





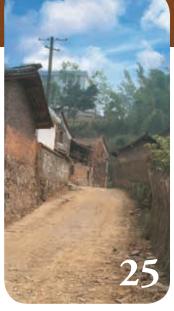
## ENERGY

Yiwu is the Queen of Puerh, and back in the day all the best puerh teas came from there. No region in Yunnan is as rich in heritage or tea history. We hope to explore the greater Yiwu region often, returning there throughout the years, starting here with an introductory issue and one of our favorite Yiwu teas ever!

love is changing the world bowl by bowl

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n June Taiwan is very hot. We retreat indoors and seek out more cooling teas. This is a time to drink young sheng puerh, green tea, white tea, the rare yellow tea and some years we play with first-flush Japanese green tea during June and July, though we haven't been trained in any brewing method for those teas and drink them simply for pleasure. We also like some Liu Bao at this time—famed for its cooling nature. These teas bring a breezy, cooling energy in the Traditional Chinese Medicine sense, are refreshing and harmonize us with the seasons. In the Tea Sutra (茶經), Lu Yu warns against drinking teas out of season, suggesting that it may cause "illness." Though we are unlikely to catch a cold from drinking any teas at any time, connection to Nature is a huge part of what tea is to us at the Hut, so we always hope and strive to drink and share tea according to the situation and session—and weather/season always plays a role in our selection of which tea to brew. This means fresh green teas, maocha, fresh white tea, yellow tea or lightly-oxidized oolong in the spring and summer (Liu Bao is also great in the summer); traditionally processed oolong, Cliff Tea and aged oolong in the autumn; and shou puerh, aged sheng and black tea in the winter. There are obvious exceptions to these categories as some teas are good through the year, like red teas, and some are exceptions to their category.

In the Center, we are working towards creating the systems that will facilitate the growth of this community and the building of the new Center. We have hired an accountant to create more transparency, and we intend to publish our financial records annually, starting this December in the form of a small pamphlet you will receive in your envelope. We are also working to decrease the cost of these envelopes while maintaining environmental integrity. Currently, the average cost per envelope is around \$11, which we hope to get down to \$7. We will do this mostly by buying in larger quantities now that we have a new, larger office to store materials. We also hope to replace some of the elements, like the tea tins. We want to design our own tea tins, as the ready-made ones are either too loose and don't protect the tea, or too tight (the ones we use) and difficult to open.

As we reach the zenith of the year, it is time once again to announce our Annual Photography Contest. We love this. Everyone can submit one tea-themed photograph, including non-members, and then in September we will choose some winners to receive tea, teaware and other prizes. You can see the photography contest in the "About" section of our website, looking to previous entries and winners for inspiration.

Speaking of tea and teaware, our 2018 Light Meets Life fundraiser teas are being pressed as we speak. We have some stunning teas this year again, including some beautiful shou, sheng and dian hong as well as some aged Liu Bao teas in Liu Bao basket-shaped Yixing jars. For teaware we have sidehandle pots, amazing kettle sets and bowls; and for gongfu tea we have some Yixing pots. Aside from providing great tea and teaware

to the community, the proceeds for this will help build our future version of Tea Sage Hut, which we call Light Meets Life (光壽無量).

One of the best teas we have ever made for our Light Meets Life fundraiser was the dian hong from Yiwu we called "Energy (氣)." In fact, we are making Energy again this year. It is one of the best dian hong teas we have ever tried: delicious and soft, with a graceful Yin energy that settles you down and grounds the being. We are super proud to have such trees blessing our community and lives and helping us to move towards our goal of building a bigger and better Center. When we pressed last year's cakes, we were also able to get some of the tea loose-leaf, which we set aside to share with the Global Tea Hut community. This is one of the best and brightest teas we have ever sent in these envelopes.

Yiwu is the Queen of Puerh. All things equal, the best puerh tea comes from Yiwu. All things aren't equal anymore, as new mountains are reaching the market with the building of accessible roads and infrastructure, many new teas have unique and powerful characteristics that compete with great Yiwu tea; and, on the other side of inequality, Yiwu itself has over-industrialized, commercialized and moved further and further into quantity over quality, including the ever-increasing use of agrochemicals that are unhealthy for the environment, the farmers and us, the tea lovers who drink such tea—all of which, ultimately, decreases the quality of the tea.

Continuing our goal to explore tea-growing regions, including their history, culture and tea production, we will take this issue to start exploring Yiwu, which is big enough and important enough that we can return there in some future issues as well. And so put on the kettle and have a few bowls of energy as we take a trip to pay respects to the Queen of Puerh!



## –Further Reading–

This month, we recommend rereading the Extended Edition all about puerh tea, which is September 2014. It will provide a solid background to the geography of Yunnan, as well as the production of tea from the region. As usual, you can find this and other issues on the "Past Issues" page of the website (soon in .html).

# TEA OF THE MODELLE OF THE

ver the course of this issue we'll be exploring the Queen of Puerh, Yiwu. Of the so-called "Six Famous Mountains (著名六大茶山)," which represented the most famous puerh teas throughout the Masterpiece (1949-1972) and Chi Tze (1972–1998) eras of puerh. Every puerh-lover regards Yiwu tea with respect. Yiwu tea is thick, strong and has a very sweet aftertaste that resembles wildflower honey. The thickness of proper Yiwu tea is quite noticeable in the liquor. We already sent a very nice Yiwu puerh in June of 2016 (the tea we call "Ordinary Treasure"), so this month we thought we would send a dian hong, or red tea from Yunnan, with all the characteristics of a great Yiwu tea. Before we explore this month's tea and then some great articles on Yiwu itself, let's review some information on puerh, red tea and dian hong specifically, adding to our growing discussion of teas by reviewing topics throughout issues, while adding deeper levels each time.

Before we dive into our review, we thought we would discuss our philosophy for these Tea of the Month articles, as it will help you to advance your understanding of tea throughout your subscription to Global Tea Hut. From the very beginning we knew that a magazine alone would never suffice to cultivate a tea education. We would have to send tea as well, because we learn as much or more from drinking teas as we do from reading about them.

When you combine context, processing and the experience of those who have drunk tea for a long time with a great tea, you have a very powerful curriculum, indeed. And this is what we have created—something unique to Global Tea Hut.

We all learn through review. It is very important to review aspects of tea over and over again, adding depth with each turn into the depths of a topic. In Sanskrit, the word for wisdom is "prajna," derived from "pra," which means before and "jna," which is knowledge. This means that wisdom is that which is "before knowledge." In Zen, we translate this as "beginner's mind." The beginner's mind is open, receptive and enthusiastic and always eager to learn. The wise cultivate this mind no matter how far they travel. When lessons return, we review, renew and deepen. And this is the philosophy of these Tea of the Month articles.

Every time we come to another tea in a particular genre, like dian hong this month, we start by reviewing the basics of that tea and then add depth each time. Sometimes we rewrite the parts that are reviewed, offering a new angle on these ideas, and other times we reprint the original, as it may be a great, clear and lucid way to understand the concepts. While you could skip over the parts that are a review and jump to the new chapter that adds to the exploration of that kind of tea, we recommend reviewing the material every time. This will help you learn—

to consume and digest the information to the point where you have really and truly learned it and can even speak on the topic yourself. It is worth repeating that we all learn through repetition. Oftentimes, we review material that we haven't read in some time and find new things that we didn't notice before. Sometimes we even wonder how we possibly missed something so important in the first read. Also, in many issues (like this one) the articles that follow the Tea of the Month article will also provide context and depth to the topic (though sometimes the issue's main topic is different than the Tea of the Month, like when we cover teaware or other aspects of tea practice or culture).

We encourage you to take your own notes on the genres we cover and then maybe sometimes take some notes when you drink the Tea of the Month. You can use your gift for this month to start. That way, when another dian hong comes along and we review these basics again, you can review your notes and maybe compare that dian hong to the new one, learning about the genre. Expansion Packs are also a great way to add to this education, increasing the kind and quality of teas available. Of course, we also encourage you to source your own teas from merchants that respect the environment and provide teas that are grown sustainably!

Now that we understand the Global Tea Hut learning process, we can dive into our review of dian hong.





Yiwu, Yunnan, China



**Dian Hong Tea** 



Yao Aboriginals



~1,200 Meters





# Ten of the Month

A basic understanding of dian hong includes the following concepts: red tea versus black tea, the genre of red tea in general, red tea production and what makes dian hong special/how it is different from other red teas. How well do you understand these basic ideas? How do the dian hong teas you have drunk help you understand the basics? Let's put a kettle on and see...

#### Red Tea & Black Tea

We know that many of you have heard all this before, but we have to start by correcting the black tea/red tea mistake. (*Beginner's mind!*) Yes, what is called "black tea" in the West is actually red tea. The reasons for this mistake are manifold, having to do with the long distances the tea traveled in chests to Europe, and even more importantly with the general lack of information there for the first few hundred years that tea was traded. Another layer of

the confusion comes from the fact that the Chinese have always categorized tea based on the liquor, while Westerners named tea for the color of the leaf itself. The difference between black and red tea is much more obvious in the liquor than in the leaf, though the leaf is also slightly red to our eyes. Europeans weren't allowed inland in those days, and never saw the tea trees or the processing either (except some roasting). Buying tea through middlemen in broken Pidgin English, you could see how easy it would be to spread misinformation. We repeat this every time we send a red tea, because it is an important mistake that we tea lovers have to correct in the world, so that the real black tea can have its name back!

Nowadays the term "dark tea" is used by some tea vendors and authors to describe black tea, rather than correcting the mistake. However, we still feel that when a culture misappropriates or mistranslates a concept, category or idea from another culture, then

it is the foreign culture's responsibility to correct the mistake, demonstrating a respect and honor for the "host." Honoring the proper Chinese terminology is honoring the farmers and tea masters who have handed the genetic lineage of trees, the brewing methodologies and the spiritual practices down to us. We are not trying to correct the mainstream habit of saying "black tea." What we are doing is correcting this mistake amongst those who care amongst our community of more conscious, heart-centered Chajin, allowing all of you to better communicate with those who produce and sell tea at its source.

The issue is, ultimately, a minor one, but here's an example of the effect that honoring tradition and correcting this mistake can have: last year, we met with two farmers from Liu Bao in Guangxi, and they were so happy with our efforts to honor and respect true black tea, returning it to its proper place in the West, that they broke out



a celebratory fifty-year-old Liu Bao tea and congratulated us again and again, cup after cup! And their gratitude was definitely sincere, as is our respect for black tea producers.

Sometimes it may feel like the Western world has been making this mistake for so long and that it is so prevalent that there is no point correcting it. We hear this often from tea vendors in the West, who say that it is just easier to continue saying "black tea" when talking about red tea than it is to correct every customer. However, if we authors, vendors and tea lovers do not correct the misinformation, then who will? Just because a mistake is long-standing and popular doesn't mean it isn't worth correcting. That doesn't mean one has to be forceful or act like that know-it-all who corrects details like this all the time. Sometimes when having tea with someone whose interest in tea is very casual, especially when we are the guest, we may be polite and refrain from correcting someone about anything tea, but in general it is worth correcting a tea lover who is starting their journey, restoring true black tea to its rightful place in the tea world!

#### **Understanding the Genre**

Red tea is unique in another way. One of the other common mistakes that is published in English is that "all tea is Camellia sinensis and the differences in genre are all in the processing." Correcting this misinformation is actually paramount to an understanding of red tea. Actually, both points of this widely published idea are technically not correct. Firstly, all tea is not Camellia sinensis; there are actually a couple dozen species of camellia used to produce tea. (We have shared some other species throughout the years.) Traditionally, the cluster of species with caffeine that has been used to make tea was called "Theaceae," which

comes from the Greek "Thea," after the Titan goddess of clear vision. (There are even more species in the Camellia genus that have been used to make tea throughout the millennia that humankind has partaken of the Leaf, if you include those without caffeine.) Tea was, in fact, often called "Thea" before it was called "Camellia." There are also more kinds of trees to be discovered and/or speciated. For example, the tea that we used to produce Mountain Gate twice for our Light Meets Life fundraiser, from Ai Lao, is a very unique kind of tree that has a different appearance, leaf and flavor from all tea we have ever tried. The trees are taller and do not branch until much higher. The tea is sweet, sour and pungent, light and fragrant in a way unlike all other kinds of tea. We suspect that once biologists get around to studying the tea in Ai Lao, it too will be classified as a unique species of "Thea." Recently, some wild teas in Taiwan have also been classified as a unique species.



## Seven Genreas of Ven

n the middle of the last century, a famous professor of agriculture from Anhui named Chuan Chen came up with the now famous "Six Genres of Tea," which are: white, yellow, green, oolong, red and black. At the time, puerh fit neatly into the "black tea" category, as all puerh that was consumed was either aged sheng or ripe shou (fully fermented, in other words). In fact, government records for 2004 list puerh production at a much lower level than we would today because they didn't include sheng puerh at all. As more people have begun consuming puerh young and raw, puerh no longer fits in the "black tea" category, which is characterized by post-production fermentation.

When the world changes, or our understanding of the world changes (or both), it is time to change our categories. We have found that people learning about tea will pick up on the genres of tea faster and more efficiently when there are seven genres, as opposed to maintaining an artificial, and ultimately arbitrary tradition of using six. Also, it should be noted that there are other ways of categorizing tea and some are much older. The seven genres are just one map for exploring the tea world.

It can be confusing when tea people say that the categories of tea are strictly defined by processing methodology because the seven kinds of tea weren't invented at once, but rather evolved over time in response to the variations in the plant as it changed terroir. It is a very modern, and in many ways unhealthy, practice to tell Nature what to do. Traditional farming was always about accepting the bounty of Nature with gratitude, rather than coercing Her to give certain kinds of foods in certain amounts. Each genre is as much a varietal (or varietals) as it is a processing method. The exception to this is, of course, red tea as any kind of tea can be made into red tea.

The second half of the mis-statement that "all tea is Camellia sinensis and the differences in genre are all in the processing" is actually the part that is more relevant to a discussion of red tea, which will lead us to dian hong. It is important to remember that processing methods developed over time in response to certain varietals of tea, which in turn evolved in response to a particular terroir. Farmers were learning, honing their skills through trial and error, as well as through a deep connection to a life of tea and intuition/ insight. In other words, they innovated over time to bring out the best in the tea trees that were local to them. It would not be correct to say that oolong, for example, is just a method of processing tea, because that processing was developed to suit certain varietals of tea. And as oolong varietals have changed, moving from place to place (whether naturally or carried by people), so too have processing skills evolved, creating a whole array of different oolongs. So, you could say that oolong is both a processing method and a varietal (or more correctly varietals, as there are now many).

Nowadays, there is a lot of experimentation, processing teas from one region in the way that they are made elsewhere. Like many things in the modern world, this fusion is due to faster communication, more access to information, easier travel and the greater connection to the rest of the tea world that modern farmers enjoy. And a lot of that is great. People traditionally only ever bought tea from tea shops, but nowadays many people can purchase directly from farms, often resulting in fairer prices for the farmers themselves. And some of the new experiments do result in amazing teas, like the purple red tea from De Hong many of us know and love (Evening Sky). But the majority of such teas don't turn out well, as with the modern attempts to cultivate Taiwan's Three Daughters, as well as Ching shin oolong in Vietnam and Mainland China. No matter how nice the trees or how great the skill of the farmer, you can't find the same quality elsewhere. In other words, a Taiwanese tea processed like a Wuyi Cliff Tea might be a nice tea in its own right, but it will never compare to a real Cliff Tea, at least not by Cliff Tea standards. And

anyone (we do mean anyone) with some experience drinking Cliff Tea will know that this tea is *not* from Wuyi. Also, anyone who has ever been to Wuyi will stand up and testify to what an immense role the unique terroir there plays in the creation of Cliff Tea (it's called "*Cliff* Tea," after all). There really is no place on Earth like Wuyi, and so no place could ever mimic that environment, which then informed the varietal, which influenced the evolution of processing, and so on...

As another example, the tea buds in Fuding have white hairs on them as a natural deterrent to insects. Local farmers found the thick buds hard to process, and also beautiful when dried, so they developed a unique kind of tea processing to suit this varietal of tree, which came to be known as "white tea." White tea processing has changed, evolving significantly since the early days of the Tang and Song dynasties when tea was processed into powdered cakes (as we covered in April 2016 when we talked about Emperor Song Huizong), but the varietal and those changes have grown together. The evolution of processing was motivated by this unique tree. And while you could dry other tea like white tea, and this may create new and interesting results, if it is not made from a varietal that has white buds it is technically not a "white tea." Therefore, white tea is also both a kind of tree and a processing method.

How many of the albums in your collection are cover bands? Probably not many, and for good reason. There may be some cool cover bands that produce interesting music, and we can even think of a few good reasons for having a cover band, but at the end of the day if that cover band can produce music that is good enough that a fan of the original band will like it, then they are also good enough musicians to produce their own music! This is analogous to tea. There is no way a Taiwanese farmer can make a Cliff Tea that could convince an experienced Cliff Tea drinker that it is from Wuyi, but he could make a replica that was interesting and delicious. But, a tea lover is then left wondering the same thing as with music: "If you can take this tea from a completely different terroir and impress me, a lover of Wuyi Cliff Tea, then you obviously have the skill to

stop copying and produce this tea in a way that is in harmony with its terroir and essence!" Why not process the tea in the way that brings out its best qualities instead of making cheap copies of another region's heritage and skill as a gimmick?

The conclusion is that the genres of tea are not "all in the processing." The reality is far more complicated than that: each genre of tea is as much a terroir and the local varietals of tea as it is the processing methods used there. In fact, some authors include culture and processing methods in the very term "terroir," which is an insight that we appreciate, since it acknowledges and celebrates the very natural part that humans play in Nature and in tea. If the tradition of tea processing is indeed evolving and improving based on the idea that "better" processing brings out the natural highlights of the trees and leaves, then you could say that farmers who process in this way are as natural a part of the life of that tea as the sun or rain. There are also deeper and subtler implications in including processing methods in the word "terroir," beyond just climate, weather and all, since doing so testifies to the fact that humanity is Nature. These days we feel disconnected and separate from the world, even though we are as ingrained as any species of Thea, and our influence can be just as natural and harmonious or as destructive as any other force of Nature. So, it is worth repeating that the differences are *not* all in the processing. The next time someone tells you white tea, oolong or puerh is a processing method, you should raise a hand in protest.

These large-leaf trees have a unique genetic heritage, chemistry in the leaves and a very different relationship to the earth, with single trunks and deeper roots. The leaves are much larger than small-leaf varietals. Of course, this influences how such tea is processed, no matter if it is sheng, shou or dian hong. And no tea from another region can mimic these characteristics.



# Ten of the Month





And this brings us to red tea, which is actually the exception to this rule. Of the seven genres of tea (white, green, yellow, red, black, oolong and puerh), red tea is the only one that is truly "all in the processing." In other words, you can take tea from any varietal and terroir and process it like a red tea. And it is often nice. We've had great Taiwanese high-mountain oolong (Ching shin varietal, 清心) processed like red tea; the "gongfu reds" are essentially all-bud green teas processed like red; and, of course, where this discussion is heading this month—puerh raw material processed like red tea, called "dian hong."

Understanding that any varietal can be red tea is also illuminating when it comes to understanding just how the misconception that differences in tea are "all in the processing" became so widespread in the Western world. Red tea (mistakenly called "black tea") is the most consumed and produced tea in the West. Almost everyone in the Western world who drinks tea, drinks red tea. And since it is true that "the difference is all in the processing" for red tea, you could see how this would be mistakenly applied to other kinds of tea, on the assumption that this principle is as true for green or oolong tea as it is for red (which it clearly is not). Consequently, red tea is really the only genre of tea we can say is just a processing method and nothing more.

One of the characteristics used to evaluate red tea is its clarity—finer red tea does not have any cloudiness in the liquor, so it is important that we have taken a few bowls' worth of time to clear up this misunderstanding. As we travel further into our session, we'll have to do so with the understanding that red tea is unique amongst all kinds of tea since it has no terroir or varietals to call home. This means that a discussion of any given red tea will have to include the varietal which is used to make it. In our case, we will have to discuss dian hong as coming from puerh, since it is essentially puerh tea exposed to red tea processing. But before we turn to dian hong specifically, let's review some history, as well as the general steps of red tea production, which are even more essential since they literally define this genre of tea.

#### Red Tea Production

When it comes down to it, red tea is the last stop on the oolong line. This is another reason that the confusion of calling red tea "black tea" began in the first place, since it hadn't yet distinguished itself as a kind of tea in its own right when European traders started exporting red tea to the West. Oolong is semi-oxidized tea, and red tea is very heavily oxidized (sometimes people say "fully oxidized," but that isn't really

possible). In other words, red tea was considered a kind of very dark oolong in the beginning. In fact, all semi-oxidized teas were called "red" by some dynastic tea authors.

The main feature that distinguishes red tea is a very heavy withering, often with as much oxidation as possible. This heavy oxidation is achieved during the processing/drying stages of the leaf. Oxidation is an enzymatic process: basically, a cellular breakdown due, of course, to exposure to oxygen, like when a banana or an apple turns brown on the counter. Oxidation can be spontaneous or controlled and can have a positive or negative influence on the quality of a tea. The change in the leaves after harvest is spontaneous oxidation. In green tea production, the goal is most often to arrest this as soon as possible. Controlled oxidation happens during the withering, rolling and piling phases (not all red tea is piled). Proper oxidation in tea production requires an abundance of moist, oxygen-rich air. For red tea production, oxidation rooms (or long vats with fans and/or heaters) must provide ample humidified air to promote heavy oxidation. The polyphenols in the leaf (tea catechins) bond to oxygen molecules during the early stages of oxidation.

