



CLASSICS OF TEA

EMPEROR HUIZONG'S
TREATISE ON TEA

MOONLIGHT WHITE TEA





MOONLIGHT WHITE

This is our second issue in the Classics of Tea series, following the Cha Jing we translated last September. The emperor Huizong's Treatise on Tea offers a window into Song Dynasty tea, and the lives of some of the earliest Global Tea Hut members. The emperor loved white tea above all else. Moonlight White is a great white tea from the forests of Yunnan.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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From the Editor

In April, we move into the heart of spring. Tea buds are opening to another year's rain and weather. This flush will never happen again. Though some of the teas come to our door again, we're meeting for the first time. This is our one chance to meet—our one encounter. For a tea lover, this is the season when the emperor sips the first flush, heralding the official beginning of a year. The teas that are harvested now will define many of the sessions we'll share this year.

At the Center, we're seeing the sprouts of many newly planted endeavors begin to arise. We have renovated the Center itself to include another tea room and an office to create this magazine. Also, we rented a quite large garden right next door to the Tea Sage Hut and have begun to plant what will hopefully turn into a large and abundant source of food. Some of you who haven't been here in a while will be happy to find out that we have, for some months now, incorporated a daily, one-hour service period into the schedule. And a few of these hours will, each and every week, be devoted to the cultivation of our new garden. Like the farmers who are praying for grace, we also hope that with some love and hard work, we can improve the diet and experience of the Center by growing as much of our own food as possible.

As this community grows, all the many and new ways that this experience is growing from the humble roots of a simple Center and magazine, with each of you a blossom on the many branches around the world, renders us awestruck before the spring fragrance of a truly global tree. Some of you continue to ask us how you can support. The most important service we need now is to spread awareness. We would never ask you to speak on our behalf unless you truly felt called to. But if you do love this Global Tea Hut, please let the world know—sing about it through whatever social media you use! Now is our time to grow!

We have begun to look further into the future, when there are many more Global Tea Hut members, and to ask ourselves what other meaningful projects, beyond just building Light Meets Life, we can initiate to change the tea world and to improve the lives of our members. We have discussed hiring journalists and photographers to explore tea stories across Asia and find new organic teas, and about ways of contributing more towards environmental awareness and communication between organic farmers. We've also talked about hardbound anthologies of Global Tea Hut articles, like all the seven

genres of tea in one book or the many classics we hope to translate over the years. And, with the upcoming annual Global Tea Hut Trip, we have of course been discussing future gatherings and tea tours. These and many more exciting landmarks are just around the corner for us all.

Speaking of the great Global Tea Hut milestones, this issue is surely a huge triumph of our story! Hui-zong is one of the most important emperors of the Song Dynasty, and one that all Chinese remember from middle school classes. He tragically lost China to the northern "barbarians," ending his life in seclusion. Most historians suggest that his love of the arts was the country's downfall. He neglected the throne to pursue painting, calligraphy, poetry and tea—brewing his elixir with his own august hands. Critics throughout the ages found his calligraphy and painting peculiar and surrounded his legend with controversy, often suggesting that he put his name to paintings that weren't his own... I hope this introduction has sparked your interest, and your passion for tea is fueled by the pages to come.

The emperor's *Treatise on Tea* is one of the most important tea texts in history. Adding to the Western understanding of tea with the translation of another classic swells our hearts! For my part, there is a tremendous joy in imagining this brightest of characters sneaking off to brew tea in some hidden corner of the palace. Forbidden from such mundane tasks, he would have hidden his tea set away—stealing there to find the same solace we seek. You could constellate the tea skies with such a scene. Let's raise a cup of his favorite kind, white tea. We bow to you, old brother. Be at peace.



Further Reading

Each month, we are also adding the Further Reading articles to the blog on our site (www.globalteahut.org/blog). This month, the best supplemental resource is the *Cha Jing* from September 2015, which is now up on the Past Issues page! The blog also has a story of Wu De's, which present an alternate ending to the emperor's story; one born of spirit!

TEA OF THE

MONTH

There is no greater sentiment for a tea lover than to imagine the emperor, lord of the Dragon Throne, and forbidden by the laws of Heaven and Man to partake in any mundane task, himself sneaking off to some hidden nook or alcove of the great palace to make tea with his own hands. And this month we're all raising our bowls to our elder tea brother—one of the first members of Global tea Hut! He loved white tea above all else, saying, "White tea is unique amongst all the tea under Heaven." He devoted a whole section to it in his treatise, as you'll soon read, so we knew we'd have to find a very special white tea to celebrate this month.

Of course, tea is processed very differently nowadays than it was in the emperor's time. They steamed the tea, pressed it and then ground the leaves into powder before compressing the powder into cakes. The terroir, the world and the processing were all so different that we cannot replicate the lost Song Dynasty tea cakes, sadly. But we thought we would share one of our favorite white teas with you all, anyway.

Our tea of the month is the perfect chance to connect with the older, deeper and non-linear aspects of tea. In this day and age, many of us have lost our connections to the

sacred—in ourselves, our friends and even Nature. We no longer connect very deeply, not even with our own families. Tea like this month's is good medicine for that. There is not much by way of the intellect to understand about this tea. It doesn't fit neatly into any genre of tea, and all you need to know about it is found in the bowl. It is a "white tea," but very different than any other you've ever had. Still, we'll tell you some details about where it comes from, too. But first, more on white tea.

White tea is the simplest/least processed of all tea. White tea is picked, withered and dried. It is most often dried in a controlled way, though traditional white tea was sun dried in the province of Fujian, where they say white tea began. It is withered more than other teas, often for 24-48 hours. Like green tea, the highest quality white teas are often all buds, while lower grades contain a mixture of buds and leaves. The tea is called "white" because the buds of certain tea varieties have white hairs on them, which lend the small buds a whitish-silver appearance. These hairs are a deterrent to insects. As there is no processing to break down the thick cell walls, the only way to get at the real juice of this tea would

be to boil it, which no one does these days. Instead, we steep this tea at lower temperatures. This produces a light yellow, golden to clear liquor that is often floral and fragrant. The Qi often enters the body through the aroma and/or mouth.

As we have so often discussed in these magazines, Yunnan is the source of all tea on Earth, and home to a tremendous number of tea varieties, mutations and natural distinctions. The wild tea trees that grow in the different mountains often have their own distinct characteristics. Seed-propagated tea, grown in biodiverse forests with room to grow, is what we call "living tea." And every tea seed is unique, resulting in a great variety of trees even on a single mountain. Over these last years of Global Tea Hut, we've explored several mutations from Yunnan, including the famed purple-red tea we all love. This month's tea is a similar mutation. We have also often discussed what living tea is and why it has such healing potential. We talked about the six characteristics of living tea: seed-propagation, room to grow, biodiversity, no irrigation or agrochemicals and a healthy relationship to the humans who tend it. This month's tea is definitely a living tea.





Moonlight White



Daqing, Jinggu, Yunnan



White Tea



Dai Aboriginals



~1600 Meters

*Check out the Tea of
the Month video to
learn more!*



www.globalteahut.org/videos



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

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





This varietal is, in fact, so unique that scientists have said that it is actually not a varietal at all, but another species called “Camellia taliensis.” This raises the question of what a tea tree is.



The difference in power and healing between seed-propagated and cloned tea is obvious. There are essentially two main varieties of tea trees: what are called “big leaf trees,” which are the original, oldest tea trees (which we’re drinking this month). They have a single trunk, grow very tall and have roots that go straight down. As tea moved north it evolved into “small leaf trees,” which are more bush-like. They have many trunks and roots that grow outwards. Big leaf tea trees can live thousands of years. The oldest one we’ve dated is 3,500 years old! It is about seven people around (I kissed it, and once for you). There are probably older ones out there, or at least were in the past. Small leaf tea trees can live hundreds of years, and some are many centuries old. But here’s the punch line: The clones on plantations typically live thirty to fifty years only. And more than a

few farmers have told me that they aren’t living as long anymore, sometimes as few as fifteen to twenty years.

Our attempts to interfere with Nature rarely take into account all the biodiversity and infinite, immeasurable connections there are between species. We take control of an environment and monocrop it, controlling a few factors in a huge web of symmetry. As we’ve done this to larger and more diverse areas, our meddling has begun to have a global impact, changing the Environment (capital ‘E’) rather than just the places where we farm.

Actually, none of our creations ever come close to the power or beauty of Nature, especially since we too are one of her greater masterpieces—so all that we create also owes homage to Mother Earth, ultimately. Allowing her creative license is an important aspect of the

Moonlight White in various stages of withering. White tea is picked, withered and dried. It is most often dried in a controlled way, though traditional white tea was sun dried.



diversity of life that sustains this planet, and any given environment. When tea is natural, and seed-propagated, every single tree is unique. Mutations arise. They each have a place and a hue, and in that way She can create more and varied medicine for us. It is presumptuous to assume that all the variety in tea is man-made, and has to do exclusively with processing, as some authors would suggest. A tremendous amount of variety is natural born, and defies our limited categories.

This month's tea is one such natural tea. It is an incredibly fantastic white tea made from wild tree leaves that have white buds. This varietal is, in fact, so unique that scientists have said that it is actually not a varietal at all, but another species called "*Camellia taliensis*." Some argue that it is primeval and actually pre-dates *Camellia Sinensis var. Assamica*. It is a naturally occurring non-hybridized varietal. Its potency

lies in its unadulterated Nature. It is naturally bug repellent, and grows wild in the forests of Yunnan.

That it pre-dates the varietal of *Camellia* that we normally assume to be "tea" raises interesting questions about what it even means to say that something is "tea." The categories we use to separate these varietals are, of course, arbitrary. Still, this lineage of trees is unique enough that it is considered by biologists to be a separate species altogether. Curiously, it is an older cousin of the modern tea tree, but with all the force and power we love. This suggests that the lines between what this medicinal herb actually is and when it began aren't as clear as we've thought. Recently, several new varietals and/or species have been discovered and named, some of which are—like this month's tea—rediscoveries of something older than our modern tea trees.

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

Tea of the Month

Our tea of the month comes from Daqing village in Jinggu, which is about 1600 meters above sea level. “Moonlight White (*Yue Guang Bai*)” is a unique white tea that lies somewhere between a white and red tea, depending on how long it is withered by the farmers and then how long it is aged after drying. They say that this tea was once withered under the moon, which is why it is named thus, though these days that is more of a colorful tale. Our tea was processed in autumn, when the moon is at its fullest, and since it withered more—most likely overnight—though not outdoors, it is, in its own way, connected to the moon. The extra withering lends this tea a darker, redder liquor. Our tea is truly somewhere between a red and white tea.

This white tea is richer than almost any other white tea we have experienced. This is because it comes

from old-growth, large-leaf trees and is withered longer. The trees have natural, white buds, but the tea is composed of leaves and buds both, lending it a greater depth and more complex body. The large-leaf tea doesn't wither and dry the way small-leaf white tea does, whether Silver Needle (only bud) or Bai Mu Dan, which has leaves like our tea. In general, when discussing small-leaf white tea from Fuding, Fujian, all-bud tea is much higher quality; but we like the energy the leaves add to this Yunnanese white tea. It is strong and earthy, yet somehow spacy and celestial.

Moonlight White is gorgeously sweet, like dew. It tastes to us the way flowers must taste to hummingbirds. Some sips are fruity and the next are flowery and musky. It is a very deep and complex tea, especially for a white tea. White teas are rarely this rich, either in the mouth

or the body—for make no mistake, Moonlight White is also deep and transformative. It is the perfect tea to mark the change in weather to the warmer part of the year. Be sure to drink it outdoors if you can, and raise a bowl to the emperor Huizong!

*Is the giant moon
really so silvery-white
in my bowl?*

-Wu De



Moonlight White

Like so many of you, we also sit down with friends to share the Tea of the Month. And though we drank this Moonlight White at a different time than you, we are reminded once again of the interconnectedness we share within this global tea community. Just as we set out altar cups in acknowledgment of our tea brothers and sisters the world over, we also drank this tea with all of you in mind, knowing that somewhere under this global thatched roof, you'll likely be doing the same! And just as you might discuss your experiences drinking this tea with your friends, we did the same:

茶 In the dead of winter, it is hard to imagine putting on a t-shirt and heading outside. Similarly, I don't even think about drinking a light tea in the colder months. In the winter, you forget why you love light teas. Then, like when that first day comes and you head outside with a t-shirt on in spring, you remember. You feel freedom, a lightness and a connection to the season. The sun warms you and the breeze refreshes you. Even smelling the dry leaf of this tea gave me this sensation. Light pervaded my experience while drinking this tea. Both the sensation of lightness and the experience of light, spreading outwards from my chest. This tea feels like spring.
-Sam Gibb, New Zealand

茶 Moonlight White is so very patient, offering us infusion after infusion of this beautiful golden elixir! The dark and white leaves compressed in the cake, to me, resembled a feather falling in the night, caught in a spring wind and captured in flashes by the light of the moon. The name and the color of the leaves also reminded me that even when we find ourselves in a dark place, there is always some moon or starlight shining through. In general, while drinking this tea, I felt refreshed, uplifted and cleared out like that feeling after a good spring cleaning.
-Shen Su, Canada/Taiwan

茶 The liquor of the Tea is a very beautiful yellow color, golden and shiny. It is light and clear in texture. The color is the attractive yellow of a summer sunset that shines on a rice field, illuminating the golden harvest. The Tea flavor has a special spice, similar to the Ruby Red peppermint taste. The special taste is cooling, and this cooling in this weather helps the humidity to leave the body. It quenches the thirst. It is a fresh Tea.
-Joyce Peng, Taiwan

茶 I was surprised that, to my palate at least, it did not taste the same as it smelled. Each sip coated my mouth fully; even after I swallowed, there was a feeling of fullness and coolness. With each serving, She evolved, becoming more mature and complex. She retained Her flavor, still giving; She became softer on the palate. Towards the end, the faint taste settles in the pores of my tongue, and at the back of my mouth.
-Dalal Sayer, Kuwait



Check out the video
on brewing tips now!

www.globalteahut.org/videos





Brewing Tips

Moonlight White is a very forgiving tea. It is difficult to misbrew it. Try making this tea in a side-handle pot if you can. You will want to use the best of spring water, as any impurities in the water will make a huge difference in this lighter, more sensitive tea. Green, white and yellow teas all taste as much of the water they are brewed in as they do the leaf. Richer teas can add depth with a tetsubin's flavors, but a tea like this will shine with the pure, uplifted water brewed in a silver ginbin, for example. But use the best kettle you have, and try your best to source some extra special water for this month's tea.

