times when I am able, from a space of an opened or softened heart, for example, to see beyond their personalities and towards the more fragile, loving and in-need-of-love beings behind them. I imagined simply sharing this space with them for a few moments.

I can't say that I continued for very long with this. I didn't later stand up and offer them a piece of cake, or wait to brew another steeping as they returned from the toilet. Nor did I ask them if they detected a note of copper in the tea's after-taste or offer them a hug at the session's closure. Yet it was incredible how even this brief meditative sharing of space with my imaginary friends opened up a tender heart-space to them and reminded me that they (as with everyone I know) are far more than mere personalities with their quirks and perks. I felt like I had spent some time looking at them soul to soul, all masks laid aside. What a lovely feeling that permeated the space around me. And I got to eat the cake all by myself!

Osho, cranky old philosopher that he was, liked to suggest that instead of bothering others with our problems, we try speaking to the wall. We upset no one that way, let others get on with their lives, start no drama, fuel no ego, and still get whatever rubbish we have in our minds off our 'chests'. In a parallel way, we can practice opening our hearts to those we love (and, perhaps even more beneficially, to those we do not love so much) without taking up any of their time. This is our homework, after all, not necessarily theirs.

I heartily suggest opening up your tea space to "imaginary beings": your higher self, departed loved ones, friends you have just had an argument with, persons you

wish you were with at the moment, people to whom you neglected to say the right thing when you had a chance; people with whom regular communication is complicated by roles, masks, or other forms of unconscious behavior. Imprinting our consciousness with this kind of feeling-based acknowledgment of another's beingness may hopefully continue through to our next so-called "real-life" encounter with them when, despite any automated forms of behavior or conversation, a connection with that image of their light, beautiful, fragile and searching-for-love selves will infuse your words and deeds with greater compassion. And, of course, this Global Tea Hut is the perfect demonstration of all we're discussing, since it

affords us all the change to drink tea with another around the world, connected in spirit!

At the very least, it reconnects you with some childhood creativity you likely have lost!

Until the next time we meet in Fairie-land, be well...



A cup for all of you...





茶席介紹



AN INTRODUCTION TO CHAXI

-Shen Su

Along with last month's beginning to a new series on Chabana, we are renewing a regular series on arranging your space for tea. A lot of you contact us often with questions about chaxi, and it has been a while, so we thought we would start with an introductory article, traveling deeper in the coming months. Shen explores the philosophy of chaxi and some essentials to get you started as well.

If we want to invite more Tea into our lives, we need to expand our definition of what Tea is, rather than just increasing the frequency of doing one particular activity. Though in one practical sense, the practice of *chaxi* is done directly on the tea table, it requires us to consider many factors outside the tea space, even at the rudimentary level.

Let us broadly consider the term “*chaxi*”, as it literally translates: “tea stage.” Like in all tea practices, working with your tea stage is an expression of your state of mind, not to be confused with an expression of your *self*. Though an aspect of yourself will inevitably come through in the final expression, it is not the goal of a *chaxi* to express the self. We might simply say the goal

of a *chaxi* is to create a harmonious setting that honors the communion between guest, host, and Nature in a chance encounter over tea.

A practical approach to chaxi

First and foremost, we must create space! This is the first thing anyone must do in order to invite Tea into their lives. The type of Tea that finds Her way into your life will be directly related to the space in which you create for Her. So, if our tea stage is to honor our self, our guest, Great Nature, and in fact all our brothers and sisters in Tea, as well as all the saints and sages of the past,

present, and future, it must first be cleared and cleaned! On the surface level, this means cleaned of any dust and debris. In other words, physically cleaned. On the inner level, this means cleared energetically, from all past tea sessions that might cause us to forget that this tea session right here and now is both our first and last. It is our demonstration to the Universe that we acknowledge the uniqueness of this time together. It is a cleaning off of the dust of the world and worldly matters, purifying ourselves in preparation for a once-in-a-lifetime encounter. *Nothing is more important!* It might sound cheeky, but another very good introductory article on tea could cover the art of cleaning and tidying. And let us remember



that one of the Eight Bowls of a Life of Tea in this tradition directly addresses cleanliness and purity.

Start with emptiness

"Without anxious thought, doing comes from being." -Wu De

Once you have a clean stage upon which to practice, the next most important step is the same as with *chabana*, *being before doing*. Remember, this is both the ending of the last tea session and the beginning of the next. Expand your definition of the tea ceremony. You are always drinking tea. By being present, you prepare yourself for the next moment and honor the last.

How you act now will play a very influential role in the unfolding of the tea ceremony. What you lay out on the table will be a demonstration manifest of your state of mind.