The intentional, controlled stage of oxidation begins after the harvest, which could be by machine or by hand, when the raw leaf is sent to the pro-



cessing facilities for withering. When tea leaves are picked, they are too brittle to process, and would crumble as a result. It is essential, therefore, to evaporate some of the moisture before processing. (The exception to this rule is all-bud green or yellow teas, which are always firm and never withered.) These days, the withering of red tea most often takes place in long troughs that have fans that blow warm humid air over the leaves. However, in Yunnan, farms are often still very simple and lack machinery, so the tea is often just left on the ground in a pile to wither. If a farmer is going to wither without machinery, it is ideal to pile the tea on round bamboo mats held up on racks, as this will allow more air flow from underneath.

There are many chemical reactions that comprise oxidation. The oxygenation of polyphenols starts a series of chemical reactions that change the flavor of the leaf more toward that of red tea. Tea expert and Global Tea Hut member, Robert Heiss describes these changes better than we can: "The enzymes polyphenol oxidase and peroxidase act on other polyphenols to produce theaflavins. These red-orange compounds then react with more polyphenols to produce thearubigins, the chemicals responsible for changing the leaf's color from a fresh and vibrant green to golden, coppery or chocolate brown of wet red tea leaves.

# THE PROCESSING OF DIAN HONG TEA



Plucking

Withering

Rolling

Withering

**Sun-drying** 

Sorting

Packaging

The thearubigins, meanwhile, are also busy reacting with some of the amino acids and sugars in the leaf, creating the highly polymerized substances that develop into the various and distinctive flavor components that we expect in red tea. In general, theaflavins contribute to the brisk and bright taste of red tea, while the thearubigins are what provide strength (depth or body) and color. If the temperature of the leaf is allowed to rise too high, the controlled oxidation will rage out of control; and if it falls too low, oxidation will cease." Usually, the pile of withering tea is stirred to control the temperature and degree of oxidation.

The oxidation of the tea then continues into the next stage of rolling. Rolling can be done by machine or, more rarely, by hand. This breaks the cell walls down and releases the essential oils that make red tea darker, allowing oxygen to interact with these otherwise trapped chemical components. Rolling also shapes the tea, so the method of rolling will determine the final shape of the tea. For most red teas, this is done for up to ninety minutes, but experts will of course judge when the tea is ready by looking at and smelling the leaves. One year in Ai Lao, Auntie Ai had us roll for more

than ninety minutes, but then last year we only rolled for around thirty to forty minutes, so it really depends on the leaves and their moisture content.

In the case of CTC (Cut, Tear, Curl) tea, rolling is combined with additional steps, which involve chopping the tea leaves into tiny pieces, causing them to quickly oxidize, and then rolling them into pellets as the tea is further oxidized and dried. CTC processing is an efficient and cheap means of tea production, so CTC tea is commonly used in teabags and in less wealthy tea-drinking countries, such as India and Sri Lanka. CTC tea is intended to release all its flavor very quickly; it usually lasts only one infusion or two to three boils.

Optionally, red tea is then piled again after rolling to increase oxidation, usually on round bamboo mats, to a thickness of twenty centimeters or so. This additional oxidation results in further changes in the tea's flavor, aroma, color and impact on Qi when drunk.

Finally, red tea is dried. Most red teas are baked dry in ovens, as we showed in October's issue about Elevation, Sun Moon Lake red tea. However, dian hong is more often sun-dried like puerh. The baking arrests the oxygen

and finishes the tea. Some areas will also include sorting at various stages of the processing, but usually after the tea is dried to remove misprocessed or broken leaves before final packaging.

#### Dian Hong

"Dian" (滇) is an aboriginal word for "Yunnan" and "hong (紅)" is "red," so this term applies to any red tea produced in Yunnan. It may surprise you that Yunnan produces red tea, since it is famous for puerh tea. Actually, throughout the twentieth century, Yunnan produced much more red tea than puerh, until the boom in the early 2000s. In the late nineties, there were hardly any puerh shops in Kunming and the locals drank much more red and green tea. Now, of course, there are puerh shops everywhere, including the airport.

As we discussed earlier, any tea can be processed like a red tea, and while the process may seem complicated when you include all the chemistry we have discussed this month, it is actually one of the simplest kinds of tea to make: pluck and oxidize heavily. Since dian hong starts out as puerh raw material, its quality is determined in much

🌣 Nowadays, a lot of producers in Yunnan are turning to machinery, which they can now afford with the rising profits from tea. But no machine will roll as well as the hand, which involves the subtle oils of the skin and the spirit of the producer. This means also that a lot of dian hong is dried in ovens these days, which also bakes the tea. Drying red tea in this way is a kind of low-temperature roast, which does affect the flavor and energy of the tea. This can add dimension, but it is not good for dian hong, as the oven is not capable of awakening the microbes essential in the fermentation. Only sun-drying can do that, which is why all puerh tea has always been sun-dried. Sun drying dian hong means that it will have much more ageability. Traditional sun-drying happens in two stages: in the first (shown on the right), the leaves are all separated to dry uniformly. This must be done in the early morning. Then the mostly dry tea is piled and occasionally stirred in the sun.



the same way, which means that terroir and the age of the trees play a huge role in evaluating dian hong. Some of you will remember our discussions of trees and gardens in Yunnan, in which we said that, like most things in the tea world, there are no standard ways of discussing tree ages or garden types (and like most things tea, the trends that do exist are often misleading and/ or incorrect).

Understanding the age of the tree, the mountain the tea came from and the kind of garden it grew in are essential in puerh tea. Most teas have a ratio between the terroir/trees/raw material and the processing skills that create the final quality. This ratio is different for each genre. With oolong, for example, half of its quality comes from the raw material, half from its processing. But with puerh and dian hong, as much as ninety percent of the quality of any tea is in the raw material—the terroir. We call trees above one hundred years "old growth" and trees around one thousand years old "ancient." We then divide gardens into three main categories: "plantation," which are industrially grown, rarely sustainable rows of cuttings; "eco-arboreal," which are semi-wild, seed-propagated gardens that are on the edges of villages, between the forest and homestead; and "forest gardens," which can be wild or human-made, but are in the jungle proper with all its biodiversity and life. While there has been a lot of plantation red tea produced in Yunnan for centuries, the old-growth dian hong are the best examples of living dian hong.

Dian hong is distinct from other kinds of red tea in the same ways puerh is distinct from other kinds of tea. Puerh maocha is unique because the firing (sha qing, 殺青) is done at a lower temperature for a shorter duration so that the heat-resistant spore colonies essential to the post-production fermentation will survive the firing to form new colonies afterwards. The tea is then sun-dried so that the light and heat will reactivate the microbes and fermentation will begin. Dian hong has no firing stage, no de-enzyming, so the microbe-dense leaves, which are covered in hundreds of species of molds and bacteria before harvest, are even more active. Like puerh, dian hong is sun-dried, which gives the tea a unique flavor and leaves the microbes active.

Dian hong is most often malty and rich, brisk and energetic. The color of the leaves ranges from dark, blu-

ish black to bright gold, and it can be made of buds or sets of leaves and buds. The liquor often brews a dark or bright red and can be cloudy due to a lack of skill and quality control in Yunnanese tea production, especially if the tea is made simply in the village. But no one drinks a dian hong looking for refinement; if you are seeking that in a red tea, drink a "gongfu red tea (工夫紅茶)" from Anhui or Fujian. Dian hong is strong and vibrant. It moves the Qi as briskly as any genre of tea. Our Tea of the Month, Energy, is both strong and gentle at the same time, which is unique for a dian hong. The flavors and aromas feature the same complexity as puerh, with added sweetness and maltiness from the extra oxidation. And though dian hong teas can be hard to enjoy when they are produced from plantation tea, covered in chemicals and misprocessed, when they are produced from quality raw material from old trees, they are most often loved by everyone and are therefore go-to choices for those starting their tea journeys. They are sweeter and more delicious than sheng puerh, with a deeper and brighter liquor and none of the astringency or bitterness and much of the energy of the old forest if they are made from great maocha.



# Tea of the Month

#### Ageability of Dian Hong

The best qualities dian hong has to offer are in many respects similar to puerh: old trees and deep Qi with a strength due to the heavy oxidation, which releases the deep energy of a dian hong in the same way aging puerh tea does—only aged puerh is yin and red tea processing results in yang tea. You could think of dian hong as the counterpart to aged puerh. Both release more of the deeper, dark essence of the tough, large leaves of Yunnanese species, but dian hong does so through oxidation during processing, making it vibrant and young, while the slow and graceful aging of sheng puerh releases the same depths more softly and gently. And energetically this is also true: dian hong is vital and strong, and aged sheng puerh is deep, soft and soothing in a feminine way.

People often ask about the ageability of red tea in general, and then follow that question with many more about whether you can age dian hong and how. All tea gets better with age all tea! You should be clear on that to start with. Though that is a very true statement, there are some caveats and conditions regarding green, yellow, white and lightly oxidized oolong teas. We wouldn't call these light teas exceptions to the rule that all tea gets better with age, but there are some things you need to understand about aging them. First, there is a magic in the freshness of light teas that will, of course, be lost; and second, these teas will pass through an awkward stage that can last as long as fifteen to twenty years. This happens because the moisture content is too high, so the teas need to dry out. Storing them in a drier environment for a while is therefore paramount. And since space is limited for all of us, one could make a convincing argument that light teas aren't worth storing long-term. Indeed, most well-aged light teas were accidentally left around rather than intentionally stored (though they are wonderful). Consequently, traditionally processed oolongs, sheng/shou puerh and black teas are the best candidates for aging. Red teas like dian hong fall somewhere in the middle.

Like light teas, red teas were rarely intentionally stored. But they don't have as much of an awkward stage

throughout the beginning phases of aging. If the red tea in question is a dian hong, however, and it was made from good trees, it will age spectacularly. And, what's more, you can age them in drier conditions than puerh tea, which means that many of you can age dian hong where you live. This will result in a different kind of tea than those aged in humid places, but the quality won't deteriorate as heavily as with sheng puerh. Still, it is ideal to have some humidity around your dian hong. As with most kinds of tea, we recommend storing your dian hong away from other kinds of tea, as it will definitely influence them negatively, especially sheng puerh and oolong.

Most of the same principles we use to age puerh apply to dian hong as well: it ages better in a cake than as loose-leaf and it requires some air and humidity (though much less than sheng puerh). However, it doesn't take as long to age, and can be wonderful even after ten or fifteen years. It kind of dries and mellows out the way a heavily fermented shou puerh does, as we discussed in last month's issue. Dian hong can also have a bite to it and can be strongly tannic, bitter, astringent and rough on the palate. These qualities all soften with age and the tea will grow sweeter and more billowy in the mouth.

We have found that if one is intentionally producing dian hong for aging, one should consider oxidizing the tea less, creating a more sheng puerhy kind of dian hong, which will damage the Qi of the raw material less, and provide more opportunity for the tea to change over time. Such greener red teas are not as sweet, but make up for it in Qi and ageability.

The Stars asked the Sun Who told it to the Monatain.

The Old Man Monatain Whispered it to the Trees

And a young leaf offered us the secret of the Stars.

-Wu De



#### YIWU & THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO TEA

The Yiwu tea-growing area is located in the Yiwu Township of Mengla County. The greater Yiwu region encompasses the four townships of Mansa, Mahei, Yitian and Manluo. In ancient times, local ethnic Bulang people were the primary growers of tea. By the end of the Qing dynasty, large numbers of Han merchants arrived in Yiwu and began growing tea. They founded businesses to engage in the tea trade, establishing a collection point among the six famous tea mountains. In practice, the Yiwu tea district also includes Mansa Tea Mountain. Today the Yiwu tea-growing areas are approximately 15,000mu (1mu = 1/6 acre) in size and produce approximately 600 tons of tea per year. They lie between 820 and 2,000 meters in elevation and have a very marked topography. Yearly rainfall is between 1,000 and 1,800mm. There are between 1,600 and 2,000 hours of sunshine per year and a relative humidity of 80%. The weather is warm and humid all year around with no frost.

Throughout this issue, we will start exploring the Queen of Puerh, Yiwu, introducing a region that we hope to return to throughout the life of this magazine, as it is such an important tea-growing region and worth returning to. This issue will, therefore, be primarily an introduction. The tea from Yiwu is famous for being thick and strong, while maintaining a feminine delicacy at the same time. Yiwu liquor is thick, fragrant and often has an aftertaste of raw honey (the kind in which wild bees take in the pollen of many wild flowers). However, Yiwu is a large area and the tea from different mountains will have distinct characteristics. Tea from Mansa, Mengla County, like our Tea of the Month, is slightly less thick with a brighter, sweeter fragrance, for example.

Since dian hong is made from puerh raw material, it is important to understand what determines quality in puerh tea, as it will be relevant in a discussion of what makes a great dian hong as well. Puerh is unlike most other kinds of tea in terms of quality. It is always best to move our lessons from the general to the specific, so before discussing puerh specifically, and then

dian hong, let's review what makes a fine tea in general.

The quality of every tea is a ratio between the source of the leaves (the terroir/tea tree) and the processing skill of the producer. The source is almost always primary in this measurement, and includes the climate, the varietal, the environment the trees grow in and its health, the age of the trees, whether they are seed-propagated or not, irrigated, the use of agrochemicals (or hopefully not) and all the other myriad of factors that go into the health and quality of a fine leaf. Within the character for tea are the radicals for "herb (++)" above and "wood/tree (木)" below, with the radical for "human (人)" right in the middle. This tree is a gift to humankind, bestowed on us by Mother Earth and has a very unique relationship to people, including that it must be finished with our skill to reach its potential. The way the tea is harvested and processed will also determine the quality of a tea, almost as much as quality of the leaves themselves. As Wu De always says, "The leaf is an expression of the tree's relationship to its environment."

The traditional way of thinking about this is that fine tea requires the cooperation of Heaven, Earth and Human to reach its potential. The Earth in this is the tree itself, the varietal and the health of the ecology, but even that is not enough to make a fine leaf, which is very rare really.



The weather must also cooperate, which is the Heaven part. The rainfall, sun and mists all help create the perfect leaves. Only when the right trees in the right place on the mountain meet with the perfect weather systems do we have the real potential for a very fine tea. However, it is only potential at this stage, like fine vegetables made in the right soil at the right time of year with the perfect weather—a chef is needed to make them into a masterpiece. The skill of the farmer is required to take these perfect leaves, made of healthy strong trees combined with great weather, and process them to perfection. We could also think of this as a young prodigy born with tremendous musical talent (the leaf/environment + weather), who then needs the training of a teacher (the farmer) to reach her potential (a golden cup of fine tea liquor). Sadly, with changing weather systems due to the pollution of our environment, such leaves are rarer and farmers are often faced with the challenge of making the best tea they can with inferior leaves.

Puerh varies from this formula, perhaps more so than any other kind of tea. With puerh, quality is far less about the farmer than it is about the leaf. A puerh tea's quality is based on the mountain where it came from, what kind of garden (forest, eco-arboreal or plantation), the season/weather and the age of the trees. The mountain part of this equation can be based on real, often desirable characteristics and also can be based on marketing hype. Type of garden and age of tree are usually more significant, though the mountain is important. While oolong tea is about equal in terms of the importance of the raw material (weather/ garden/terroir/leaf) and the skill of the farmer (gongfu), puerh is really closer to a ratio of 90/10, in which 90% of the tea's quality is in the leaf. Processing in Yunnan is rudimentary, crude and ancient. That has been changing recently as the cost of puerh maocha (毛茶) rises and the remote mountains are developed, with technology, information and processing skills making their way to these remote areas. Aboriginals are starting to improve their processing skills, but sometimes away from traditional processing and more towards green tea or oolong, as more of the market consumes puerh young and

raw. But truly, the quality of the best puerh comes from the mountain, garden and trees combined with the right type of spring weather.

Moving from quality in maocha to dian hong, things begin to shift a bit, as the skill of the processing starts to play a much larger role than it does in raw puerh. This is also true of artificially fermented puerh (shou, 熟). These two types of tea have more processing, and the way in which this is carried out will play a much larger influencing role on the final quality of the tea than with sheng, which is simply withered, fired, rolled and sun-dried. Dian hong adds in the oxidation and a longer rolling, each of which cannot follow a predetermined formula if the tea is to be excellent but must be adapted to suit

Sadly, both shou puerh and dian hong are all too often processed without this sensitivity. The piling in shou puerh is often done to completely artificially ferment the tea (lasting forty-five to sixty days) as opposed to being done with skill as it was back in the 1980s and 1990s, when the piles' height and moisture, along with the duration and the introduction of microbes from previous batches-all were coordinated to suit the blend of tea being piled and to bring out the best characteristics from the tea. Similarly, dian hong is oxidized to the correct degree through withering and rolling based on the leaves. There is a need to adapt the processing to the raw material, including changes in the weather that year. Many farms in Yunnan are new, and just follow a general red tea production formula, without working skillfully to process the tea the way it "wants" to be processed, which is to say the way that will bring out its potential as a dian hong. Just as most shou should actually only be partially artificially fermented, so too should most dian hong only be partially oxidized. This is especially true when the raw material (maocha) comes from a forest garden and/or older trees, as a heavy oxidation (or piling) will only damage the energy of the tea. Leaving the tea a bit rawer means that it will have breadth and flavor, and also will be more ageable, as we discussed earlier. (Aged dian hong can be a real treat to share!)

We should express a small caveat here, which is that we are not arguing

that processing skill is irrelevant in the production of sheng puerh. As we stated it is a factor, just a small one (we arbitrarily chose 10%). The point is that the influence of the producer's skill (gongfu) goes up drastically when the maocha is made into either shou puerh or dian hong. And the skill of the best tea producers is really a kind of listening: listening to the garden and how to care for it so that it is in a healthy state of balance based on its own ecological fitness, not what humans want from it; listening to the weather to know when to pluck the leaves and then listening to the leaves to know the best way to process them so that the characteristics of these unique trees can shine and fulfill themselves as they travel into the human realm. This last part means shaping the leaves into something that fulfills the senses of the human and restores the Nature in her as she drinks the liquor and feels the cooperative forces of Heaven and Earth flowing now through her being!

Fine dian hong is, therefore, made by listening to Heaven and Earth and bringing the Human in harmony with the whole, which is medicine of tea. Energy is the perfect emblem of a well-crafted dian hong tea. And of course, tasting says more than words.

The second withering is akin to a piling. The wet, rolled and broken-down tea is piled and left to further oxidize, sometimes overnight. This can be done in plastic bags (less ideal) or baskets. Then, in the morning, the tea is taken out and the clumps are separated so that the leaves can be spread out to be sundried, which is a specialty of dian hong tea. The tea smells strongly of fresh wintergreen at this stage. It is important that the tea be thoroughly separated so that every clump is undone, creating an even dry.



## Ten of the Month

# #Energy

Yiwu is the Queen of Puerh. The most famous teas of the previous eras all came from Yiwu. And the reputation isn't all hype. The tea from Yiwu is strong and vibrant, sweet and smooth. It is great for aging and drinking alike. This dian hong is no exception. It is from old-growth trees from a stunning garden. These older trees yield gentle, smooth and steady brews, with thick liquor and the traditional honey-fragrance aftertaste of nice Yiwu tea. The oxidation is lower, preserving the power and essence of this magical tea. This is amongst the smoothest and most radiant dian hong teas we have ever tried.

This precious tea is from the spring of 2017. We reserved some of the tea we used to make our Light Meets Life fundraiser cakes to send off in this month of Global Tea Hut. We knew that this tea was too good not to share with everyone in the community, especially since the cakes were so limited. This month's tea comes from the Mansa (慢撤) region of Yiwu. Mansa is located to the east of the Mengla County, Yiwu Township. It borders Laos and is one of the Six Famous Tea Mountains. The tea-growing area includes Mansa, Manhei, Mannai, and Manla. Mansa Tea Mountain has a mountainous, monsoonal subtropical climate. It lies between 820 and 2,000 meters in elevation and has very marked topography. Yearly rainfall is between 1,000 and 1,800mm. Our farm is at around 1,200 meters. There are between 1,600 and 2,000 hours of sunshine per year and a relative humidity of 80%. The weather is warm and humid all year around with no frost.

The tea is lightly oxidized for a red tea and less than most dian hong teas as well. Wu De often says that this is an issue with red tea in general: the more oxidation, the sweeter and more delicious the tea will be, but we also lose a lot of the vibrancy and "Energy (Qi, 氣)" of the tea from the heavy withering and vigorous rolling. This is not a huge issue when it comes to most red teas, but when the tea is made from nice old trees we would rather have a tea that was slightly less sweet and left more astringent if it means that the tea thrums with a deeper, more lasting energy with more to experience in the heart and body than in the mouth. This month's tea is a very "puerhy" dian hong, which means that it has less of the oxidation of normal dian hong. This means it will also age well if any of you still have cakes left. Though there are sweeter dian hong teas around, you won't find any with as deep and lasting "Energy."

We find this tea incredibly meditative—gentle, soft and gracefully feminine. It has a subtle way of grounding and centering us. The old trees from Yiwu are generally of this type, with softer and sweeter liquor. As we mentioned above, Yiwu tea is famous for being thick, light and tasting of raw honey. These characteristics are all present in this amazing tea. We especially enjoy this tea in the morning, near sunrise. It wakes us up with the world. It is powerful, filled with the soft stillness of a quiet dawn deep in the forest—just before the birds wake up. This month's tea can change your day!



