

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

July 2017

ANNUAL TRIP

MAOFENG
GREEN TEA

毛峰
綠茶





MAOFENG

Our annual trips are inspiring highlights in our year and lifelong memories for this community. Though we cannot all go every year, these issues devoted to the trip bring us all along in spirit. We also now have a tradition of hand-processing tea ourselves, blending it with local tea we find and sharing it with you.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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From the Editor

In July, the weather in Taiwan is very hot and humid. All the moisture that the puerh in storage absorbed in the spring is now activated by the heat, and the whole Global Tea Hut office smells of puerh fermentation. When we serve roadside tea, we serve sun tea, steeping loose-leaf sheng maocha in a large glass jar for two hours in the sun. We then add ice to our *kama* every half hour at our roadside stall, pouring in the cool tea by the pitcher and then ladling it into bowls as normal. We even put artificial, cooling blue flames under the *kama* for decoration. At the Center, we are drinking green tea in a bowl, young sheng puerh and occasionally some first-flush green tea from Japan or Korea, which is refreshing in the afternoon. This allows us to get out some of our Japanese *kyusu* and brew such tea, though we aren't trained and this is more just play for us. We have fun trying other brewing methods, including "essence brewing," which is when one brews just a few drops of very strong and very concentrated Gyokuro green tea.

Things are growing and evolving in this hut, as we re-thatch the roof to accommodate more Chajin and redo the rattan walls, which, as any tea hermit knows, need to be replaced every few years that one lives on the tea mountain. This year marks a big change here at the Center, as we are moving into a course schedule. Moving in this direction is necessary as the community grows and we move towards the more permanent Center, Light Meets Life. Once the new Center is built, we will move into topical courses, including Tea and Meditation, several levels of gongfu tea, three levels of bowl tea, courses on how to serve tea and much more. For now, most of our courses are going to be geared toward an "Introduction to Cha Dao." So far, we have only one exception this year, which is a seven-day course on Tea and Qigong in September. These ten-day Intro to Cha Dao classes will immerse guests in a life of Tea, with lessons on tea ceremony, gongfu tea, experiments, linear lectures, meditation instructions, service, trips to gather water and to Yingge to see tea and teaware, and much more. Our aim is that you will leave at the end of ten days fully infused with a Tea life, and with all the skills you will need to start a daily practice at home. We will continue to evolve and improve these ten-day experiences as time goes on, including maybe starting with a three-day electronic fast for all guests and other ideas we have for making these retreats more beneficial. You can read more and apply for a ten-day course at our Center website: www.teasagehut.org

For the fourth year in a row, we set out on one of our annual trips to China, inviting this community to travel through tea regions with us. These trips have gotten bigger, better and more heart-centered over the years. In part, this is because we are better at organizing them, and better

at getting the group together, which has been made up of people from countries around the world, and very different walks of life. Of course, there are the logistics of getting everyone there physically, but more important is the feeling of group love, camaraderie and friendship that ensues—which is a focused version of the sentiments of this greater Global Tea Hut community.

This issue is one of the ways that we make an effort each year to bring you all with us in spirit, documenting the trip so that you can come to Anhui with us vicariously. We hope that through the accounts of the trip, the photography and the amazing tea, you feel as if you were on the bus with us. It is also a tradition now for us to make some handmade tea on these trips, which we then add to some of the locally produced tea and send it out to you. Everyone on the trip tried their hand at drying some Maofeng green tea. And we asked them all to think of their friends and Tea family who weren't present as they did so, filling the tea with good wishes for all of you. Hopefully, some of that is transmitted through this month's bowl.

After each trip, we return to the Center in a calm tiredness, feeling a need for rest, but also filled with a warm glow that is so inspiring. On the last day, during the sharing, people expressed gratitude for the Center and Global Tea Hut, suggesting that these endeavors required a lot of work. My response was to mirror that sentiment right back at the group, and all of you: with such fine tea brothers and sisters to inspire us, this work is an honor and a joy. I hope this issue inspires all of you as well and that you feel a part of the smaller circle that traveled to Anhui together this year!



—Further Readings—

This month, we recommend taking the time to read through the May 2016 issue of Global Tea Hut. It is all about green tea in general. You may also want to read about some of our previous annual trips in the June 2015 and July 2016 issues. All three are on the "Past Issues" part of the site.

TEA OF THE MONTH



Over the course of this month, we will be drinking the nutty, clear and clean Mao-feng we got on our trip. All of this month's tea was hand-processed, some of it by the guests on our annual trip, filling the tea with their good wishes and love. Also, the travelers on this year's trip donated money towards purchasing the remainder of this Tea of the Month, adding more of their love to what we are sending to you this month. As we raise bowls of this clear and refreshing liquor, cleaning our hearts like a cool breeze on a hot day and bringing uplifting mountain visions, let us return to the topic of green tea. As usual, in this Global Tea Hut, we explore the genre more deeply by renewing what we have learned so far while traveling deeper into the veins of each leaf and expanding on what we know.

Green tea is one of the purest kinds of tea, and the least processed. It is often a Chajin's first love—the Tea whose aroma carries us to the places where names like “Temple Mist” and “Fur Peak” make perfect sense. Green teas often taste of such vistas as well, recalling clear stream water singing over stones, forest pines, or sometimes the lightest fragrance of a flower caught on the breeze, though not for long enough to identify it... There is a magic in these light aromas, and in the uplifting Qi that often sweeps us up off our cushions. Sometimes it is nice to return to our roots, remember-

ing Nature through perfect fragrance. The freshness of green tea also reminds us of the weather, though it can also be great when it is aged. Let us all celebrate the poetry of tea fragrances this month, as we stray into old dreams of bright leaves floating around a cracked bowl...

The official beginning of spring in ancient China was the day the emperor sipped the first cup of the first flush of green tea, heralding the arrival of the New Year. Preserving the freshness is the key to all green tea processing. This is done by intruding but minimally. The two most important aspects of green tea production are reducing the withering/oxidation as much as possible and shaping the leaves in a way that suits their nature, color and fragrance.

Green tea has been the most popular tea in China since the Song Dynasty (960–1279). In ancient times, there were loose-leaf green teas, but in the Tang Dynasty (618–907), it was compressed into cakes that were made of green tea powder, which were boiled. Then, in the Song Dynasty, the cakes were ground and whisked, like matcha. As we learned in the April 2017 *Classics of Tea* issue, the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) emperor Taizu outlawed these cakes and people began producing and consuming loose-leaf green tea again. In the early days, green tea was steamed, like it still is in Japan, but as new varietals evolved so did unique processing methods. To this day, China produces almost two million tons of

green tea a year. Sadly, the most mainstream genre of tea, with such high demand, is also the least environmentally friendly or sustainable, but there are many projects starting up that aim to change this. If Chinese green tea could go organic, it would be a great example to tea producers around the world!

Green tea is lighter than other teas because the processing is minimal. Plant cells have thick walls, and so without cellular breakdown, the tea does not release as much of its essence. It is impossible for tea to be processed without some oxidation; it begins oxidizing the moment it is picked. Also, the water content of fresh leaves is too high to process. If you fired or shaped such tea it would break, being brittle from the water in the leaves. During the trip from the field (or forest, if it's living tea) to the processing area, the tea naturally withers, losing moisture and becoming soft enough for processing. Ideally, green tea should be processed quickly, on the same day as plucking.

Traditionally, the best green teas were made from buds only. It takes tens of thousands of buds to make one *jin* (600 grams) of tea. The buds can also be processed with less oxidation, retaining more of the essence of the fresh leaf. They are also young and Yang in energy, which contributes to the magic of green tea. Over time, a greater demand for green tea has led to many kinds of green teas that are combinations of buds and leaves.



Maofeng



Huangshan, Anhui, China



2017 Green Tea



Han Chinese



~800 Meters



In many instances, such blends or leafy green teas are inferior in quality. But as green tea has gained popularity, more regions are producing it and using many different varieties that weren't traditionally used in green tea production. Sometimes, depending on the varietal and terroir, a leaf/bud blend can actually be better than just buds, adding depth and Qi to a particular green tea.

Though green tea began in China, it spread to both Korea and Japan by the 10th century. These three could be considered "traditional" green tea, as opposed to the newer productions elsewhere.

There are many ways of processing green tea, based on local varieties of leaf and terroir—especially if we include the mastery of tea production handed down from generation to generation within our definition of "terroir." Remember, "terroir" is a French word that is generally used in discussions of wine, but it is so appli-

cable to tea as well that most tea lovers have adopted it into their discussions of the Leaf. Terroir denotes the special characteristics of a place, found in its geology, geography, climate and even cultural heritage, which interact with a cultivated plant species to create unique expressions. Terroir is the soil and weather of a particular region; the geography and culture of the people and their relationship to the plant, and even the local microorganisms. Every place has a unique soil composition, pH, minerals and climate—all of which create a distinctive tea. When we talk about a tea's "terroir," we are speaking to the unique environment that created it, one which couldn't be reproduced elsewhere. Even if you took a grafting of a tree and cloned it elsewhere, it wouldn't be the same, since the sun would be weaker or stronger, the soil composition different, etc.

Green tea is most essentially defined by a lack of oxidation. The aim is to arrest oxidation as quickly as possi-

ble, and thereby preserve the freshness of the tea. Green tea is picked and then goes through some form of heat to arrest oxidation. This could be steaming, baking or, most commonly, pan firing. It is then dried. If the green tea has leaves along with bud, then after firing, it is rolled/shaped before drying. The rolling shapes the tea. The rolling for a green tea will always be significantly less than for other teas. All-bud green teas are not rolled—instead, they are shaped in the drying. The most common method of drying green tea in China is to use a hot wok. Sometimes, with pan-fired green tea, the firing/rolling will be repeated a few times until the desired shape/color is achieved. The liquor of green tea can be clear to yellow or even vibrant green, depending on local variations. The Qi often enters the body through the aroma and/or mouth.

Whether the green tea is all buds, bud-leaf sets or just leaves will also determine how it is processed.



FAMOUS GREEN TEAS OF CHINA

Longjing 龍井

“Dragon Well” green tea from Hangzhou is perhaps the most famous of all Chinese green teas. It is pan-fired and pressed as it is dried, resulting in unique paper-flat leaves with a bright yellowish-green hue.

Biluochun 碧螺春

This tea is produced in Jiangsu. It is pan-fired into dark green curls with hints of white. *Biluochun* is named after the leaves, which are shaped like curled-up snails.

Anji Bai Cha 安吉白茶

Despite the “white (*bai*, 白)” in its name, this tea from Anji County in Zhejiang Province is actually a green tea. Its name comes from the whiteness of the buds and paleness of the leaves. These long, thin, spear-like leaves are folded in a peculiar way that makes them easily recognizable.

Zisun 紫筍

This famous green tea from Guzhu in Zhejiang was remarkable enough to be included in Lu Yu’s *Tea Sutra*. “Zisun (紫筍)” literally means “purple bamboo shoot,” referring to the purplish hue of the buds and small leaves of this green tea.

Zhen Mei 珍眉

This “Precious Eyebrow” green tea is better known in the West by its Cantonese name, “*Chun Mee*.” It is famous for tasting subtly of plums, with a bright, tangy liquor when it is well made.

Lu'an Melon Seed 六安瓜片

This green tea is made in Anhui, near where our Tea of the Month comes from. It is a very unique green tea in that two leaves are plucked separately to make this tea, as opposed to the bud sets that are more common in green tea production. You can read more about this tea in the March 2017 issue of *Global Tea Hut*.

Xinyang Maojian 信陽毛尖

This tea from Xinyang, Henan Province is called “*Maojian* (毛尖)” in reference to the furry buds (*mao*, 毛) and shape of the leaves (*jian*, 尖), which is a “sharp point.” This is one of the most ancient teas still in production in the world. *Maojian* is one of the older types of green tea in China. Fine *Maojian* is made exclusively from small, sharp handpicked buds that produce a delicate, refined liquor.

Zhu Cha 珠茶

“Pearl Tea” is better known in the West as “Gunpowder Tea,” due to the fact that it is made up of small, rolled-up pellets that often have a smoky flavor. According to some tea scholars, this rolled-up green tea from Zhejiang Province may be the precursor to oolong tea. The highest grades were called “*Pingshui* Gunpowder (平水珠茶)” which means “Temple of Heaven Gunpowder.” This tea is withered and steamed before drying, which means that dark, shiny pellets are usually a sign of freshness. They can be smoky due to pinewood fires near the withering tea and/or used to heat the woks during the de-enzyming, similar to *Zhen Shan Xiao Zhong* red tea.

Taiping Houkui 太平猴魁

“Peaceful Monkey Chieftain” tea is another Huangshan varietal. Because the medium-leaf trees used to make this tea traditionally grew in shady valleys, they have less chlorophyll and tannins, making them less astringent than most tea leaves. For that reason, larger, pretty leaves are used to make this extraordinary green tea, which is often considered the emperor of all green teas when it is well made. Traditionally, the leaves were processed in individual sets of three leaves to a stalk; this shape was referred to as “two knives and a pole (兩刀一槍).” But nowadays, stalks of *Taiping Houkui* often have five or even seven leaves.

中國著名綠茶

進貢皇帝茶 昭告春天

The basic methods for hand-processing green tea are: pan firing, basket firing, oven baking and steaming. With the introduction of modern machinery, however, many of these steps have changed. Pan firing to arrest oxidation and de-enzyme the tea, for example, is often done in large, heated tumblers nowadays. Steaming tea is only done in Japan, which is how they arrest oxidation/de-enzyme their tea. The result is the dark green color of Japanese teas, as well as the bright green liquor and distinct flavors such teas offers.

There is great skill in processing green tea, since it is so simple. Sometimes we assume that mastery is in the more refined of the arts, but it is often the simplest things that take the greatest effort and skill. Great chefs don't need to cook with tons of spices all the time; they can also bring out the natural flavors of ordinary ingredients in unexpected ways. We once had a vegetarian chef stay at the center and he cooked up the carrots we eat regularly, only they tasted somehow more "carrot" than usual! They were delicious.

And it was carrots, oil and salt—nothing else! Similarly, green tea at its finest is an expression of simple tea leaves as they are in Nature: bitter and astringent, with a transforming sweetness that lingers on the palate. And the simplicity shines when a green tea is good, like ours this month!

The pickers are masters at selecting tea, living in close harmony with Nature their whole lives. The bright farmer depicted to the right was happily singing tea-picking songs as he selected the perfect leaves for our Tea of the Month. Unbelievably, he is seventy years old, and how young he looks is a testament to mountain living and eating only organic vegetables. We asked him if he still felt young and he happily went on about how he still loved to work, to be out in the fields and under the sun. Living in a completely organic, healthy and thriving village in the mountains isn't just good for one's health and longevity, it is also conducive to happiness and prosperity. We met nothing but smiles while there. It felt like home!