There is no easier, simpler way to improve your tea or your life than water. Water is the medium of tea, as it is the medium of life. Since ancient times it has been known as the "Mother of tea." There is an old Chinese saying that a great tea is ruined by poor water, but an average tea can be made great with special water.

There are some general principals we can use to navigate our exploration for good water. For example, it is always better if you can gather water yourself from Nature, rather than buy it in a bottle. The act of fetching water puts a bit of your energy into your tea. It makes it real, and demands respect. Every week we hike into the mountains to gather the week's water for the Center. This ritual is transcendent, and the tea on that day is always some of the best, lit up with the morning's stroll through the mountains and the love for our favorite water. Guests are always able to taste the difference drinking such tea with such fresh spring water.

Tea Experiments

粟 蟹 眼

THE MILLET & CRAB EYE

-Wu De

We interrupt our regularly scheduled gongfu tea tips to try our hand at Song Dynasty-esque tea. We took this month's tea and ground it from scratch, hoping to raise a bowl to the emperor before we start our journey into his world, a froth that he'd deem worthy.





We had to take a break from gongfu tea tips this month and try our hand at whisking tea Song Dynasty style. And since brewing tea à la Lu Yu last September was so much fun, we were enthusiastic to recreate the experience of the emperor's tea this time and do so from scratch. Of course, we can't really replicate Song Dynasty tea, as the tea nowadays is grown and processed so differently, but we thought we would have some fun and raise a bowl for the emperor. Maybe some of you might want to try something similar as well.

We have an antique tea grinder, originally from Japan, here at the Center. We have successfully ground many kinds of tea—from aged oolongs to Five Element puerh, red tea to shou puerh. Some of you have experienced whisking or boiling this precious tea. The process of grinding takes a long time—up to five hours, in fact. We always try our best to surround this process with sacred intention; listening to chants, we take turns grinding in silence. When it's not our turn, we practice loving-kindness meditation to fill the tea with positive energy. Our results have been excellent so far. The Five

Element puerh powder, for example, is cosmic.

For this experiment, we wanted to try grinding this month's white tea. We have tried Fu Ding white tea before, but the thick "Silver Needle" buds are too fibrous. The powder was almost meshed and didn't whisk very well. However, this month's Moonlight White is made up of as much leaf as bud, and so it ground down into a powder very nicely. Unlike previous grinding sessions, we also asked the guests who were participating to think of the emperor Huizong and hopefully instill the tea powder with some nostalgia to make up for all the many ways that our tea is different than the cakes that were ground in his time. We started in the mortar, grinding and de-stemming, before moving to the stone grinder. Of course, we'd need to let the tea sit for a few days before drinking, as we always do, so that it can calm down after the grinding.

We have admired the Song Dynasty-esque water vases/ewers that are sold at Linn's Ceramics in Yingge for many years, so we were excited to have an excuse to finally get one for the Center. Usually, when we brew whisked tea, we do

so formally in the Zendo in a Japanese tea ceremony fashion. However, we designed a more casual style of whisked tea for the Main Tea Hall that we thought would be better suited to trying this month's tea ground. We even had a matcha bowl with a spout made a few years ago. We whisk the tea in this and then decant it into five special bowls that I brought from Japan many years ago. The bowl was designed to match these cups, in fact. This is a nice way to share some whisked tea without spending so much time like we do every Saturday, which is devoted to Japanese whisked tea. (A more formal ceremony takes several hours to set up and clean up afterwards.) Also, we hadn't used the water vase before, and we wanted to try following the emperor's instructions for whisking the tea. The emperor suggests a heavier whisk made of old bamboo. The whisks in the Song Dynasty were shaped differently, so we used our thirty-year-old one as the next best thing.

We have tried using seven gushes of water in the Song Dynasty fashion and found that this does in fact create a creamier, smoother bowl of whisked tea. In a formal whisked tea ceremony, we usually add

three ladles full (*hishaku*). But this was the first time we had ever tried the specifics of the emperor's method. After rinsing out the teaware, we added some tea powder to the center of the bowl and waited for the water to boil. When it reached crab's eye, we transferred it to the gorgeous celadon water vase. We poured gently and slowly around the rim, as the emperor suggests, adding just enough to turn the powder into a paste without disturbing it. As with most things, he suggests perfect balance—neither letting the paste sit too long nor not long enough, which makes brewing very challenging. But we're used to such Daoist allegory in gongfu brewing. So when it felt right, we started whisking in ever-widening ellipses. When the first foam appeared, we poured in the second stream in a circular fashion. The emperor says that this stream is not poured around the rim, but quickly into the tea, which we tried. We then increased to a more powerful whisking, circling and then chopping in intervals. At that point, we added the third gust of water, which he says should be more water than before, and followed it with gentle whisking. We used our third method of whisking, which is to gently rake the tea up and down. After this, the emperor suggests a fourth, tiny gust of water. We poured this one from on high, to increase foam. The liberal fifth shot of water came next. We tried holding the whisk more loosely at this point, moving it all throughout the bowl as the emperor instructs. "If there is any place that the foam is too thin, the master will whisk in heavier strokes throughout that area." We searched and thickened the foam. We poured the sixth gust into the place where the foam is thickest, churning one last time to congeal the foam. We usually add a tiny seventh gust of water, but decided to leave it out this time, as the emperor's sentiment seemed poetic, honoring Lutong.

The resulting cups were very blissful. The tea was thick and creamy, with deep and powerful flavors that rolled and changed, with a musky aroma that arose in the back of the nasal cavity. The energy was uplifting. We felt transformed, looking around at eyes that seemed to be emerging from a much longer meditation retreat. All of the care in grinding this tea and the spirit of the emperor's time lent a certain magic to this session. We set a cup aside for Huizong, hoping that he knows that Chajin still admire him!

Some of you will no doubt want to try some Song Dynasty tea at home as well. You don't necessarily need this whole complicated process to do so. Of course, you are welcome to grind this month's tea the way we did, but even otherwise, some matcha will do. And you

could use any pitcher rather than a Song Dynasty-esque one like we did. In fact, even your kettle will do. We think that much more of the richness of this type of brewing experience lies in following the emperor's whisking instructions anyway. Try adding water and whisking in the way described above. (You might want to read the emperor's words, as well.) You can then drink right from your matcha bowl, as opposed to decanting the whisked tea the way we did. Set a bowl or cup aside for the emperor, as he was a true Chajin indeed!

Go online to our discussion board on the website and share your findings with the whole community. We would love to hear from you!





Watch the tea grinding and whisking video!



www.globalteahut.org/videos

TEA

EMPEROR

Emperor Huizong ruled from 1101 to 1125 CE. He has since come to be known as the “Tea Emperor.” Not much of a ruler at all, the emperor spent most of his time composing poetry, painting, writing essays, holding incredibly grand parties and concerts, drinking wine and visiting his 3,912 ladies in waiting, including empresses, concubines, attendants and even courtesans he brought to the palace, shaming the sacred halls which had previously only ever had virgins enter its gates. Beyond that, he apparently took numerous trips into the city incognito, since apparently several thousand ladies weren’t enough to satisfy him.

In his defense, the emperor was the eleventh prince and had not spent his early years preparing to become the monarch. He grew up expecting that the government would rest on one of his elder brother’s shoulders. Though decadent, the emperor was also one of the most artistic, educated and charming men ever to sit on the Dragon Throne. He was a great patron of the arts, summoning poets, painters and musicians to him from all over the kingdom, making many of them famous beyond antiquity to the present, and establishing the Song court as an emblem of

China’s golden age of art. For most of the duration of his reign, his kingdom was at peace and its king free to seek the heights of less terrestrial peaks, though one may argue that Huizong would have been thus in any age. He himself was a gifted scholar, poet, calligrapher and painter, and several of his pieces are still exhibited in museums around the world.

Emperors of China took active roles in the production of tea beginning in the Tang Dynasty. Tribute teas were sent to the Dragon Throne from tea-growing regions throughout the Middle Kingdom, and at some periods of history spring was officially heralded when the emperor drank the first flush of spring tea. Though each emperor had the best of teas and no doubt enjoyed them, few were inspired as passionately as Huizong.

In 1107, the emperor composed his treatise on tea, entitled *Da Kuan Cha Lun*, which was a marvelous first in many ways. Very few “Sons of Heaven,” as the emperors were called, brushed their own thoughts onto paper in this way; and the treatise contains thorough descriptions not only of tea preparation methods of the time, but also of the farming, harvesting and processing of tea into cakes, which all occurred very far from the isolated king in his palace.

The emperor seems to have learned enough to start a farm and factory should he have chosen to. He was an amazing character indeed, and the fact that he found his way into the *Story of the Leaf* isn’t so surprising, given his charisma and erudition, rarely shown by other emperors. One of the first English books on tea, *The Chinese Art of Tea*, by John Blofeld, has a lengthy chapter on the emperor in which the author describes his tea drinking and study of the *Leaf* so elegantly that I cannot help but quote him at some length:

Sometimes, when drinking tea alone in reflective mood, I like to fantasize about him. I am sure that somewhere within the depths of his magnificent palace there was a small, rather unpretentious room where the Lord of Ten Thousand Years experimented with fine teas, brewing them in various manners with his own august hands. No doubt such conduct was puzzling, and even shocking, to the horde of palace ladies and eunuch attendants whose duty it was to bathe and dress the emperor, wait upon him hand and foot and ensure that nothing remotely suggestive of manual labor—other than the wielding of a writing brush or Imperial chopsticks—ever came his way.



宋徽宗

And indeed, no other emperor before or after is known to have prepared his own tea by hand. The introduction of his treatise also suggests that Blofeld was right in assuming that the emperor did understand the stillness inherent in tea, as he often states that tea is a time to set down the cares of the world, finding serenity away from daily life. It would seem that tea was a solace from the debauchery that marked other aspects of his life.

The emperor's kingdom fell into disarray as he more and more neglected it, and in 1125 a rebellion of the Northern Tartars stormed the palace and ended the Northern Song Dynasty. Huizong and his son were banished into exile beyond the

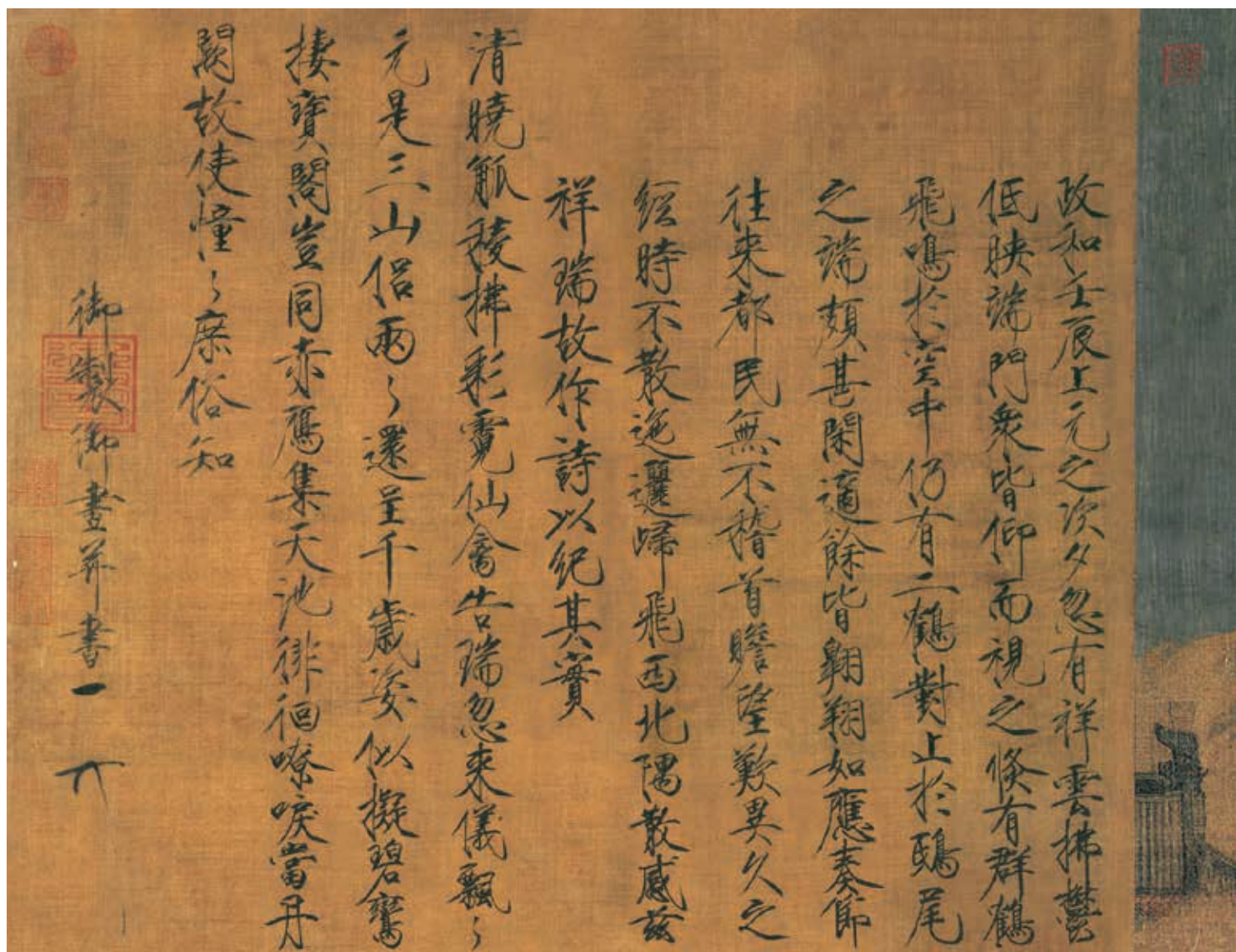
Great Wall, where they would live in captivity for the rest of their lives. The emperor then wrote sorrowful poems, longing for the palace days that he had lived in his youth. His treatise on tea was studied by tea masters down through the ages, capturing all the art and spirit of tea art during his age.