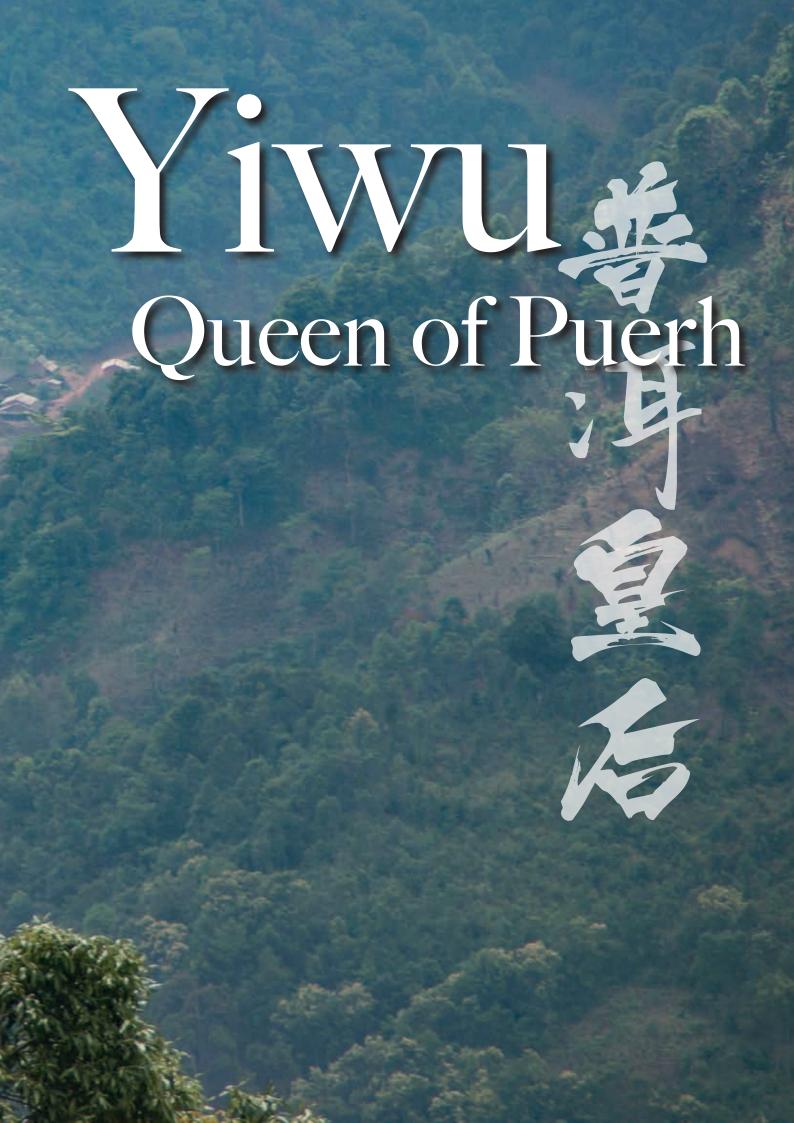
# Brewing Tips

This month's tea is a great bowl tea. It is full of deep Qi, which is why we named it as we did. In drinking bowl tea, we can relax more deeply into the experience as opposed to evaluating the tea with great sensitivity. We suggest either brewing this month's tea leaves in a bowl or with a sidehandle. As this is a spectacular tea, we suggest focusing on your water as much as possible.

Water is all about source, storage and preparation. Every cup or bowl of tea is made up of much more water than it is tea. They say that average tea with great water is great, while great tea with poor water is below average. Obviously gathering spring water yourself from Nature will make the best tea. If you are using bottled water, be sure to test many different kinds and find the best one you can.

As for storage, water is much like tea: store it in a good container, made of nice materials in a cool, dry and dark place. One of the problems with bottled water is that it is stored in plastic, which is an unstable molecule and also allows light in. Glass would be better than plastic. Ideally, we should store our tea in a ceramic or stone jar made of good material. Choose glazed ceramics if you aren't sure whether the clay contains lead or are uncertain about its effects on the water. For preparing water, we suggest learning to use your senses. Ideally, the water should reach temperature as quickly as possible to maintain structure. Also, when water reaches a full, rolling boil the hydrogen bonds break and the energetic structure comes apart. Finding the right temperature for each tea (individually, not based on genre, which is misleading) is paramount to get the best out of your teas. Try achieving this by looking at the bubbles, listening to the sound of the kettle and feeling the vibration, developing your sensitivity and skill.





Over the centuries, Yiwu has garnered much attention thanks to its tea. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907), Yiwu was known as a "profit city," but only today do the true implications of this name become clear. Since the French annexed the south of Xishuangbanna in the nineteenth century, making it part of what would become Laos, the Yiwu region has become a gateway between China and Laos. "Mansa" was one of the Six Famous Mountains of puerh, as most all tea exported to other parts of China and beyond came from these mountains. It was only in recent times that puerh from other regions started to reach the world in larger quantities. All things equal, the best puerh tea comes from Yiwu. Nowadays, however, all things are not equal. Environmental degradation, over-harvesting and the creation of plantation terraces to meet market demands have all lowered the quality of a lot of Yiwu tea. There is still great tea in Yiwu, though. Understanding this historic region is essential to an understanding of puerh tea in general. Throughout this issue, we will be exploring the region from an introductory perspective, with the hopes of taking a longer trek through the region in future issues, sharing more tea from Yiwu as well as the history and processing methods there.

本A: Ben Ni ( 案泥)



ount Yiwu has an important place in the history of puerh tea. It was one of the historical Six Great Tea Mountains, and the tea produced there was classified as a tribute tea by the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) government. Many famous historical tea labels had their headquarters at Yiwu, including the Tongqing, Tongxing, Tongchang and Ganlizhen brands. The name Yiwu (易武) has always been intimately connected to puerh tea. However, after the Sino-Japanese war began in 1937, the old tea shops in Yiwu gradually began to feel the effects of wartime, with some closing down and others being sold. In 1949, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, the tea shops went through several phases: they started as private enterprises, then became state-private joint partnerships, and eventually all were stateowned. All of Yunnan's privately-run tea shops disappeared. Yiwu, one of the main puerh-producing regions,

no longer produced tea under its own name, but rather became a source of raw tea leaf for state-run factories such as the Kunming Tea Factory, the Hai Tea Factory and the Xiaguan Tea Factory. In other words, Yiwu tea as a distinctly named variety of puerh disappeared after the 1950s.

However, a true pearl never loses its luster, even when covered in dust. From 1978, during the reform and opening up period of the People's Republic of China, tea production in Yunnan Province gradually began to change. In the early 1990s, a few puerh tea enthusiasts from Taiwan and Hong Kong, including Mr. Lü Lizhen (呂禮臻), headed to Yunnan in search of puerh, traversing mountains and rivers to reach Yiwu. With the help of the then head of Yiwu Village, Mr. Zhang Yi (張毅), several batches of tea were produced there in the following two or three years. This tea was made with local Yiwu leaf, under the direction of the only surviving tea master from the pre-war era Songpin tea brand, Mr. Zhang Guangshou (張官壽). That batch of tea is now familiar to tea drinkers as the Zhen Chunya tea brand, removed in time by half a century from its pre-war ancestors, the old Yiwu tea brands.

So, Yiwu tea was just like a pearl whose glow had become obscured by decades' worth of dust-finally, modern Chajin have wiped away the dust and once more revealed its brilliance to the world. Thus, the history of Yiwu tea was gradually uncovered, and Yiwu tea leaves gradually gained recognition within the tea industry. The establishment of the Zhen Chunya brand marked the beginning of "modern" Yiwu teas, giving it unique historical significance. In the few years following the brand's beginnings, orders of Yiwu tea leaves by several tea merchants in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Guangdong officially opened the curtain on the prologue of modern Yiwu tea. These included the Hai Tea Factory's 99



Blue-Black Ticket Big Green Tree and 99 Red Ticket Big Green Tree teas, as well as the Changtai Tea Factory's 99 Yichang brand. Prior to its restructuring in 2004, the Hai Tea Factory produced several dozen batches of tea ordered by various merchants, as well as its own house-brand Yiwu tea. At the same time, Yiwu tea leaf was recognized as unique, and was used in teas made by many different brands, such as the Haiwan Tea Factory, the Liming Tea Factory, the Fuhai Tea Factory and Six Great Tea Mountains Tea.

After its restructuring in 2004, the Hai Tea Factory produced a further batch of Yiwu tea in 2005, and another in 2006. After that, the Hai Tea Factory didn't make any more Yiwu tea until 2009, when production recommenced. Yiwu tea faced a lot of competition in a market that was flooded with puerh. The Xiaguan Tea Factory had already started taking orders from tea sellers in 2008 and started to produce Yiwu tea. It's clear that the emer-

gence of modern Yiwu tea is inextricably linked to the emergence of modern puerh. This renaissance began brewing in the mid- to late 90s and reached full bloom from 2000 to 2006. The market went into decline during 2007 and 2008, and gradually began to revive in 2009. Following the revival of puerh tea, a number of new brands emerged during the period between 2009 and 2010, including He He Chang, Run Yuan Chang, Bao He Xiang, Dian Cha and Guo Hao.

In one sense, since Yiwu tea is so closely associated with puerh, all of these new brands served to promote puerh tea. Some other brands, such as Suiyue Zhiwei and Cha Mo Ting, specifically marketed themselves as specializing in Yiwu tea. In the puerh world, a top-quality tea-producing region is often a hotly contended commodity for owners of factories both large and small. In terms of Yiwu tea, large and small factories produce countless different Yiwu teas, with

prices ranging from tens of Chinese yuan to several thousand. For consumers, the words "Yiwu tea" hold an irresistible appeal; almost everyone who has anything to do with puerh has heard of Yiwu tea. For one thing, the quality of the tea from the Yiwu region is genuinely excellent; what's more, the very name of Yiwu has come to represent a gold standard on the market. So, it's no wonder that almost all the tea brands are producing Yiwu tea, and it's no wonder that Yiwu tea is so highly sought-after by today's consumers.

The tea region of Yiwu lay silent for over half a century before it shook off its decades of dust. In the future, it will undoubtedly continue to enliven the world of puerh, as its legend continues to enliven the conversation of those who love tea.





Master Chen Zhitong is one of the world's leading experts on puerh tea, and a dear friend and teacher of ours. His book "The Profound World of Chi-tze (深邃的七子世界)" is the reference book in the puerh world. He has been traveling to Yiwu to produce old-growth tea for decades, and so his experience there is a great way to introduce the area in this issue. We hope to continue translating Master Chen's insights and understanding in future issues as well.



本A: Chen Zhitong (陳智同)

he tea mountain of Yiwu (易武) is situated to the east of the "inner" Six Great Tea Mountains, near the border of Laos. It covers an area of around 750 square kilometers and has historically served as the main distribution center for the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains. The major waterways in the area are the Jinchang River, the Sadai River and the Tongqing River.

The *Puerh Government Records* make mention of the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains, namely Mansa, Youle, Mangzhi, Gedeng, Yibang and Manzhuan. Mount Yiwu, however, is only specified as another place that also produced tea. In reality, the tea-producing area of Yiwu covered almost half the land in the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains region.

The Yiwu tea region was developed by the people of Shiping County during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). The region was once lauded for its illustrious history of producing tribute tea, and many tea labels that are widely known today sprang up in great numbers at that time. Some of the big brand names were Tongxing, Tongqing, Chenyun and Fu Yuan Chang; the teas they made are still regarded by today's tea collectors as classic "antique" teas.

The route of the Old Tea Horse Road allowed for the transportation of goods out of the region via Yibang. But as new roads were built following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Old Tea Horse Road lost its function as a transport route. And, after mechanical processing plants were set up in coastal areas, the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains lost their status as a major tea-producing area. Many of the workshops in the Yiwu area where tea was handmade went into decline, and the industry entered a new era of unified administration and increased output. During this period of agricultural transformation, Yiwu also sank into a recession and only began to gradually recover in the early 1990s. As early as the Tang Dynasty, the Pu people had been planting tea in Yiwu; some of the original tea trees from that time remain today on the Mansa tea mountain. These trees have lived through more than a thousand years of history, from the Yuan (1271-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties when they were incorporated into the territory of the administrative division of Cheli Xuanwei, to the Qing Dynasty where the surrounding tea region was developed by the people of Shiping.

We know that the big leaf tea plants cultivated at Yiwu date to four approximate time periods: the Tang, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. The distribution of each group of trees gives us a general idea of the settlement and migration of the area's residents over time. Following the wax and wane of local development, many tea gardens were lost to history; forgotten for hundreds of years, the tea plants gradually

spread and formed symbiotic forests with the other local plants. Even today, they still grow peacefully among the forests of Yiwu, living evidence of the rise and fall of the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains and a testament to Yiwu's long history.

The route between Jinghong City and Yiwu leads from Ganlan Dam via Menglun to Mengxing and then on to Yiwu. Once you arrive at Menglun you can already see some traces of Yiwu tea. The soil in Yiwu is mainly latosol and red soil, and the large tree-shaped tea plants (known as "old-growth tea") can be classified into Assam and small-leaf. The smaller terrace-grown tea plants are broadly classified into the early terrace tea (the large-leaf varietal), and the new varietal that was introduced from workers' cooperatives in the 80s. There are also a lot of other plantation tea varietals that were developed in recent years. Small-leaf varietals make up a very small proportion of the tea plants in the Yiwu region. Out of all the areas in the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains region, Yibang is probably home to the most small-leaf tea plants. This small-leaf varietal also displays some variation in flavor, a result of the influence of the surrounding environment over a long period. Some people are unaware that small-leaf tea actually thrives in Yunnan, but there are many plantations in Yunnan, mostly producing green and red tea. There was a time, in fact, when green and red tea exceeded puerh production.

# Yinn & Tuerh



These are some of Master Chen's Yiwu teas that we have collected over the years. If you come across a tea he has made, it is surely of great quality and from oldgrowth trees. His connections there go back decades, and he supervises the production to ensure quality. To the right is the small village of Mahei, where ancient and modern live together. Every time you visit, you can see the modern world slowly overcoming the jungle, with electric wires, paved roads and television antennae. On the one hand, it is great that these areas are developing economically, which will result in a better quality of life for the aboriginals, including better schools and medicine. However, on the other hand, this could spell the end for many aspects of their culture, including holidays, language and tea production, of course, which will shift more and more to plantation tea processed by machines. We hope that the tea culture of these areas stay alive, and that this education will help preserve it.





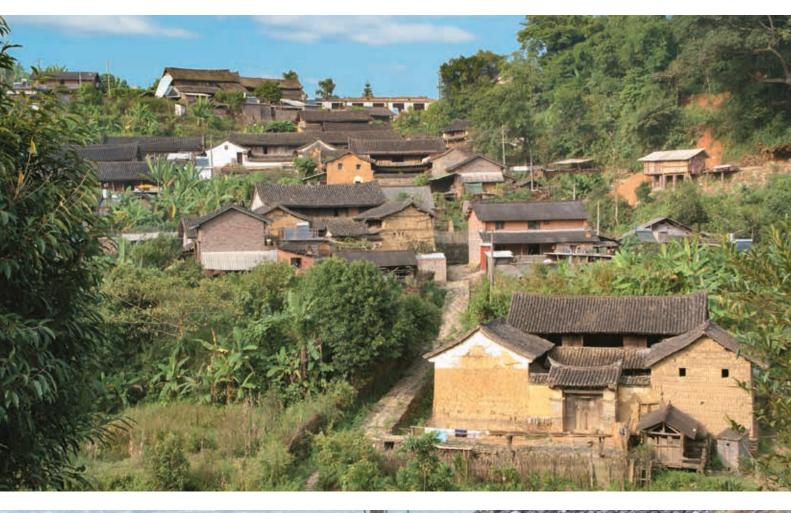
Yiwu can basically be divided into two parts: in the north is the Manla tea region, and in the south is the Yiwu region. The main tea-producing villages in the Manla region include Xujia Liangzi, Zhangjia Wan, Dingjia Zhai, Yangjia Zhai, The Yao ethnicity Dingjia Zhai, Wangong Zhai and Yishan Mo. The villages producing tea in the Yiwu region include Mahei, Luoshui Dong, Gaoshan, Manxiu, Yibi, Da Qishu, Sanhe She, Cha Wang Shu, Tianba and Guafeng.

The teas from the Manla region and the Yiwu region itself differ slightly in terms of aroma, though both essentially display the characteristic Yiwu aroma, a sweet fragrance with a hint of sourness. The only difference is that the teas from Manla also have a subtle glutinous rice scent. The prices of the

raw tea leaves from the group of villages in Yiwu are interlinked, with the current prices in Mahei and Liushui Dong generally setting the standard. The price of old-growth tea is highest in the villages of Guafeng and Dingjia Zhai, but the price discrepancy is within 15%. Although Banzhang tea commands the highest price, it is only produced in the one village, whereas Yiwu has nearly twelve villages. So, in terms of total market value, Yiwu tea can be considered the market leader. In recent years, due to overly high prices, some of the villages in Yiwu had a surplus of tea, which led to a decline in quality. This has meant that a lot of the tea tends to be on the weaker side; however, there is still a lesser amount of raw leaf from the wild tea forests that has retained its high quality.

The cultivated "old-growth" tea plants in some of the villages display a significant amount of dwarfing, particularly noticeable in Mahei, Luoshui Dong, Yibi, Da Qishu and Sanhe She; in recent years, the Dingjia Village has also shown this trend. The area surrounding Mahei and Luoshui Dong is also home to a lot of plantation tea; most of the villages are surrounded by a number of new plantations. The purity of the tea varietals tends to be the biggest concern for the tea pickers, especially in the two scenic villages of Mahei and Luoshui Dong.

Guafeng Village is largely inhabited by people of the Yao ethnicity, and was originally built for reasons that had nothing to do with growing tea. Guafeng Village only really started producing tea around 2003.







It used to function as a tea distribution point, rather than a production area. Guafeng is now an up-and-coming tea village, and the territory of Yiwu has once again been redistributed following the non-stop development of new resources.

In the Manla region, Dingjia Zhai is considered the most important village, and the villages of Yangjia Zhai and Zhangjia Wan produce tea with a very similar flavor. These three villages have always been hotly contested territories, yet the price fluctuations for Yiwu tea still tend to be fairly moderate. This year's Yiwu spring tea has increased in price by about 80% over last year's autumn tea; this sort of price increase confirms that Yiwu still holds a certain place in the hearts of Chajin, and that old-growth tea still leads the way in setting the trend for Yiwu tea prices in general.

The main section of terrace tea in Yiwu is located near Tianba, on the old terraces surrounding the township of Yiwu. Both the age of the tea plants and the price of the tea are highest in this area. Excluding the new terraces developed in recent years, Yiwu still has tea terraces operated by ten production teams. The highest-altitude garden is the old Yiwu terrace, and the other terraces decrease in altitude in order of their production team number, from Terrace Ten to Terrace One. The terraces can be broadly divided into high elevation and low elevation. The prices of terrace tea are largely based on the price of Tianba tea, and the tea leaves grown here are usually provided to large factories.

Manla's terrace tea has a slightly stronger flavor than Yiwu's, and the price of tea from the old terrace gardens is about the same as that of Tianba tea. Yiwu's terrace tea is under threat from the low-priced terrace tea imported from Jiangcheng, which has restricted the price of Yiwu terrace tea to a certain extent. However, since 2007, Yiwu tea has remained the market leader for terrace tea. This goes to show that the appeal of Yiwu tea remains undiminished, and consumer trends indicate that the future is looking increasingly brighter for teas from the big-name tea mountains. This year, amid the current slump in market prices for products of the large factories, big-name mountain teas seem to have

become a safe haven for investment. This has led to a surge of interest in Mount Yiwu, and it seems that the price fluctuations for Yiwu terrace tea will likely become even more extreme.

From the current state of the market, it looks like future trends are heading in two opposing directions: either toward large-scale, well-known brand names, or toward big-name tea mountains. In terms of the big brand manufacturers, after this year's price cuts of Menghai's products, the market is trending toward being dominated by only one major player. The price of tea from the famous tea mountains, on the other hand, is just beginning its trajectory; this year's price increase for Yiwu tea is clear proof of that. This year, the prices seen in Yiwu "antique" tea trading have blazed new trails; the most astonishing was the trading price for Fu Yuan Chang tea. This has all provided a positive momentum for the market price of Yiwu tea.

Compared with Menghai oldgrowth tea, Yiwu tea is a softer tea, while Hai old-growth tea is more vigorous. Although the flavor of Yiwu's old-growth tea is slightly less robust than Menghai's, Yiwu tea has a longer-lasting sweet aftertaste. Traditionally, most Yiwu tea was processed by hand in small-scale workshops with an abundance of different tea products being made. In Menghai, on the other hand, most production was carried out in large factories. So, the products of these two areas displayed some differences. For a long time, the growers of Yiwu old-growth tea have been privately concerned about environmental degradation and dwarfing among the trees, both of which stand to influence Yiwu tea's long-term development. Awareness of these issues is still to be raised across the entire production area; the climate of Yiwu is gradually changing, which is likely related to the excessive land clearing and over-cultivation of recent years. These climate changes influence the growth cycle of the tea trees. Some examples include an unseasonable warm period in late autumn of last year, which caused chaos in the tea's growth cycles, and heavy rains this year in early spring. All of this has had an effect on the quality and output volume of Yiwu tea. These climate changes have produced aberrations or shortages in the supply

of agricultural produce, which have thrown the pricing of Yiwu tea into disarray. For tea collectors, this can be both good and bad news; the bad news is that this may produce considerable variation in quality, while the good news is that it may also cause significant price fluctuations.