獻唱給葉子

歌聲帶來陽光

清明

Qing Ming

In the Chinese lunar calendar, Qing Ming (清明) is an important holiday. People pay a visit to their family tombs and clean them up before making prayers. It usually falls on April 5th each year, though it wavers like the moon. The highest quality spring green teas are often Pre-Qing Ming (明前茶). The leaves that sprout just before this time are sweeter and more tender, often with less bitterness and astringency. For that reason, they are valued in the market as the highest grades of green tea. The next highest grade is that which is produced a couple of weeks after Qing Ming, which is called "pre-rain tea (雨前茶)." The buds from this flush are also often tender, but not as tender as Pre-Qing Ming teas.

With climate change, agrochemicals and other human influences, much of the meaning and premium of "Qing Ming" is lost nowadays. Leaving aside the many fakes, different regions have very different terroirs, which means different qualities of tea. Also, what is valued by the mainstream is often based on different standards than those of the tea lover. Sometimes we value the energy (Qi, 氣) of the tea more than the flavors, especially when viewing tea as medicine. And all of this does not take into account the changes that have started due to climatic fluctuations and agrochemicals, especially chemical fertilizers, which change the time and manner in which tea bushes flush with buds in the spring.



MAKING MAOFENG TEA

Huangshan Maofeng green tea (黄山毛峰) literally translates to “Yellow Mountain Fur Peak” tea. We will explore Huangshan a bit later in this issue, but that part of the name is obvious. Though the tea doesn’t grow in the World Heritage Site anymore, it grows in the lower foothills all around the park. Huangshan is home to several famous green teas, like *Taiping Houkui* (literally “Peaceful Monkey Chieftain”) and An Melon Seed tea. The “fur” part of the name refers to the white hairs that cover the leaves. These hairs are a common mutation in tea, which most scientists agree is a defensive adaptation to protect the buds from insects. Most insects do not prefer tea, as it is tannic, but the buds aren’t yet so bitter and astringent, and are much more palatable. The furry hairs on the buds shield them from many species of insects. These hairs make the buds more hardy, beautifully yellowish-white and

also change the fragrance and Qi of the varietal, often resulting in more delicate liquor. Oftentimes, allowing for biodiversity, along with the plant’s natural defenses like these hairs, is enough to ensure a large yield without the need for agrochemicals. Since insects prefer other plants, they will only choose tea when the ecology has been decimated and tea is all that remains. The “peak” part of the name “Maofeng” refers to the shape of these special leaves, which are said to resemble the jutting, craggy mountains of Huangshan, known the world over for their otherworldly spear-like spires—the kind celebrated in countless traditional Chinese ink paintings.

The travelers on this year’s trip were once again afforded the chance to experience just how challenging tea-making is. Tea truly is one of the most labor-intensive agricultural products on earth. You pick and pick

throughout the morning, and then take a glance down into your basket to see how you are faring, only to find that your basket is far more empty than you thought it would be—and not just by a small margin, rather more of a “That’s it?” kind of feeling. It’s very hard work picking tea. And actually, our green tea is much easier than many kinds of green tea in the world, because we are picking leaf and bud sets—unlike many green teas, which are composed of only buds. In fact, it can take as many as twenty thousand buds to make a single *jin* (600 grams) of tea! Overall, this leaves one with a deeper respect for the tea we drink. Though some of you weren’t with us to experience this firsthand, you can read this issue and hopefully cultivate an even deeper and greater respect for tea farmers, and for each and every tea you serve. Knowing this, you’ll hopefully respect this month’s tea even more.



茶 First, the Maofeng tea is hand-picked. All the tea from Xiang Tan Cun (響潭村) village is hand-harvested; this time part of it by us, with love. Then the tea is roasted over a very hot flame to de-enzyme the fresh leaves and start the drying process. The farmers use a square mesh screen to gently stir the tea dry. We found that these square screens got too hot over time and switched to ones with long handles that allow you to dry the tea from a distance. Afterwards, the tea is moved to large bamboo baskets that are placed over a dish of charcoal burning at a much more mellow temperature, and are very gently baked until they are dry. They then sit out for a few minutes before being stored away for sorting and packaging, which is the final step. This all preserves the freshness of the green tea, keeping the leaves pristine. (The gorgeous picture above, of Tian Wu picking tea, was taken by the talented Maxwell Nordeman.)





One interesting thing we learned traveling from Huangshan to Qimen, and picking red and green tea, was that different regions have different picking methods to suit the local varietals. In Qimen, the farmers squeezed and twisted, whereas the green tea pluckers were gentler, removing leaves by just squeezing. You have to pick with your fingertips or fingernails, so you don't tear the stems. You want to squeeze the stem at just the right spot. When it is done right, it comes off as if it is given. There is a satisfying squishy feeling when you have released the stem in the best way.

We started our day with prayers, offering our service to the tea bush-

es and asking for permission to share their medicine. And before we started picking, we asked the guests to respect the tea and remember this promise, allowing their heart to choose the proper bud sets to pick. In that way, the sensitive picker gets a real feeling that the tree is bestowing its buds on you. There is a fair energy exchange, especially in those moments when you choose the right stem and squeeze it to the perfect degree and in just the right place. We also asked everyone to try and remember that these leaves would make their way into Global Tea Hut envelopes, and try to fill the act with love. This spirit will hopefully reach your bowl this month.

Traditionally, all-bud green teas would be considered higher quality. This is true, but only in terms of flavor and aroma. An all-bud tea will usually be more delicate and fragrant, since the cells of the tea have been less affected by withering. The issue of quality in green tea can be more complicated than just buds versus leaf-bud sets, however, as you have to take into account the weather, the varietal and the time of year the tea is picked. There are teas that benefit from having some leaves mixed in, as it can add breadth and strength, especially if you plan to brew the tea as leaves in a bowl. (Our Tea of the Month is a higher grade, made up mostly of fresh buds.)



杯中真理

浸泡一個故事

茶 The tea fields in Xiang Tan Cun (響潭村) were stunning and pristine. The villagers told us that they had never used any chemicals on any of their fields, including their vegetables and tea. The tea trees are all seed-propagated and between thirty to forty years old. Inside each tree was a vibrant ecology, including the wonderful macro-photography above, taken by Nadya Vorobyova. Spiders are a sign of long-term organic practices, as they only thrive after other insects thrive for some seasons. The most important factor in the quality of any tea is the terroir: the climate, soil, rain and ecology. When you add agrochemicals like pesticides, you remove the element of insects, which then affects the lizards, snakes and birds, and so on. These changes ripple through the ecology and ultimately influence the tea, at least by taking out natural fertilizers in the form of the waste these organisms leave behind. More importantly, the tea does not live in a thriving, whole, healthy and sustainable environments, which means that the man-made fertilizers that we add are slowly deteriorating the fertility of the land, so that future generations of tea lovers will have far lower quality tea, or maybe none at all! Even the people in Xiang Tan Cun looked so much younger than their age, demonstrating how clean air and water, as well as chemical-free food and tea, makes a huge difference for the people who are stewarding the land, as well as for the tea trees.

Of course, most of the time, mixing leaves in with the buds is done for economic reasons, since it vastly increases the yield of a harvest. Green tea farmers will often have a grade that is all bud and one that is composed of bud and leaf sets, which is available at a lower cost. In our case, the choice to use leaf and bud sets was based on the fact that we would not have been able to pick anything at all if we had chosen to use buds exclusively. Also, we knew that the tea we would purchase from the farmer to blend with the tea we made ourselves would also be bud-sets, due to the high cost of all-bud green tea. Even the bud-sets from this village are quite costly, as the tea is organic and hand-processed.

With all green tea, you want to arrest the oxidation as quickly as possible. In fact, the main difference between most other teas and green tea is withering. Other teas are withered to oxidize the leaf, but with green tea we want to arrest oxidation as quickly as possible. When larger leaves are included in a lower grade green tea, there will be some slight withering just to remove moisture from the larger leaves. Such teas are also rolled to shape them, making them more like a very lightly oxidized oolong—akin to Baozhong tea. But our Tea of the Month was very small bud-sets, so there was no withering or shaping at all. After plucking, the tea goes straight to drying. You cannot shape buds, as they are thick and juicy and would break. They are, in essence, left the way Nature shaped them.

You might wonder how the firing, or other kill-green (*sha qing*, 殺青), “arrests oxidation” if there is no oxidation in green tea. Well, there is always *some* oxidation. The moment the leaf or bud is separated from the tree, it starts oxidizing. And it will continue to do so as it sits in baskets, waiting to be taken to the processing facility. However, the aim is to keep this duration as short as possible. In Xiang Tan Cun (響潭村) village, there are only rudimentary machines for red tea production. All the green tea is processed by hand, using traditional drying methods.

The tea goes through two stages of drying, both of which use charcoal fires. The first involves gently dancing the tea leaves over a stronger flame, de-enzyming and drying them

at the same time. This baking has to be done with great skill. One has to make sure the fire is not too weak or too strong, and that there is no smoke from the charcoal, which would lend unwanted flavors to the tea. The farmers use square metal mesh screens with wooden frames to move the tea over the flames, but most of us resorted to similar screens with long basket-like handles because the simpler screens got too hot to hold and were therefore much more difficult to manipulate. It was much easier to stand up and gently shake the tea with the handled version of the screen. After the tea is finished, which the farmers judge by appearance and aroma, it is taken to large bamboo baskets that are placed over milder, cooler charcoal braziers. The tea leaves are spread out over the bamboo to finish drying. This consistent, mild heat bakes the tea dry. It is then cooled on a round bamboo tray before sorting and packaging, which are the final steps.

The production of Maofeng tea in Xiang Tan Cun is simple. After all, the essence and beauty of green tea is that it is closer to the leaf’s natural state, with much less interference. By picking selectively (all buds or buds and small leaf sets), the farmers ensure that the leaves are less astringent and much sweeter than more mature leaves. Of course, tea is a bitter plant and even the buds and small leaf sets have a mild bitterness and astringency, but many of us were munching on them throughout the morning, as the bitterness gives way to a pleasant sweetness and bright energy. Tea buds and the small, new leaves around them have less chlorophyll and tannins, which is why they often aren’t as green, and are therefore sweeter.

You shouldn’t assume that because this tea is processed so simply that it is not made with mastery (*gongfu*). Of course, oolong and other more complicated teas require more skills to be produced well, but that doesn’t mean that fine green tea is easy to make. It is difficult to make simple things, especially these days. To leave the nature of the leaf intact and only very subtly enhance its flavor and aroma with the gentlest of touches, while also shaping and drying the tea, is a very challenging task indeed. Sometimes, fancier food is easier to make delicious, with all the spices and sauces one needs to

make rich food. But making simple salad delicious without adding too many ingredients requires skilled selection of the right produce and a delicate touch in the preparation. If this was easy, a lot more people would be drawn to eating simple, healthy food. Similarly, green tea requires its own mastery: in the selection of the right varietal, the right leaves and then in the gentle drying of the tea in a way that preserves the freshness of spring.

內部和外部的茶

茶 After making your Tea of the Month, we took rest by spreading out amongst a lovely grove of tea trees and drinking Maofeng tea together. This was one of the most exquisitely meditative tea sessions we had during the trip, drinking this tea near the trees with local water that the tea thrives on.



Maofeng

Xiang Tan Cun (響潭村) village was perhaps the most inspiring stop on our whole trip. As you will no doubt read about in the accounts published throughout this issue, our day there was beyond magical. We spent the first half of the day picking tea. On the hike into the mountains, we learned that the entire village has always been organic, never using any pesticides or chemical fertilizers. All their tea and vegetables are produced as they have been for centuries, and as Nature intended. And yet, the quality of the tea and food is excellent and the yield more than enough, contrary to what tea vendors who sell inorganic teas would have us believe. In fact, the lunch we had after picking tea was perhaps the best meal of the whole trip. We had handmade noodles and steamed buns with several dishes of local veggies to go with them. You could taste the vibrancy in the food, as you can in this month's tea.

The radiance of these pristine fields was so evident. All of the tea trees here are seed-propagated in a natural way, making this one criterion away from full living tea (the bushes were pruned). Not only was each bush unique, but they were all also thirty to forty years old, carrying wisdom and respect in their thick trunks. The trees were surrounded by rich biodiversity, including spiders, which are always a great sign. Only after a few years of organic farming, when the insect population has grown substantially, will spiders come and make a home there. This soil and place were rich. Remember, the terroir of tea (its environment, climate, soil, etc.) is the most important aspect of its quality. The richer the environment, the more the tea that grows there will offer. The infinite connections of biodiversity in an environment all subtly grow in influence, until the difference between this kind of natural tea and that grown in sterile, chemical-laden plantations is huge. The relationship between the insects, the animals that eat the insects, and their waste, which helps renew nitrogen in the soil, is just one of a myriad of significant factors that go into healthy tea. When tea grows naturally, without chemicals or irrigation, it learns to grow deep roots and drink of the mineral-rich soil of the mountain, and to strengthen itself against insects by growing more robust leaves. This, and all the positive, symbiotic relationships that make up a healthy ecology, make all the difference in the world—the difference between a flat, lifeless bowl of tea and a rich, uplifting and powerful bowl that takes you to the place it was grown.

In the afternoon, we sat and drank these amazing Maofeng tea leaves in a bowl. The tea was bright, crisp and clean, with a liquor that filled our insides with the spring weather of the mountains that surrounded us. This tea is incredibly uplifting and cleansing. After a few bowls, it feels like you have just showered, emerging from the session rested and renewed. Because of the pristine environment, coupled with little processing, which has left the leaves green and new, this tea fills you with birdsong, spiders, grass and flowers, and you feel like the emperor who rightly declared that spring had begun upon drinking such delicate liquor.



茶道



Leaves in a bowl

Sidehandle

Water: spring water (very important!)

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: cooler, crab-eye, roughly 80–85°C

Brewing Methods: leaves in a bowl or sidehandle (leaves in a bowl is better)

Steeping: longer, to taste

(long steepings stay sweet if the water is cooler)

Patience: ten steepings

茶 Use a dark bowl, preferably a “Tianmu (天目)” bowl, this month to highlight the gorgeous green of the tea leaves.

Brewing Tips

This month's tea is the quintessential leaves in a bowl tea. These magical leaves with some bright spring water over them are glowingly green, adding so much visual appreciation to the experience of drinking tea. Watching green tea open in a bowl is one of the great joys of a tea lover, and adds so much to the flavor and aroma. These leaves are truly gorgeous to behold. Make sure you take the time to appreciate the sensual aspects of this amazing tea, with deep and slow inhalations of the aroma, both of the leaves and in the bowl, savoring the nutty sweet flavors and taking the time to glance lovingly into the bowl.