This might sound a little extreme, but really, it's a matter of heart. If we are to live a true life of Tea and Zen we must fervently seek the balance that strives towards perfection, and yet rains compassionately on all shortcomings. Life is fleeting, and this expression of beauty and art on the table could very well be the last mark you make on this Earth... Take a few breaths, quiet the mind, and *envision* your *chaxi*.

Arranging a chaxi

"Instead of thinking through the question that life is confronting you with, sit quietly and let your thoughts settle down. Allow the answer to emerge spontaneously from your intuition without unnecessary deliberation. Go straight to the solution." -Wu De

As with choosing a suitable tea for each ceremony, the design of our *chaxi* should strike a balance between certain practical factors and our intuition. It is always helpful to consider details, such as the time of day, the weather, the season, the number of guests, bowl tea or gongfu tea, etc.



In fact, in the beginning, most of us will lean towards using these details to design our tea stage. But it's just as important to begin an internal dialogue between your, the space, the accoutrements to be used for the occasion, and the spirit of the Leaf. There is then less "me" in the design and more tea spirit, as it should be.

Though you may think yourself limited by having a small selection of tea stage elements, this is actually a good place to start. Having less to work with is actually an advantage in the beginning, just as it is advantageous to start with bowl tea,

requiring only leaves and hot water in a bowl. With less parameters to consider, we can more easily connect to the spirit of what we are doing, and also as with bowl tea, the spirit of *chaxi* lies in simplicity and balance. With this as our foundation, it will be easier to work towards more elegant and refined *chaxi* layouts in the future, just as we progress to the more refined and complex brewing method of gongfu tea after first brewing bowl tea for a long time. As we so often say around here, *advanced techniques are basic techniques mastered!*

Chaxi elements

There are many *chaxi* elements to choose from and countless combinations to create. Luckily, many of your Global Tea Hut gifts can be put to use here! But as I said, you will want to start simple and work with less in the beginning, challenging yourself to be as creative as possible to suit each occasion. Not that elegance and aesthetics are forbidden from the tea stage, but in the beginning we must first "forget the bowl and remember the soul." A stage with too many fancy items,

items used out of harmony, or items that seem forced will yield a disharmonious or distracting feeling at the table. Like with *chabana*, utilization of space is not easy and also very important. Deciding to fill an open space or not can make or break a *chaxi*. Therefore, working on a smaller stage with simple elements is easier.

Ironically, some of the *chaxi* layouts that I have received the most praise for from friends are the ones that my teacher scolds me for the most. This is not to say my friends have poor taste, but rather, highlights the fact that what my *chaxi* did was excite the mind rather than draw it inward for silent contemplation. Simplicity is so important in the beginning! I have seen too many stages for tea (including many of my own) that were overly concerned with color combinations, elegant items, and sentimentality, which more than likely stemmed from an unconscious desire to seek attention. Walking this path of tea is not about being at the center of the stage but creating it for a higher purpose. It is about service, transformation and connection, and all ultimately for the benefit of others. We are not here to receive praise for our efforts but to honor the occasion. That is why stepping out of the way and purifying the self is so important, as the *chaxi* can then come *through* us rather than *from* us.

There are no set rules to laying out elements on your tea stage. After sitting quietly, I often start by choosing a runner in harmony with my chosen theme and all of the aforementioned factors. I usually use a cloth or bamboo runner or perhaps a wooden board suitable for tea. At this point, everything depends! You must choose wisely between tea boats, scoops and sticks, lid rests, miniature statues, bonsai, leaves and petals, water features, flowers, rocks, etc. Of these, maybe the most important item to work with is some sort of centerpiece to highlight your tea pot and bring

focus and symmetry to the center of the stage, reminding us why we're all here! That might be a low and rustic plate, or the more elegant rattan we sent out last month, among many other options.

During this process, I always sit down a number of times and get a feel for how everything is unfolding. I put myself in the guest's position and contemplate how they might experience this *chaxi*. There comes a point at which you either feel satisfied or not. Feeling satisfied is easy to understand, just as when you level a scroll or hang a picture in the perfect spot—everything just clicks into place and you know it's in harmony. This happens when you are calm, respectful, and heartfelt. When you feel unsatisfied, however, you can take something away, add something, or change everything! More often than not, when my teacher corrects and adjusts my *chaxi*, he takes something away or has me start over.

Finish your *chaxi* in a timely, calm fashion. Obviously, do not rush such an endeavor, but also don't get caught up thinking too much. Stay centered, find your breath throughout, and work single-mindedly. When the tea begins, everything is perfect just as it is. But each time, ask yourself, is this your best effort?

How you finish anything is how you start the next thing. Just as we started by cleaning our stage, so too we end by cleaning. Gratefully, clear everything away. Do yourself and your guests a favor and make a new *chaxi* for every occasion! Be diligent! In doing so, you will notice the stagnation that sets in even after using the same *chaxi* only twice, and furthermore, your actions will be in harmony with the fact that this very encounter will only happen but once in our lives. And so, to honor this significant occasion, we arrange our *chaxi*.