The substantial rise in the price of agricultural produce in recent years is closely related to the abnormal changes in the global climate. Together with changing consumer attitudes, these conditions have led to an upward trajectory for old-growth tea. Over the long term, the Six Great Tea Mountains, on both sides of the Lancang River, will continue to lead the market for Yunnan old-growth tea. Of these, the Yiwu tea region is still a crucial player. With its hundreds of years of history, Yiwu's special status in the hearts of Chajin will become even clearer and more significant in years to come.



There are ancient trees all throughout Yunnan, and even in Yiwu. Some of the trees are several hundred years old and can grow more than twenty meters tall. These ancient trees will produce tea that is much better than the terrace tea. In the beginning of terrace tea production, such tea was at least clean of agrochemicals, but nowadays more and more farmers have been bated by chemical merchants into polluting their land. However, the forests are still pristine and, therefore, finding old-growth tea from forest gardens is still possible. Furthermore, there are healthy eco-arboreal gardens in and around villages and an effort is being made to protect older trees like this one from over-harvesting and other detrimental agricultural methods.



Cha Dao Series

# How to Choose

# a Bowl



**本A: Wu De (**無的)

ne of the greatest joys of the tea lover is seasoning one's teaware, watching it change and grow as you both travel the tea road together. There is a real friendship that grows between a Chajin and her teaware, and after some years she may find herself choosing the morning's tea based not on the weather or the session, but on which of her friends she wants to spend time with—which pieces of teaware are calling out to her. We can also learn a tremendous amount from our teaware, just as we can from Tea, if we learn to pay attention, listen and be receptive. Our teaware can teach us how to use it and why, showing us the easiest road down the mountain, like the waters that have found their way through our tea and into our bowls. And as we learn to recognize that the teaware demonstrates the method, as does the Tea, our sensitivity grows and we find ourselves waking up to the places where life meets Tea and Tea becomes life: to the Dao of this Cha.

Over the years practicing the methods of this lineage, I have often stumbled upon subtler and subtler verification as to why particular movements are genius. When the movements in our brewing methods were taught to me, I was, of course, told the main reasons why we do things that way, both external, practical reasons and internal,

spiritual ones as well. But then, over the years, as I continue this practice, I come upon other, subtler practical or spiritual reasons why that is done and realize that the magnificence of the technique goes way beyond my understanding. This is one of the reasons why lineage is important, as it is the accumulated wisdom of many students who became teachers, but kept on as students and took it all further, passing the new, deeper version to their students who become teachers... I have actually found very, very delicate, yet very practical and useful aspects of a technique that eluded me for decades. I used to think that the perfection of these techniques was due to the wisdom of the ancient masters and the accumulated force of many generations passing on a growing body of wisdom through the years, but I have recently realized that, while ancient wisdom and lineage are indeed important reasons for the high degree of refinement in these techniques, there is also another important aspect: the teaware itself.

I have come to realize that some of the insights that add to the growing body of teachings transmitted to each generation is taught not by the teacher, but by the tea and teaware. I know this because I have added to and adapted this body of wisdom through what I have learned from Tea and teaware.

Bowls, pots, cups and other kinds of teaware do have a way of communicating, like all things. And if you are sensitive you can see that they "want" to be used in a certain way. "Want" isn't the right word, but we haven't a better one: when I say that a bowl "wants" to be used in a certain way I do not mean that you have to use it that way, but rather that when you use it that way, you and the bowl work together more harmoniously and with greater precision. The bowl "wants" to be held in a certain way, for example. This means that when you hold it that way, the process is smoother. I don't play basketball, but I have noticed that every player shoots the ball with one hand behind the ball, arm pumping, and the second perpendicular on the side (I assume for stability). Literally, all the pros shoot that way. This doesn't mean there isn't a time for breaking this rule, like when doing a one-handed lay-up. Shooting in this way is based on the ball itself, the physics of shooting and the ergonomics of the human form. The harmony of these forces creates more precision in a shot and more accuracy in shooting the ball over time. This is not a style or a fad. It is the way the ball "wants" to be shot. This method has been learned over time through lots of trial and error to be the most precise and harmonious way to shoot



a ball. In the same way, teapots, cups, bowls and other pieces of teaware show us how they want to be held.

Our gongfu lineage emphasizes experiential understanding through a lot of experimentation. We experiment constantly to verify the teachings and to understand them ourselves, as opposed to just repeating them. This is important, as it brings the lineage to life in us. And we never stop, always cultivating the beginner's mind, which is humble, receptive and open to more learning—repeating the experiments every now and again and never with a feeling of knowing or having arrived at mastery. The only tea masters are those who have passed on. The rest of us are students of the Leaf. As I repeated the experiments throughout the years, each time refining my understanding, I realized that the teaware was speaking to me. That I was learning as much from my pots and cups as I was from the Tea.

My growing understanding, especially of subtler levels was as much due to the teaware teaching me as it was to the lessons I have received from my teacher. The pot and cups really do "want" to be used in a certain way and if we use them in that way, we not only make better tea, but harmonize with their nature more and more—becoming the brewing process. In that

way, we find the places where these instruments were designed for humans by humans and travel deeper into the magic, which is that though these instruments were created to be used in a certain way, as humans used them over time, the instruments also taught the humans how to refine, adapt and evolve the form to better suit the use. As I listen to my teaware, I grow more and more sensitive, and with that sensitivity more understanding is communicated from instrument and process to me. I learn more about the reasons why the teaware is shaped as it is and why I use it in the way I do, and how using it in that way helped evolve its shape to this one, and so on. If people used a teapot, for example, in a specific way for hundreds of years and as a result of that evolved the shape and design to suit that use—refining this as their experience grew. Then using that teapot in some other, random way will mean that we will miss out on all the subtle advantages that went into the evolution of this particular form (maybe over centuries). We will also be blocked from experience of fluidity and harmony, of truly becoming the process, if we don't use the pot as in the way its form was evolved to be used.

Sadly, in recent years, fewer and fewer teaware makers have a strong tea practice. Much of the teaware produced in Asia is done for money. If the ceramic market for flower vases was stronger than teaware, they would all make vases. Without an understanding of the way an instrument will be used, one may be able to make an attractive new version, but it will never be very functional, or appealing to those who have some expertise. You need to be a photographer to make a camera that professionals want to use. Without an understanding of how and why photographers use cameras the way they do, it would be impossible to design one that would impress an experienced photographer. When you make teaware based on its appearance, without concentrating at all on its function and use, it will never really shine as teaware, which has always been art with purpose and movement. The best teaware looks good, but also makes great tea and is in harmony with the Chajin. In fact, forced to choose, I would take an unattractive pot that was made of great clay, made awesome tea and functioned perfectly over a pretty one to put on a shelf and look at, since it is dysfunctional when used.

In fact, as our tradition has grown and its influence spread around the world with more and more people brewing tea using our methods, we found more and more ceramicists who make teaware have noticed this.



A growing market means it's worth making bowls and sidehandle pots without having any experience brewing tea this way, without any connection to our lineage and its teachingsmerely doing so because there is a financial opportunity to do so. Let us not disparage that too much, though, as we want more variety and hope that the trend increases. However, without experience brewing tea in this way, such teaware will never offer the perfect blend of function and form. After all, if the artist is testing the pots with a different grip, pouring differently than we do, then they will design the work accordingly, which is to say that it was not designed for the way we will use it. In such an instance, there are three possible solutions: 1) the potter makes the ware loose and general so that it can be used in multiple ways, which means refinement isn't there and as sensitivity increases through years of practice the piece will become less attractive; 2) we switch brewing methods and use the method the maker was using when she created/tested/evolved the form; 3) the potter learns our method and practices it, refining her pieces to suit our needs.

#### The Gongfu versus Bowl Tea Quest for Teaware

As a beginner, we choose our instruments based on the way they look or feel, but as your practice develops, you choose more and more based on what the instrument means to your practice, subtle nuances in technique, etc. Before we really know how to prepare tea, of course we cannot use the criteria that we learn in tea brewing to choose our teaware. The best way around this is to rely on our teachers or elder brothers and sisters. My teacher gave me my first Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) pot, even before I was able to taste what such a pot can do to tea liquor, let alone understand what it offers technique-wise. Similarly, when I first started in photography I was interested in cool specs and the idea of what a camera can do. As I grew in experience and knowledge, I stopped seeking gear for its own sake and began asking what specifically that piece of gear could improve and whether or not I should be doing that task on my

own. I also learned how a camera feels in the hand, the subtleties of using it and how function relates to form in deciding on a camera to use.

There are degrees of precision and accuracy when it comes to any work and the instruments we use to practice. Sometimes having a tool that can do many tasks in a mediocre way is better than a tool which can only do one task extremely well. We have a perfect old pot that can make excellent aged puerh in very small quantities because it is only 50cc. It does that one thing exceptionally, but wouldn't be great to take on a tour in which I was going to be hosting many different kinds of sessions for different numbers of people and with different intentions. I would rather have a general-purpose pot for that. This is important because, in general, gongfu tea is much more precise than bowl tea. After all, gongfu means "skill." Gongfu tea is about mastery, sensitivity and a growing ability to brew the tea beyond the ordinary. Bowl tea is about a relaxation of the critical mind. Bowl tea is about ceremony, ritual space and meditation. Obviously, the functional criteria we use to choose teaware for these different brewing methods is also very different.

For gongfu tea, there is much more precision in every aspect of the brew down to even using smaller muscle groups in our fingers as opposed to using larger muscles in bowl tea. As our sensitivity improves and our skill with teaware also develops, we focus on minutiae, for these small details become more influential as our sensitivity improves. They also add up. Many small effects greatly influence a tea when they are added together. This does not mean that there is no aesthetic feeling in gongfu tea or teaware—there is, it's just more limited by the necessity for the teaware to function properly and with a greater precision the more your skill develops. In gongfu tea, most of our choices follow function, in other words.

With bowl tea, function takes the back seat. It is important, as we shall discuss, but there is more room to wiggle. Bowl tea is far less precise. The bowls are bigger, the movements more gross, we focus on relaxing away from hyper-sensitivity and instead on sacred, ceremonial space and ritual movements that are precise more be-



cause they have inner spiritual depth than outer practical function (though the technique is practical). This means that the functional limitations of teaware for bowl tea is lesser and allows for more personal freedom on the part of the artist making the teaware and the one choosing it. Since we aren't focusing with as much alacrity as possible on the texture of the tea liquor, for example, we can choose bowls and a sidehandle pot made from many different kinds of clay, as opposed to the extremely limited variety that produces the best results in gongfu tea. And that is just one example of many, which means, in essence, that it is much easier to choose teaware for bowl tea and that we can use our own intuition, feeling and personal aesthetics to make our choices.

Don't assume, however, that gongfu tea is *all* function and bowl tea *all* form. This is just an introductory way of discussing the difference between these methods. Gongfu tea can, in fact,





Mostly, the choice in bowl is an aesthetic one. There is a lot less function in bowl tea than in gongfu tea. This doesn't mean that function doesn't matter, though. One important aspect of choosing bowls is to choose light colors. In white bowls, we can admire the beautiful colors of various tea liquors. Dark bowls can be nice to brew green teas, especially tianmu bowls, but all the liquor looks the same in them. For that reason, we prefer lighter bowls.

be very meditative and there is some function in bowl tea as well, which is really what this discussion is all about (how to choose bowls).

For the most part, we teach beginners to let go of function in bowl tea in favor of accessibility. Get started, in other words, and don't let the need for particular teaware to get in the way of drinking and sharing tea ceremonially every day! Use rice bowls if that is all you have. Start by putting leaves in the bowl and adding water. I usually say that the first and only criteria for beginning a tea practice is to only drink tea, which means no multitasking: when you sit down for tea, just drink tea! This is more important to the overall influence a tea practice will have on your life and your friends and family as well than which teaware to use. Eventually, though, we do reach a level where Tea has become a part of our lives and we're ready to get some "real" teaware for bowl tea. Doing so improves our tea on two levels:

firstly, since teaware was made to be teaware, as opposed to rice bowls, for example, it will make a difference on an energetic/spiritual level; and secondly, if the teaware is made by an experienced tea drinker following the criteria we shall discuss below, it can make a functional difference in our ability to make better bowl tea ceremonies for ourselves and others.

Basically, choosing teaware boils down to aesthetics and function. For gongfu tea, function plays a greater role than appearance and vice versa for bowl tea, which is more about how the piece looks and feels. Since this conversation is about how to choose a bowl, there is, of course, nothing I can say about which bowl looks nice to you, inspires you to drink tea and which bowl feels right for you. What is left is a small amount of aesthetic advice based on my experience, some functional teachings about how a bowl is used in our tradition and what makes a good bowl (functionally) for using when following the methods we teach. Hopefully, these criteria will help you choose a bowl!

#### The Aesthetics of the Bowl

Most of the aesthetics of choosing a bowl will be about your personal preference and aesthetic. You will be the one to use the bowls every day, so they should feel great to you. You should walk by them and want to use them. I always tell the students at the Center that a *chaxi* is successful if you walk by it and are reminded to drink tea. If you look at the bowls and are drawn in by a feeling similar to what you experience in a tea ceremony, those are aesthetically pleasing bowls. Beyond what speaks to us each individually, I can think of only three aesthetic factors worth sharing, mostly based on my experience with lots of bowls: the spirit in which they were made, simplicity and color.



We have already discussed the spirit of teaware production, but it is worth repeating that the best teaware is always made by someone who loves tea and understands the method in which that piece will be used. I think a respect for Tea and for the ceremonial space the teaware is used in is also beneficial to the overall quality of the bowl. I wouldn't want to make art for a lineage I knew nothing about and had no experience with just because it was a way to sell more pots. Understanding the spirit of the method, the teaware will function better. Also, if the artists love tea with a passion, that love will translate in their work and a Chajin will feel more connected to the bowls as a result.

The further I travel in tea, the more my aesthetics simplify. Simplicity is a pillar of great art. And as Lu Yu said in the *Tea Sutra* (茶經), the spirit of tea is simplicity. When I first started out many years ago, I was interested in carved dragons, floral patterns and oth-

er richer aesthetics in my teaware and tea space, but over time I have gravitated more and more towards simple, ordinary aesthetics. I think that when one begins exploring tea, the tea ceremony can be about blasting off into shamanic visions from the bowl to great mountain-peak vistas that let us see the big picture, helping us to understand our relationships to ourselves, Nature and each other. However, the further we travel, the more this practice becomes about capturing the universal and steeping it in the ordinary-gathering the stars like lightning bugs in a net and letting them shine in the simple mason jar of our teapot. While you may be attracted to bowls with many colors, splashes of this or that, extravagant designs, etc. trust that as your tea journey unfolds, you will be called to simpler teaware that is understated and yet full of ordinary spirit.

A good example of the simplicity aesthetic relates to this month's issue and our discussion of *tianmu* bowls

specifically. When I first started traveling in China to learn about tea, Song Dynasty (960-1279) tianmu bowls were still very cheap, so the Center has a small collection. However, I never chose the fancy bowls that were perfect—the ones made by collectors and preserved on glass shelves in nice boxes. I always chose the ordinary bowls, some of which were misfired. Early on I realized that almost all the misfired pieces were destroyed as they couldn't be sold, so if one survived until today it meant that one of the employees who worked at the dragon kiln took home the misfired piece to use as daily pottery, just as tea farmers often drink the down-sorted or misprocessed tea. To me, a bowl that was used by ordinary folk over the centuries is far more beautiful and full of tea spirit than a fancy bowl that someone kept on a shelf and never used.

Finally, color is relevant when choosing a tea bowl as we mostly want to choose light-colored glazes.



Dark bowls do not allow us to enjoy the color of our teas, turning all our tea the same color. In Chinese, the word for enjoying tea is "pin (品)," which consists of three mouth radicals (口), representing the mouth, nose and eyes. Tea is a lovely color, and appreciating this is an essential part of bowl tea ceremony. Therefore, we choose bowls in which at least the inside is light in color and preferably as white as possible as other light colors can also change the tea liquor's color too much. The exception to this is, obviously, bright and fresh green tea, which is the opposite: thriving in a dark bowl that accents the brightness of the green and has a magical ability to make a green tea session glow. If we drink a lot of such green teas, we would get a very nice tianmu bowl, as that is a pair made in Heaven. Otherwise, choose light bowls for most

Beyond this advice, follow your heart and choose bowls that feel right for your ceremonies, at least aesthetically. There is some functional advice worth covering, like the size and shape of the bowl, which do play a role in our ability to prepare tea in this way.

#### Function & Bowl: Size

The first aspect of a bowl's function that we need to discuss is a controversial one: size. Those of you who have discussed bowl size with me know that I feel strongly about this issue, but just remember that as I type this, I am smiling. In our tradition, we practice bowl tea and gongfu tea mostly. As we explored earlier, the energy of these two methods is very different—a different lineage of teachers, a different focus and often we choose one or the other for very different occasions. The magic of practicing both these methods is that they work together so seamlessly, charging and empowering one another. They are much more powerful together than either is apart and allow a Chajin to serve just about any kind of tea in any situation. A lot of the power they offer is through the dynamic each brings to the table: bowl tea for a relaxation of the critical, evaluatory mind and gongfu for a better ability to perceive quality; bowl tea for equanimity and acceptance and gongfu tea for sensitivity. The power they offer the Chajin, however, is contingent on their separation. In other words, they work well together when each is kept apart, separate and individual.

We often use the analogy of charcoal to discuss how powerfully gongfu and bowl tea can work together, since it is the space between two or more hot coals that creates enough heat to boil the kettle, rather than any one piece on its own. Another great metaphor would be a strong couple with a beautiful relationship that is healthy because both sides are independently healthy, strong and unique, while at the same time cooperating with the other towards a mutual goal.





One of the biggest mistakes people make is choosing bowls that are too large or too small, usually the latter. Small bowls are neither cups nor bowls. We call them "bups." These confuse the brewing methods of our lineage and are energetically contrary to both. Bowl tea is about relaxing parameters and letting go of the evaluatory mind. Gongfu tea is about sensitivity, brewing the tea to its greatest potential. This separation is why these methods work so well in the life of a Chajin, so long as they are kept apart. The distinction is on all levels, even the muscles used—large muscle groups in bowl tea and fine finger movements in gongfu tea. A "bup" confuses this, forcing sensitivity in a situation that should be ceremonial and meditative. "Bups are good for little children who are interested in learning tea, though. (#bupsareforkids)



In the same way, gongfu tea and bowl tea work well together when each is separate, yet cooperative. Keeping the two separate also pays respect to the purity of the traditions. Blending the lineages pollutes both, and the teachings start to mix up in ways that make either or both unrecognizable. But what does this have to do with bowls?

In bowl tea we use bowls. That's why it's called bowl tea. In gongfu, we use cups. Oftentimes, beginners make the mistake of using cups in a bowl tea ceremony, or worse yet buying some middle ground, which I humorously call "bups." Bups are little bowls that are neither suitable for gongfu tea (too big and wrong material, since gongfu tea requires porcelain cups) and too small to hold properly in ceremonial bowl tea. These bups are confused. They don't know what they are and take the teachings and brewing methods of our lineages and muddy them, dishonoring both. I would never suggest that it is wrong to use bups or that they are bad, but rather that if you do use bups it will influence the strength of both your bowl tea and gongfu tea practice in our lineage, as well as the power and effect the combination of the two can have.

What then is the proper size of a bowl? Proper bowls fit very nicely in two hands. The hands shouldn't be too separate, as they would be for a large chawan (茶碗, tea bowl) for whisked tea, nor so small that they start to become "buppish." Bowls that are too large are not suitable, as they will have too little tea in them when we use a sidehandle, and too small and we confuse brewing methods, lineages and the energy of our ceremony, since bowl tea and gongfu tea are oriented in different directions. Like the Three Bears, we choose bowls that are sized "just right." (Bups are great for kids who have smaller hands and cannot drink so much tea—bups are for kids!)

#### Function & Bowl: Shape

There are four factors to the perfect shaped bowl for ceremony: the width to height ratio, the curve on the side of the bowl, the lip and the foot. Each one will influence the functional quality of the bowl, and along with the look and feel of the bowl, glaze and spirit of the design, will help us choose the best set of bowls. For that reason, it's worth exploring each of these in detail:

Width to height ratio: In part, this factor could be summarized as the size of the bowl, in which case the choice is "just right," which means not too large or too buppish. But even within the right size bowl, the width to height ratio should be balanced and harmonious. A low, open bowl can be okay for drinking green tea in summer (liquor cools down quicker) and acceptable for leaves in a bowl tea, but doesn't work for other teas or brewing methods like sidehandle or boiled tea ceremonies. The bowl should fit comfortably in the hand and not be too tall and narrow, nor flat and open. If you do drink a lot of green tea or leaves in a bowl, a set of wider, flatter bowls may be great (too tall and narrow is never good), but if you only have one set we would recommend a more balanced bowl that could be used for these and other teas and brewing methods.