This month, water will be much more important than other months. Of course, every cup or bowl of tea is 99% water, so choosing good spring water is essential in tea brewing. There is no faster, easier or better way to improve all your tea than choosing fine water. When drinking such a delicate, fra-

grant and light tea, water will play an even more pronounced role. You have to make sure that your kettle imparts no flavors to the tea. We want to enhance and encourage the simplicity and sweetness of this gentle tea. You also want to use a lower temperature of water, choosing "crab-eye" water, which is roughly 80–85°C. If the water is too hot, it will scald the delicate tea and some of the fragrance will be overwhelmed. You must be gentle with this tea, even in the pouring. Be sure to pour over the sides of the bowl and touch the leaves themselves with the stream from your kettle, allowing them to spin and start steeping in the first place, and to lift off the bottom of the bowl in later steepings. Though this tea is leaves in a bowl, and therefore the essence of simplicity, it should still be prepared and drunk with a bit more upright grace. And that should be reflected in your chaxi, the water you choose, the way you pour and even the way you sip this ethereal tea.





Huangshan



*Thirty-six otherworldly peaks,
All immortals with black top knots.
The morning sun strikes the treetops,
Here in this heaven-mountain world.
People, raise your faces!
For a thousand years the cranes
Have come and gone.
Far off, I see a hermit gathering firewood,
Plucking sticks from stone crevices.*

—Li Bai, “Dawn Vista on Huangshan”

Huangshan (黄山) is a vast mountain range in southern Anhui Province. These mountains were formed one hundred million years ago in the Mesozoic Era, when the ancient sea that covered much of China vanished, exposing these underwater mountains. In later eras, Huangshan was further carved and shaped by glaciers. Huangshan is famous for the deciduous forests of mostly pine that stretch from 1,000 meters above sea level to the tree line, which is around 2,000 meters. Many of the pines (*Pinus huangshanensis*) are very old. Due to the low rainfall, the pines grow slower than elsewhere, and often at crooked, winding angles, which means that even small pines may be much older than they seem. Many of the older trees have poetic names such as the “Welcoming Pine (迎客松).” Over one thousand kinds of plants can be found within the park, including many species of flowering trees.

In ancient times, Huangshan was known as “Yishan.” In 747, during the Tang Dynasty (618–907), the name was changed to “Huangshan” by imperial decree. Most scholars believe that this was to honor the mountain by connecting it to the first, legendary emperor “Huang Di (Yellow Emperor),” who is the mythical ancestor of all Han people. Some locals say that the august Huang Di left the world of

mud on this mountain, ascending to immortality after cultivating himself at a local Daoist temple. After the decree which changed the name, the mountain became a well-known destination for Nature lovers, Daoist and Buddhist hermits, as well as artists, musicians and poets seeking inspiration amongst these brushstroked crags.

Huangshan is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, covering more than 150 square kilometers of pristine park. It has also been known as the “Sea of Clouds (云海)” for centuries, referring to the ocean of clouds that covers much of the park most days. This “Huangshan Sea” is one of the main attractions that have drawn so many guests to this pristine place for so long. The clouds produce strange kinds of light, special sunrises and sunsets, each of which demands many return visits to catch a glimpse of it. The most famous is the “Buddha’s Light (佛光),” which occurs at sunrise as little as once a month.

The high-altitude hikes are life-changing, offering great, craggy vistas that extend to eternity. The three tallest peaks are Lotus Peak (莲花峰), Celestial Peak (光明顶) and the City of Heaven Peak (天都峰), which are all more than 1,800 meters tall. These jutting celestials remind you that you have strayed outside the ordinary realm—the world below, where we live our ordinary lives—and into a higher,

more noble world, where meditation comes easy. Despite the thousands of noisy tourists with bright clothes and megaphones, there is a deep and lasting eternity all around that drowns all the noise in older, more profound sentiments of calm.

We spent three glorious days in the park. We packed up our stuff, leaving most of our luggage down below in the city, and took the cable car up to the top of the mountain, hiking further in to our hotel, which was a quaint inn with all the original décor from the 1960s. We hiked each day to various peaks, drank tea amongst the rocks, and then had tea gatherings and discourses in a long, thin café in the front of the hotel each evening. There was a lot of poetry in these days, as we all got to know each other better, finding a group dynamic and learning to live as a traveling band of Chajin. The mountains and mists helped bring a magical charm to this, filling our days with mystery. When we did find peaceful rocks to be alone, we would pull out our trusty thermoses and sit down for some leaves in a bowl and meditations. Looking around at Chajin meditating on various rocks, facing in all the directions, was one of the highlights of our trip. It felt as if we had been there for ages, lost in the clouds. We would leave a part of ourselves behind, to forever join the mountain spirits wandering the park.

*Ancient cliffs and crags
Dance to forgotten music:
Rock rhythms
Without percussion,
And piping pines
That lilt without wind.
The beat drums slow,
In time no man can measure.
Yet if a sage reaches out,
Straining his ears
Through winter snows,
Deep within his cave,
And summer rains,
Along the trails,
He might catch a glimpse
Of a single note,
And die content.*

– Wu De



三十六離塵峰群在黃山





Steve Kokker (Ci Ting, 慈聽), Estonia

These lines of sweet reminiscence I write from within the embrace of Wuyi Mountain. After this year's Global Tea Hut adventure, I decided to continue steeping a few more rounds, surrounded by rocks, sky, distant gongs and chanting, and some of the finest, healthiest, happiest tea trees on the planet. It's a fitting place to unpack memories, absorb lessons, to let things settle, and pretend for a while that I'm an Immortal.

Each day in Wuyi Park, I watch as men and women pick tea leaves in the fields from 6am, and several hours

later carry two massive basketfuls balanced on bamboo bars crushing down into their thin shoulders. Sinuous calves, which mimic the texture of the grand black rocks that line the valleys, seem to take on most of the weight. I know full well I could barely lift even one of those full baskets, much less fill it with freshly plucked leaves in just a few hours, or carry it up and down mountain staircases. I feel very much like the spoiled weakling I am compared to these heroes.

I smile recollecting the moment Wu De told the busful of us that over

the course of an entire afternoon, we had worked tirelessly plucking tea leaves that yielded but two kilos of tea. It took thirty people several hours to pick but two kilos of leaves. "Which, after processing, would end up as about 500 grams of tea," he added, driving the needle in deeper. That news silenced some, and made others whoop out loud in laughter. In our defense, we were picking mostly buds and small leaves that day, not the larger leaves which take up more space, but still, the point is clear: *tea processing is incredibly labor intensive.*

REFLECTIONS OF OUR 2017 TRIP

茶之旅迴響

We have tried our best to bring you along on our trip, through the tea we made and shared for our Tea of the Month, the photography we made along the way and now in these accounts. We asked several of the participants of this year's trip to write down their reflections of what they experienced, some highlights and wisdom they learned along the way. Hopefully, you will feel included and will share in some of the tea wisdom we all were immersed in. In the least, the diaries of these tea travelers may open the tea vistas of China up to your imagination, affording you the chance to travel to the source of our Tea of the Month, or perhaps inspiring you to make such a journey in person.

Each and every step of the way, there is mastery and labor involved. There's the endless plucking of just the right leaves, which locals do smiling, singing or engaged in light gossip. Not grumbling about their long days and inattentive bosses. Then there's the lugging down to processing stations; spreading the leaves out under the sun seems a break from labor but even that requires skill to lay them evenly. Depending on the tea, there's also shaking, rolling, shaping, drying, sorting—all that before packing and shipping. Only then does our steeping ask for

equal mastery and patience. Alas, if we could only master just one of these steps in a lifetime!

An avid group of Global Tea Hut members such as us already knew some of the intricacies of tea processing, but to experience a fraction of it ourselves I think left us with one of the longest-lasting gifts we could ask for. As the saying goes: "Tell me and I'll forget, show me and maybe I'll remember, but let me do it and I'll never forget."

In our case, our intellectual understanding about tea processing became

visceral knowledge several times in and around Qimen. Twice, we were entrusted with baskets around our shoulders to pick the spring leaves, which must have trembled as we approached. Once, we even tried our hand at drying leaves the old way, over a cauldron of burning charcoal. We tried, gingerly but with bravado, to evenly toss the square bamboo tray of leaves in a specific rhythmic way that dried but didn't burn the leaves, and didn't scatter them all over the floor or plunge them to untimely deaths on the charcoal—all easier said than done.

Not burning our fingers was an unexpected challenge. For most of us, one of those consequences seemed inevitable, but we tried our best. When, in the end, I jokingly asked our host farmer if we were hired, he didn't miss a beat, exclaiming, "No!"—with a big smile of course.

Understanding how difficult it is to process tea is important because it sharpens our resolve not to waste any! When we use too many leaves to make a brew that would have easily made a better pot with fewer, we waste other people's efforts, along with the leaves themselves, in trying to force some experience for ourselves or our guests. It's as if we're trying to squeeze the juice from the leaves and extract an experience. When we misbrew or steep fewer times than the leaves themselves offer, we toss away in a flash something that Nature and human hands have spent finite energy to bring to us. We all do this kind of thing unknowingly all the time, every day. It's the nature of our un-mindful, throw-away consumer society.

Ah... sneaky me. I skipped ahead to one of the trip's biggest take-aways, perhaps in fear that some might not make it to the end of this article. But let's back up a little now. First, a linear outline of the trip to help get our bearings.

The What and Where

We were just under thirty Global Tea Hut members from about a dozen countries, plus five Taiwanese tea lovers including our patron saint Mr. Liang. Our guide this time was the radiant Raymond, a swashbuckling type who seemed to have stepped out of a Chinese western film, only with much better fashion sense. We all met in the town of Huangshan (most casually the night before the trip started on the romantic streets of the Old Town), where we spent a couple of nights before heading out to Huangshan Mountain itself. We spent three nights atop the mountain in a hotel accessible only by cable car and hiking (or helicopter, but I doubt anyone in Global Tea Hut would choose or could afford to arrive like that).

From there, we quick-bused it to Qimen where we had a few days of tea processing, then headed over to two

cities famous the world over for porcelain and clay-ware, Jingdezhen and Yixing respectively. From there, we took a ride back to Shanghai where a final feast sealed the deal, as did multiple, harried goodbyes over breakfast the next morning.

Did I remember to mention that in the middle of all that were sumptuous delectations of 1930s Liu An, 1970s Liu Bao, 1960s Blue Mark and 1930s Tong Qing Dragon Horse? We each had a chance to either steep these teas or serve as *cha tong* for their preparation. Not only did we all wish to do our best to give as harmonious an experience as we could to our fellow Chajin, we all wanted to rise several levels to do as much justice as we could to the teas themselves.

Although each of these sessions was remarkable, likely the one which struck deepest was the Liu An session, as it took place in a fancy tea museum in Qimen. We had been given a fabulously giddy guided tour and visited a laboratory for taste-testing (oh how we spoiled tea brats verged on snobbery there, the quality of the teas being not quite up to our standards). Everything was rather stiff for us more bohemian, sensitive types, so brewing this special tea in silent reverence, shifting the overall atmosphere, seemed a way of expressing the transformative power of Tea to go beyond linear thought. I will remember the softened eyes and hearts following this session for a long time.

Huangshan

Among the most touching moments of each trip occurs while at the end of it when we each share our reflections. It's another occasion to take in the beauty, openness and vulnerability of others, crack a last joke or get an opportunity to learn through the reflections of fellow consciousness. There were more highlights to recall, as there were more people on this year's trip, but the stunning scenery of Huangshan was common to most as among the starkest experiences we'd had.

Though there are no tea bushes growing in the cold, rocky terrain which stands near the top of the list of China's most-visited natural attractions, what we saw struck a deep tea chord, as the landscape looks just like a



living incarnations of almost every traditional scroll painting we'd ever seen, hanging on walls not far from where tea gets prepared. We had an eerily surreal feeling of floating inside of a painting.

Most memorable was our introduction to the mountains as they were shrouded in thick fog when we first arrived. Visibility was but a few meters through luminescent clouds on the cable car up, and for several hours we were teased by Nature, when massive cloud curtains briefly parted to reveal glimpses of unspeakable majesty just beyond, then closed again allowing us to be "cloudwalkers" once more. Hundreds, then thousands, of rocky steps up and down led us snaking along rocky cliffs and mountain faces, through narrow valleys and along heavily touristed pathways sparsely dotted with hardy trees.

Emerging from tiny crevices on the vertical mountain rock faces were bonsai-like pine trees, perched tenuously, roots gripping onto God-knows-what, spreading out horizontally in a dance that celebrated their loneliness.



The fog was indeed our friend, playing tricks with our minds and expectations. There were audible gasps from the group as the wind picked up and suddenly a majestic vista would appear in front of us, jagged and oddly formed scraggly mountainscape as far as the eye could see, appearing where moments before the gray-white fluff had acted as a physical boundary of sorts. Suddenly our sense of space, whereabouts and belonging would explode and scatter widely.

On another morning before sunrise, the fog was so thick that bare branched trees appeared like the black and white brush strokes of a Chinese traditional painting writ in the air itself. Or like live Rorschach blots in majestic IMAX 3D.

We breathed this mountain air for three nights, with the occasional tea session and evening discourses which kept our wandering minds from straying too far from the Dao part of our Cha Dao expedition. The ethereal magic of Huangshan stayed with us for many days after we left—for many of us at least, in the form of calves throb-

bing with pain and hearts with memories. Fortunately, that pain was soothed in the glorious hot springs we visited for a few hours on the way down from Huangshan.

Source

A large part of these trips' significance to all of us is a sense of being brought to a source, the spot where a long and flowing river begins its course over long distances, nourishing untold numbers of people. This is never expressly told to us, but when the realization dawns on us that we are being humbly shown the origins of so much that we cherish dearly, it can be overwhelming. In Yunnan, on previous trips, we were brought to the birthplace of Tea on this planet. This time, the same feeling arose when we were shown the inspiration behind thousands of Chinese scrolls and paintings (Huangshan), the origin of some of China's most revered pottery (Jingdezhen), tea's most beloved steep-

ing companion (Yixing clay), as well as traditional methods of picking and processing tea (in Qimen).

When we engage with these aspects of tea culture in the future, we will hopefully, with guided focus, an open heart and good memories, be able to tap into some of the aspects of tea history that we experienced.

Source came not only in the form of geographical locations, but incarnated in the people we were lucky enough to meet. In the easy-to-ignore subtle smiles of the farmers who welcomed us, in the genuine smiles of the cooks who prepared endless feasts for us, in shows of incredible generosity and humbling hospitality few westerners are used to and in the quiet burning wisdom of the people who have been growing and processing tea since childhood.

On this trip we were also graced by the presence of Mr. Liang, always ready with a sardonic quip and eager to help us deepen our knowledge of all things tea related. He is a dear friend, and despite the fact that we could not communicate, we had tea.

Henry from Malaysia joined our crew for a few days, precious Liu Bao in tow, happy to give us lessons in tea pouring energetics. And few of us will ever forget meeting Master Zhou and his wife, Master Chen, in Yixing. We were too big of a group to visit his home this time, but he brought his at-home feel with him to the restaurants where he treated us to meals, and to the huge welcome he organized for us.