舞台無法勝過台上耀眼之星



Liu Bao Tea

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IN SEARCH OF LIU BAO NOSTALGIA IN MALAYSIA

-Yingyin Luo

At the beginning of this year, we set out to translate more articles from Chinese for this magazine, which we have done. We thought we'd end the year, and start the next with one more. This article from Tea Art Magazine was written by a good friend of ours. It features our own teacher, Master Lin, as well as Henry Yiow, the donor of this month's tea. It is a very well written travelogue of Miss Luo's journey through Malaysia to try to better understand Liu Bao tea.

Liu Bao tea is from Cangwu (蒼梧) County, Wuzhou City (梧州), Guangxi Province (廣西). It has been one of the twenty-four most famous teas in China since the Jiaching Era (1796-1820). However, to the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, especially in Malaysia, the flavor of this tea is strongly tied to a century-old nostalgia. So when we decided to write about Liu Bao tea, the first thing that came to mind was to visit teashops in Malaysia, instead of Wuzhou City in Guangxi. We should go to Malaysia to take a look at how the Chinese people there drink Liu Bao tea. Where do they buy Liu Bao tea? And how is it woven into the local culture and economy of everyday life in Malaysia?

Traditionally, the most important seven daily necessities for Chinese were firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar, and tea. But after a trip to Malaysia, you may be sur-

prised to find that tea leads that list, especially Liu Bao!

There were three major ethnic groups that emigrated to Malaysia from China: the Hakkas from Chaozhou (潮州), the Minnan people from Anxi (安溪), and the Southerners from Guangdong (廣東) and Guangxi provinces. In the beginning, these three groups of overseas Chinese reminisced of their home over different cups of tea: the Hakka people drank Wuyi tea, Anxi people drank Tieguanyin, while the Southerners drank Liu Bao tea. As time went on, however, all the Chinese expatriates started drinking Liu Bao.

Liu Bao Tea and the mining industry of Malaysia

Our first stop was Ipoh, a fast-growing mining city during the 1920's that has since lost most of

its population due to the closing of the tin mines in the 1970's. Nevertheless, there are some beautiful buildings from that era that still remain in the old town. Along with the miners and their families, the once popular Liu Bao tea has moved away.

Long ago, Liu Bao tea and the mining industry were tightly knitted together. According to Mr. Huang who lives in Kuantan, his father came to Malaysia in 1902 to escape a long period of war. Ships with up to one thousand refugees arrived in Malaysia regularly. These migrants came to find jobs in the local tin mines. However, out of the one thousand Chinese who arrived with Mr. Huang's father on the boat, he was one of only two lucky survivors left standing months later! "You buried one body in the morning and you became the body to be carried to the tomb in the afternoon. This happened everyday", says Mr.



Huang, describing the poor working conditions of those times.

Malaysia is a tropical country, so cave-ins were very common due to the humidity and constant gusty wind. Beyond the danger of collapse, miners were exposed to moist tunnels and blasting winds all the time. The panning miners working outside in the water weren't any better off because they stood in the river barefoot under a blazing sun all day long. The extreme weather, long working hours, and foreign food and water dimmed all their dreams, which faded like the light in the mines.

Under such terrible circumstance, many Chinese miners had a need for tea, and Liu Bao became an important necessity they brought along with them to Malaysia. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, tea is usually cold in nature; and yet Liu Bao tea is actually mild. It has the amazing ability to be cold or hot as needed. In

addition to the basic health benefits it shares with all tea, Liu Bao tea is special because it can dispel dampness and heat, soothe the lungs, cool the body down, and flush out excess Qi. As a result, Liu Bao tea was perfect for the miners who worked in Malaysia. It became essential to have a big pot of Liu Bao tea brewing at the entrance to the tin mines. Miners lined up at the entrance with a pot of porridge for lunch in their left hands and Liu Bao tea in their right. Liu Bao tea was a vital medicinal drink to keep them alive as well as a constant companion—a familiar flavor of home. It is said that when mines placed ads to recruit miners, the Chinese would choose the mine with complimentary Liu Bao tea. There are also instances of miners refusing to work at mines that didn't provide Liu Bao.

Name brands that tin mines helped polish

At its peak, Ipoh was very lively with busy mines all over the area. Because of the high demand for Liu Bao tea, teashops in Hong Kong and Guangxi opened local branches in Ipoh. Chen Chun Lan/PL Teashop (陳春蘭/寶蘭茶行) from Hong Kong was the most famous and influential of these, selling Liu Bao tea exclusively. It is said that they imported several thousand baskets (each with a capacity of 20-50kg/45-110 lbs.) annually. PL Liu Bao tea is a highly sought-after vintage these days.