Despite his lascivious tendencies, the emperor Huizong remains one of the most interesting and talented emperors ever to rule the Middle Kingdom. Like Blofeld, we may also perhaps envision him waking up before the attendants and servants even—perhaps moving the arm of some snoring ladies to do so—and quietly sneaking off to his private tea room to brew some morning

tea away from all the hubbub of the palace. In that space, as his mind drifted softly into lucent peace, he was no longer an emperor, a king, a moral satyr, but a tea sage as simple and elegant as any mountain recluse. And in that same space we may join the emperor whenever we choose. We have raised many a bowl to him, as we all should. He was, after all, one of the first members of this Global Tea Hut!



These cranes were painted by the emperor's own hand. He thought them to be an auspicious omen.



Acknowledgments

We have a bountiful treasure trove of information to share, so that we can all steep in the life and times of the emperor. We have an amazing article, brushed by the erudite Steven D. Owyong, which provides us with an in-depth introduction to the life and times of one of China's most charismatic and legendary figures. Michelle Huang, a renowned art historian, guides us through an exploration of the emperor's art. So let us don our nostalgic caps and explore the wisdom of teawayfarers long gone! There is a great peace in knowing that the bowl we drink from has been around so long, and that even the Son of Heaven, the emperor himself, is just a man sharing tea.

Our translation of the Treatise on Tea by emperor Huizong would not have been possible without the guidance and help of first and foremost Michelle Huang, and also Steven D. Owyong, who provided edits, advice and added some poetry to the whisked broth we've made. Wu De also worked tirelessly and even without sleep to translate and annotate this issue, so let us also raise a bowl to him.

Translating ancient Chinese is very difficult. Well-educated aristocrats like the emperor wrote with great poetry, implied meaning and quotation, as well as esoteric Daoist references. This translation is not meant to be definitive, but to add to the growing dialogue of tea wisdom in English.



Tea Emperor

皇帝和茶的艺术

THE EMPEROR & THE ART OF TEA

-Steven D. Owyong

Steven D. Owyong brings not only an amazingly erudite mind to the subject, but also a poetic brush that lends the life and times of the emperor the air of mystique the subject deserves. You'll walk away from this article knowing about the emperor's life, art and tea; and, more importantly, you'll set this magazine down feeling as if you've been traveling through the Song age, carried by the author's gossamer words and images.

When the imperial prince Zhao Ji ascended the Dragon Throne at age seventeen, he became sovereign of the wealthiest, most populous, and advanced state in the world. Known in history as Emperor Huizong, the eighth ruler of the Song Dynasty, he inherited an empire marked by stability, prosperity, and peace such that he once wrote a poem to pose a bold yet earnest query. Couched in verse and Daoist phrases, Huizong wondered if the eternal celestial records had not prophesied his good fortune, his rise and reign, for contrary to the rules of succession he was never highest in line nor designated heir apparent. Despite his surprise and apprehension at his elevation to emperor, Huizong wrote:

*The Age of Sages
embraces three thousand years,
A time when Immortal Blossoms
begin to bloom.
Does the account
in the Golden Register
Foretell the coming of the Perfected?*

“The Perfected” embodied the ancient notion of the sagacious and superior being, a person of high virtue and utmost attainment. The imperial conceit of the poet aside, Huizong was indeed a good and supremely accomplished man.

Born in 1082, Huizong spent his childhood amidst the luxurious palaces and gardens at Kaifeng, the Song imperial capital. He was tutored from a young age by eminent scholars and so received an excellent education based on the Confucian classics and their moral teachings. Entitled and enfeoffed the “Prince of Duan,” he was the eleventh of fourteen sons sired by his father the emperor. With so many older brothers, Huizong was not expected to become ruler of the empire and thus devoted himself early on to the study of Daoist thought, the arts and culture. He moved at age thirteen from the family residence into his own palace, shepherded by a large personal staff of servants, officials and advisors. Free to pursue his keen inter-

est in scholarly pastimes, he became erudite in poetry, highly skilled in music and brilliant in calligraphy and painting.

Artist Emperor

Huizong's fondness for the arts began within the Forbidden City, where the intimate residential apartments and the grand palace halls were beautifully decorated by generations of master painters commissioned to create majestic murals and fine scrolls. Designed by the empire's most famous architect, even his own palace of modest but princely rooms bore the works of noted artists. Walking from one hall to another, the young prince might happen on an artist adorning a wall, the painter busy but nonetheless willing to impart an impromptu lesson to a bright pupil. As emperor, Huizong organized painters into a palace academy and personally trained artists in the literary and technical aspects of the court style. A formidable painter in his own

聽琴圖

吟徵調高窳下桐
松間疑有入松風
仰窺低窳含情客
以聽無妨一弄才

臣承謹題



right, he specialized in a refined and minutely detailed verisimilitude of birds and flowers and figure painting. In keeping with scholarly tradition, Huizong learned to write well, not merely to communicate clearly and with erudition but to compose characters in a fine and elegant hand. He developed a distinctive manner of calligraphy known as Slender Gold, for his characters were sharply and precisely formed, displaying a brittle metallic quality as if the very script were cut from thin but precious plate. Huizong was an avid collector and connoisseur of antiquities, amassing collections of painting, bronzes, jades and ceramics that he displayed in palace galleries during meetings with his ministers. His interest in ancient bronzes spurred Song archaeology, the rediscovery and relevance of the distant past and the recasting of bronzes: the lost Nine Tripods, for example, which recalled the original empire of ancient times as well as represented the integrity of his modern Song state. His taste in ceramics favored celadons: the pale blue-green porcelain stonewares, the most famous and rarest of which were Ru wares created by the southern kilns and used by him as daily service within the palace. Huizong studied music and actively engaged the imperial music bureau, where he reformed ceremonial and ritual composition. He decreed the casting of bells, the writing of ritual composition, and the training of court musicians in the performance of the new music. For Huizong, rectitude and harmony of sacral song exemplified his reign and enriched his imperium through tonal and cosmic accord with Heaven. His reforms were met with reports of auspicious signs in which cranes, those ancient symbols of immortality, gathered to soar *en masse* above the temples and shrines of the palace.

As for musical instruments, Huizong was personally enamored with the hushed dulcet tones of the silk-strung zither, and he performed the

instrument as a gifted musician. Unlike grand orchestral music, the sound of the zither was small, soft and muted—its tone and tenor best suited to close chambers and intimate gatherings. The musical score known as the *Tablature of the Inner Chamber* preserved the notation devoted to the fingering techniques of the zither—ascending and descending glides, strumming runs and bell-like plucking—that characterized the court compositions of Huizong. Like the man himself, the music was described as “elegant and fascinating.”

Wind in the Pines

Huizong was a master of literary allusion, wielding his brush not merely towards pictorial realism but also to evoke music, tea, and other forms of art. For example, the handscroll *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk* was ascribed to him as a pictorial metaphor of the old zither melody *Pounding Cloth*. The scroll *Listening to the Zither*, also attributed to him, was thought to depict Huizong playing out of doors for his ministers, one of whom adorned the painting with a poem. The minister described the burning of incense and a moment of transcendence heralded by the wind:

...A zephyr seems to enter the pine,
songfeng.

Looking up to see dear friends,
Like hearing the song of
a string-less zither.

Meaning to please his sovereign, the poet deftly employed the literary phrase *wind in the pines* to wonderful effect, for *songfeng* was a metaphor for both zither and tea, two of Huizong’s favorite pursuits and realms of expertise.

Dating from the sixth century, the poetic phrase *songfeng*, “wind in the pines,” was a scholarly motif that conjured in the mind’s ear the soft soughing of pine needles brushed by a gentle breeze. Among

the literati, hearing the wind in the pines was a solitary thing, a moment of reflection that rose with the whispery sound and slowly died away to silence. Fleeting yet resonant, the sigh of the wind was likened to the muted vibrations of the zither strung with soft silk. A Tang dynasty poem captured the ephemeral essence of *songfeng*: “The wind in the pines fades like the sound of the zither...” In time, *wind in the pines* became a metaphor for the song and sound of the zither.

Songfeng was also an allusion to the art of tea. *Wind in the pines* was likened to the sound of the kettle and to the skill of boiling fine spring water: thoroughly heating the liquid while still preserving its fresh and lively character. The Tang tea master Lu Yu described the practice in the *Book of Tea*:

Of boiling water, when bubbles appear like fish eyes and there is a faint sound, that is the first boil. When bubbles climb the sides of the cauldron like strung pearls in a gushing spring, that is the second boil. When appearing like mounting and swelling waves, that is the third and last boil. Boiled any more, and the water is old and spent and undrinkable indeed.

In the late Tang, however, water was no longer boiled in an open cauldron but rather heated in a closed ewer, the boiling water unseen and its bubbles unobservable. To determine the proper boil in such a kettle, tea masters listened instead to its sounds. A later poet described the moment:

Wind in the pines,
rain in the junipers:
When the sounds first arrive,
Quickly take the bronze kettle
from the bamboo stove.
Await the sounds in silence,
and then
The cup of Spring Snow tea
surpasses ambrosia.



Thus, attending the fire and waiting for *wind in the pines* was a meditation, a moment of stillness and reflection until *songfeng*—its murmur and pulse—signaled the instant when water reached the perfect point for brewing fine tea.

Tea and zither were linked in the literary mind by the qualities they shared. In the mid Tang, the poem entitled *Zither and Tea* related instrument and drink by comparing the zither's most ancient song with tea's most ancient source: "Of tunes, the zither knows only old *Green Water*; of tea, the herb's most ageless leaf is only Mengshan." As a musical instrument of subtlety and restraint, the zither accorded with qualities akin to tea.

In the Tang *Book of Tea*, Lu Yu described the true nature of the herb:

Tea is innately reserved and temperate. Expansiveness is inappropriate to tea. Thus, its taste is subtle and bland. Even in a full bowl, when half consumed, its flavor is elusive. So, how can the nature of tea be described as expansive? The color of tea is pale yellow. Its lingering fragrance is exceedingly beautiful.

The merits inherent in the faint color, bland taste and enduring aroma of tea were also intrinsic features of the zither; its soft, abiding tones long considered "refined... uncomplicated... insipid."

With his talent for picturing poetry, Huizong combined tea and zither in the painting *Literary Gathering* (shown on pg. 32). Like the painting *Listening to the Zither*, the activity was set in the open amidst the trees of the palace gardens: a group of men surround a large table arrayed with food and wine, while in the foreground servants prepare tea; the zither rests for the time being on a large stone slab under the pendent willow. Despite the convivial scene, the mood of the painting is oddly expectant. The tea has yet to be savored, and the zither yet to be enjoyed. It is a timeless moment of pure anticipation for the twin pleasures of *songfeng*, wind in the pines.



“Tea Competition”
Artist Unknown

趙信翰林面院

Imperial Tea

Huizong and his art of tea were indebted to generations of Song emperors and the precedents set during their various reigns. The story of Song tea began in 977, when Emperor Taizong received tribute tea from Fujian, a place many hundreds of miles from the imperial capital and far to the south. The large rounds were named Dragon Tea and bore the images of mythic serpents and fabulous phoenixes. Grown in the warmth of the subtropical zone, the quality of Fujian leaf was superior to tea produced in the declining imperial gardens at Changxing in Zhejiang, a region once graced by a moderate climate but since turned cold, frigid enough to destroy plants and freeze Lake Tai. Taizong favored Fujian and decreed the establishment of

an imperial estate below Phoenix Mountain at North Park, a collective of small tea gardens with descriptive names like “Chicken Bush Hollow,” “Roaming Ape Ridge” and “Flying Squirrel Nest.” In 996, nearly twenty years later, Taizong received a tea called Stone Milk, a small cake of leaves that brewed to a pale hue, a light calcium color reminiscent of stalactites dripping from the ceilings of deep caves.