Our presence became the reason for the 2017 International Yixing Tea Gathering, with banners and posters trumpeting our arrival (had we known, we would have worn our best clothes, which we instead chose to wear in the tea fields for the most fashionable tea harvest Qimen had ever seen). We thought we were dropping in for tea. Instead, we arrived at a massive Tea Institute of some sort which had been set up just for us. We had gifts bestowed upon us before we brewed some deeply moving 1970s Liu Bao that Henry was kind enough to bring for us, before settling down to watch Master Zhou create an Yixing pot for us to observe the process.

He did the sped-up version for us, doing in a few hours what would normally take a few days. And yet his focused skill was there 100%. Most of us were hypnotized to watch not only the craftsmanship, the myriad details we could never imagine go into creating a teapot, but also by the sheer concentration and focus with which he approached anything he did. It was like getting a chance to see an Olympic athlete train, a grandmaster swordsman prepare for battle, a world class botanist enter his most cherished garden or a concert pianist expressing the piece of music which they held dearest to their hearts.

Indeed, Master Zhou exhibits this ability to be focused, present and highly efficient in everything he does, from ordering lunch, hurrying us onto the bus so as not be late for our next appointment, scurrying up the side of a mound to dig up some Yixing clay to show us all or focusing on the micro details of the holes in the inside of a teapot's spout. His skillful handling of life's big and small moments was an inspiration to many of us. I could see the way he lived in the way he made a teapot, and his way of teapot-making in his life as well.

Global Tea Hut Trips Are Always Personal

As always, despite the many highlights of the trip itself, and above the dizzying lessons and experiences, sights and sounds, it was the moments of interpersonal dynamics that were most meaningful and significant to everyone. As a species, we are hard wired from birth to be sensitive to subtle cues from others, and we understand ourselves only in relation to others around us. We grow most profoundly from our experiences with one another. No matter how amazing a trip can ever be, it is the words and play with others that offer the greatest potential for growth, fun and life itself.

As tea persons we are naturally a pretty solitary bunch, many of us shy and not group-oriented (or so we think). I know a number of us met the news of a "bigger than usual group" with some trepidation. (I certainly did!) Yet each time we stepped just a few centimeters out of our comfort zones, or gently ignored a thought which told us we needed to be silent, alone or fixed on an electronic device during this bus ride or that evening back at the hotel, and instead asked a question of the person in the next aisle or invited someone in for a smaller tea session—well, that's when the small miracles really occurred. It doesn't take much to allow magic to happen! (Kudos to every one of you who stretched beyond your usual self.)

If Tea opens Herself up to us commensurate to the focus and stillness we bring to Her, imagine what we receive when we bring that openness and stillness to another living being. We are humans, after all, not part of the plant kingdom, and so our deepest, most resonating rewards come from active reaching out and being open to the approach of others at the right time. Some of the most beautiful moments of the trip occurred in seeing shy people slowly unfurl their semi-observed blossoms.

Sometimes, all that was needed for this was an invitation to tea, or a dance party in a hotel room, a corridor chat fest, an invitation to share our positive feedback about others to them directly, or not passing up an opportunity to be silly and playful. And when all else failed, the sound of Neil's laughter always caused group hysteria.

Swapping Chinglish mistranslations was also good for a bonding laugh (my favorite was posted above a urinal, seemingly trying to persuade guys to advance closer to avoid dripping: "Civilization a big step forward one small step").

For me, the potential gloriousness of group dynamics (and I'm writing from a loner, one-on-one type of general mindset) came on our final bus ride together, from the delightful glut-tony of our final Shanghai feast back to our hotel. Lipps Inc.'s long version of "Funkytown" was blasted and most of us were dancing together in the aisles, replacing the single-worded chorus with the names of the places we had just visited: "Won't you take me to... Qimeeeen. Won't you take me to Huangshaaan... Yixiiiiing..." Arms waving in the darkened bus, speeding along futuristic highways and cityscapes, it felt good to be part of this tribe, and to be reminded that the more you reach out, the more you'll receive.

Thanks to everyone for taking the risk to show yourselves. My heart sings to see that you all just received positive feedback for the effort! For many, the essence of the trip began after the trip ended, in the absorption and integration of everything that had happened in such a short time. Like steeping a tea many times, we too are dedicated to not letting any of it go to waste—any of the precious effort that was expended on our behalf to provide such priceless experiences. Time to digest, transform and offer it all forward...



✿ *This stunning photograph, and the one on p. 27, made by Nadya Vorobyova, capture some of the magic and mystery of the mist-enshrouded crags of Huangshan. Porters have to carry all the supplies for the local hotels up many thousands of steps every day. Their job is hard, but they stay fit, and in gorgeous surroundings.*



Andrew Taylor, USA

This year marked my third Annual Global Tea Hut trip. With the long awaited return to China, after sadly missing out on the epic journey to Yunnan last spring, the event has now become a marker in the calendar and reference point for looking back and seeing how self and life have evolved over the years. After the first two magical trips into the virgin forests of Yunnan and rocky cliff sides and temples of Wuyi, there was reserved excitement to experience a new and unfamiliar region of China.

As is the way of the annual Global Tea Hut trips, we came together on the first day mostly as strangers meeting for the first time, and after the long journey, left feeling like brothers and sisters, sharing an experience that will forever be etched in our hearts and minds. The first day had a real light feeling to it, due in part to the beautiful and relaxed vibe of the Huangshan City old town. As most of us had arrived via Shanghai, this small city provided a welcoming arrival point and place of preparation for our journey to come.

The theme that began from when we all first gathered, which would foreshadow what was to come for the duration of the whole trip, was that of fun. Our itinerary covered a lot of

different terrain and the schedule had us constantly on the go, but our energy and excitement towards where we were did not cease for a single day. The trip contained a small portion of elements from trips past, like drinking old, rare tea and spending time with true masters of the tea world, but the enduring memory of the trip for me will be the endless amounts of fun we had as a group for those ten days.

Our daily schedule was quite full, from all-day hiking in the epic wonderland of the Huangshan Mountains, to picking tea with the locals in rural Anhui or being hosted for an event at a private studio for tea artisans in Jingdezhen. Some occasions served as a reminder to expect the unexpected, and others reminded us that as Chajin we must make the most of the situation at hand. That meant using water and fire less than ideal for an eighty-year-old tea (and the tea police were nowhere to be found!) or drinking an old *Longma* puerh in the Chinese version of a 1950s-style speakeasy diner (by far the most comfortable chair I've ever sat in for a gongfu tea session!). No, this certainly wasn't a timeless tea session in the virgin forest amongst ancient trees. There was no birdsong to be heard in that diner. It didn't matter, though. We were all filled with immense joy for

this occasion and got to drink a tea Wu De had longed to share with friends for years. And, more importantly, we were together. That joy was the same joy cultivated in Huangshan, and it grew infectious from the first day onwards to Qimen, Jingdezhen, Yixing and back to Shanghai, punctuated with an epic meal and bus ride back to the hotel featuring a sing-along and dance-a-thon to the last great song from the disco era.

Life was calling, so I immediately had to leave China to get back into the routine, carrying home with me an abundant heart filled with love and joy. The first morning back home sitting in my tea space I reverently set out a bowl to celebrate friends new and old and wish them a safe journey for their travels. Upon that offer, the "play" button was apparently pressed in the recesses of my mind, and the remaining bowls were drunk to the soundtrack of our bus' disco anthem, "Funkytown," started on repeat in my head: "*Gotta make a move to a town that's right for me (tea)! Town to keep me movin', keep me groovin' with some energy*" ... at least until next year!





Shiva Rose, USA

The roads were dusty and meandered among abandoned buildings. Surrounded by Cypress trees, wild mint bushes, and rose gardens, one had to be aware and awake because of the random wells that littered the earth. “Stay away from the wells, Shiva! You could fall in and be lost forever.” But being a curious and rebellious spirit, I dismissed my mother’s warnings and I would find myself near the deserted wells, peering down in search of fairy worlds, lost kittens and a way to fill up my lonely child heart. This memory came flooding in... This memory of the beautiful villages of Iran—a memory that is linked to who I am at my core. I am now peering into an abandoned well, but now I am not in the village of my beginnings in Evin, Iran. I am now a grown woman, in a Chinese village in lush, green Huangshan. I am now kneeling to see the bottom of this Chinese well, but now my heart isn’t a lonely hole wanting to be filled up, it’s rather full from the teachings and healing beauty of Tea.

Leaving my child, animals, home, businesses and life is no easy task for me. As much as I still have the nomadic, gypsy longings to travel in my

blood, my life makes traveling not as easy as it is for others. When I heard about the Global Tea Hut trip, my spirit called out a big “Yes!” When I saw the mountain ranges of Yellow Mountain online, I just knew I had to find a way to go. I know now it is Tea and Her spirit that led me to make the impossible possible. Months later, when climbing those mountains with our group, my yearning to be there had become a reality. This was an example that we can manifest anything when we are connected to a mission or a practice. On those mountains, sitting in meditation with my brothers and sisters is a moment I will always be grateful for. Spending time on the tea farms, and later watching Master Zhou make a teapot, has only enriched my love for this practice.

The memories that have etched their mark on my spirit are the ones in the village where we learned how to process tea over charcoal. That village where we all sat—sat as one, sat as a family, under a grandmother tree after an arduous day of tea picking, is what I keep going back to. Being united with these souls that came from Russia, the Czech Republic, New Zealand,

Australia, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Taiwan and beyond, from other places—these souls and I are all united through Her, through Tea.

Wu De has graciously shepherd-ed us, brought us all under his wings, brought us here under the canopy of this ancient tree so we can feel Her in Her truest form. Tea has linked me to the Earth again, and to a community of like-minded spirits. Tea has reconnected me to my lost childhood by awakening me to the similarities between villages—ones in Iran and ones in China—the villages we forge and steep through Tea. The emptiness I have had from a tumultuous childhood and broken families is somehow filled with every cup of Her leaves.

Tea has shown me that self-love and a deep, intimate connection to the Source of all things is the only way we can fill up the wells of our hearts. Now, when I kneel down to peer deep into this well in the outskirts of a village in China, it’s not unlike peering into my teacup as its being filled: I don’t see an empty well or an empty cup, I see only the capacity for more expansion, more growth, more bonds, more mountains to summit, more tea, more love . . .





Qimen



*The leaves that found the sun,
Filled me with sky.
The roots that drank the rain,
Filled me with mountain.
And then, root to branch,
Stem to leaf,
As my hand did brush across
The old trees,
I forgot whether I'd come there
Or merely dreamed it
At home,
Lost in my bowls.*

—Wu De

Qimen has been known for its tea production since the Tang Dynasty. Tea production techniques have also evolved over several dynasties, from earlier methods of rubbing and kneading the leaves to the more recent pan-firing method used to produce green tea. Up until the time of the Qing emperor Guangxu, Qimen had always produced green tea. It wasn't until 1875, when Yu Ganchen (余干臣), a native of Yi County in Anhui, returned home from his official posting in Fujian Province to become a merchant, that this began to change. Yu admired the Fujianese red tea, often known as “*Min Hong* (閩紅)” or “Fujian Red,” for its rich flavor and popularity on the market, so he began to produce red tea locally. The next year, he set up a tea shop in Shanli Village in the west of Qimen, and thus began the success story of Qimen red tea. At the same time, a Qimen native by the name of Hu Yuanlong (胡元龍) was also starting the “green to red” trend, and set up the successful Rishun Tea Factory. From that time on, red tea production in Qimen continued to grow and flourish, making Qimen one of China's major red tea producing regions. Qimen red tea is known as “*Qi Hong*” in Chinese

(祁紅, literally “Qimen Red”), and is also known in English as “Keemun” tea, after an older anglicization of “Qimen.”

This “green to red” phase in Qimen's tea history was largely motivated by changes in the international tea market. At the time, the overseas demand for red tea (or “black” tea, as it was called outside of China) was growing rapidly, which directly spurred the growth of red tea production in China. Fujian Province's three main types of *Min Hong* gongfu red tea were not being produced in anywhere near a large enough quantity to satisfy demand. So, red tea production expanded to the north and took root in provinces such as Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui. Qimen in Anhui and Ningzhou in Jiangxi were known for producing the finest teas.

Meanwhile, in the United States in 1875, Chinese green teas were already not selling as well as their Japanese counterparts; this, along with the sudden increase in demand for red tea, presented a challenge for the green tea export market. Qimen, which had always produced green tea, began to feel the influence of the international market. Shifting toward red tea was the most prudent response to the

changing circumstances. Thus, Qimen burst forth onto the international red tea market, and since then, the export market has been the main driver of red tea production in the area. The tea industry continued to develop along these red tea lines, up until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1911.

When the planned economy era began, all purchasing and marketing of tea was controlled by the State. Several decades later, in 1984, the State Council announced policy changes, easing market restrictions; with the exception of tea sold directly across China's borders, all tea for the domestic and export markets could now be freely bought and sold. The changing tides of policy led to a reversal of the trends in Qimen, and a “red to green” phase began to emerge. This was because red tea was mainly produced for the export market; now that the State no longer bought and sold tea on their behalf, many small rural private enterprises in Qimen didn't have the ability to sell tea for overseas export. So, they turned to green tea, which was popular on the domestic market and which they could easily harvest, process and sell by themselves. Today, the green and red tea industries thrive in Qimen.

At present, Qimen County governs seven “townships” (an intermediate administrative division) and eleven villages. Of those, only two produce mainly green tea: Fufeng Village in the southeast and Anling Township in the north. The green tea produced there is mainly Maofeng tea. If you ever have the chance to visit a rural Qimen family in their home, you’ll be welcomed warmly with a cup of green tea—surprisingly, though, it isn’t Maofeng, but rather a simple homemade green, fired in their own pans. The raw leaves for green tea are generally picked in March, in early spring when the leaf shoots have just begun to sprout; the leaves for red tea are harvested later, during the second wave of growth.

We had an amazing time in Qimen. We picked stunning red tea from an organic farm, similar to that which we sent out as last month’s Tea of the Month. We also visited the tea factory and took a tour of their small muse-

um and met the lovely sixty-year-old tea master Min Xuan Wen (閔宣文), featured in last month’s issue, who showed us how red tea is hand-rolled. We then had one of the most amazing tea sessions of the entire trip. With the speed and efficiency that only tea lovers know, we waited until the museum/factory closed and converted their hospitality area into a lovely *chaxi*. We set up five tables, each with flowers gathered from outside, and we used the five Yixing pots we had commissioned for the trip, with a special stamp on the bottom commemorating our travels. We brewed a 1930s Liu An tea from Qimen, drinking in silence for hours. Everyone was enraptured, and we returned to our lovely hotel (many said the best of the whole trip) and continued steeping the tea until late at night in our rooms. The next day, we got up early and boiled this amazing tea yet again, carrying it with us in thermoses for the bus ride!