Liang Ruisheng (梁瑞生) founded a teashop that bore his name at the peak of tin mining. It was later sold to Yi Huicai during the 1940's, and is now managed by the second generation, Yi Songqiang. The brand "Sirui (四瑞)" was developed in the

1940's, and became so famous everywhere throughout Malaysia that many teashops and tea drinkers even now use the name "Sirui" as a generic way of asking for Liu Bao tea.

When looking for teashops in the old town area of Ipoh, Ruizhen (瑞珍) is the best choice. Li Lichi established the Ruizhen Drugstore in Anxi in 1918 and his son Li Yizhen opened a store in Malaysia in 1924. The mining industry helped Malaysia's economy strengthen, encouraging a larger and better tea market. The mesmerizing ambiance, old tea brands painted on the walls, antique doors and *tansu* (drawers), not to mention the shiny floor polished by decades of heavy traffic all reveal how popular it was back in the day...

In Malaysia, tea is so popular and crucial that it can be found in many stores other than teashops. Often times, most drugstores or Chinese herbal apothecaries have a section exclusively for tea right at the entrance, with higher visibility than rice or salt! Ample choices of tea can be found in Chinese Medicine shops because the locals consider tea as medicine, which it was for centuries, or even millennia, to all Chinese people. Liu Bao tea can also be found in shops selling paraphernalia for ancestor worship, because it is one of the common offerings given to ancestors. If you ask a waiter at a restaurant for Liu Bao tea, they'll not only have it for sale, but will offer you choices of both new and old vintages! While strolling through the old town, we saw an old man riding a bicycle to Liang Ruisheng's old teashop to buy Liu Bao tea. The owner wrapped the tea up in a piece of brown parcel paper and tied it with a piece of red plastic string. The old man hung the package on the handlebars of his bicycle and rode away. Nowadays, such a scene is only preserved in Ipoh, Malaysia.



So many mysteries about Liu Bao tea

There are all kinds of Liu Bao tea in every store in the old town district, and yet you have to go to the experts to taste the oldest Liu Bao tea. But how is the Liu Bao tea dated? How are the numbers and codes on the labels of the tea baskets deciphered? Why is it that all the very well aged Liu Bao tea was only consumed later on? Did the Liu Bao tea get here directly from China or did it all have to go through Hong Kong? And why is there a saying that "One can't tell the vintage from the package, nor can one tell if it is new or old from the leaves." There

are many unsolved mysteries about Liu Bao tea that even the most experienced experts cannot explain.

We roamed around half of Malaysia searching for answers in both old and new teahouses and teashops, from Ipoh to Taiping, through Kuala Lumpur to Kuantan, and then returning to Kuala Lumpur. After tasting over fifty kinds of Liu Bao tea and photographing almost a hundred baskets, we found ourselves trapped in an endless cycle of understanding some aspects of this magic tea, only to fall back into the dark of a confusion as pronounced as when we started. In the beginning, we were able to identify some teas correctly. Yet after a few more rounds of tasting differ-



This friendly restaurant owner in the mining town of Lembing serves aged Liu Bao bowl tea.

ent kinds of Liu Bao, all the flavors were mixed up and we got confused. Then, after a while, we managed to know certain teas better. But then we'd get confused again, not knowing the vintage or even the age of the tea, as if we'd stumbled into a labyrinth of elusive tea that varied so much that you couldn't tell a tea you had tasted just the day before. There is a saying that "the water for brewing puerh is deep", meaning that there is a lot to be learned about puerh tea. Over the course of this trip, we realized that the water for Liu Bao is not any shallower!

There are many reasons why it is difficult to date Liu Bao tea: First of all, Liu Bao tea was simple back then (much like puerh), so after the

tea was imported to Malaysia, packaging documentation and/or importation dates were not important. Secondly, even though almost all the Liu Bao tea originated in Guangxi, it was sometimes packaged in Hong Kong or even in Ipoh. And tea companies had their own different coding systems for the labels on the baskets. Decades later, those codes are not traceable or decipherable. Thirdly, for many different reasons, there was little to no tea produced in Wuzhou between 1958 and 1989. In the beginning of that era, tea companies in Hong Kong used leaves from Yunnan and Sichuan and marketed such tea as "Liu Bao tea". During the 1980's, teashops in Malaysia imported tea from Thai-

land and Myanmar and packaged them into baskets and sold them as "Liu Bao tea" as well. As a result, we have only the baskets and the tea leaves left to tell the tale of any tea's vintage and/or origin. For example, the better the craftsmanship of the basket, the older the tea is. And sometimes, the labels on the baskets reveal the period of time when the tea was imported. But since Liu Bao was often aged before it was even sold from Guangxi, and then often aged again in Hong Kong, this says little about the year of production.