Successive emperors benefited from Taizong’s foresight, receiving yearly tribute tea from Fujian in the form of rounds, squares and wafers with names such as “Dragon in Dense Clouds,” “Soaring Dragon Auspicious Clouds,” and “Dragon in Hidden Clouds,” all names that flattered each ruler, his sovereignty, and the prosperity of his reign.

The tea reached the capital in elaborate packages by special courier:

In the first ten days of mid Spring, the Transport Bureau of Fujian sends as tribute the first fine tea which is named “New Tea for Examination from North Park.” All of the tea is in the shape of squares in small measures. The imperial household is offered only one hundred measures; they are kept in soft pouches of yellow silk gauze, wrapped in broad green bamboo leaves, and then again in linings of yellow silk gauze. The tea, which is sealed in vermilion by officials, is enclosed by a red lacquered casket with a gilt lock. It is further kept in a satchel woven of fine bamboo and silk, and thus protected by these many means.



Once in the safety of the palace storerooms, the tea was carefully divided into portions that were sent to the imperial ancestral shrines as sacrifice and to select members of the aristocracy:

The tea is made with the tenderest leaf buds whose shapes resemble bird tongues. One measure of tea requires four hundred thousand leaves. Yet, this is barely enough to make a few bowls to sip. Sometimes, one or two measures are given to the outer imperial residences, the distribution determined by family lineage. The dispersal of these gifts is a courtesy and considered a wonderful present.


The largest share of tribute was held in reserve for the emperor who

sent personal gifts of the tea to the empress, the high consorts and a select few of the great ministers. Rare and unavailable to all but the emperor, the tea was nearly priceless. Estimates placed the value of a single measure of tribute tea at forty thousand in silver. Such was the aura of power surrounding the dragon rounds that it was once said that the flowers of spring did not dare open until the emperor had drunk the first tea of the season.

Not content to merely possess the finest tea, Emperor Renzong once commissioned a report on the tea practices of Fujian so as to better appreciate the making and drinking of the precious dragon rounds from North Park. The official charged to provide the account was Cai Xiang,

a scholar from Fujian and the greatest calligrapher of his generation.

In 1045, Cai Xiang was appointed special administrator to Fujian and within two years came to oversee the province's Transport Bureau as well as the annual tribute of its tea. On the presentation to the emperor of his book *Record of Tea* circa 1050, Cai was credited for advancing the manufacture of dragon rounds and for providing the first explanation of the process. He further offered Emperor Renzong insight into the aesthetics, utensils and techniques particular to Fujian as well as the preparation, service and drinking of tea in the Fujian manner. At the time, some tea was formed into rounds and other shapes, dried over a low fire, and then glazed with an expensive



茗有醇
雖多不
飲之宜
力過也
人

aromatic, such as musk or “dragon brain,” a peppery camphor imported from Borneo. Cai famously noted in his record of Fujian tea that “among the people of Jian’an who practice tea, none add aromatics lest they take away from tea’s true fragrance.” Cai Xiang and his account were followed by several other authors whose writings described in detail various aspects of Song tea, especially that of North Park, its facilities, gardens, products and leaf characteristics.

Reign of Great Vision

During the *Daguan* or “Reign of Great Vision (1107-1110),” Emperor Huizong wrote the *Treatise on Tea*. The tract was a remarkable display of his knowledge of the plant, its cultivation, harvesting, and the manufacture of the leaf

into dried cakes. The treatise further revealed that he was also a discerning connoisseur and an accomplished master of the art of tea.

It is interesting to note that during his adolescence, Huizong was tutored by three teachers, two of whom were from Fujian and who indubitably instructed the prince in the art and etiquette of tea as an important part of his social if not his cultural education. His household staff of eunuchs, managers and mentors assisted Huizong in building a library, acquiring a collection and loans of rare books on the subject of tea. With an increasing imperial stipend as he grew older, the prince easily afforded quality teas from the private estates, the fine ceramics used in the drinking of the leaf, and the special equipment used in the preparation of tea for competition. Perhaps as a result of his growing expertise in tea, he

was indulged by the emperor and allowed to raid the imperial stores for rare tribute teas, provided of course that from time to time he served the spoils of his forays to his father and empress mother.

During his reign, Huizong introduced white tea, proclaiming its inaugural manufacture at North Park. Everything about white tea was superior. As a plant, it was rarer than rare and singular in form. White tea was wild, a truism of all great teas in Daoist legend: its leaves were “nearly translucent” like the pale wizened immortals who prized tea more than jade or cinnabar. Fine textured and sublime, a cake of white tea “glowed” like a precious gem. Huizong continued to favor white tea above all others. In 1120, some ten years later, the emperor received a newly created tribute tea named “Dragon Rounds More Beautiful than Snow.” The tea was a



variation of a white cake known as “Silver White Threads on Icy Bud” but made without aromatics and distinguished by “small dragons undulating over the surface.”

Tea in the Song shared in the historic pursuit of foam, the fine bubbles of liquid and lather that had long defined the art of tea. In the third century, the *Ode to Tea* first claimed tea foam as the ultimate quest:

*Serve tea with a gourd ladle,
emulating Duke Liu.
Only then can one begin to perfect
thin froth splendidly afloat,
glistening like drifting snow,
resplendent like the
flowering of spring,
Chaste and true like the color
of autumn frost...*

In the *Book of Tea* of 780, the Tang master Lu Yu wrote of froth:

Froth is the floreate essence of the brew. Froth that is thin is called mo; thick froth is called po; that which is fine and light is called flower, hua. Flower froth resembles date blossoms floating lightly upon a circular jade pool or green blooming duckweed whirling along the winding bank of a deep pond or layered clouds floating in a fine, clear sky. Thin froth resembles moss floating in tidal sands or chrysanthemum flowers fallen into an ancient ritual bronze. For thick froth, use the dregs of the tea remaining in the cauldron and heat it. Reaching a boil, the thickened floreate essence of the brew then gathers as froth, white on white like piling snow. The Ode to Tea described it as “lustrous like mounding snow” and “splendid like the spring florescence.”

Inspired by images of frost and snow, Huizong sought lighter and lighter teas. The finest caked tea was “luminescent and white.” The finest liquid tea whisked to a “stiff” meringue. Huizong succeeded in fulfilling the ideal with his decree, prompting the production of white tea at North Park and introducing its special properties at court. He doubtless astounded his competitors, winning all the tea contests by whisking up the whitest and thickest froth. One courtier recalled an incident when, overwhelmed by enthusiasm, Huizong accidentally splashed tea foam into his own face.

In the *Treatise on Tea*, the form of things followed the function required. Design enhanced precision and increased economy of movement. The spout of the water ewer poured a forceful but controlled stream from a tip that was so meticulously crafted as to be

utterly dripless; its use free of extraneous drops that might ruin an otherwise elegant service. Color, size and proportion mattered. The bowl accommodated the tea: too large and the color of tea was diminished; too small and whisking was impeded—the tea lacking smoothness and froth. Proper tools and discipline were everything, and technique translated naturally from medium to medium. The tea whisk was weighted and balanced, its sword-sharp tines whipping up bubbles and foam—“millet and crab eyes”—to paint the bowl; the handle was held “loosely yet firmly” like a writing brush deftly wielded by the supple wrist of a calligrapher. Distinctions between the arts at times simply disappeared.

Sovereign Tea

Huizong seems to have enjoyed sharing tea with his family and ministers. Not only did he serve them with his own hands, but he was also generous and gave away cakes of palace tea as presents. He once wrote a poem on the event of receiving a tribute tea from North Park:

*This year, Min altered
the tribute tea.*

*All the spring buds were devoted to
creating Soaring Dragon
of Ten Thousand Years.*

*On opening the imperial chest,
a fresh scent filled the air.*

*I bestowed the tea upon
high ministers and officials.*

In another poem, Huizong returned in the evening from a spring outing, a day of playing seesaw and drawing in the fragrance of orchids. Tired and spent, he rested in the hall listening to the sound of grinding tea.

As a poet of tea, Huizong was often very specific, allowing the season, place and purpose to override lofty lyricism:

*In the first month of spring,
the finest Jianxi buds are chosen.
I take the tea to the library window
for a critical look
But the place is not suited
for judging its quality,
So I hold the bowl closely
to examine the snowy bloom.*

Of the many poems Huizong wrote in his lifetime, only four hundred fifty or so remain.

Fickle Fate

At age forty, Huizong was at the height of his aesthetic powers. Indeed, his contributions to culture and the art of tea were hallmarks of his reign and remained artistic high points for centuries thereafter. Yet, all his cultural sophistication and artistic attainments could not spare him from a dire and terrible destiny. Unlike the purity of his snowy white tea, and at odds with his optimistic “Reign of Great Vision,” Huizong’s future was dark and dirty. Threatened on its northern borders, the Song had for decades negotiated an uneasy peace with the tribal Liao of the Asian steppes. Then in 1121, Huizong was tempted by the Jurchen of Manchuria to attack the Liao. Under the joint armies of the Song and Jurchen, the Liao were defeated. In 1126, however, the Jurchen betrayed Huizong and declared war on the Song, sending an invasion force to within sight of Kaifeng. Huizong abdicated the Dragon Throne to his son and fled south, only to be captured and deported north to Manchuria. Nine years later, abused and broken, Huizong died in captivity at the age of fifty-two.



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Tea Emperor

藝術家
宋徽宗

SONG HUIZONG THE ARTIST

-Michelle Huang

As an art historian, Michelle can give us a glimpse into Huizong as an artist. They say that he was a terrible ruler because he was such a gifted artist. But his calligraphy and painting were misunderstood for much of history. It is always thus with genius, as we'll soon see. There is actually great spirit in his work, and his contribution to Chinese art is extremely important.

Huizong (1082-1135) was one of the most important emperors of the Song Dynasty. All Chinese students learn about and memorize many aspects of his life in middle school history classes. Unfortunately, the well-know facts about Huizong's life are not really trustworthy, often lapsing into legend and folklore. When the court was attacked by the "Barbarians from the North (Jurchen)," Huizong abdicated his throne in hopes that his son would know how to deal with the war, as he surely could not. The renegade court retreated to Hangzhou, along the Yangzi River. Unfortunately, eight short months later, both Huizong and his son were captured by the Jurchens. Their lives were spared, but both were conferred extremely derogatory titles, deprived of their nobility and had to perform humiliating ceremonies to honor the Jurchens in public.

As Confucianism spread across the realm, later generations would attribute this disaster to Huizong's overwhelming affection for the arts. There may be some truth to this. He

was a soft ruler. Besides being a great connoisseur of all art forms, he was also a fantastic calligrapher and brilliant painter himself. Scholars have often portrayed Huizong as an intellectual who enjoyed all the high arts, such as playing the zither (*guqin*), as he does in the famous painting (pg. 20), rather than as the emperor he was. Huizong invited all the best painters to court and had them compile three compendia of his huge collection of calligraphy, paintings and other antiquities. Regardless of his political performance, Huizong made a huge contribution to Chinese art by elevating the social status of painters and documenting the artistic milieu in and around the twelfth Century of China. And that is reason enough to celebrate his legend as much as his person.

For most Chinese, there are two lasting impressions of Huizong: his loss to the "barbarians" and his one-of-a-kind calligraphy style. Chinese calligraphy had been highly developed since its arguable peak in the fourth century. From then until Huizong, we do not find much

innovation in styles. In general, the Chinese aesthetic values a balanced composition of well-rounded and uniform brushstrokes. However, Huizong's idiosyncratic Slender Gold style (瘦金體) has been called by critics "peculiar," "bizarre," "unbalanced" and even "crooked," which somehow also reflects his irresponsible personality and non-conformist attitude. However, if one can strip away what scholars, past or present, suppose to be "good quality," then one can appreciate the uniqueness of his brushstrokes, not to mention the spirit and glory of his art. Furthermore, when all the brushstrokes are evenly placed, and in perfect order, then, one could argue, that all the characters look and feel two-dimensional, like they are in print. However, the seemingly uneven, chaotic and fluid strokes of the Slender Gold style, varying in size and direction, create a sense of three-dimensionality. The "broken" frayed ends of the emperor's strokes suggest velocity and swiftness.

五色鸚鵡來自嶺表養之
築馴服可愛飛鳴自適往
於苑囿間方中春繁杏遍
翔翥其上雅託容與自有
種態度縱目觀之宛勝圖
因賦是詩焉

乳皐此異禽遐取來貢九重
五色非允質惠吐多言更好
似恰毛羽貴徘徊如飽稻
紺趾誠端雅為賦新篇安

製
并

Take a look at the vertical strokes in the close-up below, which are prominent in the lower right portion of the top left character and the middle of the lower right one. The strokes start with a slanted top that tapers down to a thinner end, eventually terminating in another, smaller diagonal stroke. All of these slanted and diagonal elements create the illusion that the vertical stroke is on a separate plane. Now if you analyze all the vertical lines, standing back, you may feel they transcend the paper. Then you will begin to realize that beneath the seemingly unbalanced and uneven strokes, there is an underlying regularity, and a deep spirit in his calligraphy. In the same way, one could explore the horizontal and diagonal lines and find that all the individual strokes exist in their respective planes, interacting with the paper at slightly different angles.