迷失在天堂

找到新朋友



*You ask me why
I stay on the green mountain.
I smile, without answer,
For my heart is at peace.
Peach blossoms
are carried far off
by flowing water.
Apart,
I have found Heaven and Earth
in the human world.*

-Li Bai, "Question & Answer on the Mount"

山中問答
問余何意栖碧山
笑而不答心自閑
桃花流水窅然去
別有天地在人間





REFLECTIONS OF OUR 2017 TRIP

茶之旅迴響 PART II

Antonio Moreno, Spain

Even though Wu De forewarned us that the Annual Global Tea Hut trip was certain to be epic, I really hadn't the foggiest notion what that might mean for me personally. On the first day, as we awaited the high-wire cable car that would swiftly and silently lift us half way up Yellow Mountain, Wu requested I write something about this trip to share with all of you. I joyfully assumed this task of bringing you along for the ride, often jotting down minimalistic blurbs of impactful moments, precious sceneries, memory-bound sounds, stories and legends, inner teachings, bubbling emotions and blubbering—absurdities now set in the fonts of a rippling eternity! But how can I possibly make sense of these notes and convert them into some kind of meaningful narrative? What's the thread? What's my angle?

I laugh at the possibilities: Should I just export this into a bunch of Gonzo storyboard chapter headings? Circum-ambulating the circumstances, dabbling these typewriter keys in a dubious palette of words, sans syntax?

Example:

Chapter 1. Yellow Mountain.

Cloud Walkers—Gongfu Cups (Crack of Dawn)—White Monkeys—Da Hong Pao Posse—Misty Morning Muse—Polished by Adversity—Rock me Mama like a Wagon Wheel—Hard Beds & Hot Springs!

Sure, that's a nice sketch! I could now go in and expound, fill in the finer details, complete the impressionist painting. But, I'm sorry. I am truly not up to this task. Feeling overwhelmed, I realize it truly is beyond me! The course of my emotions is diverting the stream of thought, filtering the facts, now a heavy undertow is pulling me, and I've lost my ground entirely.

Make a complete sweep. Wipe the slate clean! So what then? How to proceed? For all the places we visited and for all we saw (and we saw a lot), this trip was actually less about the places and events as the people assembled. Shall I say, "to my surprise?" Well, yes and no. I should have known better.

But did I? How could I? I've never traveled in a group or associated myself with an organized trip before. Clearly, a group of Chajin following a schedule prepared by Global Tea Hut would suffice for me to make an exception. But how would I navigate that on a personal level?

On day one, Wu De threw the gauntlet down: He explained how on previous trips the group only began to click and merge as a family unit on day three. He challenged us to make the shift from day one, so from that moment: shift-click-boom—family vibe on! I knew I had to make an effortless effort and just flow. I had to be the vessel, the teapot. My cup was empty (you are Chajin, you understand the symbolism).

And yet, despite my introverted tendencies, bouts with individualistic independence and general uneasiness in groups larger than four, I barely had any issues. After all, this family was forged long ago in our passion for the Leaf. This Global Tea Hut is steeped in community, and so to meet and re-



meet such incredibly generous, loving, talented and funny brothers and sisters I've long heard about from others, contacted over social networks, read about as TeaWayfarers or already shared wonderful intimate moments with over tea was as good as it gets for a Chajin. And then sprinkle in a steady dose of improvised magic along the way and you may begin to get the feeling. This trip was incredible; this family, pure fantasy bonded by our love. It won't be repeated. *Ichigo ichi-e*. I have so much gratitude for all of you who shared so much with me. I returned to Barcelona full, brimming, overflowing and sharing the bounty—re-energized with purpose and love. I love you all for just being.

So what more should I add? Does this article have any add-ons? How can I rig this thing into something more insightful? I see this article (this reflection of the trip) failing, but its failure is a holy failure, because the trip was a holy trip—a pilgrimage for a Chajin. But wait... I just caught a glimpse of a memory I'd like to share:

The tea fields were peopled with Global Tea Hut, their upper bodies scattered among rows of tea bushes; their hands concentrated on a steady leaf-pluck of one tender bud, two leaves; their eyes attentive and avoiding spider webs, deftly filling their little baskets with the freshly-picked flush; their ears and hearts open, their mouths mostly silent, leaving just enough room for meaningful words.

I see a brother approaching without a basket; he has but a small bunch of leaves in his hand. He adds them to my basket. I see him move off and look for where to pick next. He's still looking. After a few minutes he adds, "it's all been picked here." I recommend he come over to my side. I'm picking away, humming a melody, finding a groove (left hand gently holds the stem, right hand softly pinches); after a few minutes my right hand is a bundle full of leaf sets that I gently place in my basket. I look up and now he is standing almost right beside me. He has a single bud and leaf set in his palm but his face displays massive contentment.

I playfully ask him if he's found an area he can pick. And you know what? He surprised me saying: "Yes, I did. But it takes me a long time to pick a set. I really like to quiet the mind and think of the person who will be drinking this tea."

"Ah, gotcha." I nod, blown away.

Then he continues, bud and leaf in hand, feeling his way through the bush, feeling his heart for presence and intention... You may recall, just a little while ago, I said I felt like this account of the trip was a failure, in that conveying something insightful was beyond me, and this memory either refutes or corroborates my point. I mean, I could brew tea for you. (In fact, I'd love to brew tea for you and tell you all about the trip.) But if we do in fact meet, we are more likely to spend our time talking about our lives, present and future.

When I face the prospect of failing to convey our trip to you, this "holy failure," I do so devoid of any kind of woe-is-me feeling. No, there certainly isn't any sense of futility or ineptitude.

There is just a sense of gratitude and a magnification of what I've already said: For me, the greatest part of this trip was the sense of community and the people who shared their hearts and their days with me. I returned to Barcelona full, charged, determined, open, loving and generous.

When I endeavor to recount the particulars, my heart swells, images gush out: portraits, landscapes, sounds and silences. What should I tell? Doesn't that have to be experienced? For instance, our tea sessions... Many of us poured our hearts with our brewing whether as brewers or as *cha tong*,

and those being served were also exemplary and a host's humble dream come true. It was so gratifying and inspiring to see so many brothers and sisters step up and share the Dao they've been cultivating! And how can I begin to go about describing the ambiance? And what about the incredible selection of teas we were honored to share without a sense of prudence and containment. Suffice it to mention names like Dragon Horse Star Dust. But what does that tell you? *There is no better cup than this one. Right here. Right now.*

As I wind down this reflection, I take away memories of mist, trails, aged

teas, gongfu brewing, shared meals, bowl tea sessions, smiles and laughter.... Fade out, with a soundtrack culminating in "Funkytown," to Shanghai traffic lights.

I aspire to express the deeper teachings of this trip in my day-to-day living, in my tea and with the greater community. And I really look forward to the new app, which will make it so much easier for us tea lovers to meet as we travel about. (As you read this, in fact, the app will already be out and we will most likely all be chatting away!) Definitely get in touch when you come to Barcelona!



没有比这杯更好的

最好的茶葉在太陽底下

Timo Einpaul, Estonia

The morning I left home, it was snowing and around zero degrees Celsius. Just eleven hours later, I found myself on the other side of the world in the busy city of Shanghai, home to twenty-three million people, in pouring rain, the temperature twenty-five degrees higher, with humidity through the roof. Early on, this felt like an adventure to come.

The next day, trekking on the steep steps of Huangshan, cloud-hidden, it is difficult to encapsulate in words what the senses are perceiving. It truly feels like a scene out of a fantastic dream or at least a *Lord of The Rings* movie (I imagine Huangshan is the place where dwarves live). This is the place where a soul goes to rest, and it is no wonder this location is the source of inspiration for countless works of art.

A few wandering days later, our journey brought us to Qimen where we got to participate in the picking and processing of tea, experiencing firsthand how difficult a labor it is, making us have second thoughts from now on every time we throw away tea leaves that would yield a couple more steepings! Standing amidst vibrant seed-propagated tea bushes in a valley by a small rural village of around three hundred inhabitants was amazing. If one were to bring one's face down to ground level, one would witness a fascinating private world revolving around the thick roots of the trees: all kinds of lovely critters, bugs and insects mingling and minding their own business, being protected by the leaves from the burning sun.

In Huangshan, shortly after harvesting the leaves, we brought them back to the processing room where we all got to try our hand at patiently shaking the leaves on a bamboo tray over hot charcoal to dry them. Besides managing to spill the better half of the leaves, some even burned themselves. We were quite the sensation, bringing together a notable amount of friendly locals! Time seemed to follow its own slow and relaxed pace.

The day was already drawing to a close, and after spending quite a few hours on the bus, we were finally approaching Yixing, as indicated by the number of cars being interchanged with worn-down trucks carrying goods of all kinds on the highway. As in most cities in China, we were greeted with flashing neon lights, colors of the whole spectrum, decorating the vast buildings on our way downtown. I'd heard people's travel stories of arriving in Yixing and being surprised to discover a city with a somewhat industrial feel. Being a Western tea lover fond of Yixing teaware, one can easily develop an over-romantic picture of the home of the teapot.

After a good night's sleep, we went to see the old Qianshu Dragon Kiln. What was once on the outskirts of the town is now in the back alley of an anonymous small street with just a few signs along the way to point out the direction. Later on, we got off the bus near a nondescript multi-laned street, adjoined by a great wooden gate and a white wall. Behind these barriers lay the original closed mines of Yixing. We

could just get a glimpse of what is behind the walls, glimpsing the top part of the hills. We walked a bit further down the street and Master Zhou, who was our generous guide, climbed up a hillside, grabbed a chunk of rocky soil and showed it to us exclaiming: "This is it! This is Yixing ore!" The particular chunk was obviously not high-grade ore (more suitable for making a flower vase than a decent teapot), but nevertheless, it was utterly fascinating to see how what we perceive to be a simple piece of rock has the potential to be the teapot we so adore.

Master Zhou then took us to a hall where we were officially welcomed to Yixing in the warmest of manners, with generous gifts and several signs erected to honor us. After our formal tea gathering (drinking, amongst other teas, some amazing vintage Liu Bao that Henry brought to us from Malaysia), we were spellbound for the next two hours as we closely watched, barely blinking, a true master at work. Master Zhou usually makes two to five teapots a month, spending several days on some of the processing steps he rushed through this time for the sake of demonstration. With his work, details make the difference.

Thinking back on the days of the trip, I'm reminded of a scene in the movie *The Cave of the Yellow Dog* by a Mongolian filmmaker, Byambasuren Davaa. The story revolves around a nomad family and their young daughter. The girl gets lost in the fields, and as the night falls, she finds shelter at the house of an old woman.

The old woman dries her clothes, feeds her and gives her a teaching: The grandma picks up a large needle and holds it over a saucepan, pouring grains of rice from her palm onto the needle. She asks the girl to try to balance a single grain of rice on top of the needle head. After some trying the girl concludes that it simply cannot be done, and the woman continues explaining that the probability of balancing a single grain of rice on top of the needle head is the same as being born as a human being in this world.

Somehow, I was reminded of this sentiment rephrased as “the needle in a haystack” when thinking about our trip: the places we visited, people we met and how several of our discussions revolved around the traditional knowledge, skill and wisdom that has been lost in the modern era. It is easy to think that the world is constantly

evolving. We are coming up with new technologies, obtaining more knowledge, etc. However, it is not often that we think about the similar amount that is also lost, forgotten in the folds of time. I feel extremely blessed to have come in contact with a living tradition. Considering the thousands of master potters out there whose pots are pleasing to the eye but not functional in terms of tea preparation, tea farms that produce simply mediocre tea, brewing techniques that produce a fragrant cup of tea at most, I feel very grateful. As Wu De has so poignantly put it, he spent many years scouring the Earth for the best brewing techniques so that we would not have to do so ourselves. Of course, I’m not implying that one should take their status for granted, without testing, comparing, experimenting and challenging whether these techniques are true for you. And

when you experience it as such, the things that are true will stand the test of time. (In fact, our tradition encourages such experimentation.) However, not to follow a laid path in front of one is simply a waste of time compared to the lengths one could possibly go if one is to follow the dewy path presented, developing and renewing the tradition naturally in the process.

I cherish the days spent with the Global Tea Hut community in China: the kilometers we walked and many more we drove by bus, the spontaneous gas station dance parties, the amazing veggie food we shared, all the heartfelt conversations and endless laughter, and, of course, all the cups of beautiful, transforming tea. I hope you all can join a trip in the coming years!



Maxim Ulasevich, Russia

When you go on a trip with people whom you don’t know and haven’t even met before, naturally your mind starts to generate different thoughts like: “Will I be welcome? Will I feel good amongst them?” And you start to ponder these questions instead of enjoying the pleasant thoughts about new experiences and friendship. That’s what happened to me, anyway. But everything changed when I started to meet people from the Hut on the way to Huangshan. It was as if I was in a big and loving family, where everyone is glad to see you and is willing to help you. That feeling, I now know, is extremely important on such trips as this with large groups. This helped me to enjoy every moment of the trip to the fullest, happily communicating with the people around me and with Tea. Nothing could distract me from observing the mountains, Nature and people.

It’s been a while since I’ve returned home, but sometimes I still see the mountains covered with a veil of clouds. Huangshan is truly marvelous! The mountain scenery is stunning and changes the way you think.

I will always cherish the memories of the tea we drank in the mountains.

It was also an unforgettable experience to interact with the tea—with a plant that is budding, and shares itself with people. It was a moment of unity and meditation. The sound when a tiny bud is separated from a branch will always remain among my most precious memories. It is a sound of help, when a natural medicine starts its journey to a person. A tea ceremony among tea bushes, when everything around is permeated with tea energy and vibrates it, when fresh green tea fills you with this energy—all of it helped me to feel unity with Nature on a new level that had been beyond my reach before.

The tea sessions were also unforgettable moments. I was allowed to drink and to connect myself to teas I couldn’t even dream of: 1930s Liu An, 1930s Dragon Horse and 1960s Blue Mark. I had heard about those teas only in the stories of tea collectors. But now all of us have had an experience of interacting with these teas. This experience changes you from cup to cup, session to session.

The high point of the trip for me was the day when Master Zhou showed us the process of creating a teapot. He made it all by hand! As forty people watched him make something beautiful, something precious, I couldn’t have imagined that such a mastery existed.

It was a great chance to reinforce the connection with my inner self, with Tea and with the people whom I consider to be my family after sharing with them all the joys and hardships of this trip.

The evening discourses in the mountains and in the small village also helped me to figure some things out. I feel grateful that our teacher shares his wisdom with us. Before the trip, the Russian tea community told me that I would return a different person. I didn’t believe that. But it really happened. Many inner walls have been demolished. I also feel much more inspiration boiling inside me, which I can now share with others in the gatherings I host and bowls I serve. Now I truly understand the meaning of the phrase: “Love changes the world bowl by bowl.”