Miss Xiuzhen Zhang (張秀珍) from Huizhen Ge (匯珍閣) led us from Ipoh to Taiping. Taiping is one of the oldest cities in Malaysia, with the oldest harbor and railway



Liu Bao baskets and treasures stacked in a tea shop in Kuala Lumpur.

station. In the old days, people lived around the mines there. Now the old tin mines are gone, replaced by a lovely artificial lake. As a result of the beautiful lake and cool breezes, Taiping has become a popular vacation destination in Malaysia.

We started our exploration of old Liu Bao tea in Taiping. Tea connoisseur Guoxing Cai (蔡國興) started drinking Liu Bao tea when he opened a tea house in 1993. He explained why it is difficult to date Liu Bao tea: “In the early period, there was no direct trade between Malaysia and China, so tea shops had to purchase tea from Hong Kong, or tea had to be shipped through Singapore. Since Liu Bao tea is a black tea, and the post-production fermentation process is so vital to the tea, the condition of the

storage has a huge impact on the quality of the tea. The fact that the natural environments of Hong Kong and Malaysia are very different contributes to the huge variety of Liu Bao tea in the market. However, through comparing some aspects of the tea, and drinking more varieties, it is possible to place a tea into a relative timeframe.”

Mr. Cai categorized Liu Bao tea into three major periods: “There is a lively, slightly subdued sweet taste to the tea made in or before the 1960’s. The tea made in the 70’s and 80’s, on the other hand, tastes a bit more brisk, and the color is more reddish-yellow. During the last period, the color of the tea liquor has gotten lighter, and the storage smell has grown stronger, especially around 2007. After that, the mar-

ket demand changed and very little Liu Bao tea has since been aged after fermentation in the traditional way. Because of the popularity of puerh tea, Liu Bao is now produced with a greener, more raw profile. But there is a re-emerging trend to make Liu Bao tea in a more traditional way, with fermentation and aging.”

Mr. Cai prepared different teas for us to taste. The first group were the “Eight Mid-green (八中青)”, SSHC, and KWF (廣匯豐) from the 1970’s. The second round was Liu Bao loose teas (not from big baskets) made by Wuzhou, KWF premium Liu Bao loose tea leaves, and the big leaves, which are from a basket. The third batch was the China Tea (中茶) tea bags. Then we tasted premium vintage Liu Bao, Zhong Cha and LLLL367 (寶蘭)



Above: A Liu Bao bush we shot at night. It is a descendant of a tree the miners planted to try to grow their own tea.

Below: An old sign advertising a shop that can send money home to China for miners.



A shop in Kuala Lumpur full of Liu Bao baskets and aged Liu Bao and puerh in jars.

from the 50's and 60's. Last but not least, we savored collector Mr. Li's YSC1, which is unlike any other Liu Bao tea. It has a pungent ginseng aroma and the tea liquor looks clear and transparent.

After tasting more than ten different varieties of Liu Bao tea, the famous betel nut and ginseng flavors of Liu Bao left a very strong impression on us. There were many other tastes and fragrances, ranging from refined sweetness, briskness, thick ginseng to sweet camphor... It was as if we'd attended a Liu Bao carnival with a wide spectrum of colors and fanfare.

Tracing time with a cup of aged Liu Bao tea

The following day, we went back to Ipoh to visit another tea connoisseur, Mr. Zhong (鍾) who started to savor Liu Bao tea in 1975 when he moved to Ipoh. He felt sad talking about Liu Bao tea because most tea enthusiasts in the early period did not know how to appreciate this "Essence of Malaysian Tea". Ironically, people finally started paying more attention to old Liu Bao tea when the price of old puerh became too expensive.

According to Mr. Zhong, people in Wuzhou, China, where Liu Bao originates from, have never consumed much Liu Bao tea because almost all of the tea was exported. He says Hong Kong was the loca-

tion where the tea was most often finished, and yet not many people drank Liu Bao tea there, either. Most of the Liu Bao tea was consumed in Malaysia. In Ipoh, the miners drank up the lower-grade Liu Bao tea while the higher-grade tea was geared toward the rich bourgeois, mine officials and restaurants (the last of which we discovered later). After the closing of the tin mines in the 70's, there was a large surplus of premium tea. Three decades later, old high-quality Liu Bao tea re-surfaced in the market and people finally recognized its value.

Mr. Zhong went on to share the three key elements in brewing fine Liu Bao tea: very hot water, adequate tea leaves, and antique Yixing teapots.

For example, for a teapot with a capacity of 200ml, Mr. Zhong suggests using 14 grams to make a nice pot of tea. He suggests that once you've mastered brewing, you can differentiate the nuances of various vintages more easily.