庭中
零露
霑如
醉殘

By manipulating the brush and ink, Huizong quite masterfully bestowed his calligraphy with a sense of otherworldly three-dimensionality! In Western art, most movements trended and strove towards such three-dimensional realism, called “*trompe l’oeil*” in French. This wasn’t a value in Chinese art, which makes Huizong’s calligraphy all the more special. There are no shadows or perspective to give the illusion of three-dimensionality in calligraphy, yet he somehow achieved just that.

When we focus on the detail of the upper right part of the top left character, we see several white, hairy ends like the first gray starting to silver a wiser man’s beard. If you yourself were trying to achieve this effect, you might try using less pigment, so that the end of a long stroke would run out of paint, leaving the ends of the stroke uneven. It is more likely

that the emperor created the same effect by brushing a long stroke with lots of pigment moving across the paper at a high velocity, which is, of course, much more difficult. Brushstrokes with jagged, rough ends are termed “flying white (飛白)” in Chinese. Such speed makes mastery a lofty goal, and also fills calligraphy with Daoist sentiments. In appreciating Huizong’s calligraphy, one might imagine his stance and movements, his grace and speed. If you look with your heart, you can see this movement in the characters, not unlike how we can see the force in Jackson Pollock’s paintings. (He is actually the perfect Western analogy, since many critics also disapproved of his “messy” style.) In this way, Huizong was instrumental in the transformation of Chinese writing into pure art. He not only created a unique style with texture and depth,

but also, like all true artists, he challenged mainstream aesthetics, which were based on the supremacy of well-rounded strokes and perfectly balanced composition. By brushing ink with such virtuosity, Huizong conjures up spirit, movement and three-dimensionality. We feel the Daoist leanings in his work, and the viewing brings as much movement as the painting did. Huizong’s calligraphy dances off the page, carrying us with it. His work is truly Heavenly; his strokes carry us skywards, with the cranes he loved to paint.

Huizong experimented in mixing different media in his paintings. The painting below shows a parakeet in vibrant color perched amongst plum blossoms. In order to portray the pitch-black eyes of the parakeet faithfully, Huizong dotted the eyes with a thick blob of lacquer.



舞蝶迷香徑
翩翩逐晚風



This is the first recorded use of lacquer in the history of Chinese art.

Even though he favored poetic representations in the painters' exams that artists had to take to enter court, he considered accuracy a prerequisite of a good painting. Therefore, his official portrait should be a fairly accurate resemblance. (*Your gift of the month!*)

A painting that exemplifies his passion for and attention to detail is *Literary Gathering*, which also depicts tea drinking. Even before Huizong there had been numerous famous paintings of officials gathering together to compose poetry while drinking wine. In Huizong's time, tea was often offered at the end of such parties to "wake people up" from the effects of liquor and

ease them into physical activities such as dancing afterward.

In his version, Huizong painstakingly documented all the paraphernalia for making tea and the lavish array of snacks at such parties. There are a total of 122 ceramics on the big table and 21 pieces of teaware on the three smaller tables where the servants are depicted preparing tea. On the big table (*shown on the next page*), where the gentlemen are sitting together conversing, each has his own set of teaware, a wine cup that is elevated by a small dish, a small bowl, and three small dishes for different snacks or for food waste. In addition, on the central part of the table, there are smaller dishes with snacks, different fruits and even bonsai, as well

as other decorative plants—all elevated on bigger plates. The tall vases inside the big bowls on both sides of the table are wine vessels. At that time, people preferred wine that was warmed higher than body temperature. The bowls contained hot water to keep the wine warm.

In the service area, the servant standing in the middle is scooping whisked tea into smaller bowls placed on top of black lacquer dishes to be served. On both sides of that servant, the vases on the tables contain hot water for whisking tea. The servant on the right, who is mopping the table, might be the one who's just finished whisking and is, we might imagine, getting ready to prepare some more. In front of the serving tables on the ground, there

are two stoves for boiling hot water and a small chest to store all the smaller paraphernalia for making tea. However, judging from the fact that some officials have already left their seats and the bamboo whisk is missing from the table, this may be the end of the feast, and the entertainment will soon begin. The vision of such tea is a treat for a modern Chajin, especially over a bowl of this month's white tea!

Another painting that ties Huizong's love of the high arts to tea is this one entitled "Auspicious Cranes" (pp. 17-18). As a romantic emperor, he was obsessed with all kinds of auspicious signs that were testament to his "Mandate from Heaven." He was especially fond of pure white and/or extraordinarily unique natural objects. This may also play a part in why he strongly favored white tea, since other tea connoisseurs of the time were not as impressed. Huizong recorded an incident when a flock of white cranes hovered above his palace, stark against the fantastic clouds, for a long period of time. Many civilians nearby saw this rare event and came out to appreciate the wonderful omen. The Chinese consider the crane a lofty animal, especially the Daoists. A crane can only survive in a clean environment; hence it is a sign of purity and a lofty abode. Also, they balance large bodies on small legs effortlessly, often standing on a single leg for hours. They also stand still for extraordinary lengths of time, appearing to be asleep, when in fact they are very aware, waiting to pounce on a fish with great concentration and alacrity. Huizong also composed a poem to celebrate the omen of the cranes, which to him signified a benevolent ruler and a peaceful and prosperous world. Ironically, many would argue that his reign was not auspicious at all, ending as it did.

Huizong not only enjoyed painting, he also spent a lot of time and energy promoting painters and appointing them as court officials.

He changed the title of the court painters' guild to the "Hanlin Painting Bureau," which was the same name as a prestigious official bureau that had been set up in the previous dynasty. From the eighth century, those who wanted to pursue a court appointment had to attend the same exams, from annual county-wide and provincial exams to the national exams held but once every three years. Just as literati were judged on the essays they wrote on topics such as the characteristics of a good governor, painters in Huizong's reign would compete based on their ability to use imagery to represent the lyrical essence of a given poem, rather than merely to depict objects realistically. For example, the verse "an ancient temple tugged at the mountain" was best represented when a painter refrained from showing any indication of a temple structure, only painting a monk fetching water on a mountain. In the same vein, the awarded painting that captured the verse "Returning home, trampling on flowers, the hooves of the horse smell great" did not portray any flowers at all, just butterflies dancing around the hooves of a horse. Court painters were either literate painters with advanced painting skills or good poets who could do more than illustrate words. Such artists were eventually promoted to officials of China during Huizong's reign.

Huizong was the best of artists, and yet the worst of emperors. He had everything at his disposal in the vast palace, yet ended his life without a possession. You could say that in quite mythic terms, he sacrificed the palace for art, Earth for Heaven. He suffered for his art, as some say all true artists must. If he had not been emperor, he might not have had the luxury to experiment with innovative calligraphy styles, paint such glory, or, as he himself says in his treatise, had the "leisure" to write about tea. Nor could he have amassed such a huge collection of art, changing the history of

art in China forever. Though it may be trite to make light of his suffering from such a distance in years, it seems almost in harmony with the poetry of his legend that his focus on art has made him infamous as one of the worst emperors. It seems almost scripted that he faced two terrible years of imprisonment, five long years of exile and died without a proper burial, alone beyond the northern frontier. From the glory of Heaven, the true artist knows the agony of Earth that must always live intertwined with the ecstasy. And Huizong was a true artist and Chajin.



Up close, you can see the gorgeous attention to detail, making you feel like you are there sipping tea on a stump, watching the gathering.





TREATISE ON TEA

BY SONG HUIZONG

Preface

'Tis insightful that plants grow in the opposite direction to human beings, with their roots as their heads underground, they grow from the bottom up into our world...¹ Amongst all the many resources befitting human beings, we find only necessities and luxuries. Common people and children alike know of the need for necessities such as rice and millet, and the hunger that demands food, as well as how essential silk and hemp are to protect us from the weather. However, such as they are not always able to appreciate the way a fine tea distills the exquisite essence of Ou and Min,² endowed with the spirit of those hills and streams. A fine tea can dispel and cleanse obstructions, leading to clarity and balance. But the seemingly subdued flavor, and the delicate tranquility inspired by fine tea is an acquired taste that can't be enjoyed in a time of upheaval.³

Since the early period of this dynasty, the tea cakes marked with dragon and phoenix patterns called *Longtuan*,⁴ *Fengbing*⁵ and *Huoyuan*⁶ from the Jian River area have been made exclusively for the imperial family.⁷ These treasured cakes have become the most famous teas under Heaven. Nowadays, hundreds of lost crafts and arts are flourishing again due to the effortless currents⁸ of the four seas.⁹ Court officials and civilians alike work so hard and well that the emperor does not have to expend much effort governing. As a result of this peace and prosperity, the gentry and peasantry have both benefitted from the glory of the imperial court, and become cultivated in high culture, refining activities such as tea drinking. Consequently, tea has flourished over the past decade. Tea farmers have learned to pick only the finest of leaves, have improved their processing skills,

cultivated more varieties of tea than ever before and the people have developed new brewing techniques to prepare them. You could say that there is always a natural rise and fall to any cultural practice, and the market surrounding it, but destiny, and the Mandate of Heaven, have also played a part in the rise of tea culture. For during times of turmoil, one has to strive that much more in the search for daily necessities that one hasn't the free time to devote to a luxury like tea.¹⁰ But after a long period of peace, one begins to grow bored with the usual routine and pursue luxurious and exquisite novelties. For example, people nowadays are spending more and more time indulging themselves in grinding tea cakes that are as precious as jade or gold in order to savor the tea's essence that much more.¹¹ All the nobles under Heaven can afford to revel in the appreciation of exquisite rare tea, seeking its literary gems and pretty-sounding bits of golden verse, sipping from its flowers and sucking on its blossoms, weighing the value of its literature, debating the distinctions in its appraisal and judgment, not to mention the innovative designs of their teaware collections. Even the poorest folk are not ashamed to store some tea at home.¹² Verily, in such an enlightened era, a person can choose to express themselves to the utmost degree, and even the spirits of all the cultivated plants can be developed to their fullest potential.¹³ I too happened to have a day of leisure to dwell upon the subtleties and wonders of tea. And for the posterity of later generations, I would like to share my experience in twenty small essays to be called the *Treatise on Tea*.

Notes

Note on Title: The original title is “Treatise on Tea (茶論),” but it was later shortened to “On Tea.” We suppose that the shortening was to avoid confusion with essays on tea written by others. For example, Shen Gua, (沈括, 1031-1095), a famous critic from Hangzhou, in a slightly earlier time also wrote an essay entitled “On Tea.” Out of the twenty-six years he reigned, Huizong (1082-1135) changed his regnal title five times. As a result, Huizong has six regnal titles altogether. Chinese literati liked to impress others by name dropping, or being very precise in minor details. Since this treatise is written during the Dagan reign period, which literally translates to “Grand View”, people have also referred to this treatise as the “Dagan Tea Treatise.”

1. Many indigenous cultures believe, and expressed in their mytho-poetry, that the world and lives of plants takes place underground. The part that we see and eat is therefore but the roofs of the plant city, which is thriving underground.
2. Modern day Zhejiang and Fujian.
3. It may seem as if the emperor is starting off with a condescending tone, but as you read through the preface, you begin to see that he is celebrating the abundance of his time and honoring the fact that in other, more tumultuous times, people didn't have the liberty to pursue the culture and refinement of tea, let alone its spiritual dimensions. Later, he says that even the common people can enjoy tea now that there is peace and prosperity. Much of this message is all the more important for us modern tea lovers, as we enjoy an unparalleled abundance of tea, including the best tea magazine ever, which comes with such great tea and awesome translations of ancient texts!
4. Literally, “dragon rounds.”
5. Literally, “phoenix cakes.”
6. Huoyuan (壑源) tea was a tribute tea from Jianzhou. Song celebrities such as the famous poet Su Shi wrote a poem about how his friend sent him some fantastic Huoyuan tea. As a prolific poet who wrote a lot about his own daily life, he wrote many poems on social gatherings including food, tea and wines. He was the most influential literary figure in the Northern Song Dynasty. The most famous calligrapher, Mi Fu, also wrote a poem documenting his visit to Tiao River (茗河), which also mentions Huoyuan tea.
7. The Jian River (建河) is a tributary of the Min River (閩河), which runs through Jianzhou (建州).
8. Throughout the text, the emperor often betrays his Daoists influences. Here he uses the phrase “wu wei (無為),” like Wu De's ordination name. It means

“effortless effort,” referring to the spontaneous presence and flow of a sage's participation in the world.

9. This Chinese phrase (五湖四海) refers to the world, much as we say the “seven seas.” It literally translates as “five lakes and four seas.”
10. It's interesting that the emperor lists tea as a luxury. Tea was considered one of the “Seven Necessities,” along with firewood, oil, rice, salt, vinegar and soy sauce. This list is attributed to the book *The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendor*, which was contemporary to emperor Huizong. It obviously wasn't popularized until later, especially by tea lovers who always cited it since it heralded their beloved. Wu De often teaches that ‘tea as luxury’ means we have to be even more environmentally conscious, as there can be no justification for luxury items that come at the cost of the environment.
11. The modern version could read “For example, people nowadays are spending more and more time reading *Global Tea Hut* in order to savor their teas' essence that much more.”
12. The Song Dynasty is when tea really started to become available to the common people of China, even in urban areas. It was always a part of life in tea-growing regions, especially Yunnan and Szechuan, however.
13. It's interesting to contemplate this sentence juxtaposed with the first sentence of the preface.