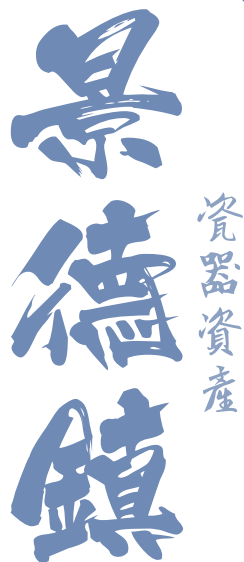
茶 Drinking 1930s Liu An in the Qimen museum was a highlight of the trip and our lives! Our quick transformation of the space used for greeting guests into a lovely chaxi, followed by two hours of silent bliss was a testament to Cha Dao.

三票孫義順





Jingdezhen



*There are porcelains a-plenty wrought by skill,
Hard as jade, sweet-toned as a bell,
In a hundred shapes that tradesfolk sell:
Wine cups, rice bowls, lanterns, plates,
Teapots, snuff bottles, vases with mates.
There are porcelains a-plenty wrought by skill.*

*There are porcelains made by no man's will—
Miracles, they, of the kiln and fire,
Outwitting dreams, outrunning desire;
Fashioned when genii blew the coals;
Decreed for the reverence of man's souls.
There are porcelains made by no man's will.*

—Lyon Sharman, “Porcelains,” 1917

Porcelain is one of the most distinctly Chinese arts, and in some ways, the world met China through its porcelain, as it was one of the earliest goods traded abroad. For millennia, Jingdezhen has been the “Capital of Porcelain,” known throughout China and abroad for its beautiful pottery. The people here began making fine porcelain-ware as early as the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). In the Tang Dynasty (618–907) the arts thrived in China, supported by the Dragon Throne. In the Song Dynasty (960–1279) all of the royal works in the Forbidden City were from Jingdezhen, stamped “Jingde (景德)” on the bottom. This royal-grade ware was so fine that many nobles lauded it, saying: “Jingde porcelain is as white as jade, bright as a mirror and as thin as rice paper, with a ring as clear as the truest temple bell.”

Today, Jingdezhen is in northeastern Jiangxi Province, just a stone's throw from the border of Anhui, where we spent most of our trip. Jingdezhen remains a center for porcelain production, and, we found, a gathering place for artists of all kinds. We met some students who told us that the local art college is attracting all kinds of artists and craftspeople from all over China and beyond, coming to study from

the great teachers at the college and learn in an environment where they can inspire each other. We met metal and woodworkers, ceramicists and, of course, those who work in traditional styles of porcelain.

Porcelain is a paste, composed of different elements—kaolin being the main ingredient. The name “porcelain” comes from the Italian “*porcellana*,” which refers to a “cowrie shell” and was chosen as it describes the translucent color of this ware. There are many ways of making porcelain clay, forming and then decorating the ware. The most famous decorative techniques used in traditional Jingdezhen porcelain ware are first and foremost the world-famous blue and white porcelain (青花瓷), painted with cobalt oxide and then fired to make the beautiful blue and white patterns that the Manchu loved, as the art reminded them of the sky they worshiped. The second traditional style was called “*famille-rose* (粉彩瓷)” by Europeans. This is a pink-enameled porcelain style that began in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). It is characterized by brightly colored glaze, often decorated in Nature patterns. The third traditional style is called “*linglong* porcelain (玲珑瓷),” which is characterized by pierced and poked patterns that look

as if glass was inserted in the ware. The final traditional style is “color glazing (彩釉瓷),” which is often a single color on the outside and white inside. The most famous of these wares started in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), using copper, iron or gold glazes to make bright colors.

We spent our day in Jingdezhen at the museum, seeing the old wood-fired “dragon kilns” and watching craftsmen make ware in the old ways. They used pole-turned wheels to hand-throw porcelain ware. Some of our group even tried their hand at this. Other craftsmen trimmed or decorated the porcelain, demonstrating all the steps needed to make a fine piece. From there, we traveled to the studio of a well-known local artist, where his students and himself had set up a lovely *chaxi* for us, including some of their own ware. We drank a green tea, followed by a Phoenix Mountain *Dancong* oolong, and then ambled around their studio admiring the beautiful pieces. It was amazing to feel the rich and deep heritage and history in Jingdezhen, changing the way we would all relate to our porcelain gongfu cups forevermore. We also were all very impressed to find a thriving artistic community of teaware makers, promising many more great works to come.



無際的白雲

遺失在地球







Petr Novak, the Czech Republic

Tea lovers all around the world are more than familiar with Yixing teapots, and many of us have dreamed of visiting this birthplace of *zisha*. And so many of us use cups, jars or plates from Jingdezhen, the hometown of porcelain. Both places are highly respected, and surrounded by legend by all potters and ceramic artists, teaware or otherwise. You can, therefore, imagine my excitement when I learned that this year's Global Tea Hut trip included these two historic towns! Of course, I knew that the time which we would spend visiting such deep places would be far too short to penetrate the surface of the wisdom and art accumulated there for hundreds of years, but even a glance at the clay, the chance to watch the hands of local artists, would be a refreshing wellspring of inspiration for me. I longed to touch the tools they use, smell the clay and see as much as possible: the curved lines of kilns, piles of wood slowly drying, clay and people—all dedicated to a life of teaware. My senses are always sharpened when close to potters, no matter how mundane and ordinary their lives seem to be. To put it mildly, I was excited to be there, even if just for a short while.

The story I would like to share with you is not the history of the ceramic industry in these two cities. There is more than two thousand years of ceramic history, and we spent just a day and half in Jingdezhen and a day and half in Yixing. After such a short visit, I don't feel qualified to talk about their history—like someone writing about Russia after spending half a night in the Moscow airport. So, I'll leave that to more qualified authors. What I would like to offer you here is my impression of the hundreds of shops, thousands of pots and millions of working hours we witnessed—a story of people creating a life from earth, of everyday alchemists who use water, fire and wind to alchemize mud into gold.

From one perspective, the porcelain from Jingdezhen and the purple-sand teapots from Yixing are situated really far from each other. The clays, as the bones of these two kinds of teaware, are so different from each other that the whole technology around them differs in every single step, from mining to clay-processing to the ware and firing. Traditional porcelain-ware was made on a wheel, and then extensively trimmed. Yixing pots are hand-built

(or "slab-built," if you wish) and polished for hours. Yixing pots are left unglazed, while porcelain clay is painted and glazed. The kilns in Jingdezhen are huge pear-shaped "dragon kilns" with tall, wide chimneys, loaded from the front with one big firebox. The dragon kilns in Yixing are long, low and climb a hill, with almost no chimney, using multiple side-strokes instead. Though they are more different than alike, how are these two teaware towns alike?

What both these towns have in common is the vast amount of energy carried on for centuries, and an amassed lore of craftsmanship, as well as the accumulated and transmitted skill of countless unknown potters behind each piece. For centuries, pottery was collective work, carried out through the cooperation of whole villages working together in mining, clay production, teaware artistry, firing and even the merchants who represented the town to outside traders. Ceramic work has always been a very complex and wide field, where knowledge was handed down over generations. Every single step, from mining to firing, represents the lives of many masters and students who became



REFLECTIONS OF OUR 2017 TRIP PART III

茶之旅迴響

masters themselves. In Yixing, as well as in Jingdezhen, there were masters of clay, pot-throwers, trimmers, painters, carvers and kiln masters—each with a lineage of craft and skill. When you see an old Yixing pot stamped by a famous artist, or a porcelain vase painted by a famous painter, you must remember that all their fame was built on the joint efforts of families, students and unknown craftsmen, without whom these masterpieces would not have been possible.

As I was walking around the ceramic museum in Jingdezhen, we came upon skilled craftsmen demonstrating how wares were made in the past, with a hand-turned wheel. I was amazed. And not just by the really cool show and the demonstration of skill, but also by the many small details I noticed—all the soft skills in the tools, shelves, firewood and other details. There were piles of clay ready to be used for today's work, which may create the rice bowls someone will be using a few hundred years from now in their kitchen. As the thrower was spinning his wheel, I thought about what would be left from this day in those bowls: his laughter and sore elbow, the morning rain and

afternoon sun, forever imprinted into the malleable clay that absorbs whatever impression is around it.

Fine porcelain was always fired in saggars, which are chamotte clay cases, to protect the glazing and fine paint/glaze details from direct fire. When I saw those saggars stacked around like modern art sculptures, with fire marks and wonderful textures, I couldn't help but think about the hard work and mastery needed just to make these saggars. And once again I was deeply impressed by the accumulated knowledge needed to create such simple equipment and the little-honored craftsmen who spent their days making saggars to fire other men's masterpieces in.

When you walk within old kilns, you can feel the heat—the river of energy that once flowed through them. Today, Jingdezhen is still rightfully called the “Porcelain Capital,” even though some of the old techniques have been lost. In ceramic communities, people say that you can find everything and anything possible in Jingdezhen. Artists and designers from all around the world, full of young and wild ideas, go to Jingdezhen to make

it happen. The university there is the most important ceramics university in China. And it was nice to see new, young artists, galleries and approaches thriving there. As a potter, I would be happy to go back one day on my own, but this time for a longer period—to learn, work and create. Jingdezhen left me with dreams...

This was my second visit to Yixing and I had to smile to myself, knowing that I was as excited as the first time, just to walk around the closed-down mines others would find boring. We must have made quite the picture: three dozen foreigners trying to look behind walls which surround small hills where deep underground, mythical stones are hidden. What did we actually see? Just hills full of red stones, growing grass and wild trees. So why the sparkle in our eyes? Was it just our imagination? Or the connection to the Leaf? Maybe both, but the enthusiasm of our hosts, Master Zhou Qi Kun (周其坤) and his wife, Master Chen Ju Fang (陳菊芳), was real and everybody was touched by their joyful and selfless desire to share wisdom and hospitality with us, making us feel at home in Yixing.

The time we spent sightseeing at the old mines, the Dragon Kiln and museum was just like an appetizer before a feast. Many Yixing teapots relate experiences, and the evening's demonstration would add to our teapots forever. Master Zhou showed us not just how a chunk of clay becomes a glorious teapot, but, more importantly, what true mastery looks like. Two hours of quiet, focused creation with relaxed “effortless effort (*wu wei*, 無為)” energy mesmerized all of us. At the end of the trip, a few people from our group mentioned that, for them, this was the highlight of the whole trip. I was not surprised. His hands were so gentle and yet so powerful. Even though we saw just one part of the Yixing pot-making process, and Master Zhou apologized a couple of times for not doing it as well as he would like to (due to the lack of time), the demon-

stration was magical, like a shamanic dance, and yet somehow as natural as a tree growing. It was as if the pot had always been in that clay, destined to rise by the meeting of his hands and the work of his deft movements. From the inside out, fruit is grown—from stones mined underground, an empty space in the shape of a teapot is made ready for our tea brewing, another extension in the long line of arts that leads to a cup of tea.

When we clean our tea table, neaten our *chabu* and put down our favorite Yixing teapot, next to simple, blue-painted cups from Jingdezhen, we are often so familiar with this act that we don't think too much about all the effort and tradition that has gone into that moment, literally for centuries. These two kinds of teaware have played together for a long time, enhancing myriad cups of tea, and

making our own tea settings complete and our lives more beautiful. That is why we could say that ceramics are the oldest medium of interactive art there is in the world. Art is here to enrich our lives and to communicate without words, often things that can't be communicated verbally anyway. That is why even a small cup of tea can sometimes say more than a book of words. When part of a tea ceremony, these simple cups and pots, with centuries of art and craft within their soul, bring greater depth and energy to our rituals than we often remember. Having traveled to these glorious cities, I won't forget that depth for many a session.





Matthew Grohne, USA

Over the past few years, I have begun to think more deeply about my relationship to the greater sphere of life and Nature. One of the things I love about Global Tea Hut is that the approach to tea is interwoven with an approach to life and encourages one toward self-cultivation and connection to something greater than oneself—whether that be spirituality or ecology or community. On this annual trip, which was my first meeting with Wu De and other members of the Global Tea Hut community (beyond my friends at home), I had the opportunity to explore tea from all these perspectives and found that it yielded some important insights about my life and my way of thinking.

First, the community. During the orientation on the first day of the trip, Wu De challenged us to become a tribe within a day's time. At the time, I thought this statement was about inclusiveness—making sure that no one felt isolated and that those who did not have previous connections (like myself) felt a part of the group. And that did happen—the generosity, affection, openness and kindness of the people on the trip made friendship possible in a short time—but, over the course of the trip, I also came to think about

how “tribe” relates to lineage and tradition. Over the years, my tea practice and my spiritual practice have primarily involved self-study—reading books, sutras, issues of Global Tea Hut, etc. All of these things helped me to progress along my path, but at the same time I knew that something was missing, and that despite sitting silent retreats, going to regular yoga classes and drinking a lot of tea, I was still searching for a connection to something larger. I thought that thing was lineage—a stream of practice passed on through the years, connecting one to the sages of old. But it occurred to me on the trip that it was also connection to people. It occurred to me that lineage is a living thing, carried on and molded by the people who practice in that tradition, and in that way, it is inseparable from them. Lineage lives and breathes and drinks tea! And so, in connecting to tribe, I connected to lineage and found a community of practitioners that I came to call friends.

The second insight was related to ecology and spirituality. As I mentioned before, one of the things I love about Global Tea Hut is the approach to Tea in a larger context, including environmental sustainability and conservation. We explored this aspect of

Tea as we visited two ecological tea farms, full of spiders, wasps, salamanders and giant moths. We got to experience, too, the beauty and splendor of the mountains of Huangshan, gazing upon distant peaks that seemed out of an ancient scroll or a dream. In these environments, an appreciation of this world seemed to come quite spontaneously and left me with a sense of awe. But one of the things I keep coming back to regarding the intersection of Tea and ecology did not happen out among the plants and mountains, but huddled around tables drinking tea on our first night in the mountains.

Following one of Wu De's talks, I had the opportunity to ask about the intersection between living tea and human activity. In a universal sense, all things are Nature. The idea that there is anything not encompassed by Nature is a fiction that humans use to draw distinctions between things—in particular, between humans and everything else. This implies that humans are somehow governed by different rules as the rest of the natural world, and that the things that humans do fall into a different category. But in a universe that is a cohesive whole, where nothing is added or removed (via extra-dimensional portal or otherwise),

this is simply not the case. Humans are included in this whole, in Nature, as are all the things that humans do. As Wu De spoke about this, he used the example of a Zen garden, and how the changes made by the person tending the garden are as natural as a trail created by a rabbit or the grazing of a deer.