The curve on the side of the bowl: The bowl is designed for the hand. Turned upside-down, the curve of the bowl should fit perfectly in the palm. The palm of the hand is the perfect shape for a bowl. When we have spun the bowls to wash/rinse them and have then placed the bowl in the palm to shake up and down three times and remove the final drips of water, a great bowl fits perfectly into our hands. This is also the ideal shape for holding the bowl when drinking and helps preserve the temperature of the tea. As you work with bowls in ceremony, you pass them from hand to hand, spin them to hand them out, offer them to guests and wash them. Throughout all of this, the perfect, palm-shaped curve will have a subtle influence on the handling and fluency of the bowls. Of course, when





the bowls fit our hands, they are also nicer to drink from as well. Make sure the bowl has a proper curve—large, straight bowls are *chawan* for whisked tea.

The lip of the bowl: For the comfort of the mouth when drinking tea, the rim or "lip" of the bowl should flare out slightly. The angle and distance of the flare is important. If the flare is too strong, the bowls will be awkward to grab from the top, which means clumsy to hand out or turn. If the rim is too short, thick or stubby, it won't be comfortable to drink from. A perfect rim extends just a bit, with a slight curve that matches the lips and also thins out ever so slightly, allowing the tea liquor to pass into the mouth much more smoothly.

**The foot:** The foot of the bowl is very important, as it rests in our hand. Not only should it be a bit wide, but it

must also be the right height, which will depend on the clay and glaze used. The thickness and height of the foot will depend on how much heat the bowl conducts. With the right clay and a thicker glaze, the foot can be shorter. Most bowls, however, benefit from a slightly thicker and taller foot as it prevents the bowl from getting too hot to handle.

An indentation under the rim: This is not a necessary option, but makes tea drinking much more comfortable. Since ancient times, some tea bowl makers have created a concave line just below the bowl's rim on the outside. If done properly in combination with a lip that extends outwards, this dip in the bowl makes drinking very comfortable, especially if the outside of the bowl is also glazed. A smooth glaze, thin, flared lip and an indentation just under the lip make for the ultimate tea drinking experience when it comes to

bowl tea, as your mouth seems to connect to the bowl as comfortably as a kiss.

#### The Chawan in the Heart

The true tea bowl is in the heart, and the ones we collect are expressions of that, just as the leaf is the tree's expression of love. A good *chawan* is a tea lover's first and oldest friend. It is the only teaware we take with us into the forest when we leave home. The last session, I imagine, will be in a bowl as well. So let us raise a bowl to all the tea bowls of the world—those of the past, present and yet to be made—Tea's oldest and dearest friend. May you find a great bowl to walk with you throughout your life of tea!

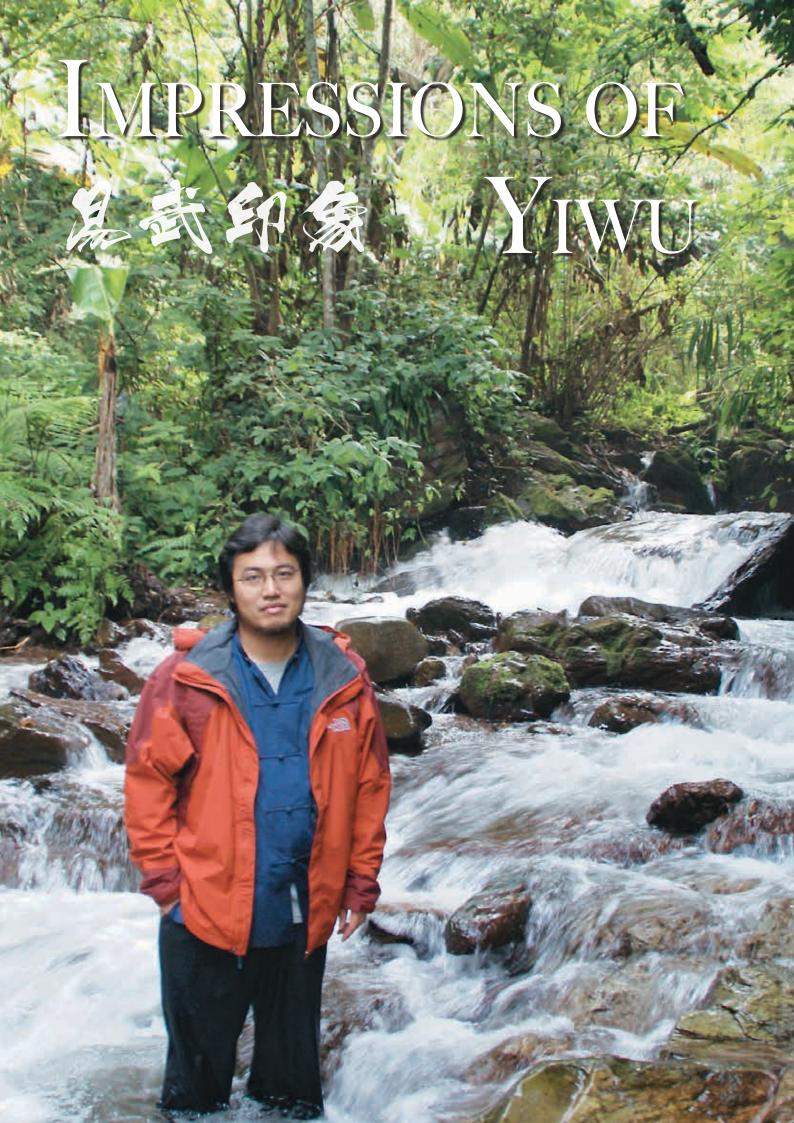








🌣 The best bowls feel a part of your body. When guests learn how to hold the bowl properly, they often share that the bowl then feels a part of them—inside their being, communicating more easily. A well-made bowl facilitates this. This is, in fact, the difference between a bowl made with tea spirit, and by a potter who understands how it will be used, and another kind of bowl, like a rice bowl, or a bowl made by a potter who doesn't drink tea or not in the way we intend to use the bowl. The most important features of a well-made bowl is its color, shape, the rim, the foot and maybe an indentation as well. The bowl should not be too open or too tall, but fit the hands perfectly, keeping them open and comfortably apart. It should be light in color to see the tea liquor. The foot should be tall enough so that the bowl isn't too hot to handle and the lip/rim should flare slightly to make drinking comfortable. When you find such a bowl, it connects immediately.



Master Chen Zhitong has immersed himself in the world of Yiwu tea for many years. With a spirit of dedicated research, he has uncovered many mountain peaks in the Yiwu tea mountain area that were previously unknown to the market, bringing excellent tea leaf sources and untouched natural ecosystems into the public eye. His work has provided clear and accurate information to tea consumers, offering people an invaluable source of information and an objective perspective on Yiwu tea.



本A: Chen Zhitong (陳智同)

unnan's ancient Six Great Tea Mountains are situated in the northeastern part of Xishuangbanna Autonomous Prefecture. This was also historically known as the Jiangnei area (on the central side of the Lancang River). In the past century, it was the most important region for the production of tribute tea, and is famed for its authentic Yiwu tea. The Yiwu tea region was not actually listed among the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains—only the neighboring Mansa tea mountain was officially included. Despite this, the output of the Yiwu tea mountain is equal to almost half that of the Six Great Tea Mountains combined.

In the past, Yiwu and Yibang functioned as processing and distribution centers for the historical tea mountains. Later, due to changes in the transportation network, they gradually went into decline. However, many hundred-year-old Yiwu teas still enjoy a high status in the collector's market, which has further elevated the Yiwu tea mountain brand in the eyes of consumers. The mellow, sweet flavor and lingering aftertaste of Yiwu tea have also cemented its leading position in a market that is gradually trending toward more emphasis on terroir. At present, Yiwu and Banzhang Village are the two main names in old-growth tea. They both have earned the respect and aren't just hype.

However, the current output of Yiwu tea, whether in terms of value or volume, far surpasses that of Banzhang. The main reason is that Banzhang tea is only produced in the one village, located on Mount Blang, whereas Yiwu actually encompasses the whole of the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains area. So, in addition to a higher output, Yiwu also has more market influence than Banzhang. In general, it's much easier to purchase Yiwu tea than Banzhang tea; however, purchasing tea from specific villages in Yiwu such as Chawangshu or Wangong is just as difficult as purchasing Banzhang. As the puerh tea tasting sphere continues to mature, the trend toward more detailed sales information is inevitable.

The ancient Six Great Tea Mountains region borders with Laos to the east, with the national border covering a distance of 87.3 kilometers. The region also neighbors Jiangcheng to the north, Jinghong city to the west, and the Lun and Yao regions to the south. The area includes Youle tea mountain, which falls under the administrative area of Jinghong city. The tea mountains cover an extensive area, with most of the land ranging between 800 and 1,700 meters in altitude. Across the whole region, the elevation varies by about 1,400 m. From the lowest temperature of 0.5° C at 100 m above sea level, it's clear that the climate in the area is varied and multi-dimensional. The soil types in the area include red soil, latosol and lateritic red soil, with pH value typically ranging between 4.5–6.5, which is excellent for tea plants. The average temperature is 23° C, with typical yearly lows of 10° C–13° C. Yearly rainfall is around 1,700–2,000 millimeters, with the majority of rainfall occurring in the summer, which is why summer tea tends to be priced somewhat lower.

Yiwu is covered by clouds and mist year-round, which tend to clear in the afternoons. Gazing at this land-scape, you would almost think you were looking at Taiwan's tea villages. Mount Yiwu stands tall like a horse proudly raising its head, encircled by mountains and rivers. It's no wonder the people of Shiping decided to make their home here a hundred years ago. The terrain and *feng shui* are both excellent here in the Han village, providing a nurturing home for the Han culture that has existed for thousands of years.

Most of the tea trees on the Yiwu tea mountain are large-leaf trees, with small-leaf tea trees also scattered across Yibang and Gedeng. The old tea trees in Yiwu are all Assam tea, and vary in terms of when the gardens/plantations were developed and how they are managed. The tea plants can be essentially classified into old-growth tea and terrace tea (gardens and plantations), or forest and village tea.

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In terms of when the gardens/plantations were established, they fall into two development periods: one established by the inhabitants of the Han village and the other by people of the Yao ethnicity (from the Yao village). If we classify them by natural environment, some of the tea trees grow as part of a natural ecosystem while some grow in mixed-growth forests. If we classify the tea by region, the relevant divisions are the Yiwu, Manla and La regions. Although there are varying styles of tea in these regions, they all share the same broad Yiwu tea characteristics. Below, we will further explore the classification of Yiwu tea by tree type and era the garden/plantation was established.

#### Tea Tree Types

Let's put old-growth tea aside for a moment and discuss Yiwu's terrace-grown tea. Terrace tea makes up most of Yiwu's tea production, with the best terrace tea coming from the terrace plantations at the Yiwu township itself. Because most of these are old terraces, the quality of the tea is superior, especially in the areas surrounding Tianba and Dianchang. Other villages such as Mahei and Luoshui Dong also have tea terraces, but the Han villages still lead the market in terrace tea. These places set the price standard for Yiwu terrace tea.

Most of the output comes from ten production teams, each in charge of a terrace. The terraces steadily climb in altitude from Terrace One to Terrace Ten. Terraces Eight to Ten are essentially a part of Yiwu village, and their altitude and tea prices are relatively high. The only difference between this tea and the tea from Yiwu itself is that the tea trees are somewhat younger, and the flavor is a little lacking in stamina.

Since the ten terraces increase in altitude, the tea from terraces Six to Ten is priced higher than that from terraces One to Five. These terraces have become one of the main sources of Yiwu tea leaf for the large factories. Yiwu terrace tea has a refined manufacturing process and a mature natural environment, meaning that it surpasses many of the old-growth teas from the Yao village area, whether in terms of leaf

shape, kill-green or the manufacturing process. Because of this, many visitors to Yiwu buy terrace tea mistaking it for old-growth tea, largely due to the refined manufacturing and delicate shape of Yiwu tea. On top of this, the flavor of Yiwu teas is characteristically fresh, sweet and mild, so without taking the aftertaste and other factors into consideration, it's not surprising that people would make this type of mistake.

The mass-production of terrace tea in the Han village poses a threat to the purity of the old-growth tea from the same places. In addition, the increasing output from the Han village in recent years, as well as the increasingly strict management, have had a negative influence on the flavor of the tea from the Han village. This indirectly led to the emergence of the Yao village. However, terrace tea still plays an important role in the Yiwu tea region; in terms of price difference, terrace tea is certainly more competitive.

#### Garden/Plantation Age

The tea gardens/plantations in Yiwu can also be classified according to age, with the Yao village gardens and the Han village plantations being developed at different times. The basic dividing line between these two groups falls in 2005. Prior to that year, Yiwu tea was concentrated around the Han villages. These include Mahei, Luoshui Dong, Yibi, Da Qishu, Sanhe She, Gaoshan, Manxiu, Zhengjia Liangzi, Zhangjia Wan, Sanqiu Tian and the Han Dingjia village. The main Yao villages include Guafeng, Wangong (Yi Shan Mo) and the Yao Dingjia village (upper and lower villages). Sadai and Zhongshan are other areas neighboring the Yao district that are also quite active in harvesting tea.

A major difference between the Han and Yao villages is that the Yao villages did not have any tea gardens or terrace plantations when they were first established. The Yao people from these villages mainly harvested oldgrowth tea from the neighboring mixed-growth forests or state-owned forests. This meant that one Yao village could harvest tea from a large area of surrounding forests. This is why I have always purchased my tea leaf at Yiwu.



We'll leave any further discussion of the Han villages for next time; for now, let's focus on the Yao villages, which are less well-known to the market. In 2005, when I started buying tea from Yiwu, my existing impression of Yiwu tea was that the flavor tended to be fairly weak. After I came into first-hand contact with the tea at the local markets, I realized that there were several reasons for Yiwu tea's relatively mild flavor in the past. We'll discuss these in the following passage.

#### **Excessive Management**

Those who are familiar with the world of wine know that in the wine-producing regions of France, irrigating the vineyards is forbidden, as irrigation influences the overall flavor and quality of the grapes. For the same reason, this year's spring drought in Yiwu also boosted the flavor and sweetness of the tea. Watermelons are also affected in a similar way, with dry periods resulting in especially sweet melons. Stress can help produce a higher quality leaf, though too much will harm the tree.



One problem facing today's puerh industry is that many people have very complicated ways of thinking about this kind of very simple principle. This irrigation principle is also why tea harvested in the summer, known as Yushui ("rainwater") tea, is the lowest-priced tea of the whole year. But due to the relatively high temperatures in summer, the tea leaves of Yushui tea are long and attractively shaped, which goes to show that, especially in tea-producing areas, the best-looking things are not always the most useful.

Spring tip tea, on the other hand, often has shorter leaves, which is mainly due to the relatively low spring temperatures in Yiwu, plus the growth rates and daily sunshine hours, which are also on the low side. So the leaves of genuine spring tip tea are less attractive than terrace tea leaves. Why is this? It's because in human-made plantations, the farmers have considered things like the sunlight hours, angle of sunlight and growth rate, and have worked out an optimal combination of these factors. Harvesting is also faster in these plantations, and prior to harvesting the spring tea, the old leaves are removed quite thoroughly. This all naturally increases output, but it also decreases the strength of the flavor

#### The Uses of Yushui Tea

For a long time, the market has placed a certain value on the physical appearance of old-growth tea, with the perception that the longer the tea leaves, the more representative they are of old-growth tea. This has led many people to consider the length of the leaves when choosing tea. In reality, Yiwu's terrace tea is the most beautiful and finely processed. This market preference has led to changes in processing methods: during the rolling stage, more emphasis is placed on the shape of the leaves rather than on the flavor that is produced after the cell walls in the leaves are broken down. This is why the flavor has become weaker.

Yushui rainwater tea is very widely used to keep costs down. For example, both this year, in 2009 and 2007, the leaves of the spring tip tea were very short, but those of many other Yiwu teas were especially long. The temperature in Yiwu is basically divided

into two periods, on either side of the water-sprinkling festival or *poshui jie* (潑水節) in mid-April. After the festival, the tea leaves grow more rapidly and get longer. Prior to the festival, the leaves are shorter and the price is at its highest, which is related to the temperature.

However, the people in the Yao villages do not use this type of time division. This is because the tea leaves that they harvest grow naturally in mixedgrowth forests, which provide richly diverse ecosystems where the tea trees mingle with other trees and plants. Just like in a tropical rainforest, the forest floor is rich in rotting vegetation. Because the ecosystem is naturally in balance, there is no need for pesticides; in fact, it would be impossible to use them on such a scattered population of tea plants. However, because the tea trees here grow naturally, the surrounding environment limits the amount of sunlight the tea trees can receive, slowing their growth. Hence, spring tea grows much more slowly in the mixed-growth forests than in the Han villages, which is why the spring tea in the villages of Wangong and Guafeng was so scarce this year.

The crucial point for spring tea in the mixed-growth forest generally falls on the fifteenth of April, which is slightly inconsistent with the old method of time division. On top of that, recent years have seen unusual changes in weather patterns, which interferes with the growth cycles of the tea plants. This often leads to a situation where various tea gardens/ plantations mature at different times, and means that the harvesting time for spring tea is inconsistent. Ancient records relating to mixed-growth forests appear in the Classic of Chinese Tea (中國茶經), including a description of "sunny cliffs and shady forests," which also acknowledges that diffused sunlight is a characteristic of these forests. If the amount of sunlight a plant receives is altered, this will also alter the process of photosynthesis. From my understanding, this results in a slower growth rate, and is also the reason why the old-growth tea cultivated in mixed-growth forests is much more full-bodied than the tea grown in the Han villages. So, from the above discussion, we can determine that while summer Yushui tea certainly grows quickly under the influence of sunlight, temperature and rainfall, the flavor also becomes weaker. This effect can often be observed in the products of the large tea factories.

#### **Increased Harvest**

The Yiwu tea region was established quite early, although it subsequently went through a period of decline. Later, from the 1990s onward, people from Taiwan began going to Yiwu to obtain tea, so the development and management of the Han villages began to get back on track. In 2003 and 2004, Yiwu tea experienced a substantial price surge, which also sped up the dwarfing of the tea trees and increased over-management in the Han villages. At present, the biggest problem in the Han villages is that the production volume and harvest frequency are too high. The number of harvests within one spring tea period has doubled, which has inevitably weakened the flavor—a predictable result. We can see evidence of this principle by weighing an equal volume of tea leaves from the Han villages and the Yao villages:

the Han village tea is much lighter. When brewed, the thickness and flavor of the liquor are also very different. Does this indicate that the quality of the tea leaves from the Han villages is simply much lower than the tea from the Yao villages? Actually, the main factor is this issue of production volume. It's also the reason why this year, Guafeng village has begun to overtake Mahei and Luoshui Dong in terms of tea prices.

Why was 2005 a crucial year in marking changes to tea from the Yao villages? Because prior to 2005, the Yao people lacked knowledge and training in the craft of tea-making; the processing techniques they used were quite basic. More importantly, it wasn't until 2005 that tea prices rose high enough to make it an attractive prospect for the Yao people to venture into the wild, mountainous mixed-growth forests to harvest the tea that grew there. Harvesting tea from the forests required a large amount of labor, while education to improve processing techniques was relatively simple to achieve. So, from 2005, a large amount of tea leaves from new sources entered the Yiwu tea market. These new teas were vastly superior to the Han village teas in terms of sweetness, purity and overall mouthfeel, but the prices were also the highest out of all the leaf in the area. After I went to Yiwu and discovered the tea leaves from these new sources, I realized that Yiwu tea prices needed some revision; the previous limits of Yiwu leaf had been surpassed, and new territory was being charted.

In the Han villages, people often talk about the concept of "purity" of the leaf. In the strictly managed style of tea gardens in the Han villages, with consistent conditions, it's possible to achieve this ideal. However, in the Yao villages, this concept of "purity" is really just an empty buzzword. Because the mixed-growth forests cover such a large area, with the tea trees generally quite scattered, the amount of sunlight the trees receive varies a lot. In addition, the tea trees are of all different ages and varietals; all this makes it impossible to achieve this ideal of "leaf purity" that exists in the Han villages.

In Guafeng village, it's clear from a bird's-eye view that the village was established around different principles than the concept of *feng shui* favored in the Han villages. It has quite a menacing appearance, somewhat similar to the mountainous features of Hsiaolin village in Taiwan, that was recently affected by storm damage. At a glance, you can tell it is not a tea-producing village. The people of Guafeng village essentially harvest tea from the surrounding mixed-growth forests, and then gather it up to sell under the name of the village. So, there isn't a single unified price for Guafeng village tea, but rather several prices. The cheapest tea among these is Baisha He.

Most people who go to Guafeng village to buy tea leaf tend to choose Baisha He. However, there are actually a number of other tea leaf sources within the Guafeng village territory, including Cha Wang Shu, Chaping and Heishui Liangzi, as well as Jinchang river and Tongqing river. So, because there are so many different leaf sources, this is another reason why "pure leaf" does not exist in Guafeng village.

I believe that in coming years, mixed-growth forest tea will emerge as a force to be reckoned with. This is one of the main reasons why I produced my Yiwu Chawang tea when I was in Yiwu. In the next issue, I will provide a more detailed introduction to the characteristics of Guafeng village leaf, in the hope of allowing more Yiwu tea enthusiasts to better understand Yiwu, and to make the right choices when choosing their tea.



\*Master Chen hikes deep into the forests of Yiwu, surrounded by old trees. The big ones, like the one shown on the cover, are very rare. Most branch off lower down, with more trunks. Sometimes this is natural; other times it is because the trees have been pollarded, which is thought by some to increase yield. This tree is naturally shaped in this way, however.