Here are some different shapes and styles of “Dragon Rounds,” the tribute cakes sent to the palace.



Locale

When planting a tea garden along a steep slope, it is better to cultivate the eastern, sunny side. On the other hand, if the garden is located on a hill or in a valley, then it is better to choose a shady area. According to traditional Chinese medicine, the nature of mountains and rocks is cool, and therefore not conducive to the vibrancy of plants, which can affect the essence of the tea. It is important for craggy, rocky gardens to get enough sunshine and warmth for the trees to grow well.¹ In general, there is plenty of sunshine on gentler slopes and the soil is often more fertile in the valleys. The trees there tend to flourish, budding in verdant flushes, though they often wilt and fall more readily. Such tea tends to be more aromatic and richer in flavor. It is important to ensure that there is enough moisture flowing through the hills and valleys to strengthen the leaves and harmonize the balance of the garden. Only when the yin and yang of the natural environment are well balanced will the tea grow vibrantly.

Season & Weather

The labor of crafting tea begins at the Awakening of Insects,² though the harvest will depend completely upon the weather. If it remains cool at this time of year, the buds unfold slowly. The farmers will then have enough time to work calmly, and the color and flavor of the tea will be harmoniously balanced. However, as it gets warmer, the buds grow rapidly and the farmers must hasten to the pace of the leaves. It is a heavy burden for them to force their labor around the sundial in order to finish the tea processing.³ After the leaves are plucked, they are steamed.⁴ Then the leaves are pressed to remove excess moisture and bring out the essence from within.⁵ After that, the leaves will be ground and compressed into the final shape of the cake.⁶ Timing is everything in the creation of fine tea. With any hesitation, the color and flavor of the tea will be off balance. Therefore, tea makers celebrate the blessings of Heaven when the weather cooperates with the harvest.

Picking & Selection

Tea leaves can only be picked in the brief moments between dawn and the rise of the sun. The pickers should pluck the young stems off with their fingernails, without touching the leaves at all, for fear that the energy, smell⁷ and sweat from their fingers could overpower the delicate leaves. They often bring fresh water with them to dip the buds in after plucking them. The buds that are the size of a grain and resemble a sparrow's tongue are the highest grade. One stem and one leaf are

choice buds, followed by one stem and two leaves. The rest of the flush will be inferior. When the young buds first emerge, plucking such nascent white, bulb-shaped leaves would cause the tea to be off balance and bitter. And it is too late if the leaves have withered, looking like the dark knots of a bird's tawny band,⁸ tarnishing the color of the tea.⁹

Steaming and Pressing

Steaming and pressing the leaves are the most crucial steps in the whole process of making fine tea. If the leaves are under-steamed, they will be weak and pasty. The color of such tea is green and the liquor tastes bitter. And if the leaves are over-steamed, the buds shall wilt. The shade of such a tea is reddish, and the compressed cakes crumble apart too easily. After steaming, pressure is applied to draw out the excess moisture infused during the blanching process. If the leaves are pressed too firmly, the aroma and flavor of the tea will escape. On the other hand, if the leaves are not pressed enough, the liquor will be dark and taste tart.¹⁰ When the buds are steamed to perfection, the tea will fill the room with a wonderful fragrance. Knowing when the moisture has been pressed out and the essence released, and lifting pressure at that precise moment, requires great skill. In fine tea, three-fourths of the quality lies in mastering these two steps.

Tea Making

Washing the buds as they are picked, to maintain purity, is of the utmost importance. In the same way, the utensils used in tea processing must also be clean and pure.¹¹ The leaves have to then be steamed to the perfect degree, completely ripe for grinding, and then roasted to a flawless balance. If the tea liquor is gritty, then this point of perfect poise was not achieved. If the marble of the leaves in the finished cakes looks red and dry, then this batch of tea was over-roasted. Consequently, before the whole process starts, tea makers should master the art of harmonizing their work with Nature, so that the sun rises and sets with the production of a perfect tea, from harvest to completion. The key is to ensure that there is enough daylight and skill to finish processing all the harvested leaves in one day, as any leaves left undone at sunset shall be robbed of their quality by the passage of night.

Notes

1. As we discussed in our Wuyi issue, this is one of the magical qualities of Rock Tea. The cliffs of Wuyi absorb the sun's heat and warm the tea trees.
2. The "Awakening of Insects, *Jingzhe* (驚蟄)" is the third of twenty four solar terms in a traditional Chinese calendar, based on celestial longitude. It was usually from around the 5th to the 20th of March.
3. When amount and money overpower a love of tea and Nature, the pressure to make ends meet damages the essence of the tea and its medicinal power in our lives. This explains why many people would never think to describe their tea as "medicinal."
4. This is how the oxidation was arrested at the time.
5. This is probably something akin to the rolling that happens nowadays to break down the cells and release the juices in the leaves, furthering oxidation and shaping the tea.
6. Some experts suggest water was added back during the grinding of the tea to make a kind of paste that would facilitate compression.
7. The word "Qi (氣)" is used here, which could mean "energy" or "smell." We chose to include both.
8. There is some confusion between whether the correct term is "dark knots" or is a simile to a "bird." We chose both.
9. **Know your terms:** The term *baihe* (白和) referred to the undeveloped bud enclosed by two vegetal sheaths. *Baihe* was considered either desirable or undesirable; critics believed that the bud imparted bitterness to tea that was undesirable. The term *wudai* (烏帶) referred to leaf bud stems that were also considered detrimental to the color of tea. The term *queshe* (雀舌) referred to tea buds of the size and shape of sparrow's tongues, i.e., pointed, oblate, and tiny. The term *doupin* (鬥品) may be translated as "competition grade," that is to say, the penultimate quality of tea that produced a pale liquor and a stiff froth when whisked.
10. Huizong's Daoist esotericism is evident here as well, in his penchant towards perfect balance—a balance that cannot be taught in words. This point of balance is not something a father can hand to a son; it must be found and lived experientially. This is all metaphorical for living in harmony with the Dao.
11. We believe that the language here denotes spiritual purity as much as hygienic cleanliness. Cha Dao is eighty percent cleaning!



1



2



3



4



5

1. Basket for tea picking.
2. Sieve, called a "bili (茈莉)." Used for winnowing leaves before/after steaming.
3. Stove (zao, 竈), wok (fu, 釜) and steamer (zeng, 甑) used to process the leaves.
4. Large mortar and pestle for crushing tea leaves after steaming.
5. Table (cheng, 承) for compressing and molds (gui, 規) for the tea cakes.

Appraising Tea

Tea cakes are compressed into many shapes and sizes, similar in kind, though every one is unique, not unlike people's features. When the leaves are compressed too tightly, the cake will be dry. There will then be crevices on the surface of such tea cakes. Cakes that are too loose, on the other hand, are full of moisture. They feel harder to the touch, and display shallow wrinkles across the surface. Tea cakes made within a single day shine a bluish-purple hue, whilst those that are allowed to pass overnight half-way-done are matte, obstructing the light.¹ Some cakes might seem shiny at first glance, almost glossy, like a red prayer candle, though the ground powder turns white and the liquor is yellow. Other cakes are tightly-pressed and pale green, with a grayish powder that looks even bleaker after water is added. Some cakes are shiny in appearance, and hence popular to beginners; though, as they later discover, the inside is dull. Conversely, there are tea cakes that are bright and silvery on the inside, even though the surface does not reveal any of the hidden virtue inside.² The vast spectrum of tea cakes makes it difficult to make lasting generalizations. However, the qualities of the finest tea cakes can be summarized as follows: A fine cake should be illuminant in a single, bright and clear hue, the texture should be congruent throughout, and the cake should be neither too loose nor too tight. A tea cake should not crumble easily; there's a certain delightful resistance when grinding a fine cake.³ Some aspects of a fine tea can be expressed in a rule of thumb, but to truly comprehend quality requires experience, insight and intuition.⁴ Unfortunately, some greedy merchants purchase tea that has been steamed by private tea producers to save time in their own processing.⁵ Others crush tea cakes and re-shape them into their own molds. Even though they can claim such re-processed cakes as their own, and the appearance and the label might be similar, one can learn to discern their true quality by scrutinizing the color and texture of the cake carefully.⁶

White Tea

White tea is unique amongst all the tea under Heaven. The branches of the trees flare out wide and the leaves are so thin they are nigh translucent. White tea trees grow wild and sporadic, so they cannot be domesticated by man. White tea cakes are only available from four or five houses,⁷ which own but one or two trees respectively. Therefore, each house can barely produce up to three cakes. These priceless cakes are different from all others, in name and shape alike. Instead of the usual square-shaped cake, called a "pian," white tea is made into a floral-shaped cake called a "kua." The precious rarity of white buds, and therefore lack of expe-

rience processing them, means that it is difficult for tea makers to perfect the art of crafting white tea cakes. And if these treasured white leaves are not processed with great care and skill, they lose their matchless distinction and fall into mediocrity. The top grade white tea cakes have a harmonious texture and appearance inside and out. Such cakes glow, radiant like the finest jade held up to the light. Some private tea manufacturers manage to produce white tea cakes, but the quality is inferior.⁸

Grinders and Sieves

The best grinders are forged of pure silver. Wrought iron produces the second best, and pig iron is the next highest. Since pig iron does not go through a thorough smelting process, there are a lot of impurities in it, which can contaminate the tea.⁹ To say the least, the color of the tea powder will be darker using such a grinder. The sides of the pestle should be sheer and the trench deep. The rolling grinder on top should be sharp and thin. When the groove is deep enough, the ground tea powder concentrates in the center and is easier to collect. And when the wheel is sharp and thin, one can maneuver it smoothly, without hitting the sides or getting stuck. In grinding tea to powder, one should employ speed and power, since the longer it takes to grind, the more the metal can contaminate the color, especially if one is using iron.¹⁰

If the silk sieve is fine and taut, the tea powder will not clog the mesh. Do not be afraid to sieve the tea powder multiple times. As long as the thread is fine enough, the sieve will be light and all that much easier to be held flat and tight. Such a sieve can be reused several times without wasting tea powder or obstructing the openings. Finer, re-sieved tea powder tends to be lighter and therefore rises to the top when whisked. This forms a layer of foam, not unlike millet porridge, which focuses and reflects the color of the tea most beautifully.

The finest grinders were wrought of pure silver and often inlaid with gold. Ordinary tea lovers used stone with a wood dowel or even ceramic grinders. It's interesting that we ordinarily suggest that metal not touch tea itself, as wood and metal are contrary energies. However, pure silver or gold can mitigate this.

Notes

1. Master Lin often teaches that fine tea and teaware glows from within, while lower quality tea and teaware is dull and the light pools, making it seem shinier, but only on the surface.
2. These descriptions describe the results of Daoist spiritual cultivation as aptly as they do cakes of tea.
3. All of these apply to puerh cakes.
4. In other words, as Master Lin always says: “If and until you try a fine cup of tea, it’s too hard to tell!”
5. Here we see some of the emperor’s humanity shining through. Of course, as an emperor, everything Hui-zong had in his palace was made exclusively for him (other than antiques). Of course, all the objects made for the royal family were the best in the kingdom, and could only be made in selective royal processing institutions. So private (non-government) industries were considered ordinary, and not of real quality. The emperor is saying here that some government-sanctioned producers buy tea from private houses to save time, in other words.
6. Even today unscrupulous merchants take the wrappings off of puerh cakes and put on their own, use beautiful, cosmetic leaves on the outside of a cake, though the inside is made of cheaper, plantation tea, etc. Truly, one must be able to discern the truth.
7. This is a literal translation of a business, which was called a “house.” Chinese people didn’t separate their work and life, and many of the older generations still do not even today. This means that they are what they do. They live above their workplaces, literally.
8. Once again, the emperor is referring to non-government facilities, which he considers inferior to the royal houses.
9. This is the iron that the best tetsubin are cast from. It is very desirable in a kettle. This may be to do with the iron used in Japan, which had fewer impurities, or to an aesthetic and energetic preference for the more natural, blended iron full of “impurities.”
10. In the Chinese text, this sentence is in the section on sieves. We changed the order and put it together with the other sentences about grinders in this paragraph. Also, metal and tea do not accord in Traditional Chinese Medicine, which is why teapots rarely function well when they are made of metal.



Tea Bowls

The most exquisite tea bowls are a dark bluish-black with delicate white highlights, called “rabbit’s fur” or “marbled jade.” Such bowls contrast with and heighten the whiteness of the tea froth. It is important for a tea bowl to be slightly higher and wider at the bottom than a rice bowl.¹ The extra space allows for more breadth to whisk the tea, ensuring a fluffy, cloud-like foam to form over the tea. However, the proper size of a tea bowl shall truly be determined by the amount of tea one desires. If the bowl is too large for the amount of tea, then the color of the tea will not be fully enhanced. On the other hand, if there is too much powder in too small a bowl, then the tea will be gritty and not rise in froth.² When the bowls are pre-heated, the foam will linger much longer.³

Bamboo whisk

The whisk should be made of old bamboo⁴ so that the handle has a weight and bearing that firmly join it to the hand, making it fluid to maneuver. Furthermore, a heavier handle will generate momentum when it is being looped and twirled through the tea. In addition, the fibers of older bamboo stalks are tougher, which will add to the power of the whisking energy. It’s important that there are spaces between the flanges of the whisk, and that these strong roots of the whisk taper down to sword tips. A sharp edge will be quieter, reduce splashing and help cut through the liquor to make the finest froth.