By extension, cities, cars, art and smartphones are part of Nature. So too are the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and monoculture. Despite my tendency to think of human activity as separate from Nature, and to view this separate Nature in a more favorable light, in looking deeply I had to admit that human activity, too, (however much it alters the system) is included in Nature and operates by the same principles. There is no real, meaningful distinction—and this way of thinking only fosters a continued sense that

I am different from Nature. But this leads to questions—In the context of the whole, how significant are the efforts we make toward things like sustainable farming and living tea? How does one reconcile the harm one sees being acted out around them with the knowledge that the whole of Nature is fundamentally complete and does not discriminate as we do? They were questions I had asked myself many times. Among other things, Wu De noted in his response that the co-existence of relative and absolute aspects of reality is a central paradox of the spiritual life. The key is to learn to maintain awareness of the absolute as we work in the relativity of our daily lives, and to recognize that we are living the resolution of these two aspects of existence. At some point words fail and there is only one thing to do: “Drink your tea!”

To live the spiritual life is to find space within dissonance, recognizing the completeness of the ecological whole even as we encounter the seeming imperfection and suffering of the world around us. One of the results of this space seems to be a gradual widening of identity to include things beyond just flesh and bone. Tea can be a wonderful way of remembering that fundamental connection to Nature and expanding the sense of self to include all of Existence. Seeing the farms, the farmers, the tea plants and the insects on the trip, all of which contributed to the cup of tea I now drink, was a reminder of this larger sphere. And with each silent session we shared as a community on the trip, I found myself appreciating the opportunity I had to remember this connection with something larger than my relative self.



Chen Yuting (陳郁婷), Taiwan

I was delighted to attend this year's Global Tea Hut trip with so many wonderful tea friends from all around the world. This time, we visited two of Anhui Province's famous tea-producing regions, Huangshan and Qimen, as well as the villages of Jingdezhen and Yixing, which are famed for their teaware. I welcome you, dear reader, to travel along with us as I recount our journey.

Close your eyes and imagine, if you will, that you have just spent two hours laboring up a mountain slope, and have finally reached a place to rest. You're now sitting on a tall boulder on the mountaintop, with a gentle breeze blowing. Below us on all sides are deep valleys and ravines—those same ones that we looked up from to see the mountains, not too long ago. Every now and then, the breeze blows some mist across the landscape. Imagine the relaxed and peaceful feeling as you serenely brew a bowl of tea and take a sip. This was the most calm, leisurely moment that I remember from our hike up Huangshan.

However, this was the Huangshan World Heritage Site, and there aren't any tea trees growing on the mountain itself. None of the tea varieties from Mount Huang are actually grown or processed on the mountain in the World Heritage Site, even the well-known Huangshan Maofeng or *Taiping Houkui*. So if you ever have the chance to visit Mount Huang, whatever you do, don't go foolishly trying to spot tea plants among the pine forest in the popular scenic reserve—or you'll surely be disappointed!

After descending from Huangshan, we journeyed on to Qimen, home to one of the world's three most famous red teas: Qimen (or Keemun) red. However, on this visit we didn't just harvest and process red tea; we also made some green tea. These days, as science and technology have progressed, many tea-producing areas have already moved toward a single, modern processing method. It's not

until you visit these tea manufacturing locations in person that you truly realize that certain parts of the traditional manufacturing process are indispensable. What's more, tea growers cannot recklessly follow modern trends and use pesticides and chemical fertilizers to increase output; for doing so would sacrifice the traditional flavor of the tea.

On this journey we had the chance to visit several different tea regions, and I came to understand that the tea makers in each region employ different knowledge and techniques to produce their tea leaves. So Anhui's "Ten Famous Teas" are truly only produced in their particular parts of Anhui Province. Through this newfound understanding, I also gained a new perspective on tea culture and Cha Dao.

After our encounter with Anhui's tea leaves came an exploration of traditional teaware. We arrived in the village of Jingdezhen and visited the ancient kilns; we watched as each of the master craftsmen used their hands and traditional tools to craft the various porcelain tea vessels. Looking at the exquisite finished pieces, I thought to myself: If I were to try making them, I'm not sure if I could even finish one pot in an entire year, let alone achieving such fine elegance in every vessel! One couldn't help but feel a welling of silent admiration for these craftsmen who put such steadfast care into their work.

After the tea implements have been crafted, they're ready for the kiln. The sites in this region are home to many replicas of ancient kilns that had been lost to the tides of history, such as the Song Dynasty "Dragon Kiln (龍窯)," the Yuan Dynasty "Steamed Bun Kiln (饅頭窯)," the Ming Dynasty "Gourd Kiln (葫蘆窯)," and the Qing Dynasty "Lion Kiln (獅子窯)." Each type of kiln was named for its shape—they were quite fascinating. On the day we visited, we also got to try some of the "kiln worker's tea," or "*yaogong cha* (窯工茶)," that was often drunk by

the kiln masters. It's said that since tending the kilns is such time-consuming work, and the body tends to become overheated and dehydrated in such a hot, dry working environment, the kiln workers used to put tea and hot water together into a sealed pot and simmer or "stew" it. This way, whenever they had a break, they could drink the tea. This was a unique brewing method, different to how the locals usually drank their green tea and with its own unique flavor, so green tea "stewed" in this style became known as "kiln worker's tea."

There's an interesting little story about Jingdezhen which involves the town's former name, Changnan (昌南). Due to the sound of the name, it was believed by some that the English word "china," as used to refer to porcelain, came from the name of the "Porcelain Capital," Changnan (now Jingdezhen). However, historical analysis has discredited this theory—the real reason, of course, is that chinaware is one of China's most famous exports to the world, so this fine porcelain ware became synonymous with its country of origin.

After leaving Jingdezhen, we headed for Yixing and visited a real historical Dragon Kiln. We also watched artisans handcraft Yixing's famed purple-sand clay teapots. The ceramics of Jingdezhen are shaped using a potter's wheel, whereas the consistency of Yixing's purple-sand clay is not as sticky, so the pots must be shaped using a mold instead. The tools used to make these two types of teaware are also quite different.

We explored so many wonderful places on our journey that it was impossible to truly dig deep into every aspect of what we learned. I certainly hope to return to these unique places one day and investigate even more of the fascinating detail they offer. I look forward to sharing more tea discoveries with my dear friends from the Global Tea Hut.



茶 Yuting served tea to us in Jingdezhen at the artist's studio.
She is a true Chajin with a heart full of Tea spirit.



Yixing



*Gentle friend,
May your stream never end,
Changing generations of leaves and water
Into golden cups of Tranquility,
Long after I am gone.*

– Wu De

They say that an immortal was wandering the mountain currents, flying from the southern peaks of Wuyi to the distant north, when he saw a simple village full of goodness and selfless kindness. Stopping to watch, he saw that the people were altruistic and genuinely loved kindness. He decided to change their fortune for the better. He appeared the next day in the village square dressed as a traveling monk. He called out to passersby, “Free life-changing wisdom!” But no one stopped to find out what he meant, feeling content with their lives as they were. He still had a desire to offer a path that could result in their cultivation, mastery and awakening, so he tried another tact the next day, instead calling out, “Freedom and bliss!” But once again, the concepts were too vague for the simple villagers, who now began to discuss the eccentric monk and his strange cries, not knowing if he was a saint or a madman. That night, the immortal rested in deep meditation. He realized that these villagers would need a simpler, more practical and earthly path to mastery and immortality. They would need an art that would mold and craft their lives, with room for infinite refinement. He spoke with the mountains and the wind about the good people.

The wind had naught to offer, busy moving the seeds for the trees. But the mountain was also grateful to the villagers, who were as kind to the earth as they were to each other. The mountain told the immortal of a precious ore buried deep within, which, once it was mined, could be used to form anything the mind could imagine, and was therefore more precious than the brightest of gems. He had found the answer, for what better gift than the freedom of creativity, endless imagination, mastery of craft and livelihood for all the generations of villagers to come. The next morning the immortal again entered the square, this time with cries of “Untold riches!” And this, of course, brought everyone in the village to the square—every house emptied. They followed the old immortal to the nearby mountain, where he had dug a hole. He went inside and came back with the gorgeous ore, explaining how to mine it and form it into clay, which could then make anything at all, bringing great fame, wealth and abundance to their village now and forever. The people were enthralled, and ready to begin right away. At that point, the immortal changed into his true form, a bright yellow dragon, and flew off to the north. From that day until now, those people and their descendants

have been busy honing that precious ore into pots, and that place still bears the name “Yellow Dragon Mountain.”

There is no ceramic art in the world quite like Yixing purple-sand teapots, for they aren’t just pieces of art meant to sit on the shelf and be admired. The beauty of tea art is only expressed properly as a living art. The pots want to be used. They develop a soft, silky sheen over time the more they find themselves in the company of good leaves and water—becoming more and more beautiful as they are used. A big part of what makes Yixing teaware so special is the clay itself. The Chinese were master potters long before many Western countries, having developed stoneware and porcelain many centuries earlier. The clay used in Yixing teapots is mined from the local mountains. Because the clay is naturally lead-free, it can be used for food and drink even after the initial firing, without the need for a glaze. Without glaze, the clay remains porous and sand-like.

“Zisha” or “purple-sand” clay is composed of quartz remains, isinglass, kaolinite, mica, hematite, iron and several other trace elements. It is fired at a temperature of around 1000–1200°C, and the quartz and isinglass remains create what potters call a “double pore structure,”

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

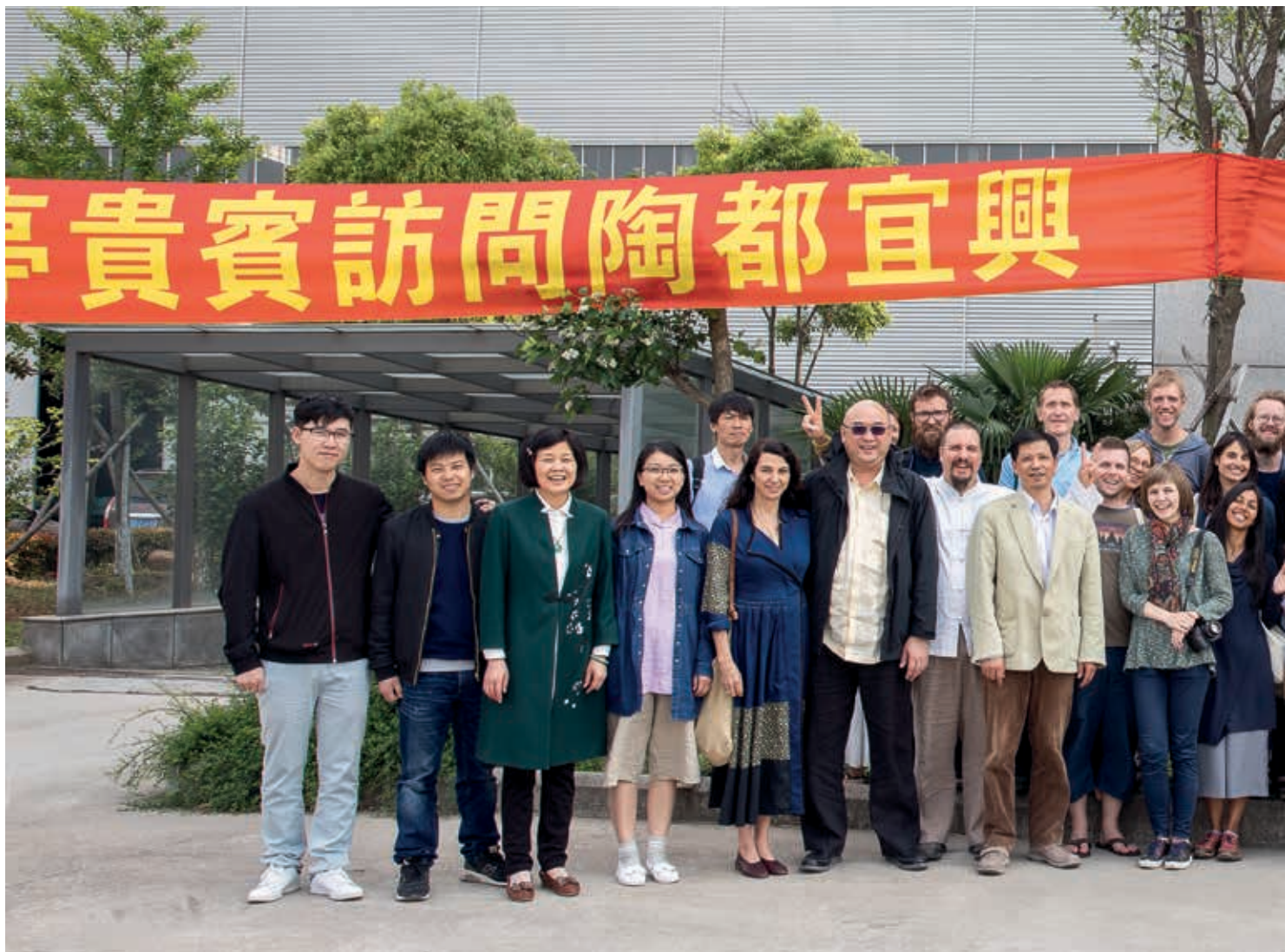
We spent our two days in Yixing hosted by the amazingly talented and gracious Master Zhou Qi Kun (周其坤) and his wife, Master Chen Ju Fang (陳菊芳). They are dear old friends with a true tea spirit. They fed us delicious vegetarian food, took us

around to see the old “Dragon Kiln,” Yellow Dragon and Blue-Green Dragon mountains where *zisha* was mined from, and then to the most marvelous tea gathering of the trip. We drank a wild Yixing gongfu red tea (the same one that was in the expansion pack last month) and a 1970s Liu Bao tea donated by our dear friend Henry Yiow. Then, Master Zhou demonstrated Yixing teapot-making by hand, which was one of the highlights of the whole trip for everyone.

Everyone went home with a special purple-sand pot that was handmade by Masters Zhou and Chen using forty-year-old clay, and a bright dish to use as a tea boat. The teapot is a replica of a Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) pot that is beloved by our own Master Lin. These treasures made the trip to Yixing more than worthwhile. But the real treasure was the knowledge we had gained, which will last a lifetime.

舊朋新友聯合

礦石寶藏
友善泥質







REFLECTIONS

OF OUR 2017 TRIP

茶之旅迴響 PART IV

Lauren Stern, USA

My mind circles back to gather moments: At first broad-sweeping, as sounds, colors, smells and feelings return, bringing a deep exhale and smile to my face. My focus refines, moments become articulated, and I begin to recall the beautiful details of a journey I will never forget...

Immediately, I want to take you there with me, to feel the way it felt on Huangshan Mountain that early evening after entering the park for our first full day: How we had somehow, in natural rhythm, split off into groups that afternoon, finding different routes up the mountain, one-by-one appearing and climbing up to a spot on top of a giant rock; how the excitement and anticipation had built up inside of me, waiting to share tea together in silence after a long day of climbing, un-climbing and climbing, step after step after step; how although the wind had become cold, I could feel that the same sun that had spent hours shining light and warmth into us throughout the day had also shone on this great rock; how leaning back to meet that great ancient granite backbone to mine, with my bowl and a few leaves, I felt as though I could dissolve and

return unnoticed back into the mountain, just as the heat of the sun seemed to slowly recede and draw back into the heart of the Earth; how it took more than a moment to peel myself up when it was time to go; and how it was the sound of dear Max's mouth-harp—that hypnotic buoyant drone, that called me back, reminding me there were miles yet to go.