Then we went from Western Malaysia to Kuantan, Eastern Malaysia. Tea master Lin Ping Xiang (林平祥) and Shunchang Qiu (邱順昌) took us to a mountain along the sea shore to watch the sunrise while sipping fantastic Liu Bao tea.

We left at 4am to climb Lembing Mountain in the pitch dark. We arrived at the peak before the crack of dawn to view the sunrise. To our surprise, the masters were very prepared, bringing a full tea set with them. Besides a nice picnic blanket, they had exquisite antique Yixing pots, Ming Dynasty porcelain cups, charcoal, a brazier and, of course, very fine water. They even brought cushions for us all to sit on. These Chajin understand tea! The coals heating clean spring water, and the most suitable teaware were the perfect combination, producing a pot of tea that left us savoring the flavor and fragrance for hours. Master Lin said that in gongfu tea none of the important elements can be compromised, helping the tea to reach its full potential, unfolding all its subtleties. After that day, I'd have to agree!

We tasted sweet YSC Old Label Liu Bao tea to quench our thirst and catch our breath after the long hike up the mountain. Then we picked the stronger Zhong Cha to give us a boost and start the day off right. After that PL LLLL367 was ready, and the first rays of sun shone exquisitely on the reddish tea liquor. This momentary union of Heaven, Earth, Tea and human beings moved us beyond words! We fell silent... The fourth tea was the "Four Golden Coins (四金錢)" from Shenchang Xuan-

zhuang (慎昌選莊). A soft sweetness unfolded alongside the twilight of a beautiful dawn! Then came the grand finale, "Joy to the World" (*Pu Tian Gong Qing* 普天共慶), Diamond Grade Yuandu (原度), the best Liu Bao there is! The rich aroma spread out from the tip of our tongues like a drop of water rippled across the surface of a pond, just as the morning sun lit up the surroundings and our souls... As we sat on the highest spot in Kuantan, savoring such fantastic Liu Bao tea, the spectacular sunshine brightened the long-forgotten Liu Bao tea culture of Malaysia.

The various fantastic, old Liu Bao teas we'd tasted on this trip proved that there are extremely high-quality Liu Bao teas out there! Realizing that our previous misconception of Liu Bao as a simple, lower-quality tea was entirely wrong, we wanted to make the most of this trip in Malaysia to better explore the enchantment...

Tucked-away Liu Bao becomes a treasure for guests

We reached our final destination, Kuala Lumpur, which has had the highest tea traffic in Malaysia since the 1930's. As it's the capital, and so near the harbor, all major tea importers had their offices and warehouses here. The top five tea shops, Kong Wooi Fong Tea Merchants (廣匯豐), Lianlongtai (聯隆泰), Guangfuyuan (廣福源), Nanlong (南隆) and Yushengxiang (裕生祥) all established storefronts in the bustling metropolitan of KL. The antique sign at Kong Wooi Fong gives away the century of history inside. The senior general manager, Mr. Liu (劉) pointed out that

in the olden times the top three grades of tea were sold to restaurants exclusively. At that time, rich people frequented restaurants for the sake of the high-quality tea as much as the food. Back then, the price differences among different grades of tea were not much by today's standards, so the restaurants which offered the best quality tea would attract more costumers. As a result, almost all restaurants purchased premium Liu Bao tea to ensure a full house. So, Liu Bao tea wasn't exclusively for tin miners. Hearing that was a very important piece in the puzzle, since I'd thought that Liu Bao tea was only imported for miners. In addition, the various fantastic, old Liu Bao teas we'd tasted on this trip, from Ipoh to Taiping to Kuantan, proved that there are *extremely* high-quality Liu Bao teas out there! Realizing that our previous misconception of Liu Bao as a simple, lower-quality tea was entirely wrong, we wanted to make the most of this trip in Malaysia to better explore the enchantment of Liu Bao. Therefore, we visited several teashops in KL.

For several decades, Ms. Meiling Chao (趙美玲), founder of Cha-no-yu Teahouse has put a lot of effort into promoting Malaysian tea culture. In 2014, she organized a grand event: "Rediscovering the Splendor of Liu Bao Tea" in KL to give Liu Bao tea more exposure. "Liu Bao tea is at the root of Malaysian culture. As a tea culture aficionado and promoter, I am obliged to make people aware of the splendor of Liu Bao tea." While tasting old Liu Bao tea with Ms. Chao, her comments echoed the flavor of the tea...

Throughout our trip, we savored and compared different aged Liu Bao tea in their flavors, fragrances and textures. And yet the full significance of Liu Bao in the history of tea, and a true exploration and appreciation of the nuances it offers, must ferment over time...





Henry, the donor of our December tea of the month, pouring some old Liu Bao.