Water Vase⁵

The finest water vases are made of gold and silver. The elegance in pouring will largely be determined by a long and graceful spout. The spout should be proportionate, with a straight curve and a larger base that tapers to a thinner mouth. A long, balanced spout that is well crafted will allow for skillful control of the water when pouring, and decrease the possibility of unwanted dribbles and splashes. In addition, the mouth of the spout should be tiny and oval with a teardrop angle. Such a vase will cut the water flow with ease, ending a pour without losing a drop.⁶ This is very important because it requires precisely seven gusts of hot water to create the perfect froth across surface of the tea.⁷ A single droplet of water would therefore disturb the foam whisked over the surface of the tea liquor.

Ladle

The proper size for a ladle is roughly what is adequate for a single bowl of tea.⁸ If there is excess water in the ladle, one will have to pour the leftovers back. If one ladle is not enough for the size of the bowl, then one will need to add another. Such adjustments delay the whisking and the liquor in the bowl shall grow cold.⁹

Water

The finest water for tea satisfies the following four elements: it is clear, light, sweet and pure. The first of these can be judged by eye. If the water is cloudy, it is surely low quality. Second, the lightest water is always better for tea.¹⁰ When tasting the water, there should be no foul, bitter or otherwise undesirable flavors. Third, fine water conveys a faint hint of a sweet aftertaste. And last but not least, the water has to be clean and pure, of course. Finding water that is clear, light, sweet and pure shall reflect the environment of the water source. Great water sources are few and far between. Legend has it that the waters of Zhongling, Zhenjing and Hui Mountain, Wuxi are the best, though these might, understandably, be thousands of miles away from one’s home.¹¹ Therefore, the best water shall be found in a nearby clean and clear mountain spring, while drawing from a well that is used often shall be the second best choice.¹² Waters drawn from rivers and brooks tend to have an unpleasant odor, and are often muddy even though they may be light and sweet. Therefore, the waters from streams and rivers are not often favorable for preparing tea. The water should be boiled to crab or fish eyes.¹³ If the water turns old, simply add fresh water and boil it again; then it can be enjoyed again.¹⁴

This famous painting shows a bustling Song Dynasty road, with tea merchants busy selling tea cakes and also whisked tea by the bowl. It has a charm and makes you feel like you're there. On the following page, we have some beautiful examples of Song ewers and bowls as well.

Notes

1. Many of us start out with rice bowls. But it is nice to get a bowl made for tea, with tea spirit!
2. The Daoist balance references of neither too much nor too little, too great nor too small, etc. continue all throughout, suggesting that perfect point of harmony that can't be taught in words and takes a lifetime to find. This is why tea is a spiritual cultivation.
3. Preserve the heat and begin to absorb peace.
4. The emperor is referring to the age of the plant itself, not to the piece of bamboo. Old-growth bamboo is better, looks finer and is stronger.
5. These are kind of more like pitchers, but we like the word "vase" better. You could also say "ewer," for example.
6. Though the emperor and his contemporaries were using vases to pour their hot water, his description alludes to all the issues we modern tea drinkers face when evaluating a kettle for gongfu tea.
7. Try making some matcha with seven pours, whisking vigorously between each one. It has an amazing effect!
8. Viz., depending on the size of the tea bowls.
9. This may seem confusing, considering the previous section on the water vase. However, as we shall see, the emperor will discuss different ways of whisking tea. *Diancha* style of whisking requires seven streams of hot water, but there is another style that used a ladle similar to the *hishaku* used to whisk tea in Japan. We often think that temperature is not important in matcha whisking, but it is. And, anyway, the tea was also different in Huizong's time. Another possibility is that they whisked in one larger bowl and then ladled into smaller bowls to share, as we see in the emperor's painting we have discussed throughout this issue (*shown on pp. 32-34*).
10. Literally it is "light" as in not heavy. At the Center, we always ladle water from the top of the water urn and leave the bottom for the plants. When water is not moving, the lightest element will rise to the surface. This is also true when gathering water in Nature. You can experiment by letting water sit in a pitcher for a few minutes and then pouring from the top, dumping out a lot and then pouring from the bottom into a separate cup to compare the difference. The effects of lighter water are even more evident in whisked tea.
11. Zhongling (中泠) is at Zhenjiang (鎮江) while Huishan (惠山) is at Wuxi (無錫), both are in Jiangsu Province (江蘇).
12. It should be used often so the water is not stagnant.
13. This refers to the size of the bubbles. This is elaborated in the July 2015 issue of Global Tea Hut, which was devoted to "Water, the Mother of Tea."
14. We have found that this is not the case. It is a necessity of using a spoutless pot to boil one's water, like a Japanese *kama*. These cannot be emptied before adding new water. We have found that it is always better to use all of one's water and then only start again. Adding cold water to hot water destroys the water's structure and it never recovers. Experiment!

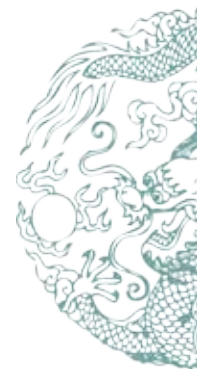
Zhang Zeduan (1085-1145)

"Riverside"





Song Dynasty “Rabbit’s Fur” bowls for whisked tea.



The “delicate white highlights” are caused by the glaze running down in firing. This technique is difficult to achieve and many pieces are lost.





Celadon from the Song Dynasty is amongst the greatest ceramics ever produced.



Above is a modern version of "Rabbit's Fur," which is easier to achieve nowadays due to gas kilns.

Dian;¹ Preparing and Whisking the Tea

There are many different ways to whisk tea. In this dynasty, we've developed a new way to prepare tea, which starts by mixing the tea powder with a small amount of water. Some people pour hot water immediately after this, and start to whisk forcefully, and often with too light a whisk. More than likely, they will not achieve the finest foam, which should froth to the consistency of millet or the eye of a crab.² This unfortunate situation is called a "languid point."³ If one fails to create the desired foam, it is most often attributable to one or more of these three errors: the hot water was added too early, the whisk was not heavy enough or perhaps the whisk was not handled with care. Beyond adding water before the tea powder has had enough time to dissolve, the whisking motions are often too vigorous. The result is a bowl of disappointingly dull green water without any white foam to speak of.

Another way to brew undesirable tea is to add hot water while the hand and whisk are moving intensely.⁴ In this case, some bubbly spots of froth might arise sporadically, but they shan't find one another and grow into a promising foam. These sparse bubbles are called "rising dough."⁵ The reason for this is that the brewer waited too long after the initial water was added to the powder or poured in too much hot water. It could also be because the wrist and fingers grasping the whisk are not limber enough.⁶ If the whisking is not fluent and uninhibited, the foam fails to grow into a thick layer of stiff froth that covers the whole of the tea liquor. Not only that, the commotion caused by ungraceful whisking leaves unattractive froth marks, called "legs," around the inside of the bowl.⁷

Masters will first stir the tea powder in the appropriate amount of water until the solution reaches a certain viscosity, akin to paste. Then, they will gently pour hot water round the rim of the bowl so slowly that the tea is barely disturbed. The whisking begins with a softness. The master's wrist will begin to gyrate in circular movements. The circles will then ellipse into larger orbits so that he can add more hot water to the tea. After that, the velocity will gather momentum. The fingers grasp the heavy whisk loosely yet firmly⁸ so that the wrist can swing, spin and twirl in full freedom and grace. The master whisks the tea to completion, not unlike the proper kneading of dough. Before you realize it has happened, foam arises like bright and twinkling stars shining in glory around the moon. At this point, the foundation of the tea is set. Just then, a second gust of hot water is poured into the bowl in a circular stream. This time, it does not need to be poured along the rim so slowly, but rather introduced swiftly and stopped just as abruptly. It is poured in so steadfastly that the surface of the tea is virtually untouched. After more powerful whisking, a greater foam will start to arise and pile up

like a treasure of pearls. The amount of hot water in the third stream can be much greater. After that, the whisking fades to a gentler and yet steady pace. After whisking everywhere, even onto the bottom of the bowl, millet and crab eye appear. At this stage, the tea is two-thirds done. When it comes to the fourth gust of water, the master only adds a little. And as the ellipse of motion grows wider, the whisking also continues to slow down. More froth with colorful reflections, like cloud and mist, will rise up. Then it is time to add a liberal fifth shot of hot water, whilst gripping the whisk more loosely and continuously whisking throughout the whole bowl. If there is any place that the foam is too thin, the master will whisk in heavier strokes throughout that area. On the other hand, one should remember to wipe away excess foam if necessary. When the surface looks like a crisp frost or freshly fallen snow, then the tea has reached its peak. This is when the sixth gust of hot water shall be poured into the point where the froth is thickest, and followed by gentle strokes of the whisk around any creamy spots to even it all out. Then comes the final touch, but only if the tea seems too strong. If it is perfect to taste, then there is no need to add the last gust of hot water.⁹ In the end, there should be a cloud of creamy foam hovering above the surface of the tea, lingering, tumbling and billowing in puffs. This fascinating glory is termed "biting the bowl."¹⁰ The clear and light upper portion is for drinking.¹¹ The *Record of Tongjun* says, "The white foam of tea is delicious and medicinal. There is no such thing as drinking too much of it."¹²

Flavor

The most important element of the tea is the taste.¹³ There are four qualities in tasting fine tea: aroma, sweetness, substance¹⁴ and smoothness. Amongst all the teas under Heaven, only those from Beiyuan and Huoyuan meet all the finest standards in these four criteria. If a tea tastes rich, but somehow lacks substance, then the leaves were most likely over-steamed or pressed too hard. According to traditional medicine, leaves grow from a sour stem. Therefore if the stem is too long, the tea will taste sweet at first but in the end it will transform to a tart or astringent quality. Leaves that are broad, have stretched out and relaxed, taste bitter in nature.¹⁵ As a result, if the leaves are too old, they may taste of such a bitterness at first, only to transform into a sweet after-taste. These are some of the issues that lower quality tea faces. However, there are extraordinary teas with the true fragrance and spirit of Nature as well.

Notes

1. *Dian* literally means a “dot,” “point” or “stroke.” *Dian* refers to the gusts of hot water poured into the tea bowls during the process of whisking the tea powder into a fluffy froth. The quality will be a synthesis of the power of the water and beauty of the trajectory, as well as the graceful movements of the brewing, whisking a great foam. (You should try it!)
2. He’s referring to the size of the bubbles.
3. In Chinese, the words *jingmian* (placid) should have been sufficient to describe this stage. The “*dian* (dot/point)” here is not really explanatory in any way. It sort of makes the whole phrase a compound noun, meaning something like “a *diancha* that has gone bad and ventured into this dead calm, which is undesirable.”
4. In our experiments, we have found that slowing down when adding the seven gusts of water does, in fact, improve the tea.
5. The *fu* (發) here is used in the sense of dough. When the dough is left “standing,” it actually rises. The analogy is that the bread doesn’t rise; the dough stays flat.
6. The Chinese says, “the fingers and wrists are not round.” The importance of having “round” fingers is to be flexible, and has nothing to do with the shape of the fingers. When one performs piano or violin, for example, if one’s fingers are not flexible enough, one certainly can’t be as expressive, nor even play certain kinds of music. In Chinese, music teachers tell their students to make sure their fingers are “round.” The same is true in calligraphy, which is perhaps a more relevant example, since the emperor was skilled at that art as well.
7. Appreciating the appearance of the tea was very important to tea lovers at the time, so this would have been aesthetically unpleasing. However, we have found that if tea is whisked well, it also smoother and better to drink, in most every way.
8. What could be more Daoist? Our Taiji teacher used to say this very thing.
9. This may be an homage to Lu Tong’s *Seven Bowls*, which says, “The seventh cup sits steaming—it needn’t be drunk, as one is lifted to the abode of the immortals.” Even otherwise, leaving out the seventh gust of water is poetic and insightful.
10. To “bite,” refers to how the foam clinging to the bowl. *Doucha* (鬥茶), or “tea fights,” were contests to see whose foam could outlast others, whose was thickest and best. Literally, the last one standing won.
11. We aren’t sure if one was meant to scoop out the lighter top portion into another bowl to drink or simply watch out for the residue at the bottom when drinking from that same bowl.
12. This record on medicinal herbs has sadly been lost, but it was well-documented by many authors as early as the fourth century CE.
13. Huizong is suggesting that the truth is in the bowl, and that tasting is believing, i.e. more important than the aesthetics of brewing and of the foam as he was discussing in the last section.
14. Huizong uses a word that means “heaviness” or “robustness.”
15. This is insightful, because leaves do stretch and while buds are yang expressions of an outward and upward moving energy, older, thinner leaves are inward-moving photosynthesizers.