I can still see the outlines of new friends just a few steps ahead of me as we walked towards our hotel through that milky white mist that carried the smell of all things earthen and green and left glistening drops on our hair. And those trees—those trees that exposed a new rhythm to me. I swear I saw chords written out in the dark sparse branches and foliage, black notes intentionally placed in high contrast against all of that white. That mysteriously placed basketball court we discovered on the other side of all of that mist in front of our hotel. Watching some of my tea brothers run out to play a quick game of hoops. The sound of the basketball bouncing and sneakers squeaking on concrete against the backdrop of those ombré mountains on the far horizon, appearing and

disappearing like ghost ships. I was instantly drawn back to the basketball courts on Houston Street in lower Manhattan, where my father would take me as a little girl to watch “real” basketball being played. Antonio said he remembered those basketball courts too from his days in New York, further amplifying the feeling of memory working its magic, the way worlds collide to illuminate the close connections between people and places, even in a surreal and far away place.

Fifty to sixty percent chance of seeing the sun rise on that next cloudy morning, one hundred percent chance of being blown away by some kind of beauty on the walk to the peak, where the birds sang their crystalline otherworldly tunes. We sit quietly watching clouds roll and change shape and form and give rise to a new day. Mia shares raw chocolate and tea. I wonder if the white flowers blooming behind her were in fact magnolias like the ones that were just starting to bloom in my neighbor's yard back at home.

Time passes and I notice how easy it feels to be with these new friends. How conversations do not seem to begin or end. How we have traveled



from mountain to hot springs to farm, in what feels like weeks, years, and somehow only a few days. Then I find myself at the table of two tea brothers, Shen and Ming, at the Qimen Tea Factory and Museum. Shen serves my first cup of 1930s Liu An so generously shared with us by Mr. Liang. A second, a third, a fourth and so on... I can feel it and I can feel me. And then, at some point I can no longer distinguish myself from this tea, from this moment. Each day feels more and more like this. The me I was when I started the journey is no longer there, and I like the sensation of getting to *unknow* myself through this kind of full immersion and moment-to-moment presence.

In the coming days, without struggle, I *became* those farms in Anhui: the vibrant buds and leaves I picked between thumb and forefinger; that lunar white furry caterpillar I watched crawl along from leaf to leaf; the noodles that were made for us by the women in that small village; the vegetables grown right there in that very soil; the charcoal that withered the tea leaves; the pink-cheeked smile of the mother who held her baby out for me to tickle her small toes; even the spoken-word

jam that Ivan unleashed while Andy, Ming, Felix, Steve, and Antonio played percussion with chopsticks (on rocks, tea bowls, and even on each other's heads) near the river where old shards of blue and white pottery lay scattered.

In Yixing, we watched Master Zhou demonstrate the stages of a pot and witnessed the seeming effortless-ness of creation that comes from a lifetime dedicated to one true thing. His body seemed an uninterrupted flow, so loose and at ease, to which the block of clay responded, becoming an exquisitely precise vessel. (Or was it Master Zhou who was responding to the clay and becoming an exquisitely precise vessel? Like most things, I imagine it is both.) I thought of Tian and the other Chajin, and the gongfu session just a few hours earlier. What is this relationship between tea and body? All I know is that my body has been quietly making connections throughout the week as we journey through the landscape. I experienced so much unexpected intimacy with this country that had once seemed so far, distant, and abstract. Having the opportunity to see the place the ore was harvested: the clay, the maker, the vessel and the

tea opened a labyrinth of orphaned thoughts. I learn in this way, by following a root back to the roots.

I turned thirty-eight that day. That evening, I was surprised with a cake at dinner and surrounded by my dear friends, while several rounds of "Happy Birthday" were sung around me in everyone's native tongue. The overwhelming offering of love all at once changed me. I remembered part of a story Wu De had shared about a tea-storing test. The same tea had been divided and stored in a few different settings to determine if the location and energy would affect the tea. I cannot remember exactly how and where the other two were stored, but I do remember that the one stored in a cave where monks chanted was easily singled out in a blind tasting by each participant. I think about this story often and the effect that this kind of love and care has at a cellular and energetic level. That night, I felt like that tea, and immediately felt the responsibility of this kind of love. This kind of love isn't like an article of clothing that can be laid down, it is the ringing and chanting of the bones that, once awakened, echoes on and on...

I have mentioned a few friends by name, but truly I wish I could share with you something beautiful I saw and learned from each one: A moment of kindness witnessed, a look, a touch, a reaching toward, an offering... Do you know what Angela dreams about? Can you believe Andy gave me an acupuncture treatment on a moving bus? Have you had a chance to be hugged by Steve? *These humans in this Global Tea Hut community are exceptional!* All I want is to get to know them more. And I have a feeling if you were there I would be saying the very same thing about you, and hope one day soon to have that opportunity. Each of these new friendships felt like the embodiment of the patience of the Leaf that has so much yet to share and give. With some it felt as though I only had a few moments of exchange, yet was touched so very deeply. I feel the purpose of this kind of journey is not

to travel farther away from but rather closer and deeper into all of life. And deeper in, for the purpose of feeling that beating heart more, so that the beat can be remembered and carried back to life and shared with one's community. Even now, taking these few still moments to sit together in this shared space while miles apart, feeling into that resonance that pulses through and between us all, together touching this incredible aliveness.

In what seems like the blink of an eye, I found myself back in my studio in Salt Lake City serving tea to a group of gorgeous women. My neighbor is yelling at his dogs, the lawnmowers have started (not quite the same sound as Max's mouth harp), our house is up for sale and we're not entirely sure where we are going or what comes next. Should I close the sliding door, so we don't hear my neighbor's awful music blasting? A smile comes over me. This.

Just this. These women, this tea, this house, this valley... It may seem easier to have found peace on Huangshan Mountain, nestled in close to my loving Tea sister Raneta, but can I settle in and find the peace already present here in this moment on Spring View Drive? This right here is Huangshan Mountain. This is watching Petr's hands pick tea leaves in Anhui, knowing the pot I'm serving tea from in this very moment was made by those same hands. This is Master Zhou's focused calm cadence as he trims the pot lid. This moment is Neil's laughter and Yuliya's palpable passion for life. It is the heartbeat of these five women that are gathered here to share sacred moments together with this sacred medicine in this sacred valley. This moment is enough in every way. This trip helped remind me of that.



茶 This is the pot Masters Chen and Zhou made for all of us; it's a replica of a Ming Dynasty pot.

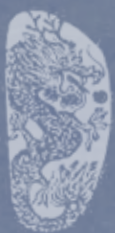


The Emperor & the Teapot



皇帝和茶壺的神話

一個寶貴的價值超過黃金



They say the great emperor Qianlong treasured tea enough that he brewed it in secret with his own august hands, though the son of the gods was forbidden such mundane activities. He also loved to leave the Forbidden City in secret, basking in the glory of ordinariness. He enjoyed the mystery and danger of being amongst his people. He would often disguise himself to walk the streets, visit teahouses and watch shows, admiring the everyday lives of his subjects. One evening, he was strolling home from a show, his bodyguards walking several paces behind to remain anonymous. The emperor suddenly stopped dead in his tracks, uplifted to Heaven by the deep and lasting fragrance of a very fine tea, as fine as the tribute teas shared only with the palace. It smelled of nutty, fruity plums and the best of Chinese herbs, filling the whole of his mind with nostalgia. "What wonderful tea!" he thought. And yet, the only dwelling nearby belonged to a simple farmer. The emperor was curious beyond containment, walking to the open door and with courtesy exclaiming, "Excuse me?" into the dark, lamplit interior, which was so simply adorned with a small shrine to the local land god, a table and two chairs, one of which was occupied by a very old man whose wrinkles were as telling as the crags of distant Yellow Mountain. "Hello, old friend," the emperor began. "Might I come in?"

"Sure. 'Tis a fine night for a guest," the old man replied with a sweet smile. "Have a seat and share some tea, if you will."

The emperor went inside, signaling to his guards to wait for him, full of joy that he lived in a world so civilized and prosperous that even a simple farmer understood the Way of Tea. The two drank cup after cup of one of the darkest, most delectable aged teas the emperor had ever tasted. Each cup transported him further and further into the mountains, like discovering a partially hidden path

leading up—the kind so seldom used that it is covered with brush, and only discernible to the true mountain man. He lost himself in its splendor, and lost touch with time as well. After some indeterminate number of cups, he looked into the old man's eyes and realized that there was a great and deep wisdom twinkling through the years of life they had observed, many more passing seasons than he. "What is this magical tea?" wondered the emperor. To which the old man giggled in an embarrassed way. "Oh no, noble sir, though I usually do trade for some leaves as I can each year, this year the drought made that impossible. Fortunately, the gods and the wisdom of my ancestors left me this amazing teapot from Jiangsu, used by my father and his father before him, back more than a hundred years. It has seen so much tea, friend, that it brews such liquor with a bit of boiled spring water poured through it."

The emperor was awestruck. He spent half an hour admiring the old pot, holding it up to the light with precious grace and gentle strokes befitting imperial jade. The old man answered all his questions, telling him all he knew of the pot and its origins. A man of tea is changed by such encounters, and the emperor was as pure a Chajin as any. He knew that he had made a lifelong friend tonight, both in the old man and his pot.

Very soon after, the emperor arranged for the old man to come into some fortunate circumstances that increased his family's holdings greatly, without revealing that the newfound abundance was a gift from anyone, let alone the throne. As far as the old man knew, his family was blessed. He also sent envoys to Yixing to bring back the best pots they could find, like the old man's. The craftsmen there were also to be honored. Over the years, the emperor and the old man shared many more wonderful tea sessions together, though those are other tea tales for other times...

TeaWayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you, 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 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 Shiva Rose.

I must say the truth about my very first meeting with Tea is not romantic and poetic at all. In fact, the first time I sat in a tea meditation, I became agitated, frustrated and annoyed. It was four years ago and my dear sister Tian Wu had invited me to her Venice abode for a ceremony. My monkey mind was wrestling with my spirit, not unlike a crocodile in a muddy swamp trying to swallow a dove. That day, the crocodile ate the dove in one gulp. I decided I wouldn't be sitting for "tea" again any time soon... Until one month later, when there was an event at my home where Tian Wu was serving again. This time, however, the dove flew towards the divine light of Tea and made the crocodile docile and tame. This time, my spirit was stronger than my ego monkey mind, and it began to respond and listen. This time I sat, I became quiet and allowed the tears to stream down into pools of lost resistance unto my lap. This time, the thought that swirled in my mind, as the steam from my cup swirled unto my wet face was, "Ahhh, you are safe. You are home." This time, I didn't feel the defenses of loneliness. I felt a kinship with Tea, a kinship with the people I was drinking with and a kinship with spirit. You see, for me, who has the nature of a hummingbird, being still is a luxury. I care for many creatures, and have many responsibilities. To have permission to be still, to rest my mind, to be nourished by Tea without having to give anything back—this all seemed so foreign. I now have come to see that being still and simply receiving is what I needed to learn. This is also about accepting our feminine nature, since the feminine is about being present, open and receptive.

Tea has now become a way of life for me. I remember Tian once told me that tea is an adaptogen and can relate to us in whatever way we need. This is the way I see Her now. Pouring water unto the leaves and seeing them unfurl can lead to whatever medicine I need in that moment: A fatherly nudge that may be the paternal strength I crave; a maternal, gentle softness that's carried on the wind as I am brewing the tea; a childlike wonder at the sounds of crickets, birds and frogs that seem to get louder and louder with every cup; seeing the greenness around me become greener, more vivid, more awake with every sip; feeling an opening



茶人: Shiva Rose

where I can handle more of what life offers me—the good, the bad and the challenging—my container expanding as my heart and spirit expands.

On this life-changing trip to China with Global Tea Hut, I remember Wu De saying. The smaller the doubt the smaller the awakening, the larger the doubt the larger the awakening. I am grateful now for having that large doubt when I first began. I had to earn this relationship with Tea and with my deepening practice. I am forever grateful to Tian Wu and Wu De for creating these spaces for us to gently grow.

Part of this great awakening is connecting with the beautiful spirits around the world that share this practice. Knowing we are all connected through Tea makes this a shared practice. This global community is truly magical, leading to so many life-changing encounters, tea sessions and new friendships. In this practice, we are witnesses to the beauty that unfolds in us. In this way we are kin. In this way we are a family—always, even when miles are between us. This community and these bowls of tea help to close the gaps, bringing us all together every month. I will look for you in these bowls and cups we share!

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

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茶主题: Sidehandle pots



We may do a Taiwan Global Tea Hut trip this year in December. Like our Annual trip to tea regions, this would include tea production, tea drinking and extra special Global Tea Hut love!



Help us spread the word. This is our year. If you know of a location where we could put some magazines and people would really read them, we would be happy to send you some copies for free.



Our app has launched! We have worked very hard on this project. Please help us and use the app. Fill in your profile and engage the community so that it is a worthwhile addition to Global Tea Hut.



Wu De will be in Estonia and Russia in August, conducting workshops. We also have another retreat in Spain this October. Check the website for more details: <http://www.globalteahut.org/wudeteachings>



Don't forget, we are broadcasting live videos at the beginning of every month on our Facebook & Instagram. This is a great way to connect with us, learn together and ask any and all questions. Check them out!



The photo contest has started. The last few years have been amazing, with tons of inspiring entries from around the world. We hope you feel as inspired this year. There will be amazing prizes!



Our Light Meets Life fundraiser teas and teaware are arriving. Keep an eye out on the site, as some of the special teaware we are making this year will be very limited, and most likely will sell very fast. The teas are also very exciting!

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. Wu De will be traveling a lot in 2017, so check his schedule on the site if you are interested in seeing him while you are here at the Center.



We have switched to a ten-day course schedule at the Center, offering two per month starting in June. This is a great amount of time to get an immersive start in tea ceremony and will help the flow of the Center as well.



Steve Kokker took precepts in this tradition, receiving the tea name "Ci Ting (慈聽)," which means "Compassionate Listener." Those who know him will be proud that he took this step, and also know that this name, of the spirit, fits him and his achievements perfectly. Raise a bowl for him!



We are going to host a seven-day tea course at the Center on tea and Qi Gong, starting on September 12th. (We changed to 7 days.)

July Affirmation

I risk

Do I hold myself and my circumstances too heavily? Do they prevent me from flying free? I recognize that life is short and precious and freely take risks. I live more fully, grabbing opportunities for expansion and growth without second thought!



www.globalteahut.org

The tea-trippiest 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.

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