# LEGENDS OF A MAN A MAN



The history of Yiwu is deep and vast. This region has produced tea for millennia and has shared tea with the empire for centuries. Tea from Yunnan was sent as tribute to emperors, some of which sent commendations to the frontier in gratitude. At one time, the town of Yiwu was a bustling marketplace home to exiled scholars and merchants from across the realm and beyond. And there have always been intrepid tea lovers blowing through, then and now, in search of the fabled golden elixir. In this article, we open the books to look into Yiwu's rich past.



茶∧: Zhou Chonglin (周重林)

#### A Modern-Day Streetside Scene in the Old Village of Yiwu

The Yi women of Shiping are sturdy of waist and leg; they step out, laughing at the frailty of the men. They bear their burdens on long journeys through the tea mountains; the tea leaves are as sharp-tipped as the women's ill fortune.

How can one help being born under an unlucky star? They hear people singing the Longcong song.

All together, they begin dancing to the beat; the men do not comprehend the women's misfortune.

Do you not see? In the town of Puerh, there are a few households in the south; every household has tea from Simao.

O, young people, drink tea, and not liquor; lest you become drunk and reach for the daggers at your waists.

—Excerpted from "Poems from the House of Jade Pipes" by Shen Shourong (沈壽榕, 1823–1882)

here is a well-known saying in the puerh world that goes something along these lines: "Yiwu is the emperor, and Jingmai is the empress; Banzhang is to the left, and Ku is to the right; Nannuo is in front, and Blang is behind." Of course, there are many variations of this saying circulating at tea gatherings and between tea masters.

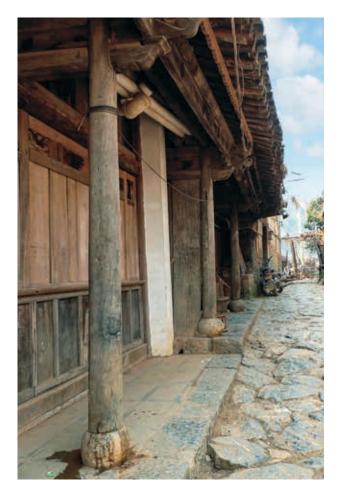
After the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the Yiwu tea region suddenly gained a lot of importance, though historically it was not as famous as the legendary Six Great Tea Mountains. Yet even today, as in the past, Yiwu still plays a starring role as the biggest name in the world of puerh. Every day brings the arrival of a continuous stream of puerh pilgrims, journeying through dense forests and along winding roads, ready to jump out of their cars at any moment to clear away rocks and stumps that might block their

path. Perhaps they may even have to stop for a while to wait for a heavy fog to clear before they are finally able to find their destination: the ancient village of Yiwu, hidden deep among the mountains and forests.

Then, at the direction of the locals, they arrive at the school; this is the starting point of their search for the bricks and tiles of times gone by. Following the old road, they wander among the old houses, weathered by the elements. The stones are mottled, the old road is muddy; in front of the houses, tea cakes dry evenly in bamboo baskets. The fragrance of tea mingles in the air with the smell of manure from the cows and sheep, and the villagers are already starting their harvest report. Parked in one corner by a cattle shed sits a BMW X5—a reminder that the tea industry has undergone fullscale changes and is still changing today. Indeed, since 2004, the spring tea prices here have been continually high; the yearly income for one tea-farming household can reach several hundred thousand *yuan*. Even after the price instability of 2007, this area is still the first choice for tea sellers looking to buy puerh leaf.

According to Dianhai Yuheng Records by Tan Cui, an imperial graduate in the Qing Qianlong Emperor's era, "Puerh tea is famed throughout the land. Puerh tea is produced at the six tea mountains: the first is called Youle, the second is Gedeng, the third is Yibang, the fourth is Mangzhi, the fifth is Manzhuan and the sixth is Mansa. The area is about eight hundred li in circumference, and several hundred thousand tea-makers inhabit the mountains. Customers buy the tea and ship it everywhere. It is unclear when puerh tea became well-known; after the Song Dynasty shifted its capital toward the south,

## Yun & Tuerh





Above the brick porch that leads to the road is ancient mortar, here since the days of the Old Tea Horse Road. The cobblestone streets have been worn down by the footsteps of many generations of people and animals. Some of the wood pillars on the houses also date back to ancient times. They have stood the test of time, witnessing the births and deaths of the occupants. And to the right, tea withers in the sun as it has done for centuries in these villages. There is, therefore, tea surrounding the village in the mountain forest and within as well.

the military from Guilin went westward with horses to trade for tea from Diannan (southern Yunnan)." These days, apart from Youle, the other five of the Six Great Tea Mountains are all located within the territory of two townships in Mengla county: Yiwu and Xiangming. Local Yiwu scholar Gao Fachang (高發昌) believes that the "Mansa" listed among the ancient Six Great Tea Mountains is, in fact, modern day Yiwu.

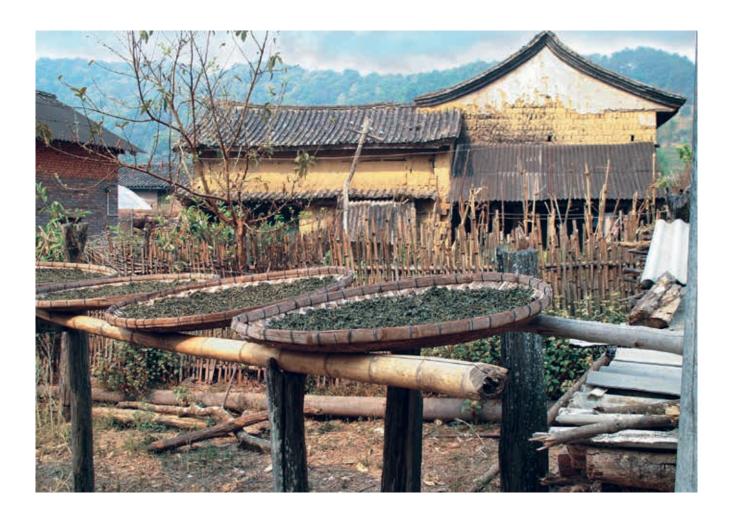
The figures put forth by Tan Cui regarding these tea regions are really just rough estimates. When you consider the whole of the Lancang (upper Mekong) river valley, which has tea plants growing practically everywhere, Tan Cui's estimated "eight hundred li in circumference" is surely too small (one *li* is roughly equal to 500 meters). On the other hand, the "hundreds of thousands of people" reportedly living there at the time seems like an overestimate; it would indicate that because of the tea industry, such out-of-theway villages as Yiwu and Yibang were transformed for a time into booming, bustling marketplaces.

Yiwu is located on the northern bank of the Lancang River, close to the border of Laos. The soil, sunlight and rainfall conditions are all ideal for plant life, and the area is densely forested. The local people have regulations for raising any type of crop or livestock, from the wild big-tree tea plants to cattle, horses, sheep, chickens and pigs. When people first settled in Yiwu, they let large numbers of domestic pigs run loose in the forest and squeal like wild pigs; some outdoor enthusiasts would even bring bows or crossbows to shoot the domestic chickens that roamed the forests. In the past, some people would even hunt bears in the forests to show hospitality to guests from far away. In the last few years, as environmental awareness has grown, eating bear's paw is now almost unheard of in Yiwu.

For a long period in history, Yiwu was the point of origin for the tea trade and was the most important town of the many starting points on the Old Tea Horse Road. Flipping through historical records and travel notes, you will notice that prosperity and decline are twin sisters. Yibang, which

had previously prospered thanks to its small-leaf tribute tea, saw its population fall rapidly from 90,000 people during the reign of the Qing Qianlong Emperor to fewer than 1,000 during the reign of the Guangxu Emperor. In the end, the booming tea industry still couldn't overcome the ravages of malaria. Southern Yunnan, with its dense old-growth forests, has many such heart-rending stories.

The decline of Yibang meant that Yiwu became the new distribution center for the tea region, and the arrival of people from outside villages and towns also provided new momentum for the development of the area. In the Qing Daoguang Emperor's era (1821-1850), tea mountains such as Manzhi, Jiabu and Xikong gradually began to decline, leaving Yiwu to take their place. Some material regarding this can be found in Resources on the History and Culture of Banna, compiled by Zhang Shungao (張順高) et al. According to these records, in 1912, the Yiwu tea region produced 5,000 dan (250 tonnes) of tea, more than the four tea mountains of Yibang, Mansa,



Manzhuang and Gedeng put together. In 1957, Yiwu produced 1,250 *dan* of tea (62.5 tonnes), which was still more than the output from the other four tea mountains, including Yibang.

## The Era of the Shiping Merchants

The village of Yiwu is mostly made up of people of Han ethnicity, which is very conspicuous in a region like Xishuangbanna that is mostly inhabited by ethnic minority peoples. During the reign of the Qing Emperor Qianlong, a group of traders arrived from Shiping and set up tea businesses in Yiwu. From then on, the history of puerh tea began to revolve around these Shiping merchants and their tea shops in Yiwu. Since 2004, antique puerh teas from Yiwu brands such as Songpin and Tongqing have become synonymous with sky-high prices, and many people have joined in reviving these tea labels and singing their praises. (They are amazing aged puerh teas, of course.)

According to research, many of the tea merchants in Yiwu were Han people who arrived from Shiping County during the eras of the Qianlong and Yongzheng Emperors. The area surrounding modern-day Yiwu and Yibang is still home to many of the descendants of these Shiping merchants, who now grow or sell tea in the region. They still speak the Shiping dialect, which sounds quite different from the dialects spoken in the surrounding parts of Xishuangbanna.

In 1382, the 15th reign year of the Hongwu Emperor (also known by the temple name Ming Taizu), Yunnan was pacified under the Ming Dynasty. During that time, a large number of soldiers were conscripted to guard the borders, and a large number of civilians from the Central Plains and Jiangnan region were resettled in Yunnan to cultivate the land. They were settled in three types of villages: military, civilian and commercial. These new arrivals brought with them tea manufacturing techniques from farther inland, including knowledge of tea planting, plantation management and processing methods for tea balls and loose-leaf tea, such as steaming, firing and sun-drying. The descendants of the Han people who had migrated to Shiping brought all these techniques with them when they moved once more to Yiwu.

In 1734, the 11<sup>th</sup> reign year of the Yongzheng Emperor, a Shiping immigrant by the name of Xiang Zhiqing (向質卿) opened the Tongxing tea shop in Yiwu. Three years later, in 1736, the government implemented a regulatory system where merchants were issued a sales and distribution license after paying their taxes. After the tea merchants returned to Yiwu, the Yiwu tea region gradually began to shift its focus to tribute tea. At first, tea processing was carried out by the early "tea shops" set up by the provincial government at Simao.

Merchants gradually began to set up their own tea shops, mostly under the supervision of the local authorities. The tribute tea made by the local tea shops enjoyed a period of fame, and Yiwu was acclaimed throughout the area as "the home of tribute tea."

## Yinn & Tuerh

In that year, probably influenced by this state of affairs, the Liu family opened a tea shop by the name of Tongqing. Since Xiang Zhiqing (the founder of the other tea shop, Tongxing), was from Shiping, he later also founded the Tongyuan Li Tea Company in his native Shiping. In pursuit of outward expansion, the Xiang family also founded the Tian Fu Tai Company in Hong Kong. Later, during the Sino-Japanese war, the Tongxing brand closed down under the effects of wartime chaos, and later in the war all the Xiang family descendants gathered up and returned to Shiping.

The original founders of the Tongqing brand were members of the Liu family from Qingtian in Mayang County, Hunan Province. In the Ming Dynasty, after the military arrived in Shiping, the family settled in Baoxiu Wuying in Shiping County. There they became part of a land cultivation unit and made their living largely from farming. They also engaged in some business in the neighboring counties, and in 1725, the second reign year of the Yongzheng Emperor, one of the Liu family ancestors, Liu Hancheng (劉漢成), went to Shiping and began trading in tea.

The process for making traditional Tongqing brand puerh tea was slightly unusual. According to the recollections of elderly Tongqing tea workers, they compressed the tea cakes fairly loosely, so that if they blew on one side of the tea, the puff of air could reach the other side. This meant that even with tea cakes of equal weight, the experienced old tea hands could discern their quality just by feeling the weight of the cake in their hand and turning it around a little. From their discussion, it transpired that they could also generally tell whether or not a tea cake was genuine old Tongqing tea. (These recollections appear in Records and Observations of the Old Tea-Horse Road by Mu Jihong (木霽弘), Yunnan Education Publishing House, 2001.)

Life wasn't easy for the early Shiping migrants to Yiwu. Up until the 54<sup>th</sup> reign year of the Qianlong Emperor, the Shiping people went back and forth between the two places: "Far from home, they had no fixed dwelling, and traveled in and out of this village rife with malarial mists...." (Quoted from the Shiping County Guild Hall

Monument of Achievements, Mansa.) One migrant from Shiping by the name of He Jincheng (何全成) settled on the mountainside at Songshu Lin, establishing the Cheng Xing Chang tea shop. Later, his two sons moved on a little further to Shi Menkan and planted a large amount of tea there. Prior to 1967, they moved on again to what is today's Mahei Village. Up until the present day, seven generations of the He clan have lived in Mahei, and almost all of the sixty-three households who currently live there are descended from Shiping immigrants.

The Yang family who live at Yiwu's Dingjia Zhai (literally "Ding Family Village") and at Manla's Xujia Liangzi ("Xu Family Ridge") all moved there from Shiping. According to the elders from those two villages, along with Zhangjia Wan ("Zhang Family Cove"), six generations of descendants of the Shiping immigrants have lived in the area. After several years of labor, the Shiping immigrants to Yiwu not only revived many of the old tea plantations, but also planted new tea near the villages, gradually invigorating the tea industry of the Six Great Tea Mountains. Because most of the original tea shop owners were from Shiping, the Qing Dynasty saw Shiping county guild halls built in almost all the main centers in the old Six Great Tea Mountains region, such as Yiwu, Yibang and Manzhuan. Unfortunately, these guild halls suffered great damage during the Cultural Revolution, and hardly anything remains of them today.

Today in the center of Yiwu, there stands a temple-like building, a monument to the deity Guandi that the locals call the "Great Yiwu Temple." In fact, this building used to be the Shiping guild hall, which was built in the mid- to late-Qianlong era (1711-1799). Inside it are shrines to the bodhisattva Maitreya, historical figures Zhuge Liang (Kongming) and Guan Yu, and tea sage Lu Yu. They are quite different to most of the temples in Xishuangbanna with their strong influence of Theravada Buddhism. The Great Yiwu Temple displays clear influences of Han culture, reflecting the connections between Shiping and Yiwu during that period.

Inside the temple is a wellpreserved monument, known as the Tea Case Stele, that was erected in the 18<sup>th</sup> reign year of the Daoguang Emperor. It's made from a long rectangular stone tablet, or stele, upon which the prosecutor in charge of court cases related to tea taxes, Zhang Yingzhao (張應兆), chiseled a record of the relevant cases and judgments. The text on the stele totals 1,147 Chinese characters and is divided into two sections, the "Case Notes" section and the "Official Rulings" section.

The "Case Notes" section contains the following passage: "I consider the situation very excessive in this line of business. The imperial officials do nothing about it; everything is unreasonable and causes disputes. For example, Yiwu spring tea is taxed at one tael and seven or eight mace (unit of measurement equaling 1/10 a tael) per dan (unit of weight); is this not truly excessive? In the fourth year of the Daoguang Emperor's reign, I accompanied Xiao Shentang, Hu Bangzhi and some

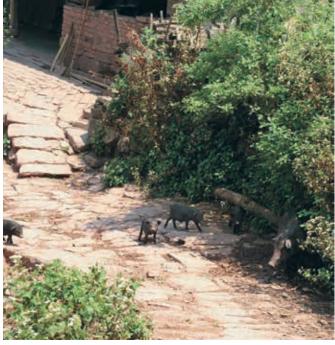


others to make an appeal, requesting that the tax be reduced to seven mace and two candareens, as it seems this would be of great benefit to the region. In the seventeenth year of the Daoguang Emperor's reign, my two sons, Zhang Rui and Zhang Huang, were fortunate to begin attending school, and I went to the mountain to ask the Yiwu officials to grant this assistance to the tea farmers, as it seemed quite reasonable. But Wang Congwu and Chen Jishao not only incited the governor in Yiwu not to give this order, they even petitioned him to find and imprison the others. Their gang acted like tyrants and refused to discuss the tax cuts. So, I went again with Lu Wencai and some others to make an appeal through His Excellency Governor Hu from Nandao and Governor Huang from Puerh, who passed the judgement." There were continual fluctuations in the price of tea, and taxes were high. The repeated tax increases meant that tea merchants struggled to turn a profit. As well as being a valuable source of information about tea, tea taxes and related laws and legislation of the period, the Tea Case Stele also reveals that the Shiping tea merchants understood how to use lawful strategies to protect their interests-incidents pertaining to tea taxes had historically been the cause of several uprisings among the peoples of Puerh and Banna. So, Zhang Yingzhao showed great wisdom in these words that he wrote on the stele: "...lest, with the passing of time, we tread once again into old ruts."

A work entitled A History of Yunnan, written by Ni Tui (倪蛻) the 7th reign year of the Yongzheng Emperor, contains a record of the governor E Ertai (鄂爾泰) establishing a tea shop in Simao, overseen by the local magistrate. The tea produced at the Six Great

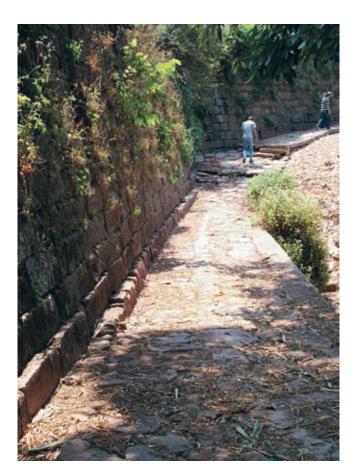
Tea Mountains was all bought locally by tea merchants who then on-sold it in Puerh, thus avoiding a significant amount of taxes. Later, private individuals were no longer permitted to buy and sell tea, and a unified system was developed to deliver the goods to Simao. This made things very difficult for the local people: the road to Simao from the Six Great Tea Mountains was very long—whether their shipments of tea were large or small, how were they supposed to feed and water themselves for that whole long journey and still make enough off the tea to earn a living? The author Ni Tui laments this situation: "For the ordinary people, tea is their only livelihood; they can barely make a profit, though they wear themselves out. Moreover, the cultural authorities claim this tea as a tribute, and military officials seize the land to live on, cutting the trees from their roots and clearing the hillsides.





This is a new museum featuring the Six Tea Mountains of the area. The building itself is very old but has been renovated with the new income that has resulted from the puerh boom. Soon there will be a modern road and buses of tourists will follow. But just around the corner, in an alley, village pigs wander into and out of some eco-arboreal tea gardens from the ancient roads that have been here for centuries. China's development is rapid and the new and traditional often coincide in a single building, or the old ways are just around a bend. There is a tremendous amount of history here.

## Yinn & Tuerh





These circumstances have left them no choice but to protest." These unpopular policies lead to repeated uprisings and rebellions, and in 1736, the first year of the Qianlong Emperor's reign, the government sub-prefect at Youle (who had been instated in the 7<sup>th</sup> reign year of the Yongzheng Emperor) was forced to retreat to Simao.

According to the Tea Case Stele, Zhang Yingzhao's ancestors arrived in Yiwu prior to 1789, the 54th reign year of the Qianlong Emperor, and began cultivating tea. This was probably a result of a migration policy implemented during the mid-Qing Dynasty which involved incorporating local chieftains into the bureaucratic system. Many people attributed Yiwu's "Shiping merchant phenomenon" to economic and cultural conditions. On a map of Yunnan's territory, Yiwu is the closest area to Shiping. Thanks to large scale migration since the Ming Dynasty and the economic stimulus of the nearby mining industry centered in Gejiu, the region of Shiping prospered and developed toward southern Yunnan over several hundred years. The increasing influence of Han culture also brought

cultural changes and effective business operations to the area. The tea industry in Yunnan moved past the concept of tea regions, and entered a new era of tea shops and tea brands.

## An Auspicious Tribute to the Celestial Empire

Today, on a streetside in Yiwu, there hangs a wooden placard that reads "An Auspicious Tribute to the Celestial Empire." This reproduction of an original artifact is connected to a story about the Daoguang Emperor and a man named Che Shunlai. One of Che Shunlai's descendants, Che Zhijie (車志潔), tells how Che Shunlai went to Beijing to attend the imperial examinations and was recommended for a place as a tribute student. To express his thanks to the imperial household for their recognition and patronage, he arranged for an examination supervisor that he'd met while taking the exam to deliver some of his handmade Che Shun brand tea to the palace. Thanks to the particularly rich and mellow

flavor of the tea, the Daoguang Emperor became extremely fond of it. Afterward, he gifted this placard reading "An Auspicious Tribute to the Celestial Empire" to the owners of Che Shun tea, allowing the Che family to hang it above their lintel for generations. He also bestowed upon Che Shunlai the honorary title of Jinshi (a successful candidate of the highest imperial examination) and gifted him the robes and hat of an official. The emperor commanded Che Shunlai to send his puerh tea to the palace as a tribute every year. Another version of the story posits that in the 20th year of the Guangxu Emperor's reign, an administrative official from Yunnan named Jiyong Batu went to the imperial court in Beijing. Another local, Li Kaiji, entrusted Jiyong Batu with some of his homemade tea balls to take to court and present to the emperor. In return, the emperor presented him with an inscription bearing the words "An Auspicious Tribute to the Celestial Empire." Jiyong Batu put the inscription on a scroll to give to Li Kaiji, who had the characters put on a placard and hung it above his door for all to see.