Fragrance

The pure, unadulterated fragrance of a fine tea is greater than all the incense and perfumes in the royal cabinet.¹ However, only those tea leaves steamed to perfection, pressed to the right degree to bring out the essences and remove excess moisture, ground and compressed in the same day will exhibit such excellence. When brewed, a perfectly made tea reveals the gorgeous and awakening fragrance of a crisp autumn breeze. On the other hand, tea that has too much moisture in the cake will smell sour and taste foul, in the same way that an almond that has been in a cracked shell for some time turns sour.

Color

The best tea is pure white in color. Greenish-white tea is second best; grayish-white the third and yellowish-white the next. If Heaven bestows the weather, and all the processing steps are done with skill, then the leaves can be pure white. During the warm season, buds grow too quickly and there is not enough time for processing the leaves to the last on the same day they were plucked, and thus the finished cakes will be yellowish-white. If the leaves are under-steamed or pressed too lightly, then the cakes will be greenish-white. On the other hand, over-steaming will make the leaves grayish-white, while too little pressure results in cakes that are olive green. And if the cakes are over-roasted, they will turn out dark red.

Drying & Storage

Tea cakes that have been roasted multiple times become too dry on the outside and lose their fragrance in the process. On the other hand, leaves that are not roasted long enough will crumble, become spotty and taste weak. It is vital to dry the fresh buds to the perfect level, removing all the moisture without damaging the leaves. When roasting, one should build a fire in the center of the brazier first, then cover most of the wood with ash, while still leaving room for the flames to breathe. The ash should be scattered with a light touch to ensure the fire is not smothered. Let the fire burn for a while. After it has reached a stable balance, place the baking basket on top of the brazier. Dry out the basket first, before adding the tea cakes. Line up the packets along the walls of the basket, opening each one to expose the tea cakes inside. Do not leave a single cake covered by packaging paper.² Flip the cakes frequently as they dry, and when they are done, wrap them back up as soon as possible. One should adjust the fire to the size of the basket and the amount of tea to be baked.

The fire should never be so hot that one can't bear to place one's hand over the brazier without getting burned.³ Gently press the tea cakes every so often to see if they are only warm on the outside. Such pressure also ensures that the dry heat be evenly spread throughout the whole tea cake and dry out the inside as well. Some people think that tea should be dried at body temperature, but a flame burning at the temperature of a person can only dry the surface of a tea cake, not the inside. Then, one will be forced to roast such cakes again, lest they become damp or soggy. After all the drying is done, put all the re-packaged cakes in an old lacquer case and seal them.⁴ If the lacquer container is left closed when it is wet outside, then the tea cakes can be re-roasted only once every year and the color will remain as fresh as the day they were made.

Famous Teas

The famous teas are made of the very best each region has to offer. For example, one can feel the effort and sacrifice in Taixing rock tea,⁵ cultivated on such barren, flat and rocky land; or Qingfeng Suicha,⁶ which grows on high cliffs, tastes stern; just as one may taste the innocence of Dalan tea,⁷ Xieshan tea⁸ blooms on islets and tastes alone. The light Wuchongzuo,⁹ also known as "Monks Walking on Water," seems made out of mulberry buds. Jiuke¹⁰ or Qiong tea¹¹ is tough like the pebbles in birds' nests. One can taste all the glorious hues of a tea grown on a tree with colorful bark, as one can feel the fierce kindness of Tiger Rock tea,¹² bestowed as a gift from our teachers; and the taste of mahogany¹³ is distinct in Wuyou Yanya tea,¹⁴ just as the vibrant verdure is there in every sip of Garden of Laoke tea.¹⁵ They each have their own specialties, which can never be found anywhere else, from any other maker.¹⁶ However, as time has passed, later generations of tea makers have begun to compete with each other, and the competition has taken a wrong turn. They have bought tea from one another, plagiarized each other and mixed their teas together. It is a shame that they have not realized that the beauty of a tea lies in the dedication to mastery over the meticulous process of finishing the tea.¹⁷ How can transplanting trees from famous places make one's own better?¹⁸ This is, of course, not the first time in history that famous teas have decreased in quality. And it is also possible for an obscure garden and tea maker to rise to fame after a few years of quality production. As a rule, reputation does not guarantee fine tea.¹⁹

The Private Sector²⁰

Aside from the cakes made exclusively for the royal family, the rest of the tea is called “*waibei*,”²¹ the private sector. In general, privately roasted tea cakes have the following characteristics: they are made up of smaller bits, which are often of different tone and hue; the cakes crumble easily; and the tea tastes weak. Consequently, it should not be difficult to distinguish them from the royal tribute tea cakes. Lately, tea lovers have begun to fill their collections with privately baked tea. After years of watching the royal tea makers, such as those of Huoyuan, private tea producers have learned to mimic the shape and style of royal tea cakes fairly well. However, a closer look at what seems to be comparable reveals a substance that is very different. The color of such leaves might shine, looking fine at first glance, and yet the quality is ultimately inferior. The cakes themselves might be compact, but there is not any texture to them. And the flavor might come off strong, but it is heavy and lacks fragrance. How can they hide the fact that they are making inferior tea? In fact,

other than the tea called “*waibei*,” there is another privately produce tea, which is lightly roasted and called “*qianbei*.” These lightly-roasted tea cakes are mostly produced near Huoyuan, so the quality is fairly good.²² The cakes are luminescent and white, and the liquor can indeed be whisked into a stiff froth. However, none of the four elements of a fine tea, namely aroma, sweetness, substance and smoothness, measure up to royal tribute tea. As this very nice lightly-roasted tea still tastes inferior to the royal teas, all the *waibei* teas should be even easier to discriminate. Some dishonest merchants add persimmon’s buds into their cakes. Even though such cakes might look fine in appearance, when the tea is whisked, a cotton-like fiber shall appear on the surface and it will be difficult to create a thick millet froth. So when in doubt, put the tea to the test by giving it a whisk!²³ The legendary tea saint Lu Yu said, “If the tea is adulterated with grass, leaves or anything else, those who drink it will find themselves ill.” How can one not take caution with regards to what is in one’s tea?²⁴

The End


Notes

1. He talks of a kind of musk. The other perfume mentioned is ambergris. Royal tribute tea sometimes had such scents added to cover up processing problems. Huizong is criticizing that practice here.
2. A *jiao* (角) was the unit of packaging tea in the Song Dynasty. Depending on the size of the tea cakes, there could have been twenty or forty cakes in a package.
3. The emperor means after the coals are stable and have been covered with ash.
4. Most lacquer has a strong smell. Being a Chajin, the emperor would have known to not store tea around strong odors. Old lacquer has less of a smell.
5. 臺星巖茶
6. 青鳳髓茶
7. 大嵐茶
8. 屑山茶
9. 五崇柞
10. 白窠
11. 瓊茶
12. 虎岩茶
13. *Toona sinensis*, used often in Chinese cuisine.
14. 無又岩芽茶
15. 老窠茶
16. It is very difficult to translate this section of the emperor’s treatise. Many of these teas may refer to very specific teas grown by masters, as opposed to regions.
17. We think the emperor is saying, quite wisely, that competing detracts from one’s ability to focus and master one’s skill. Master Takeno Joo said that those who speak ill of others’ tea have yet to understand tea. We focus on the practice at hand, in other words.
18. We wanted to add an Amen here as well. Growing tea from one region somewhere else, or adapting processing traditions from another region very rarely makes exceptional tea.
19. Amen. Big factories = big quantity = low quality.
20. As we discussed earlier, Huizong deems the tea that is not produced by the government inferior.
21. Meaning “roasted” (processed) outside of the royal production facilities.
22. The “light-roasted (淺焙)” he mentions in this section does not refer exclusively to a way of roasting; it is also a general term referring to a group of tea houses near Huoyuan, which learned to make tea cakes well from the royal tea-making facilities.
23. As Master Lin always says, “Tasting is believing.” This is why we always advocate experimentation and provide you with so many Gongfu Tea Tips!
24. And this is long before agrochemicals! It’s even truer nowadays!

Teawayfarer

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 Dalal al Sayer.

As an Arab, Tea is imbued in me. She was always there growing up and savored in many forms: a ruby red brew infused with strings of saffron and a splash of palm water; a tawny concoction of leaves and milk, scented with cloves and cardamom and a menagerie of other spices; dancing tippy toed atop fresh mint leaves; or just plain and unadorned. She was always there, bubbling over charcoal, as we gathered in tents in winter, Her warmth prompting us to pour cup after cup, a vestige of the impeccable Bedouin hospitality. Even in the desert heat She is still there.

She even came to visit me in dreams; indeed my first gustatory dream experience came by way of Tea—the taste still lingering in my mouth long after I awoke. A few years later, and only because stormy weather prohibited outdoor activity, I attended my first tea ceremony in Vietnam. At the bottom of my bowl, there She was: a heart-shaped outline. I felt Her looking back at me as I was looking at Her in wonder. And here it was, something I'd been missing all my life: a sense of reverence and awe for something I had taken for granted.

Still, I was to reconnect years later, after I myself had steeped and matured. And this was a much more grounded, profound and personal experience. In a magical space where the jungle kisses the sea, Tian Wu served me my first bowl of Tea as I know Her now. Mind you, I was really sick, so my olfactory and gustatory senses decided to take a vacation as well. There I was sitting in Heaven, sipping this hot beverage I could not taste nor smell, wondering what it was all about. "Sit," She whispered, "sit still." And still I sat. I did not wonder anymore, but simply allowed the hot liquid to permeate membranes, cells, portals... Here I saw my Self, infinite and boundless; and my heart gave a soft vow to give this Leaf a human experience. She nestled Herself in my Heart.

After I came back from that trip, I excitedly started setting up for Tea Ceremony using Elevation from Sun Moon Lake. As I was boiling the water, my sister's friend asked if she could join me. As you can imagine, a flash of fear set in, and I had to remind myself that it was Tea that had invited her, so that fear turned into glee; I am honored and humbled to serve Her! Since then I have served many bowls to my family and loved ones, and always upon their own request, curious as to



why I love Her so much. They leave transformed and loving tea thereafter.

Since then I have enjoyed many kinds of tea, and always it is like meeting a new friend and getting to know their personality: here is a peach-scented soft sun surfing my tongue and settling in my solar plexus; there is a naked revel and roll on mud and moss. She can be playful or serious. But to be honest, there is more to Tea than just the sensual realm. There is also a subtle world in each bowl. And like most things in this life, it doesn't really matter what I say. Tea is to be experienced, and once experienced, you are exploring an ancient knowledge. My heart's wish is that you know this.

She beckons me. She guides me. She nurtures me much like one tends to a sapling, a sprout or a bud. I am in deep gratitude to Wu De and Tian Wu, the Tea Sage Hut family, and all the Tea sages and lovers that came before them, and will come after them. And what a special time to be at the Hut celebrating 50 issues and all that is to come! If you ever feel compelled, come to Kuwait and share a bowl or a few... I raise one now to all of you. I love you. *Salam.*

Inside the Hut

Because of the large number of tea sessions happening around the world, we are going to post about them on our site from now on and use this section to discuss news happening around the world. If you have any news, like a wedding, birth or tea happening, let us know and we'll write about it here. Also, our new site, coming in the next few months, will connect you to tea sessions around the world in a much better way than this page ever could!



We only have a few Light Meets Life Cakes left! We would love for the last few to sell so we can start buying this year's tea. Selling out also encourages us to find more and better teas for our fund raiser. Help us to meet our goals for 2015 before teas come in this May!



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



We also have uploaded the blog to the site (www.globalteahut.org/blog). We will publish the "Further Reading" there, as well as extra content, like a new series on the exercises in Tea Medicine.



There are a number of paintings and scrolls available on the website. If you are interested in having a piece of Wu De's artwork in your tea space you can now get one through the website. (www.globalteahut.org/paintings)



Please make some comments under the new videos and let us know what you think of the multi-media Global Tea Hut. Does it facilitate better understanding of the topics? How can we improve them or the magazine. We want to hear from you!



Wu De will be facilitating a six-day retreat in the Spanish Pyrenees. It will be a Zen & Tea One Flavor retreat, focusing on the connection between meditation and tea. Participants will gather fresh spring water, meditate a few hours a day, learn chanting and have tea as well as Zen discourses all throughout. It will be a rare chance to deepen your practice and learn tea at the same time. And, if that wasn't enough, it is being held at a gorgeous venue in the mountains of rural Spain. This event will run from October the 8th to 14th. If you are interested in attending please check out the site: (www.casacuadrau.org)

Wu De will also be traveling in Germany and Czech Republic after the retreat, sharing tea and teaching Cha Dao.

Center News



Before you visit, check out the Center's 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.



Wu De plans to do less traveling this year, so he will be here teaching except for that time. We now have a calendar on the Tea Sage Hut web page where you can see availability to stay with us.



The Center will be closed from April 24th to the end of May for the third annual Global Tea Hut Trip.



We have a new farm here at the center! We have rented a couple of acres right next door. From now on, we will be taking guests out there on Fridays to serve. Hopefully, we will be growing tons of food for the center soon, and be able to support ourselves with loving veggies!

April Affirmation

I affirm the times when I am conscious.

*We all forget to be fully aware, present onto life.
Do I seize the times when I am conscious to start new
habits of awakening and light?*



www.globalteahut.org

The best tea magazine in the world! Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea history, lore, translations, processing techniques and heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao. And through it all we make friends with fellow tea lovers from around the world.

GLOBAL TEA HUT

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