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TEA IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

-Ganga & Tara

As we mentioned last month, November starts our weekly outings into the surrounding mountains to have tea. The winter months in Taiwan are perfect for outdoor tea. There is nothing like enjoying a bowl of tea in the mountains. We know that it is too cold for outdoor tea where many of you live (not all), but since we're enjoying it here at the Hut we thought we'd publish this piece Ganga sent us about a trip he and Tara took, and all the wonderful outdoor sessions they had along the way. They also took some amazing pictures.

Last summer, we decided to do a teaching tour called “The Seeds of Loving Kindness Tour” on the west coast of America. We planned to begin in Los Angeles and teach all the way north through California, Oregon and Washington, culminating on Orcas Island in the San Juan Islands northwest of Seattle. That route takes you through some of the most beautiful places in America, like Big Sur, the redwoods, Mt. Shasta and the Olympic Peninsula. We decided that on this tour, we'd camp wherever possible so that we could enjoy the natural beauty of America. Because tea had become an integral part of our life, we also intended to drink tea in all the beautiful scenic spots we passed through.

Our first stop was Big Sur. As we drove north along what is one of the most spectacular coastlines in the world, we looked for a place where we could camp for free. We turned off on a dirt road and found a perfect spot—a clearing in a grove of pine trees with a view of the ocean. After setting up our tent, we boiled water and brewed a pot of silver needle white tea. Drinking tea has become for us a communion with Nature. The tea plant absorbs the energy of the sun, the moon, the stars and the energy of the cosmos. When we drink the tea, we are imbibing all these energies and they empower us. As we sat on a soft carpet of pine needles, listening to the summer breeze blowing through the pines, we heard sea lions on the

beach below us and felt at one with all of Nature.

As we made our way north, we knew that we were going to camp on Mount Shasta, one of the Seven Sacred Mountains of the world. We thought that we'd only give two events in the town of Mount Shasta but the response was so great that we gave ten events, including a tea ceremony that was attended by over thirty people. We've been teaching in Mount Shasta for years but this time we stayed far longer than before and got to explore the mountain more than we ever had on previous visits. Mount Shasta is a powerful vortex of spiritual energy. It is widely regarded to be a focal point of the activity of the Ascended Masters and many spiritual seekers



Silver Falls, Oregon

from around the world are drawn there to experience its transforming energy. Camping on Mount Shasta was a sublime experience. One day, Tara and I climbed above Panther Meadow, set up our tea implements and enjoyed sipping purple red tea with the majestic snow-covered peak of Mount Shasta looming above us.

Our next stop was Silver Falls in Oregon, where a trail leads to seven magnificent waterfalls. We'd been there before with a Tibetan Lama, Dzogchen Khenpo Choga Rinpoche. Silver Falls is one of our favorite places on the West Coast, however this was the first time that we'd ever enjoyed tea there. It was a rainy day and a soft drizzle was falling as we drove to the park. As we pulled into the parking lot, the sky cleared and the sun greeted our arrival. We hiked to the tallest of the waterfalls and found a perfect spot to set up our tea and relax while drinking last year's Light Meets Life Ai Lao sheng puerh tea near the plunging waterfall.

Our destination on this tour was Orcas Island, where in 2002 we took the Bodhisattva Vows with our Tibetan Buddhist Lama. When one takes the Bodhisattva Vows, one pledges to devote one's life to being of service to all beings. Tara and I intended to renew our vows where we had originally made them on the top of the tower at the summit of Constitution Mountain on Orcas Island. As we drove up the mountain, it was typical fall weather in the Pacific Northwest, which means it was raining. We stopped halfway up the mountain and walked on a trail through moss-covered trees just as the rain let up. We walked along the trail past ferns bejeweled with glistening water drops, found a fallen tree trunk to sit on, and as a soft mist enveloped us, we enjoyed a pot of Tieguanyin oolong tea.

We had been looking for years for a place in America that felt like home where we could create a base and settle down to write a few books. Mount Shasta called to

us, so when we completed the west coast tour, we decided to stay in Mount Shasta for the winter. When we lived in India, we had a home at the base of Arunachala Mountain. Arunachala is considered by many to be the most sacred mountain in India. Now, we found ourselves living at the base of Mount Shasta that is widely believed to be the most sacred mountain in America. Like Mt. Kailash in Tibet and Mt. Fuji in Japan, these mountains are powerful places that draw people from around the world for transcendental experiences.

One day, we decided to make a pilgrimage to Crater Lake in Oregon. It had been snowing so we didn't know if we'd actually be able to get to the lake. Luckily, the road was open and we were able to walk all the way to the edge of the cliff overlooking the beautiful caldera lake. At a depth of 592m, it is the deepest lake in the United States. Tara and I set up our tea in the snow and savored some steaming hot Mi Xiang red tea while enjoying one of the most spectacular views in America. Tea and Nature are indeed the perfect combination!