This is the Old Tea Horse Road from Yibang, leading to Yiwu. The old road carried silk, tea and other goods all over China and beyond to Tibet. In the Qing Dynasty these villages were much wealthier. Directly left is the remains of a wealthy scholar's home. The foundation still remains. Above is the location of the original Antique Era tea factory called "Tonxing," which closed in WWII. This is one of the most famous brands in puerh history, so the site is a mecca for lovers of aged puerh.

This phase of becoming an "Auspicious Tribute to the Celestial Empire" is considered a great honor in the history of puerh tea. The first time I visited Yiwu, I had a great deal of trouble trying to find this placard; it turns out it had been taken down and hidden away somewhere and was nowhere to be seen. Later, the next time I was there, I finally found it and paid 20 yuan to take a picture. Then, on a subsequent visit, the replica of the placard had mysteriously appeared and was hanging on the roadside in Yiwu's old street. You could take as many pictures as you liked, and nobody was paying any attention or showing any curiosity about it at all.

Perhaps, in this one story of a wooden placard, we can find the concentrated essence of all the stories from this land. If we take a closer look at the significance of tributes and the royal household, we find that imperial associations hold a certain sway in the market now just as in olden times. Among the teas on today's market you will find all sorts of accompanying leaflets pointing out once-celebrated families and their hidden connections

to the Qing imperial court. If we open our lens wider and take a look at world history during that period, "afternoon tea" as popularized by the British royal family had become an important part of daily life in England. Later, during the Opium Wars, plant hunters took tea plants stolen from Yunnan and planted them all over India, disrupting the Chinese tea industry's leading position in the global economy and culture. A few years down the track, the total yearly sales income of China's entire tea industry was, devastatingly, not even equal to that of a single British tea company.

In the time of the Nanzhao kingdom, Yiwu was considered a "profit city" for the Nanzhao regime, and was of great use on the tea-horse market and in maintaining their alliance with the Tibetan regime. At the same time, the Nanzhao kingdom had set up administrative units along the route between the Six Great Tea Mountains and Dali. These were called Buri Jian (步日龄) and had jurisdiction over a large area around the Lancang River, including the Six Great Tea Mountains where Yiwu was located (a "jian"

was an administrative unit, and "bu ri" literally means "stepping with the sun," since travelers on the road would travel and rest in time with the sunrise and sunset). The precise route that was used during that period is unknown, as no reliable records of the route appear until later, during the Qing Dynasty.

#### Setting Out from Yiwu

Historical records show that the Old Tea Horse Road had its origins during this Nanzhao kingdom period. Puerh tea's unique ability to aid digestion and help the body eliminate excess grease made it very popular among the Tibetan people. Puerh tea became a staple among peoples who consumed a lot of meat and dairy products, and was later shipped north to Qinghai, Gansu and Mongolia. In the pursuit of good tea, the Tibetan people travelled thousands of miles; they crossed snowy mountain ranges, navigated down the Jinsha River and trekked through thick forests to bring their horses, dairy products and Tibetan medicines to trade for tea. The trade was bidirectional.

And the route was forged bit by bit; as the multilateral trading continued, the route became more established. As the dynasty grew, the tea-horse trade became more and more standardized.

In the Song Dynasty, the kingdom of Dali renamed the Buri Jian of the Nanzhao era "Buri Bu" (步日 部), and established tea-horse trading markets. Many different political regimes traded for what they needed: tea for horses, horses for brocade. People of many different ethnic groups interacted much more frequently due to the tea trade. In the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the name Buri (步日) evolved again, into Puri (普日). At this point puerh tea had become an important commodity traded across borders by many different peoples. In Mongolia, tea cakes had become a legally recognized currency, and puerh, along with other types of tea, made its way via Mongolia to Russia. The Khitan people acted as middlemen in the tea trade, which lead to the Russians using the name Khitan to refer to Chinese people in general. Along with porcelain and silk, tea was changing the face of China, and these three products became China's main overseas exports.

During the Ming Dynasty, the name Puri (善日) changed further, to the version we are now familiar with: Puerh (善耳 or 善洱). From that point on, the form of the name became fixed, and the Qing Dynasty saw the establishment of the Puerh Prefecture, with an official puerh tea office which managed the planting, processing and sale of the tea. This marked the beginning of the era described as "the Great Qing, when puerh flourished."

During the era of the Qianlong Emperor, the puerh produced at the Six Great Tea Mountains was designated as a tribute tea. Each year, 660 dan (33 tonnes) of tea were sent as a tribute; after the tribute, people were allowed to privately trade any surplus. During the Qing Dynasty, Yunnan's copper and salt mines followed in the footsteps of tea and experienced a boom in profits, leading many people from outside provinces to come and invest in the mines. These growing industries lent each other an astonishing amount of momentum; many new marketplaces appeared following the rapid expansion of copper and salt. In the blink of an eye, the area became bustling and prosperous: "Many peoples lived side by side, all in the business of tea...they rely on the tea mountains for their livelihood. Han people coexist with other peoples; men and women are all engaged in trading; soldiers and peasants work in peace and contentment; salt and tea are traded alongside each other."

The following passage appears in New Records of Zhenyue County by Li Fuyi (李拂一): "During the rule of the Qing Daoguang and Tongzhi Emperors, the Yiwu region produced 70,000 dan (3500 tonnes) of tea. By the 30th year of the Guangxu Emperor's reign, Yiwu's tea production had fallen to 20,000 dan (1,000 tonnes) due to the effects of the war." Yet, this still couldn't dull the brilliance of Yiwu—Qing Dynasty Yiwu tea brands such as Tongqing, Fu Yuan Chang, Songpin and Tongchang are still renowned in today's puerh circles for their rich history.

#### The Three Bridges to Yiwu

In a volume entitled Mengla County Records, there is a record of the text from the "Yong'an Bridge Tablet Inscription." This passage describes an episode relating to the Mozhe River during the reign of the Daoguang Emperor. Anyone traveling to Yiwu had to cross it, but the river flooded and cut off contact between Xiangming, Yibang and Yiwu. "The road from Yibang to Yiwu was how the country procured its tribute tea"-naturally, such an important route certainly had to be repaired. The inscription from the tablet states that: "Yunnan is of great importance to the south and is mainly involved in tea. Much of the tea is produced in Yiwu. To reach the mountain, one must take a certain path. The way is dangerous and craggy, and the passage between Yibang and Yiwu is intersected by the Mozhe River. Mountain peaks encircle the valleys; the summer and the autumn brought heavy rains, and the river overflowed with surging waves. With the rushing rapids, it was impossible to cross on the ferry, and along the banks there were uneven patches of sodden ground. The traveling merchants who used this route were no longer able

to follow it, lest they meet with disaster. Come the following summer, Xiao Mianzhai, a scholar from Simao, traveled this route, and deeply sympathized with the hardships of those who used it. He made a request of his contemporary, Wang He, who invested around three hundred silver pieces to initiate a solution." The author of the inscription was Simao government sub-prefect Bai Chengbin.

If you take Yiwu as a starting point, then this bridge is the first one on the Old Tea Horse Road. Both officials and ordinary people contributed the funds for building it, as evidenced in the following passage: "An official from the government at Simao contributed forty taels of silver; the successor to the position of Shi Dao from Cheli Xuanwei contributed thirty taels of silver; Wang Naiqiang from Shiping contributed one hundred taels of lead; He Ceyuan from Shiping contributed one hundred taels of silver, He Yong from Shiping contributed sixty taels of silver and He Chao from Shiping contributed fifteen taels of silver." Merchants from Shiping were the most motivated to fix the bridge and were also the only private investors—this gives us an insight into the unique position of Shiping merchants in the Yiwu tea industry. Another passage tells how: "For each dan of tea that was transported out from the mountain, there was a fee of five fen of silver. Once the works had been completed, the fee was no longer collected." This was just like the road tolls that we pay today.

The Yong'an bridge was started in the 10th year of the Daoguang Emperor's reign and took six years to complete. It was a stone arch bridge measuring approximately 60 feet long, 9 feet wide and 18 feet tall. Once it was finished, the bridge unfortunately didn't live up to its name ("Yong'an" means "eternal peace"), as it was washed away by another flood just a few years later. In 1735, the 10th reign year of the Qing Yongzheng Emperor, the imperial court set up relay stations for the delivery horses all along the Old Tea Horse Road to Yiwu to facilitate the transport of the tribute tea, and appointed an official to oversee them. In 1845, the 25th reign year of the Daoguang Emperor, the Qing government conscripted local laborers to upgrade the dirt road into a paved road about 3 to 5 feet wide. It passed through Nonglong Ba, Huangcao Ba, Wang, Buyuan, Yibang and Manzhuang on the way to Yiwu. The whole journey covered a distance of 211 kilometers. This road was still in use up until 1954, when it was finally abandoned. After the paved road was installed from Simao to Yiwu, the Shiping merchants and the government worked together to raise funds for another arched bridge over the Mozhe River, which was completed in the 30th year of the Daoguang Emperor's reign. Unfortunately, after about fifty years of use, it too succumbed to the inescapable fate of being washed away by floodwaters.

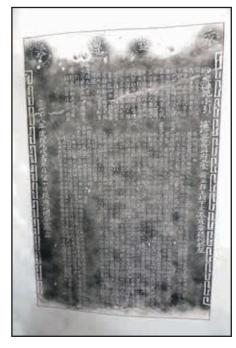
The first two bridges had both been destroyed, yet business had to continue and people had to travel, so the only choice was to rebuild once more. In 1917, the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the Republic of China, it was once again the Shiping

merchants and Yiwu Tongqing tea shop owner Liu Kuiguang (劉葵光), along with officials from Xiangming and Yibang, who raised the funds to build another Yong'an bridge just down from the site of the original one. This bridge took two years to build and was also a stone arch bridge, measuring around 66 feet long, 9 feet wide and 21 feet high. The president of the Yunnan Tea Association, Zou Jiaju (鄉家駒), made some enquiries of the descendants of the Liu family, and learned that the bridge cost around 19,000 bankai to construct (the silver bankai was the main unit of currency used in Yunnan from around the Xinhai Revolution in 1911 until the beginning of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937). However, the funds raised only totaled around 14,000 bankai, and the Liu family had covered the remainder of the cost themselves. Once the bridge was completed, it was named Cheng Tian Qiao (承天橋), or "the bridge that holds up the sky." In 1920, in order to highlight this act of generosity, the administrative sub-bureau of the 6th district on the border of Puerh/Simao presented Mr. Liu Kuiguang with a special inscribed tablet, an award for "Acting Gallantly for a Just Cause." Today, the later generations of the Tongqing tea brand have this phrase printed on their business cards in reference to this episode of history. The greatest pity is that in 2002, the "bridge that holds up the sky" was, once again, washed away by a flood. (An Informal Discussion of Puerh Tea by Zou Jiaju).











Above are old photographs of the Old Tea Horse Road from Yiwu to Simao. These pictures may be one hundred years old. To the left is an inscription from the early Qing Dynasty discussing the taxes on tea. Above is a plaque that was bestowed on a family by the emperor himself, which they kept with their precious corn. Now, only this old photograph remains.



## IN SEARCH OF ALOESWOOD



We always love these articles from the community. We hope that Tom's amazing journey to find incense and his desire to share it will inspire more of you to submit articles to us. Do not feel that because you are a student, you don't have a voice. The beginner's perspective is a very worthwhile perspective, and we have learned so much from your writings over the years. Aloeswood and tea share a long history and connection. Tom takes us on his journey to find high-quality incense in Vietnam.



本A: Tom Carrol

have a story to share, a story of seeking and learning about aloeswood throughout Southeast Asia. It's important to note that my aloeswood experience was born from friendship, and most of those friendships were born sharing tea. This is therefore as much a story about friendships and tea as it is of aloeswood. It all started sometime in the early spring of 2015. I'd begun having tea at my friend Erin's house in south Edmonton. After I'd had tea with her a few times, the topic of incense came up. I remember her saying that aloeswood was a suitable incense for tea because it is gentle and does not overpower the fragrances of the tea. I also learned that aloeswood is not readily available where I live in Edmonton. I found this interesting and tucked it into my mind for later.

In November of 2015, I became a Global Tea Hut member. I ordered my first Light Meets Life cakes (a life-altering decision). Shortly after that, in January 2016, I booked a trip to Asia to go abroad and explore. I contacted the Tea Sage Hut to see if there were any spaces available. It turned out that there was space at the end of January. Deciding to visit was another life-changing decision.

During my stay, I learned many things about tea, and everything was new to me. I was nervous showing up and not knowing anything about tea, but I was met with a warm and welcoming embrace by everyone at the Tea Sage Hut. I quickly realized that it didn't matter that I was new to tea.

A good attitude, helping where I could, listening with intent and asking questions made for a beautiful experience. I met some wonderful Chajin (also guests for the course), whom I'm honored to still be in touch with. My family of tea brothers and sisters started to grow. Thinking back to my first tea ceremony at the Hut, the sense that I remember the strongest is sight: seeing the bowls, the steam; watching the pour, the hands, the eyes, the smiles, and the chaxi—all of this looking on steadfastly in silence made the experience stronger and more profound. After the first talk began, my friend asked about shamanism in the modern world. I was blown away hearing answers to questions that I didn't realize

After being there for a few days, I asked Wu De about aloeswood one morning in the kitchen. He told me that aloeswood was a sap formed around the heartwood of the Aquilaria tree to defend itself from a fungus infection. He mentioned that the tree was native to Vietnam and Indonesia. I enjoyed this addition to the aloeswood story. One day, shopping in a local market, I was able to acquire some simple aloeswood coils. I also learned that good quality aloeswood incense, like good quality tea, can be expensive. After my first experience of tea and friendship at the Tea Sage Hut, I continued onwards to sit my first Vipassana course.

When I arrived home in Canada, I began to drink tea regularly, using aloeswood incense in my ceremonies.

Skipping ahead to November of 2016, my one-year Global Tea Hut membership was a wonderful issue dedicated to aloeswood and marked my return to the Tea Sage Hut. It was Thanksgiving 2016. We enjoyed a lovely vegetarian potluck dinner with gratitude for the past year shared around a circle of beautiful souls. During this second stay, many wonderful things happened that I could fill a book with, so I will keep my sharing to experiences related to aloeswood. I picked up a few variations of aloeswood stick incensehigher quality than the coils I had from my first visit. Wu De took us to meet Mr. Liang one day, and what an amazing day that was! I was lucky enough to acquire the same aloeswood stick incense that Global Tea Hut generously sent out with the magazine. It was one of those days when asking the right question at the right time rewarded handsomely. Before leaving the Hut the next day, I mentioned to Wu De that I was going to Vietnam and Indonesia where I hoped to find some aloeswood. Wu De asked me to let him know what I found. This is the account of what I found on my travels in search of aloeswood.

#### Hanoi

After my second visit to the Tea Sage Hut, I ventured into Southeast Asia with a heart full of joy, steeped in gratitude. My first stop was Hanoi, Vietnam. Waking up the first morning in the old quarter of Hanoi,

I had a few hours to wander around before picking up my partner, Anisa, from the airport. I walked down the street by a human-made lake in the old city. While walking, a beautiful carving of a thousand-armed Guanyin caught my eye. I stopped and stared trying to find a logical method in my mind of how I could possibly fit this twofoot statue/deity in my bag. The puzzle solved itself when I looked at the price, as it was out of my reach. I then ventured farther into the long narrow shop, and at the back I found some incense. I began asking questions, and the family who owned the shop sent over their English-speaking sister to help me. To my good fortune, I met Cam Keo and I was able to show her a Vietnamese translation for aloeswood. She called it "agar," which is another of the many names for this wonderful wood. She took me upstairs, and we sat at a display table with jars of aloeswood from different places, some pieces as large as my head. I was in sensory overload. She let me burn different pieces with a lighter, and I was amazed at how the smell was so wonderful. I bought a small amount of one kind, leaving to pick Anisa up from the airport, but promising to return again in a few days' time. I picked Anisa up from the airport, and we went out for a walk around the lake in the cool winter evening. It was so beautiful; the streets were full of people doing the same as us. The next day, after visiting a few museums, I became seriously ill. I thought I was going to have to leave the country, in fact. However, after some antibiotics and a few days of soup and tea, my health returned.

I wanted to again venture to the carving/incense shop. I brought with me the November 2016 issue of Global Tea Hut, a stick of Palo Santo and made some shou puerh tea to share in a thermos. Anisa and I arrived at the shop, meeting Cam who invited us upstairs. Her aunt and uncle were there with her little niece and nephew who were playing on the other side of the room. She invited us to sit and I offered her some tea to try and showed her the magazine, explaining to her that I was seeking aloeswood for tea ceremony. It was a cool night for Vietnam, being around 10 to 15 degrees Celsius with a nice breeze coming through a large open window overlooking the street.

This felt like the perfect occasion for a shou. They enjoyed the tea, sharing that they felt the tea was good for digestion and sleep. I wondered if they had tried shou before or if that was how all teas felt to them.

We were in the process of looking at some aloeswood when Cam was called downstairs to talk with some customers. We could hear them, and Cam came upstairs with a big smile on her face saying two Canadians were here looking for incense too. As they walked up the stairs I could see two Canadians, one being in the attire of a Thai monk. We introduced ourselves to Iason, who had ordained as a monk in Thailand four years earlier, and his hometown friend Kelly, who had come to visit him in Thailand. And together they were touring Vietnam. Jason was able to speak Thai with Anisa who is from Thailand. While this was happening, I was talking to Kelly and I learned that they were from Calgary, which is a few hours to the south of Edmonton where I live. The world was getting smaller. I mentioned tea, which is what brought me there to look for aloeswood, and of course the Tea Sage Hut came up in conversation. Kelly asked me if it was run by an American and I said yes, now curious to see where this conversation was headed. He said his friend had been to a tea center in Taiwan. I asked if his friend was from Edmonton, and he said yes. The world shrank again, as we had some of the same friends. Our mutual friend also experienced his first tea ceremony served by my tea sister Erin at my home about a year earlier. He visited the Tea Sage Hut later in the spring of 2016. I mentioned that I had been on a team of breathwork facilitators in Edmonton. It turns out that we were both registered for the same breathwork training in the coming November. I ended up staying at Kelly's house for the breathwork training, who has since become my dear friend. It fascinates me how moments accumulate momentum that changes us forever, like our first sit in reverence with tea. I mentioned to Jason that Anisa and I were looking for a place to learn more about Vipassana. He suggested Wat Ram Poeng in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Later in our travels we attended a Vipassana course at Wat Ram Poeng. Serendipity was in the air.

Back to the story of aloeswood upstairs in Hanoi... Cam had brought out some thin planks that she said she cut into small pieces for people to put in their cigarettes. A lot of people smoke incense in cigarettes in Vietnam. She brought out a jar of North Vietnamese medicinal tea grade aloeswood. She brought out some jewelry grade from Indonesia. She also had sinking grade meaning that the sap content was so high that it caused the normally floating wood to sink. I bought some tea grade; it was nice to be able to go through and pick my own pieces out. Naturally I picked the most resinous ones. The jewelry grade was more expensive. I looked through the jar trying to find the right piece, figuring I would get one really nice small piece. I found a piece caked with resin and what looked to be a reservoir of resin inside it. I excitedly handed it to Cam to be weighed. She paused, pondering for a few moments before setting it into a bowl of water. That beautiful perfect piece sank far out of my price range. She sold sinking grade for \$35 to \$50 USD per gram!

I had learned a bit more about what to look for when buying aloeswood. After this, she brought out some broken mala beads and powder scraps of the jewelry grade. This was a much more reasonable price that suited both of our needs, as I was going to make incense and she could sell the scraps. I gifted Cam with the stick of Palo Santo, and she loved it. It is far different from anything she had encountered before. We then said our goodbyes. Before leaving, we invited Jason and Kelly to our hotel for tea the next day. The following afternoon we shared a nice shou. After tea, we talked and found that we might be in Danang around the same time. If we were, we would make a point to meet up. Later that day, I sat in awe of what had transpired, feeling led by a series of synchronicities beyond anything I could possibly have designed myself. I had a feeling I would meet a few more synchronicities before returning home from Asia.

#### Danang

Next stop: Danang in central Vietnam. We arrived in Danang on a rainy evening. We awoke the next morning





Above is a piece I rummaged for out of the "unclean bin," which turned out later to be sinking grade, which means that there is enough resin in the piece for it to sink under water—the highest grade of aloeswood. Left are the very first batch of handmade cones I made upon returning home. This process has become a passion, as I will discuss later on in this article.

to a misty rain. I went to fetch water with a smile on my face. I had brought a cake of Vitality with me. The variables were so perfect for sharing Vitality: rain, view of the ocean, Anisa and myself. Danang has a beach that stretches about 15km; we were situated around the center. On the north end of the beach, we could see from our tea perch in the hotel room a 67-meter Guanvin. A mist surrounded her in the rain. When the rain cleared we went to see her. The locals say that since her construction the tropical storms and hurricanes have been tamer; they used to wreak havoc and destroy homes, now she protects them. They call her "Kuan Am," or "Lady Buddha" in Vietnam.

There was a gift shop close to the Kuan Am statue and inside there were several packages with what they claimed to be aloeswood. However, I would contest this as they were very cheap, they looked different, and I wasn't allowed to burn or smell any. I didn't buy any so I can't say for sure. The following day, there was a break in the rain so we ran to the beach for a quick swim. On our way back, we came across a jewelry shop where I could see aloeswood. Anisa and I entered and met Le Van Dai. We communicated through a translator app. He had some incense sticks that were of lesser quality. The chips he had were in three

different grades. He had a bin of light grey chips with dark spots of resinous sap on them. They seemed old and low grade to me, but they did, however, have a nice honey aroma, so I bought a small amount of them. The second bin he called the dirty or unclean bin, as there was still dirt on some of the pieces and chunks with root and/or bark on them. Again, I was thrilled to be able to pick my own pieces out. I found some beautiful pieces. There was also a smaller jar of well-cleaned, freshly carved chips for medicinal tea. I bought a small amount of these as well. A few days later, Anisa and I met up with Kelly and Jason, and we ventured together to the famous Marble Mountains at the south end of the Danang beach. They are famous for a number of reasons. The marble used to be quarried from the mountains, and many statues and carvings can be seen on the way there. There is a street of carving shops at the base of the site. The government outlawed the quarrying of marble from the mountains, so most of the carvings for sale are imported marble from China. Going into the park, there are amazing temples carved into the mountain. Some are from the Champa Empire—a Hindu kingdom that used to rule southern and central Vietnam. In addition to the Champa ruins, there were some

Buddhist temples and statues carved into the mountains. That evening we brought Kelly to Le Van's shop and I helped him pick some good pieces out of the unclean bin. We said goodbye to Kelly and Jason that night as we were leaving Danang.

#### Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City is a bustling modern city. We had set aside an afternoon to meet Huynh, who is an employee for a company who grows their own aloeswood trees to harvest. This process is referred to as "cultivated aloeswood." The cultivated aloeswood process is done through drilling holes into the Aquilaria tree. Next, they introduce fungus, inducing a response of sap from the tree to protect itself. This is how aloeswood can be made in a controlled environment. Cultivated aloeswood is grown in plantations and is also a process used on trees located in the wild. Cultivated aloeswood is easily identifiable by drill holes being visible in the wood chips as the sought-after sap forms around the hole. Huynh showed us his shop where he had several finished products, with three grades of cone and stick incense, powder, bracelets, malas, chips and oil extracts for perfume.

## Voices from the Hut





Left are many of the pieces from Huynh's shop, including some of the more uniform chips that are from cultivated aloeswood. People in Asia do make a hot tea from the wood itself, but we were surprised to receive some leaves as well, which were rolled into balls that resemble oolong tea. Huynh said that this tea helps one to sleep well.

This was the first space where I had seen an electric incense burner used to slowly burn the powder. We bought a few stick and cone selections, some powder, and some chips. The chips were very uniform and had the same amount of resin with a consistent smell. The chips from the other shops I went to had more noticeable differences in the consistency of resin from chip to chip. I've come to recognize in the Vietnam selections a sweeter honey-like aroma. I mention this in a way that is similar to being able to distinguish oolong from other teas; even though oolong has a wide range of flavors and aroma. It's identifiable as oolong to anyone who drinks tea regularly.

We did not have the chance to go and see the plantation. That would have been quite interesting, so I can hope to go there on the next trip. Anyone could see the efficiency, strain selection and uniform growing technique present in the chips. Huynh couldn't tell me if the trees were clones or what kind of mix went into the sticks, cones and powder, only that the wood was loaded into a large machine that ground and compressed them, resulting in a finished product. I didn't think to ask him about pesticides, and I'm not sure if he would have known. I did notice a number of these same

plantation-style companies online claim to be organic. Clearly there are parallels to conventional farming that is used in the tea world. I had a number of articles from Global Tea Hut running through my mind about the unhealthiness of plantation teas: the lack of biodiversity, the uniformity of clones, fertilizers and pesticides. I'm not even sure if pesticides would be necessary, as the leaves are not sought after. I reminded myself that this was an information and learning mission and to keep an open, beginner's mind—aiming to learn, not to pass judgement without seeing the whole picture. Before leaving, Huynh gifted us a bracelet and a product they were experimenting with: Aquilaria leaves, balled and processed like oolong tea. He said it's used as a healing medicine and a sleep aid. Anisa and I thanked him for his kindness and bid him farewell. With a deep gratitude, we soon left the wonderful country of Vietnam.

#### Bali

In February 2017, after our Vipassana course at Wat Ram Poeng, Anisa and I travelled to Bali, Indonesia, to visit my dear friends Tyna and Fadi. It was impeccable timing, as Wu De was in Bali and we were able to have a tea

sit with Wu De, Tian Wu and others at an amazing spot, the Shambhala resort. It was a beautiful experience! We dressed in traditional Balinese attire and fetched water from an old spring down a mountain. We were watched over by a moss-covered Ganesh. We experienced a water ceremony conducted by a Balinese priest/medicine man who blessed us. Then, we enjoyed an amazing tea session with puerh from trees dating back 2,000 years and the water we had gathered that the priest had blessed. I had brought a few very small pieces of aloeswood that I was excited to show Wu De. As we showed him a few he said, "that one is something," referring to a sliver of aloeswood that I had brought from a piece that I dug out of the uncleaned bin in Danang. Months later I realized how "something," some of those pieces really are. Anisa and I hugged farewell to Wu De and Tian Wu. I was so happy that Anisa could meet those who had made such a great impact on my life in a relatively short time. It's important to me to acknowledge that Tea was first shown to me by women, going back to my grandmother and her Earl Grey. My first Global Tea Hut magazine was on Tea and the Feminine (November 2015) with a picture of Guanyin on the cover. Before leaving Bali, we had the absolute pleasure Below is the piece Budi gave me in Java. He said it came from a long dead tree which was sunken in mud and later unearthed. This is the highest grade of aloeswood there is—a kingly gift! The bottom right are some of the Ambon pieces with ant tunnels in the tree. Usually the fragrant resin results from a fungus attacking the tree, but here is antmade incense. To the right is a carving of a dragon. A lot of aloeswood is carved into jewelry or statues. Some are more natural, like this one, and others are incredibly detailed. They are very expensive.







of sitting a few times with our Global Tea Hut brothers Samson and Andy. What fine examples of human beings they are! They welcomed Anisa and me into their homes—a testament to the heart-connecting powers of this community, and of Tea Herself.

#### Java

In Java, Anisa supported me through another passion I have: ancient ruins. Following some suggestions I received from a friend, we travelled to Borobudur, Prambanan, Candi Sukuh and Ganung Padanghaving tea throughout. At the end of this, we found ourselves in Jakarta for a day. I had been chatting with Budi, an aloeswood dealer, who invited Anisa and me to his home. We arrived at Budi's family home, where he offered us a Turkish-style coffee. Budi was extremely friendly, full of information and happy to share with us. He enjoyed several variations of aloeswood from different parts of Indonesia. I could see some of his pieces were cultivated, yet nowhere near the uniformity found in Ho Chi Minh City. He asked me if I knew what created aloeswood. I said as far as I know it's the sap from the Aquilaria tree changing to protect itself from fungal infection

particularly to protect the heartwood. He responded by telling me that's true and that there are other reasons the trees form the sap for protection. He said the trees form sap to protect from smaller injuries that don't threaten the heartwood. And he held up a beautiful piece the size of my pinky finger. The piece had small winding, tunnel-like holes that ants had made in it. He said this was common on the Indo island of Ambon. He said the sap forming in different parts of the tree like roots and branches created different characteristics of fragrances. The world of aloeswood became much larger in that

I had a brief sense of a vast, ancient, knowledgeable world of incense—as vast as tea. I was left in awe. Budi explained to us that he would venture out to islands and buy from the locals, who for the most part would harvest from the forest. Budi also is involved in engineered aloeswood. This process refers to taking aloeswood oil and injecting it into another species of tree, grown in a plantation type of way. I'm not sure if this process involves drilling into the tree like the cultivated aloeswood process does. Somehow, I don't think it does. This ingenuity came about, in part, to avoid taking old trees from the forest. This gives a very similar product to aloeswood when harvested. Budi had aloeswood chips from West Borneo, North Borneo, Ambon and engineered aloeswood. They were beautiful and reasonably priced. He said his brother dealt with the more expensive sinking grade. His brother's prices started at \$60 USD per gram, which was way out of my price range. His nephews were whittling away at pieces that would soon be chips, honing in on the more resinous areas. We sampled the pieces there.

Most of Budi's customers are from the Middle East: Saudi Arabia and Oatar. He said to me that I was the first Canadian he has done business with. In the Middle East, the incense is more for prayer than for meditation, and the method is different than what I encountered in Vietnam, Taiwan and the November 2016 Global Tea Hut. His nephew brought a charcoal holder over that looked something like a miniature Stanley Cup. We placed pieces of chips on the hot charcoal, creating large amounts of smoke and aroma. Budi said that in the Middle East it is thought that the smoke of aloeswood can carry prayers. It was a wondrous experience for me to experience another culture that I know little about, even indirectly.

I asked Budi about the ancient trade routes. Interestingly, he said that aloeswood, or "Oud" as he called it, has been used for a very long time in the Middle East. Indonesia seemed to me quite a long way to go to find incense. He said that he believed that Oud originated in India and used to be sourced from there. Later, it was found in other places like Indonesia. A large geographical area of people and cultures use aloeswood, extending from the Middle East to Japan, from where it is now trickling into North America and, I imagine, Europe, too. I began to sift through bins looking for the best pieces, like I was invited to do in Vietnam. Budi looked at me funny. I asked if this was okay to do. He said he didn't mind, as I was only buying a small amount. He informed us that usually the seller would select the pieces. I later found this to be the custom in Thailand too. I bought some chips from North Borneo, West Borneo and Ambon. As we were getting ready to leave, Budi gifted us a small bag of powder with a few broken mala beads in it. He asked me to open my hand and he put half a dozen thumbnail-sized pieces in my hand from a long dead tree salvaged from under the mud. Budi also gave me a few fake pieces to learn what to watch out for. I am so grateful for his hospitality and generosity. I have to say that Java is one of the most hospitable places I've ever been. I was touched by the outgoing friendliness throughout the island.

#### Bangkok & Home

Anisa and I arrived in Thailand the next morning. We hit up some beaches for a week before returning to Bangkok. While in Bangkok, I sought out another aloeswood dealer, an older Chinese businessman. He was also used to dealing with customers from the Middle East. We again tested some pieces over charcoal. There were two variations: one from a south Thailand/ Malaysian forest and one from Cambodia. I found the smells fascinating as they had an almost sour scent to them, yet still a familiar aloeswood aroma. We agreed on a few weights/prices and left shortly after. A few days later, Anisa and I had to part ways as I returned to Canada for work. Leaving her to come home was the biggest challenge of my journey. We had traveled to so many places together, I was going to miss her.

After being home and back at work, I started becoming more aware of how her compassion and gentle kindness had touched my heart. Thanks to technology, video chat has allowed us to fill the time until we meet in person again. I am in deep gratitude for her love and presence in my life.

After having such an amazing journey in Asia, it was nice to have a project to work on at home. I shared some of the chips, sticks and cones with my tea friends. I began to learn how to form my own cones and sticks. I found some "makko," a Japanese term used to describe the odorless incense powder used to bind. The makko also creates a slow even burn. My factory, if you will, consists of a rubber mallet to break up the bigger chips, a coffee grinder, a mortar and pestle to grind the chips into powder, a measuring cup and a mixing bowl to measure/add water and mix with. I use the cardboard backings from Global Tea Hut envelopes to roll the incense on and a wooden chopstick to hollow the base of the cones for a better burn. At first, I included very little makko and found that the burns were too fast or they didn't burn well, so I had to include more. Always, aiming for a perfect ratio, I found that cones are more practical for me at this point. They travel well and don't break easily if bumped or dropped. Cones are also easy to burn, fitting in many incense burners and are easy to use outside. Cones don't last quite as long as sticks do, though. Sticks, on the other hand, break easily. They require packaging or a case to protect them. Hand-rolled sticks won't fit most incense holders. I've found they work best with clip holders.

I would love to try the mica sheet charcoal and ash ceremony as shown the November 2016 Global Tea Hut issue. I'm enjoying this avenue of learning and practice. At one point in this process I was having a lot of trouble getting the mixture I had made from the unclean bin in Danang to burn, having to add more makko than I wanted to and also having to almost completely hollow out the cones. I was puzzled. I decided to see if the pieces that I had left over would float. It turns out a few of them sank. My eyes widened and my jaw dropped in disbelief. That explained why I needed a higher degree of makko; clearly there was

more resin to consider. I phoned Kelly letting him know to check his pieces from Danang.

I think that it is important to ask environmental questions around aloeswood, such as what effect does the aloeswood industry have on the environment? I've heard about deforestation due to the harvesting of aloeswood. I don't know what this looks like first-hand. Of the few Aquilaria trees I've seen in Vietnam, they were around other species of trees. Hopefully this means clear cutting isn't a method used. Budi suggested that some aloeswood comes from smaller branches or roots, which could mean that the tree would not be harvested in its entirety. I imagine older, naturally resinous trees are becoming rare. I don't like to think of old large trees being cut down in the forest. Reading Global Tea Hut has taught me to appreciate the environment and that biodiversity is important. Plantation tea is lacking the relationship from all the other life forms that tea naturally lives with. When we remove this and have only tea (monoculture), we are missing something. When we add petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides we are harming the environment. This includes the people who work the land, too. I wonder how much of this is present in aloeswood plantations. It seems to me that there are some parallels. For example, Aquilaria trees are removed from their natural ecosystem in a plantation. In Vietnam, the plantation chips were so uniform, as if it was a computer program that made the chips. It made me think of clones, pesticides and fertilizer.

Aloeswood, unlike tea, is not usually ingested. Also, harvesting usually requires the death of the tree. Do these two variables make plantations more viable or engineered aloeswood more of a sustainable consideration? How many of us have considered any of this before burning Palo Santo? For example, do we consider where Palo Santo comes from? How is it harvested, and what effect does this production have on the ecosystem? At this point, I have far more questions than answers. It's important for me to be respectful of the plant kingdom. Global Tea Hut has really started to awaken me. I'm beginning to see how little I know, and how easy it's been not to look.



In my home, I honor the being/ spirit of Aloeswood the same way I honor Tea. I welcome Her into my home. I share with Her that I am here to learn from Her. I thank Her for being present and sharing Her beauty. I try to keep my monkey-mind out of the way. I have reverence for Her as a medicine being. This reminds me of a lesson I learned during my first stay at the Tea Sage Hut. One day, Shen, Sam and Wu De were working on a flower arrangement for the magazine. Wu De asked if I had any questions. I did, as one was burning in me. I asked, "Why have a flower display at all if it means the flower has to die for our benefit?" It seemed unnecessary to me. Why not use a little bonsai or a living plant? Looking back, I can see the response I received took months to set in. Wu responded with a story about Buddha and the beginning of what is now Zen. He shared a story about the Buddha gathering people for a sermon. At

this sermon the people waited for his words, and he had none. He opened his hand and revealed a single flower. Only one man present understood what this meant. The flower was beautiful, inspiring and impermanent. *One chance, one encounter*. That was the beginning of a Buddhist path that eventually travelled into China and became "Chan," and later to Japan where it was called "Zen." Of course, there was much more to the story with names and details that I do not remember.

Shen shared that they purchase flowers from a grower who respects plants. At the Hut, the flowers bring inspiration and appreciation of beauty. As they fade, they are thanked before they find their way to compost, returning home. As I said, it was months later that this sank further into me. One day, I followed an urge to begin flower arranging in my tea ceremonies. I haven't looked back, and it's a part of my practice now. It was an urge that

led me into the realm of aloeswood. I find the beauty, inspiration and impermanence present in incense as well. As I learn more about this world I see how I can respect Her to a greater degree. One way I can do this is to share what I find. I am so inspired by Global Tea Hut. How many of us had no idea what was involved in the journey from seed to cup? How many of us now have a deep reverence for Her as a result of this gathering? With the deepest thanks of my being, I am grateful for people like Wu De who share what they have learned—who share their journeys, helping us to see more of what is. I am, little by little, becoming more aware of the many things it was easier for me not to look at and learning to look. And the looking somehow changes things, immeasurably so.



## Ceallhylarer

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 Jaanus Leplaan.

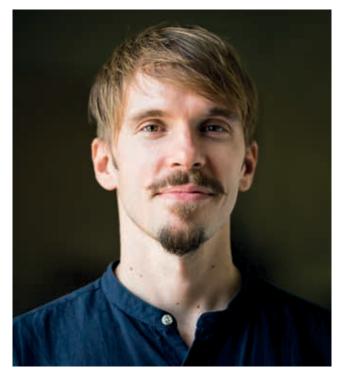
grew up in a small town in the tiny but beautiful country by the name of Estonia. Situated in the northeastern corner of Europe it is a land of forests, lakes, rolling hills, ancient bogs and marshes. The people living in this land, sometimes referred to as "elves" by Wu De, are a quaint and reserved bunch with a down-to-earth attitude about life.

Partly raised by my grandparents, I was always surrounded by plants, berries, mushrooms and natural remedies. My grandma had a garden full of fruit trees and vegetables, and some of my earliest memories are of collecting birch water in the forest with my grandfather. Tea, alongside various herbal infusions, was part of everyday life, and I enjoyed it as a beverage as early as I can remember.

It wasn't until my freshman year in university that I developed a deeper interest in tea and started to seek out, and experiment with, everything tea related I could get my hands on. Around that time, I met Steve Kokker (Ci Ting, 慈酿) while working in a restaurant. Little did I know at the time how this chance encounter would shape the rest of my life. We quickly became good friends and spent long hours discussing various topics over many cups of tea. The more I learned, the more I thirsted for knowledge of this fascinating plant. As the saying goes: when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. A year or two later, upon returning from his first trip to Tea Sage Hut, Steve announced that the teacher of this tradition had made plans to visit Estonia. I was very excited!

So I found myself sitting on the floor, alongside a few other curious tea lovers, holding a bowl filled with leaves and water, taking sip after sip of this magical liquid that felt so familiar yet also somehow unlike anything I'd drank before. The experience was powerful. With each new bowl an unnecessary layer of my being was washed away until I felt Tea's gentle touch reach my very core. After hours of ceremony and listening to Wu De talk about everything from this plant's relationship to the environment to folk tales and Zen lessons, my relationship to tea and life in general was transformed.

Like many of you, this first true encounter with the Leaf left me deeply touched. She awoke something in me and showed me a way to better connect to people,



ぶ A: Jaanus Leplaan

Nature and to my higher self. Tea has also shown me the power and beauty of community and service. Many of the people in that room have since become dear brothers and sisters and continue to foster tea community in Estonia.

As meaningful as that first introduction, is also what came after. That night, I went home with a bowl and a handful of leaves. Every morning for the next months I did my homework: I sat and drank three bowls in silence and in reverence of the wisdom contained in these leaves. Listening and resting in stillness, many deep lessons have been learned.

I have been very fortunate to share tea with some of you in my travels around the globe in recent years, and I feel infinitely grateful for the hospitality of this beautiful global community. Guided by the Leaf, my path has now led me to serve in the Tea Sage Hut. It brings me great joy to meet fellow Chajin from around the world, share tea and to be of service. Let's keep changing the world together, bowl by bowl!



#### COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Annual Trip

茶道

茶主题: Classics of Tea

茶主题: Chajin Stories/Biographies

茶主题:Anxi Tieguanyin

If you serve tea regularly and would like some extra magazines or tea tins to give out to help spread the word about Global Tea Hut, please let us know. We are also looking to donate magazines to public places.

We are trying to expand by connecting with podcasts, blogs, journalists and other communities. If you have a suggestion, please email our PR point person, Emily Cross, at: emily.global.tea.hut@gmail.com

There is a section in the app where you can post your questions for our live Instagram and Facebook broadcasts. There is also a section for suggested topics we could cover in our weekly Tea Brewing video series.

The 2018 Annual Photography Contest is underway. Submissions are not limited to Global Tea Hut members, so tell your friends. The winners will be published and receive gifts of tea and teaware.

We have created an array of teaware for this community, both for bowl tea and gongfu tea. There are gorgeous kettle and brazier sets, sidehandle pots and sets of beautiful bowls. We also have starry-sky Yixing pots in stock again!

I let my higher self lead

June Affirmation

Do I allow the inner wisdom to guide me to experiences that expand who I am or do I constrict into familiar patterns? I ask the light and love, both within and without, to lead me to truth. I listen to my intuition guiding me.

Our third annual Zen & Tea Retreat in Spain is coming up from October 1st through the 9th. For those of you who have never attended, this is a superb chance to cultivate yourself, deepen your meditation, grow your tea practice and all in the gorgeous Pyrenees Mountains. We practice silent walking meditation down the silent trails every day and do a day-long hike in silence in the middle of the retreat. You can read about previous retreats in the Feb. 2018 and Feb. 2017 issues or learn more at: www.casacuadrau.org

#### 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. Make sure you apply early for courses as they fill up fast (this is why we need a bigger, more awesome Center).

We have opened all the ten-day courses to service! This is exciting for those of you who have already taken a ten-day course and want to come serve one. You can apply on the website. This is also another way to visit if a course is full!

Our longer course for older students will be over the course of two weeks in late August. This course is for those who have been initiated into our lineage. Contact us if you are interested in attending. It will be from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. There will also be a trip to Sun Moon Lake beforehand, for five days from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the14<sup>th</sup>!

Jaanus, this month's TeaWayfarer, has just taken initiation into our lineage this month. It is wonderful to have him. He is a great person and Chajin.



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