Drinking tea in Nature has become just about our favorite thing in life. We've come a long way from the days when Lipton and Constant Comment were the only teas we knew of. Now, Tea is a way of life. It's our spiritual practice, a sacred communion with Nature and the Cosmic Energy. We have only begun this grand adventure into the inner secrets of Tea and are enjoying its constant unfolding...



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Crater Lake

Mount Shasta



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 Connor Goss:

It has been an awakening for me, discovering Tea. The seeds for this awakening were planted long ago, patiently waiting for the sun's warmth to provide them with the energy needed to sprout. Tea has steeped into the deepest places of my being, healing unseen wounds. Or perhaps Tea was always there, as it often feels like I am remembering something that I have forgotten—that we all have forgotten: our ancestral roots. These roots stretch deep into the Earth, into my own eternal form. They become intertwined with the consciousness of all beings.

Tea has revealed to me the unseen world that exists within the tapestry of our own. Journeying into each bowl, each containing an entire universe, one can find the stillness and silence required for internal cultivation. Through maintaining a space of internal stillness, of mind and form, it is possible to cultivate one's creativity. It has allowed me to weave words, structured forms from the formless landscape of the eternal. I can no longer separate my endeavor of writing from Tea. They are different sides of the same eternal form, and both my passion. Yes, I am a writer.

Since a young age, writing has called to me, finding its way into the deepest layers of my being. Yet, something was lacking. Call it an inability to perceive beyond my own form. I grew to become increasingly observant of the world, and yet I remained unable to let go of the constructs, still very much trapped in the outer layers of experience. Continuing along such a path could have proven destructive for me, but I was fortunate to have discovered Tea. And that reshaped my internal landscape. Tea has helped me cultivate a deeper understanding of the subtle, unseen threads found within our world—an understanding which everyone possesses, but for the right catalyst. For me, and many others, Tea was that catalyst.

This journey, or pilgrimage, marks the beginning of a longer, more ancient journey: to cultivate the seeds of a planetary awakening. Tea, when approached as a sacred, medicinal and spiritual plant can transcend the human and planetary consciousness to a more meaningful, harmonious existence. She has been a medicine



since the earliest days of humankind. She remembers a time when humans wandered the world, possessing a deep reverence for all beings and an understanding for their own roots. Tea carries our ancestral memories, countless stories and cultural heritage. She facilitates a space of recollecting that can be cultivated when approaching Her as a sacred plant medicine.

If any of my dear brothers and sisters across this vast, connected planet should find yourself in Australia, it would be the greatest honor to share tea with you...

You can contact me at: connor.goss1@gmail.com

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. The community in LA also has a Meetup 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 for more info. In Madrid, Spain, GTH member Helena hosts a monthly GTH session. Contact her at helenaharo@hotmail.com

 In Moscow, Russia, there are frequent tea events. Contact Tea Hut member Ivan at teeabai@gmail.com or Denis at 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.

 In Melbourne, Australia, Lindsey hosts Friday night tea sessions at 7/7:30 PM. Contact her at lindseylou31@gmail.com

 In Brisbane, Australia, Matty and Lesley host a monthly ceremony on the first Sunday of every month. Contact them at mattychi@gmail.com

 In Tallinn, Estonia, *Chado* tea shop holds events most Friday evenings at 7 PM. Contact events@firstflush.ee for more details. In Tartu, there are tea gatherings held every Wednesday evenings. Contact kaarel.kilk@hotmail.com for more information.

 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.

 In England, Nick Dilks holds regular Tea events all around the UK. For more information, please contact him at livingteauk@gmail.com.

 In Helsinki, Finland, there are regular tea sessions. To participate, contact Ville at ville.sorsa@helsinki.fi.

 In State College, Pennsylvania the Penn State Tea House holds biweekly tea meditations. Contact Tea Hut member Teddy Smith at txs397@psu.edu for more information.

 In South East Queensland, Australia, Connor holds regular tea ceremonies. For more information contact him at connor.goss1@gmail.com.

If you have been a member for some months already and are hosting regular Global Tea Hut gatherings, please use the site to contact us and we'll let everyone know!

Center News

 Before you visit, check out the center's *new* website (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.

 Our 2015 Light Meets Life cakes are all here! We have some amazing teas this year. Check the site regularly for details. They are going fast, and one is already sold out, so if you want one you should order soon!

 If you haven't yet, check out the "Discussion" section of our webpage. There is now a place for you to leave reviews of every month's tea, as well as your experience with the gongfu tea tips!

 Help us figure out ways to connect this community: we are looking to create and develop some kind of accessible GTH database/platform. Let us know if you can help or have any ideas! We want to support dialogues and gatherings amongst members, solidifying this community!

December Affirmation

Am I free of judgment?

We all need to work on letting go of our foolish assumptions about other people. With all the challenges of the holiday season, let us practice meeting everyone for the first time, every time!

